

"Rescue Those Being Led Away to Death"

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Dear friends,

- Firstly, I am glad to be able to say that things are moving ahead with the appeal of the Tasmanian case. A directions hearing has been set down for 10 October in the Tasmanian Supreme Court. Apparently this will be brief and I will not need to be there.

You may have heard that a courageous mother, Kathy Clubb, whom I know, was arrested in Melbourne early this month. Kathy was simply offering leaflets to women entering one of the abortion clinics and has been charged with carrying out prohibited behaviour within an exclusion zone. I understand that Kathy is also being represented by Christopher Brohier and it is hoped that her case and mine may be brought together since they relate to the same fundamental issue. Please remember her too.

- The Queensland parliamentary committee which looked into Rob Pyne's Bill to completely decriminalise abortion for any reason up to birth has presented its report. Happily, the committee has recommended that the Bill not be passed, but I would not take too much joy from that. The reasons given for not recommending it are "it failed to address a number of important policy issues and to achieve a number of its own stated objectives."

The tenor of the report seems largely sympathetic to legalising abortion (e.g. Professor Eleanor Milligan from Griffith University is cited uncritically as saying, "the interests of the foetus are better served through decriminalisation" (!)). You can read all 135 pages of the report at

If Pyne had not presented such a poorly written Bill the recommendation could have been very different.

Indeed, Rob Pyne has very recently introduced another abortion Bill, Health (Abortion Law Reform) Amendment Bill 2016, into Parliament. This Bill is also terrible, allowing abortion up to 24 weeks for any reason and up to birth if two doctors claim that continuing the pregnancy would involve greater risk to the health of the woman than would abortion.

As well, the Bill introduces a 50m "prohibited area" around places where abortions are done. Any protest or behaviour that is intended to stop a person from entering the facility or from having an abortion is prohibited and is punishable with fines of about \$3000. It is no great surprise that such a move has been made here in Queensland given what has happened elsewhere in the country. This makes the appeal against the Tasmanian law all the more important as a win in that case should mean the abolishment of all such bubble zone restrictions in Australia.

The same parliamentary committee is now supposed to review this new Bill and report back about it by 17 February, 2017. It would no surprise if the backers of the Bill are unwilling to wait so long and try to bring on a vote about decriminalising abortion sooner.

