

Submission to the Parliamentary Committee for Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention to assist in their Inquiry into Abortion Law Reform in Qld

The Committee of Inquiry into Abortion Law Reform Health,
Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and
Family Violence Prevention Committee

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Dear Committee Members,

My submission is in favour of the repeal of the current laws existing around abortion in Queensland (codes 224, 225 and 226) and to subsequently decriminalise abortion in Queensland, in line with similar law reform in other Australian states and territories.

I have been involved in sexuality education and sexual and reproductive health services for over 30 years. I believe that the prevention of unintended pregnancy should be a priority. These prevention strategies include broad community education which includes relationships, safe sex and contraception. This, together with access to reliable, safe and affordable contraception and professional and community education about long acting reversible contraception (LARC), should be encouraged.

However, there will always be circumstances in which unintended pregnancies occur, and in these situations, if a woman chooses to terminate her pregnancy, she should be able to access legal, safe and affordable abortion services.

Queensland's abortion law is antiquated and must be reformed to maximises women's reproductive rights and freedoms, provide the legal certainty necessary for health practitioners to provide best patient care, and reflect community attitudes. Any new law also needs to be clear and widely understood.

There are many myths surrounding abortion. These include;

- access to legal abortion will increase the number of abortions
- serious physical side effects
- serious emotional impact

Evidence from Australia and other countries shows that making abortion illegal does not stop women having abortions.

The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG) states that 'serious complications after abortions are rare, and mortality and serious morbidity occur less commonly with abortions than with pregnancies carried to term'.

In 2005, The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG) reviewed the evidence on the psychological impact of abortion and concluded that 'abortion rarely causes immediate or lasting negative psychological consequences in healthy women'.

Access to legal, safe and affordable abortion should be part of a broad health policy that includes comprehensive sexuality education, access to contraception, particularly LARCs, and availability of appropriate non-judgemental sexual and reproductive health services.

References:

1. Position Statement: Official Statement on the Infant Viability Bill (Victoria) From The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. Available online at: <http://www.ranzcog.edu.au/media/statements/1719-official-statement-on-the-infant-viability-bill-victoria-from-the-royal-australian-and-new-zealand-college-of-obstetricians-and-gynaecologists.html>
2. The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, *Termination of Pregnancy: A resource for health professionals* November 2005. Available online at: http://www.ranzcog.edu.au/editions/doc_view/480-termination-of-pregnancy-a-resource-for-health-professionals.html
3. Guttmacher Institute Induced Abortions Worldwide. May 2016. Available at: <https://www.guttmacher.org/fact-sheet/facts-induced-abortion-worldwide>

Yours Sincerely
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