

Dr Hayley Thomas



03/10/16

Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic
and Family Violence Prevention Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane, QLD, 4000

To Whom it May Concern

I am writing with regard to your consideration of the *Health (Abortion Law Reform) Amendment Bill 2016*.

I am aware that the committee has conducted an inquiry into the initial *Abortion Law Reform (Woman's Right to Choose) Amendment Bill 2016*, and is familiar with arguments for and against the legalisation of abortion. On the basis of respect for human life (outlined in section 6.5.2 of the Inquiry's report), I do not support the *Health (Abortion Law Reform) Amendment Bill 2016*. I believe that due to its nature, human life should be protected from conception. While personal autonomy is respected as one of the bases of medical ethics, in the case of abortion I believe that it is outweighed by the need to practise non-maleficence toward the unborn child.

While I do not support the bill, if it is passed I strongly believe that the right to conscientious objection should be protected. I support the provisions of section 22.1-22.2 that no one be placed under a duty to perform or assist in performing an abortion. However, I am concerned about section 22.3, which imposes a duty to perform an abortion in emergency situations. Additionally, I note that the Bill does not refer to whether a duty exists to refer for abortion, and do not believe that this duty should be imposed or assumed. This is due to the nature of conscientious objection to abortion. For some practitioners who conscientiously object to abortion on the basis of respect for human life, to perform an abortion is morally serious, similar or equivalent to murder. While I understand the reasoning behind section 22.3, and believe that some practitioners with a conscientious objection may choose to perform an abortion in emergency circumstances, I do not believe that this should be mandated. This is particularly the case due to historical experience around section 282 of the current Criminal Act, which demonstrates that what constitutes a threat to a woman's life is open to interpretation, and this is liable to being progressively broadened over time.

Thank you for your consideration of the above in conducting your enquiry.

Yours sincerely

H. Thomas

Dr Hayley Thomas
General Practice Registrar

