

From: Peter Maher

Submission to the Committee of the Queensland Parliament considering the Abortion Law reform Bill of Mr Rob Pyne to the Queensland Parliament.

Honourable members of the Committee, I wish to address this matter in respectfully making my submission.

Abortion is always a horrible act against the unborn who, while being more vulnerable, need greater protection. It is always the responsibility of Society and by default its elected representatives to offer all the necessary protections that are possible to preserve life.

The current legislation in Queensland attempts to offer that protection by codifying certain acts of abortion under the Criminal Code.

It seems to me that by removing these acts from the Criminal Code we are agreeing to murder most cruel by calling it something else. The current legislation comes under the title of 'Offences against Morality'. While many call Australia a modern nation there seems to be an implication that associates modernism with the removal of many if not all forms of restraint, in particular personal restraints by calling them rights. Where so called rights impinge on others including a human embryo they become more than rights because they nullify all responsibilities to those others.

Principle

1. All actions are preceded by choices. The consequences of those actions cannot be chosen. The point of empowerment is at the moment of choice. Prevention of pregnancy is preferable to termination and abortion and a greater effort ought to be undertaken by our law-makers and governors as part of society's responsibility to the unborn. Where are the defenders of the unborn, the vulnerable and of those who cannot defend themselves. As an actor in a current ABC drama forcefully said, 'Why do the children always suffer because of the sins of their parents?'
2. Mr Pyne advocates for all women to have the choice to make the decision to abort their foetus without the fear of occurring a criminal conviction. But surely the same fear is also a protective measure for the woman and the embryo and acts as a brake to prevent unwanted consequences.

I have a female relative who was raped in her mid teen years. We were children in a religious family whose mores included sanctity of the unborn, so abortion was not either an option nor a consideration. She gave birth to her child in a home for unmarried mothers and the child was given up for adoption. Today she remembers the birthday of her child and is grateful that a life can live despite some sorrow no doubt. Nevertheless, she does not suffer from the guilt and trauma consequent to a different course of action. She has subsequently married happily with her own children and now is a grandmother.

So what should the recommendations of your committee be?

A] Policy Objectives: I would like to see a policy that continues to recognize that there are situations for which the community must accept some responsibility to support and encourage expectant mothers in the midst of what can be extremes of emotional and physical distress. Hasty decisions are never fruitful ones. Even 'Children by Choice', an organization that advocates for Abortion, offers 3 alternatives: Parent, adopt or abort. Unfortunately their first option is listed as Abort which is not very helpful.

How does the community propose that these same options are fully available and explained? Neither parenting nor adoption seem to be serious priorities for the present Queensland Governing elites whose advocacy for liberalisation of laws seems contradictory to their protestations against Child sexual abuse and partner abuse. By liberalising abortion laws our community runs the very serious possibility and even probability of making those matters worse because our attitudes to the living embryo have changed.

Legal Principles: I am not qualified as a legal person to make a case here, other than to say that I believe the Queensland Law should do all in its power to uphold the Declaration of Human Rights which we have

signed. Both parties involved in sex acts which result in pregnancies must be held accountable, both legally, morally, and financially, and be parties to advice, support etc now given to the woman.

Factors affecting Termination possibility: All jurisdictions in Australia have some form of Legal Guidelines. Generally they mostly are in agreement with each other. In many cases they provide for a medical assessment which I believe ought to include a psychological assessment. Those doctors etc must not be members of any organization which directly profits from Abortion.

Regulations concerning gestational periods: While most Australian States and Territories have periods of timing from 14 weeks to 28 weeks, I do not consider this aspect relevant to the issue. If the adjudged reasons for an abortion are completely compelling, the gestational period becomes a secondary matter of lesser consequence except in the case where the unborn could live if delivered. Premature births have recorded live births from very early periods of gestation and should be considered and given weight as part of any Medical intervention.

Conscientious Objection from Service providers: I am of the understanding that the law in Victoria has gone past the point where a Doctor or Health Professional has the right to object on these grounds. However I would not like the situation here in Queensland to deteriorate to such a low point. Conscience is a very powerful motivational factor in someone's professional and personal life, and a person with a conviction which can be proven, rather than a preference ought to be excluded from the Abortion process except in extreme circumstances where intervention to save life is needed. Doctors and Health professional have a duty of care under the Hippocratic Oath which distinguishes medical persons from other professional jurisdictions.

Support for Pregnant women: There are many organizations in Queensland which offer support services for women who find themselves in uncharted waters. Community support for these is already offered. Government intervention must remain only to enforce the regulations already in existence. The case quoted by Mr Pyne is disturbing as it seems to undermine the place of the Law and those whose job it is to enforce it. While the law stands, decisions made in contravention of it must bear the consequences dictated by it, otherwise we run the risk of becoming a lawless society.

My views: We must uphold the rights of all individuals including the rights of the unborn. Where are these rights enshrined in Queensland Legislation?

In my experience as a School Teacher in the Queensland State system, I witnessed the introduction of sex education into primary schools and I am not surprised that we have young people experimenting with their bodies and engaging in sexual activity without regard for the possible consequences of pregnancy. Its introduction came with no reference to any moral foundation. This disregards the reality of our humanity that we are all moral beings and each of us has a sense of what is right and wrong.

I believe the latest push from the 'Safe Schools' program into Queensland Schools will open a Pandora's box of problems we have not begun to imagine. So we are going from the advocacy of Abortion as a non criminal activity to the extremes of gender confusion. Surely we are on a slippery slope to self destruction.

I urge the Committee to make recommendations to the Parliament with the emphasis on the protection of life

Sincerely,
Peter Maher