

From:
To: [abortionlawreform](#)
Subject: ALR submission
Date: Wednesday, 29 June 2016 8:12:05 PM

A personal submission to the Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee

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

Dear Committee,

I support the removal of abortion from Queensland's 1899 Criminal Code.

I support this removal for the many reasons noted below. However, as a Social Worker, much of my knowledge and awareness of the issues surrounding pregnancy, parenting, adoption and abortion comes from my seven years (2007- 2014) providing decision-making counselling and support for women (and their partners/family/friends) who have experienced an unplanned pregnancy across Queensland. These experiences amount to supporting women and their supporters in the thousands – both face to face and from just about every single Qld locality over the telephone.

My commitment to supporting women through this process of decision-making was without judgement, value position or agenda. I have supported young women, older women, both rich and poor women, women who have been abused or spurned, women with careers, young women in school, young women in care, women in jail, women with partners who love them, women living with violence, women living alone, women with family support structures, women living with homelessness, healthy women, sick women, women with disabilities, women who have been sexually assaulted, women who are unready for parenthood, women with mental health issues, women who identify as religious- and representative of many different faiths, women from multicultural backgrounds, women requiring interpreter services, women who identify as "feminist" and women who don't, confident women, ambivalent women, women with much wanted pregnancies, women with unexpected pregnancies where contraception failed.... I have been privileged to share in many women's stories, histories and experiences, values and beliefs, hopes and dreams.

The one shared experience defining of all of these women should only that of self-determination with regard to the outcome of her pregnancy decision: to continue the pregnancy and parent, to continue the pregnancy with a decision to relinquish the child for adoption, or to end the pregnancy through an abortion procedure. **True reproductive self-determination can only achieved through comprehensive access and equity of service provision for all reproduction choices (including abortion)** for all women regardless of their locality or financial circumstance. The legislative purpose for abortion should NOT be focussed on criminalisation. The State should be more concerned about regulation within the sphere of health and service provision within our public system and ensuring that all women have access to comprehensive reproductive health services.

Laws criminalising abortion are outdated and have no place in modern Australia. I do not want my Queensland sisters to face the threat of possible prosecution for choosing to terminate a pregnancy, nor do I want the doctors who help them to be fearful of breaking the law. Queensland and New South Wales are the only states where it's possible for women to be charged for an abortion. It's time to move this issue out of the Criminal Code and make it well and truly a health decision between a woman and her doctor, the

way it is in many other Australian jurisdictions.

Laws criminalising abortion create problems in accessing services which have a far greater impact on women already experiencing disadvantage. Women in rural and remote areas, and women experiencing violence, are particularly disadvantaged when it comes to abortion access.

Unplanned pregnancy and abortion are a reality of women's lives. It's estimated that half all pregnancies in Australia are unplanned, and that over one in four Australian women will have an abortion at some point in their life. No contraceptive is 100% effective, and rates of violence and sexual coercion are high. No woman 'wants' to have an abortion, but safe and legal services need to be available when they deem it best. Criminalising abortion prevents this from happening.

I am concerned at reports of women attempting to induce their own abortion at home because they can't access a safe procedure, and of women being turned away from public hospitals when requesting abortion for a pregnancy resulting from rape. This is not the Queensland I want to live in.

The majority of the population supports a woman's right to choose, according to reliable opinion polling. I believe that those opposed to abortion make up a tiny proportion of the population and their vocal opposition to change should not be taken to be representative of broader community sentiment.

Women in other states and territories of Australia have the legal right to choose abortion. I want women in Queensland to have the same rights.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to this inquiry.

Yours sincerely,

Rhonda Cale

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