

From:
To: [abortionlawreform](#)
Subject: Support for Abortion Law Reform (Women's Right to Choose) Amendment Bill 2016
Date: Tuesday, 28 June 2016 8:52:02 AM

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

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

Dear Committee,

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

The current criminalisation of abortion in Queensland is anachronistic, and unreflective of current practice and community sentiment. Queensland and New South Wales remain the only states in Australia where women may be charged for having an abortion; it is concomitantly untenable that doctors should continue to face the threat of prosecution for performing terminations. Rather than containing abortion in the Criminal Code, it should be a health decision between a woman and her doctor, as is the case in other Australian states. Women, in conjunction with their medical practitioners, are best placed to make decisions about what is best for their own bodies and lives.

The current laws create unnecessary impediments to accessing services. This is particularly the case, for example, for women living in rural or remote areas, who often need to travel significant distances, at significant expense, to access their nearest clinic. Similarly, women experiencing domestic violence are at a disadvantage; not only does this group experience higher rates of unplanned pregnancy, but they may also encounter difficulties accessing termination services, due to issues such as financial control and prohibitive procedural/travel costs.

Abortion will always be an imperative health service. Approximately half of all pregnancies in Australia are unplanned, and over one in four Australian women will have an abortion at some point in their life. There are no fail-safe contraceptive methods. Furthermore, abortion rates are generally lower in countries where abortion is legal, thus challenging the notion that legalisation will "open the floodgates". No woman wants to have an abortion, but the procedure needs to be safely and freely accessible should it be chosen, for whatever reason.

Reports of women utilising self-abortion methods because they can't access a safe procedure are concerning, as are those of women being turned away from public hospitals when requesting abortion for a pregnancy resulting from rape. The ramifications of criminalising abortion can compound trauma with trauma, for already vulnerable women.

Reliable opinion polling shows that the majority of the population is in support of a woman's right to choose, and regulations in other Australian states and territories are reflective of this. The continued inclusion of abortion in Queensland's Criminal Code is archaic, unnecessarily prohibitive and incongruent with current community values.

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

Yours sincerely,

Kirsty Shapleski

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