

Submission Response re:

Abortion Law Reform (Women's Right To Choose Bill) 2016

Dear Committee,

I write this submission unapologetically full of resolve, because abortion is an emotional issue regardless of which side you stand. It is about the ethics of life; the value of one life over another and the rights of women to control their bodies. Although I know where I stand, I know that it can be complex and there is heartache on both sides.

Let me state; **I am against this amendment.** I do not agree with the changes Mr Rob Pyne MP, for Cairns introduced on 10 March 2016.

Unrestricted Abortion, Survival and Dignity

It breaks my heart that we, as a society, could consider making the killing of an unborn child (even up to their due/birth date) legal. I am astounded that there are no gestational restrictions in this bill and that unrestricted abortion has been tabled for consideration in my beloved State. To make it worse, currently, those who *survive* late-term abortions are not given medical care and are left to die.

We currently have the Spirit of the ANZAC display in Brisbane City. I think of those men and women, who died without medical care, possibly alone and scared with no one to comfort them, not even a stranger. I believe that most reasonable people would at least try to help someone in their last moments on earth and give them comfort. Regardless if other people believe an individual is valued or not, where there is life, there should be respect especially in one's last moments. If it is too painful to do so, then surely something isn't right with us? I can imagine holding a dying 5-month gestational fetus/baby would be seriously traumatic. Surely this is a sign that we have made a tragic mistake somewhere.

Mr Pyne's Introductory remarks

Mr Pyne stated, "Surely a young person should not have to ruin their young lives by proceeding with a pregnancy if they are not ready and their family and their doctor think it inadvisable". The phrase "ruin their young lives" disturbingly implies that pregnancy is a life sentence that will trap young people forever. Although I agree that pregnancy and birth have a significant impact on women and their network, to say that it ruins lives is more of a reflection on how we engage with and treat those women and their children (wanted or not). If there is stigma, then should we be addressing that? If there is discrimination, once again should we be addressing that? If they don't want to keep the baby, then can we assist them in a different way by making adoption easier on both sides? 'Ruin their young lives' makes it sound like they have an addiction to a harmful substance from which there is no return.

How Policy Objective is Achieved

Under the, 'How policy objective is achieved' it states:

Should this Bill pass, the decision for the doctor would simply need to be that continuing the pregnancy poses a bigger risk to the woman than terminating it

I'm sorry, but doesn't nearly every pregnancy pose a bigger risk to the women than terminating it? Even in wanted pregnancies there are risks, be it financial, emotional, social etc. What is the 'risk' that is being defined here? Furthermore, I am concerned about the implication in the language: "the decision for the doctor would **simply** need to be..." I do not agree that ending a growing baby's life should be described as simple. To simplify this issue with no thought of the baby is to disregard the very start of every human's life – the time inside the womb.

Benefits of the bill

Under 'benefits of the bill' it is stated that it will repeal outdated laws that can criminalize women for a basic human right and a medical procedure. Unfortunately, this basic human right and medical procedure is carried out on another human being who at about 3 months gestation has unique fingerprints. With all the science behind the development of life in utero, how can we continue to ignore these things? I know there are horrible and traumatic situations under which some women become pregnant, but can we look after them and their unborn children? I believe we can, because I have hope and I believe that humans are creative, caring, extraordinary beings capable of much more than what this bill has to offer. We can do better.

We can do better

When the 2011 floods came, we were filled with pride as the 'mud army' went to help out those in need. Putting aside our convenience, financial concerns, past experiences and personal views, we went to help people we had never met – people are amazing. What about the unborn? Can we put aside all those things again and come to the aid of someone we have never met – the discriminated 'unwanted' future of Queensland? Surely we can provide better options to safeguard their futures and support the women and men going through difficult situations. Although I am calling for the preservation of life, I am also asking that more be done to support those facing unwanted or difficult pregnancies. Can't we provide greater support and easier avenues for adoption? Are unrestricted abortions the only and easiest option? I think not, we can do better. Please do better. Lead us well.

As a women and a mother of two children, I thank you for your time and ask that you remember my submission when making your decision.

Respectfully,

Jessica Greenwood