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To the Queensland Parliament Health Committee,

I am writing with concerns about MP Rob Pyne's second abortion bill, the Health (abortion Law Reform) Amendment Bill 2016.

Firstly, I have serious concerns about the proposed amendment:

*"an abortion on a woman who is more than 24 weeks pregnant may be performed only if two doctors reasonably believe the continuation of the woman's pregnancy would involve greater risk of injury to the physical or mental health of the woman than if the pregnancy were terminated."*

The requirement that abortions after 24 weeks have to be approved by two doctors is just a sham and a facade, as the second doctor is not required to see or speak to the patient, or even look at her file. Also, the second doctor does not have to be independent so it could be that the two doctors at an abortion clinic who would profit from the procedure would approve the late-term abortion.

Secondly, I have concerns about the proposed amendment:

*"patient protection or 'safe zones': a protected zone of at least 50 metres must be declared around an abortion facility; certain behaviour, e.g. harassment and intimidation, or "a protest by any means", is prohibited within a protected zone. Publishing images of a person entering, leaving or trying to enter or leave an abortion facility is prohibited."*

I do not support women being harassed or intimidated. However, the latest Pyne Bill would make it an offense to peacefully protest, or perhaps even to pray, within 50 metres of an abortion facility. This abrogation of freedom of speech, expression, movement and religion is an affront to our democratic rights.

Thirdly, this Bill is seriously deficient in that it does not address important issues such as counselling and parental consent for underage women. This Bill should include a requirement for mandatory independent counselling before abortion, including the provision of an informed consent booklet similar to the one provided to women seeking an abortion in the ACT between 1999 and 2002, which included information on the nature of the procedure, the physical and psychological risks of abortion, the development of the unborn child, alternatives to abortion and support agencies. There was a mandatory cooling-off period of 72 hours or 3 days. These requirements co-existed in the ACT Health Act alongside the law in the Crimes Act under which an abortion was legal only if a doctor was satisfied that the woman's life or physical or mental health was in serious danger from carrying on the pregnancy.

There are a lot of unwanted abortions which mandatory independent informed consent counselling could prevent. Often, there is not free and informed choice by women. There is a lot of coercion by parents, boyfriends, partners or husbands. Women often go into a private abortion clinic which is operating for profit and are not properly or fully counselled. They are in effect sold an abortion.

As for parental consent, 75% of Queenslanders believe this should normally be required for girls under the age of 16 to have an abortion. It is outrageous that under current case law, Queensland parents have no rights at all in deciding whether their under-age daughters can or should have an abortion. In normal circumstances, they should be involved in the decision-making process on such a major life decision. The statute law needs to be changed to give parents their rights back, so they can protect their daughters from the harm of abortion.

Yours sincerely,

Veronica Dwyer

