



**St Vincent de Paul Society**  
QUEENSLAND  
*good works*

30<sup>th</sup> June 2016

Research Director  
Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee  
Parliament House  
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**Abortion Law Reform (Women's Right to Choose) Amendment Bill 2016 and Inquiry into laws governing termination of pregnancy in Queensland**

Dear Sir/Madam

I am writing on behalf of the Social Justice Committee, St Vincent de Paul Queensland.

As Vincentians we work towards creating a more just and compassionate society.

It has been said many times that our society is judged by how it treats its most vulnerable members. The unborn children are perhaps the most vulnerable members of our society: there are no advocates specifically for them when abortion is considered; they are voiceless and their right to life is deemed to run a poor second to the rights and preferences of the parent(s).

There is a cruel irony in that as a society we spend much effort, emotion and money on keeping premature babies alive yet so easily perform abortions on unborn babies of similar gestational age. Similarly, adoption is a tortuous, bureaucratic and lengthy process with many people seeking the few babies available - yet obtaining an abortion is comparatively easy and frequent.

We agree that criminalising parents procuring an abortion is harmful and unhelpful.

As Vincentians we have assisted parents where abortion is being considered or has occurred. We work quietly, effectively and without fanfare to help those in need, extending to them dignity and offering them hope for a better future. Our St Vincent de Paul Society does not discriminate regarding who we assist and how we assist people in need.

As a Vincentian I have with colleagues visited parents in their home to listen and provide on-going practical assistance and friendship. Each situation is complex and we have found on many occasions that perceived lack of support and assistance had removed hope, leaving abortion as the only option parents felt was viable. In all situations - whether the abortion has occurred or not - the parents involved have struggled with the decision and often felt alone in their struggle. We have extended to the parents we visit our practical and on-going assistance, support, friendship and compassion. We know this has had made a positive difference to those we assist.

As Vincentians we also have a key role in advocating for justice.

**We ask that the following be considered in relation to this Bill:**

1. We all have a right to life. This includes unborn babies. It is a core principle when considering social justice.
2. An advocate for the unborn child needs to be appointed, to ensure the rights of the unborn child are considered as are the rights and opinions of others who are involved in the decision making. All parties involved must have a voice in the decisions made.
3. Late live baby terminations are cruel and painful deaths. We are extremely disturbed that this Bill contains no gestation limits on abortions. We cannot condone the deliberate killing of the unborn child, particularly late in gestation. This is nothing short of barbaric behaviour in a society that calls itself civilised.
4. All health professionals (e.g., doctors, nurses, pharmacists) must have the ability to exert freely their conscientious objection to participation at any level in abortions, whether by surgery or medication. The current conscientious objection afforded pharmacists in the pharmacy legislation needs to continue and be extended to include participation in abortions (e.g., medication dispensing and counselling for the procedure).
5. The decision to undergo an abortion must involve both biological parents (where the father is known), not just the mother. As mentioned above, an advocate for the unborn baby must also be involved in the decision-making.
6. There is a pressing need for alternatives to abortion (adopting the baby, keeping the baby) being promoted positively. Adoption needs to be delivered, promoted and supported as being acceptable, appropriate and “win-win” elements of a just and caring society. Useful targets would be:
  - a. the number of babies adopted exceeding the number of babies being aborted.
  - b. an increase of live births accompanied by a decrease in babies aborted
7. Practical specialised support must be provided for the parents that is targeted, adequate, on-going and appropriate. Whilst charities such as our own will always offer assistance and support, access to specialised services can be difficult. For example, on the Gold Coast, there is one Pregnancy Support located in Miami. Whilst they offer an excellent service, it is not all that well advertised and is hard to access for many people in need.
8. This Bill does not address the complexity and scope of all the issues adequately. The Committee constructing the Bill needs to include experts in the medical, ethical and legal areas.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely

Dr Nerida Smith  
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