

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

There have been many submissions that address the five points the committee are considering, with the overwhelming majority in opposition to the bill proposed by Cairns MP Rob Pyne. This is a position I share and I would implore Queensland parliament and indeed any representatives of a compassionate society not to introduce the devastating changes Mr Pyne proposes.

Given the body of submissions and the many excellent points made by those more expert than I, I would restrict my own comments to the 5th point the committee considers, namely, the provision of counselling and support services available to women.

I hope in this point my testimony is of some assistance to the committee.

Many years ago I had an abortion. My child was at twelve weeks' gestation at the time. There has been no decision made in my lifetime that I regret more than this one, indeed I cannot express in words the depths of my remorse and grief.

The pregnancy occurred as a result of premature indulgence in an act whose primary biological function is conception. Abortion seemed to offer an easy out from the consequence of my choice. It has been anything but.

As part of the procedure, which occurred outside Queensland, I was required to attend a one-off, mandatory counselling session. To say that the session was inadequate in assessing and supporting a frightened, vulnerable young woman is a gross understatement. Ostensibly this counselling session was to establish that I would suffer no negative psychological effects in the long term and that I understood what I was doing. However, no mention was made of any potential negative effects let alone physical ones. Depression, guilt, anxiety and even the increased risk of suicide was not discussed, I was not told what I could expect nor given any tools to deal with those potential effects. It should be noted also that my understanding of what I was doing was also neither established nor assessed as any girl who believes her baby will go away and "come back later", clearly has no idea of what she intended to do.

Likewise, no other options such as adoption or keeping the child were explored in this one-hour session. This above all other inadequacies of such counselling, demonstrated the greatest degree of disregard for my well-being and that of my child's.

Since then I have had several other children and more than one natural miscarriage. I know from the pregnancies that were carried to term that each of my children were alive, displayed an individual personality and was uniquely and entirely human throughout their gestation. I know from the miscarriages that it is a devastating thing for a woman to lose a child, but the grief and loss that resulted from these was far, far less than from the child I allowed to die.

I am very lucky to have a supportive family and a husband whose goal in life appears to be my happiness and promotion of my self-confidence. Yet I have had and continue to struggle with feelings of depression, worthlessness and self-loathing. My thoughts do not dwell over much on the abortion, yet every moment of every day I carry a deep and abiding pain, it is always there, it always

hurts. My highly trained counsellor, who I have recently begun to see, has indicated this is generally linked to past trauma, though she does not yet know of the abortion.

Please do not allow other desperate vulnerable women to become victims of this 'easy out'. It is harrowing, destructive and dangerous.

Rather than pass and promote laws that promote the killing of our most helpless members of society and devalue women. I would implore you to consider laws that make adoption a viable and supported alternative as well as education and support for other options such as mother's keeping and raising their children. Genuine counselling also needs to be provided to women considering abortion including the method of the procedure itself and full disclosure of the negative psychological and physical effects that commonly follow such a procedure.

As a woman in a unique position to understand many sides of this issue I entreat the committee not to recommend Rob Pyne's proposed bill.

Kind regards,