

SUBMISSION

to the

**Health, Communities,
Disability Services and
Domestic and Family Violence
Prevention Committee**

Inquiry into

**The Abortion Law Reform
(Women's Right to Choose)
Amendment Bill 2016**

and

**Inquiry into laws governing
termination of pregnancy in
Queensland**

Matthew J Doyle

30 June 2016

Dear members of the Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee,

**Inquiry into the *Abortion Law Reform (Women's Right to Choose) Bill 2016* and
Inquiry into laws governing the termination of pregnancy in Queensland**

Position:

I urge the committee to recommend the outright rejection of any amendment to the laws of Queensland that would render acceptable the termination of the life of an unborn child, particularly during the latter stages of a pregnancy.

What is Abortion?

Abortion, simply defined, is the termination of a viable pregnancy, ending the life of a child before they have been born.

What is the effect of abortion?

The first, and most obvious effect of abortion, is that an unborn child has their life taken away by the deliberate decision of another person. A child is alive from the moment he or she is conceived and begins their formation; therefore, termination of that pregnancy takes life away from that child.

Often, the debate surrounding abortion focuses on one of two points:

1. What is the right of the woman to decide whether or not she carries and gives birth to a child; and/or
2. At what point is an unborn child actually alive?

My position on the latter is outlined directly above, and in relation to the former, the question so rarely asked is "what is the right of the already living child?"

Also rarely canvassed is the effect, emotionally or otherwise, the having of an abortion has on the woman involved. Rarely will a woman terminate a pregnancy and simply move on with life as if nothing has happened. The termination of a child will be carried on the conscience of the woman, and indeed the father of the child, long after the act is complete, often forever.

"It is better to nurse the problem on your knee, than to nurse your conscience for the rest of your life." – Unknown author

To simply characterise the issue as one of having the right to control one's own body clearly over-simplifies these additional factors.

In relation to late term abortion, the baby is not only alive, but has progressed a long distance on the journey of physical formation. The viability and life status of a late-term unborn child is far less disputed than a child in the earliest stages of formation.

Queensland Health Minister, The Hon. Cameron Dick MP, recently released figures that in 2015, 27 aborted babies were born alive and simply left to die. For all of the talk of being a civilised and progressive nation, where are we going as a society when those in power not only consider the life of an unborn child to be inconsequential, but consider it to be perfectly fine for a formed child to be brought into the world and simply left to die? How can a state purport to represent its citizens while allowing this to occur?

Is abortion ever ok?

Abortion for abortion's own sake, because an individual simply sees no value in the life of an already living child, should never be condoned, encouraged or paid for by the State.

In matters of medical emergency, where a mother's life is placed in danger by the continuation of a pregnancy, a medical professional may be faced with a decision of whether to place more value on the mother's life or the life of the unborn child. This decision may have to be made with or without the knowledge and the consent of the expectant mother, her spouse, next of kin or other legal representative. My understanding is that it is generally accepted that in these circumstances, the life of the mother will be given priority, and medical professionals should definitely be able to make these highly difficult and emotional decisions without any fear of prosecution.

However, there must be an obligation to make every possible effort to preserve the life of the unborn child as well as that of the mother, with termination an absolute last resort.

In circumstances where rape has been involved, full respect must be given to the fact that the woman in question is a victim of a crime that has been perpetrated upon her, and that her pregnancy is the result of an act forced upon her, not the result of an act of her free will.

In this circumstance, the woman must be provided the opportunity to be fully informed of her options surrounding the pregnancy, including but not limited to the adoption of the resulting child if she does not feel she is able to raise him or her.

Abortion must not simply be offered as a flippant way out, and the victim must be afforded every opportunity to make her decision when, and only when, she is fully informed of all available options for both herself and her child.

However, when a rape victim has been fully informed of her options and has still made the emotional and personal decision not to proceed with her pregnancy, she must be protected by the law. We can never allow the law to criminalise a person who is, unquestionably, a victim.

What is the effect of this proposed law?

The law proposed by the Member for Cairns, Mr Pyne MP, unacceptably seeks to devalue the life of a child to a mere byproduct of another person's body, able to be retained or discarded at will. It will permit the termination of the life of a child at any time during their in-utero formation.

It does not legalise the choice over one's own body, it legitimizes taking away the life of a child. We do not permit taking away the life of a child who has already been born, and an unborn child is no less already alive, we cannot therefore legitimise in the laws of the State, which is charged with the protection of its citizens, taking away the life of a little boy or a little girl, simply because they have not yet been born.

Conscientious objection

Regardless of the outcome of this inquiry, should the decision be taken to devalue the life of the child and permit the taking of their life at any stage during their formation, protections must always be afforded to those who object to being involved on religious, moral or ethical grounds. No person must ever be, or even perceive that they are being, forced into being involved in a procedure that takes away the life of an unborn child.

CONCLUSION

This committee has before it the opportunity to uphold the value of the life of a child, whether born or not. We must remember at all stages of this debate, we are not talking about the right to choose, we are talking about legitimizing the taking of actions which take the life of another human being.

Except in extreme circumstances, such as the imminent danger to the life of the expectant mother, or the situation of a woman who has been raped, fully informed of the alternative options for the resultant child and still feels there is no other option, the State must not legitimize taking away the life of a child. The rights of that child, and the protection of that child who is unable to protect, defend or advocate for themselves, must be upheld above all others.

The Committee must act for the protection of the life of children, and reject any change to the law which takes away the child's right to life and considers them a simple inconvenience to be discarded at will. The proposed Bill must not proceed.