

SUBMISSION TO PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE ON ABORTION LAW REFORM

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Thank you for accepting my submission for consideration on the currently proposed amendment to Abortion Law in Queensland.

In the first part, I would like to make comment on the Members speech to Parliament introducing the topic. His case sample of the “ridiculous “ impact of the current legislation is 6 years old, in which a couple from Cairns was charged for possessing medications which were illegal in Australia. Now those very medications are legal and available, making the case itself both outdated and irrelevant. The reality in practice in Queensland is that abortion is already available on demand up until 20 weeks. My experience is that most Queenslanders are unaware of this and the sentiment is not positive when they are informed. I wonder if the reality of abortion being available up until the moment of birth would be acceptable to the majority of the community, the group whose values as a whole this law is supposed to represent.

The Abortion Law Reform speaks of protecting vulnerable Queenslanders and basic human rights. But it fails at any point to consider the protection and basic human rights of the infants who will be aborted.

In the National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children writes:

Principles to guide our actions:

Children have a right to be safe, valued and cared for. As a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Australia has a responsibility to protect children, provide the services necessary for them to develop and achieve positive outcomes, and enable them to participate in the wider community.

In line with Australia’s obligations as a signatory to the UN Convention, the National Framework is underpinned by the following principles:

- All children have a right to grow up in an environment free from neglect and abuse. Their best interests are paramount in all decisions affecting them.
- Children and their families have a right to participate in decisions affecting them.
- Improving the safety and wellbeing of children is a national priority.
- The safety and wellbeing of children is primarily the responsibility of their families, who should be supported by their communities and governments.
- Australian society values, supports and works in partnership with parents, families and others in fulfilling their caring responsibilities for children.
- Children’s rights are upheld by systems and institutions.
- Policies and interventions are evidence based.

The National Framework also recognises the importance of promoting the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families across all outcome areas 1

How can the differences between our approaches to children be so vastly different based on a few weeks of age? How can the difference between a baby which is protected by its mother and one

which is terminated be whether or not it is wanted when this is not acceptable at any other point in the life of a human?

It has been suggested that the way in which a society treats its children is the greatest indicator of its beliefs and values, primarily because they are the very most vulnerable members of our society. Nelson Mandela said, "There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children." Their value as individuals is underlined by the following quote from the American President Hoover, "Children are our most valuable resource." — Herbert Hoover, 31st President of the United States. 2

I would suggest that putting forth a bill that has no means to protect children from the time that they become viable human beings in their own right fails the most vulnerable members of our society. By not addressing the issue it is in fact addressed. And there are few members of Australian society who would agree with the realities of what that would mean for legalising late term abortions, as evidenced by the article in the Medical Journal of Australia, 2010, which showed that in a poll of Australians only 6% thought that 3<sup>rd</sup> trimester abortions should be lawful in any circumstance, while 48% of Australians thought that 3<sup>rd</sup> trimester abortions should be unlawful in any circumstance. 3

References:

1. <https://www.communities.qld.gov.au/resources/childsafety/child-protection/national-framework.pdf>, accessed 30.6.2016
2. <http://www.compassion.com/poverty/famous-quotes-about-children.htm>, accessed 30.6.2016
3. <https://www.mja.com.au/journal/2010/193/1/australian-attitudes-early-and-late-abortion>, accessed 30.6.3026