

Submission re **Abortion Law Reform (Woman's Right to Choose) Amendment Bill 2016**

I am a Registered Nurse since 1978 in Queensland and have worked in a variety of health settings in this wonderful state. I am also a Natural Fertility Services Co-Ordinator and Educator delivering sessions on sexual and reproductive health in both Primary and Secondary schools throughout the Central Queensland area for the past 23 years. Lastly but most importantly I am a wife , mother, grandmother and feminist in the best sense of the word, meaning I value all females even the ones in the womb. As I introduce myself in schools I say : my children and grandchildren are my most precious gifts. Each child is a unique and unrepeatable human being who deserves the utmost respect from the moment of conception to natural death.

I wish to object to this proposed bill that calls our current laws "archaic" and instead, pose that if this bill was passed, the result could be that more women will be exposed to " serious danger to her life or a significant impact on her physical or mental health".

Today we are looking at our planet in a holistic sense and we acknowledge the interdependence of all living things. Thus we are promoting the importance of caring for the health of humans and also our incredible environment.

This is one of the reasons women and couples are choosing natural methods of family planning. At our Natural Fertility Services clinics, couples are taught to understand and value their fertility. With this appreciation and knowledge, couples are empowered to make informed decisions about planning their family in a positive and healthy way. Fertility, to us, is a sign of good health, not an illness to be medicated! Not only do we believe in protecting our fertility, but also believe in protecting the mother and her unborn child.

Pregnancy is highly valued in our society and is a sign of good health. We know the woman's body goes through a series of miraculous steps to produce, hopefully, a healthy baby, and then continues this amazing journey by producing the perfect food for the newborn. Just ask a couple who are infertile or have fertility issues when they eventually achieve a much longed for pregnancy. Each step in this process is so intricate that to interrupt a healthy pregnancy by aborting an unborn baby and expect no repercussion is simply not plausible.

The proposed bill calls an abortion a "health procedure"! Sadly we know that abortion destroys the life of the baby and research is showing how it can adversely affect the physical, emotional, psychological and mental health of the woman. Have the proponents of this bill researched the physical and mental harm caused by an abortion? There are many studies which now show a negative impact on the physical and often a much more subtle impact on the psychological health of the woman.

Melinda Tankard Reist, a great feminist and author, before writing her book ***Giving Sorrow Words*** put an ad in Cleo magazine to ask women who had an abortion in Australia to contact

her – instead of the expected few hundred women, I believe she had many thousands reply . That great book is a compilation of some of the women’s sad and distressing stories of the impact of abortion on their physical and mental health.

Have the proponents and supporters of this Bill researched or asked women who have had an abortion the effects on their health?

Physical Health:

We know that there are many short and long term physical effects on a woman’s health. Listed below are just a few examples:

- Haemorrhage and infection.
- Reduced fertility or permanent infertility due to damage from the abortion chemicals or surgical procedure.
- A future increased risk of premature birth and underweight babies, often due to damage to the cervix or uterus.
- The link between abortion and breast cancer when the first pregnancy is aborted. (See studies by Dr Deidre Little; Dr Angela Lanfranchi, MD, FACS President of the Breast Cancer Prevention Institute: www.bcpi.org; Dr Joel Brind on 36 studies from China ;)
- Damage to other organs, extreme pain and even reports of death from such methods as the abortion drug RU486? Yes we believe the deaths that do occur from the abortion procedure are often listed under some other medical condition – without the full information on the original source of the medical condition.

Mental Health:

Once more there are a long list of short and long term effects on the mental health of a woman. The list includes just a few of the common ones easily found

- guilt, shame, depression, insomnia, nightmares and flashbacks,
- abuse of drugs and alcohol,
- inability to complete academic courses,
- anger towards others who may have assisted in the abortion decision – boyfriends, husbands, partners, family, nurses, doctors, social workers and the list goes on
- promiscuity and then repeat unplanned pregnancy and abortion
- loss of libido,
- suicide - sadly, an outcome for some poor women

If this is “practicing medicine in the 21st century”, then we should all be very concerned that this is the best medicine we can offer women with an unplanned pregnancy in 2016. This bill states it will “ protect vulnerable Queensland women”. I pose to you that with that list of

physical and mental effects listed above we should hang our heads in shame if this is the best protection we can offer Queensland women in 2016 with all the resources we have in this state.

Is abortion the only solution we can offer “a young woman not ready to have a child” ? Is she really being ‘empowered’ or will her short term gain or feeling of initial relief give her lifelong pain? Many women regret having an abortion. Professor Phillip Ney in the US cited studies showing between 10 – 85% of women will suffer to some degree with Post Abortion symptoms. On another happier note if family and community help and support the woman - , most report that they are happy and contented with the decision to continue their pregnancy.

If we consider that approximately 13,413 women (in 2013) or approximately 11,000 Queensland women in 2015 had a Medicare funded abortion in the First Trimester then we could say at least 1,100 minimum (10%) and 9,350 (85%) maximum women suffered some psychological harm from the procedure. Could you imagine the outcry in media if we had any other cause of so much distress for women in Queensland and Australia as a country.

Then we go to late term abortions or 2nd Trimester abortions – approximately 113 Medicare funded abortions in Qld in the past year. Many of these babies could live outside the womb if given the same treatment the same gestation baby would be given if it were born prematurely. How ironic that we spend thousands of dollars of our health budget to help infertile couples have a baby or to save a premature babb, and then allow babies to die who are deemed “unwanted”. If we wish to talk of social justice we need to begin this conversation in our so called “smart country” or state.

Queensland Health released, after questions asked in Parliament last week, figures showing that 27 babies born alive from late term abortions in 2015 were left to die! This is so sad, but more that that, it is outrageous that we allow this to happen.

It is pleasing to note that this bill will be first discussed by members of the Domestic Violence Committee, I would be hoping that they would notice a further travesty of justice for many women and their babies when they are told it is best to abort the baby. Another violence on the woman never makes the first violence right, ie any act of rape or coerced sexual act due to domestic violence.

Men and Abortion:

NO mention is made of the father of the unborn child, many of whom are traumatized when their child has been aborted. Is the father given no say in the life of his child? What has happened to “inclusion” and “anti- discrimination” that we so readily believe we hail as signs of our progressive society. Is this called “reflecting modern values”? Also, no mention is made of the siblings who may be very disturbed knowing they have lost a brother or a sister in this manner. It is ironic and hypocritical that we make sure men must pay maintenance to the mother if she wishes to keep the baby – and rightly so - yet the man has no say over the life of his child if the woman makes the so called “Choice” to abort the baby.

I have had the privilege of meeting some young men whose babies were aborted against their will and I have been profoundly affected by their grief and prolonged sadness at the loss of their precious baby they were willing to raise alone. It requires the generosity of a woman to go through the 9 months of a pregnancy and allow her child to develop to maturity and fullness of life.

One young man's life had been altered irrevocably and he wrote a letter about his feelings . I have, with his permission, shared his sentiments with students , especially male students who have also been touched by his story. Vincent Rue who wrote **Forgotten Fathers** reflected that abortion is a much greater dilemma for men that researchers or women have ever begun to realise.

This submission is being written just after Queensland won the State of Origin series. I ask the proponents of this bill to think of Queensland Pride, and realise that we are discussing and deciding the fate of the lives of vulnerable fellow Queenslanders who will be aborted if this Bill is passed. The baby may be a future....Gagai, or a JT, or a Cathy Freeman or the person to discover the cure for cancer, etc.....

Yours sincerely,
Noelle Melrose
RN and NFS Educator