



5 October, 2016

Dear Members of the Queensland Parliament Health Committee,

I am writing to you regarding the new inquiry into the second Pyne Bill, the *Health (Abortion Law Reform) Amendment Bill 2016*.

There are many reasons why I would ask you to reject this Bill. I will mention a couple below:

-Abortions over 24 weeks would still be allowed, even though this is a viable unborn baby. I believe it is true that there is no medical reason to perform abortion after 24 weeks to save a mother's life, and that a late term abortion would only put a mother's life at greater risk.

-There are many couples waiting to adopt a baby – adoption would be difficult for a woman, but it is filled with hope and a future, not (as is common) continuing loss and grief from an abortion.

- To establish exclusive zones for abortion clinics cuts across our Australian right to protest peacefully. Why can people not offer information or practical help to women about to make very serious decisions that not only affect them but their families, and of course the baby they are carrying? Is it right to criminalise those wishing to peacefully promote life and hope, while protecting medical groups that make money by ending babies' lives?

-This Bill is unclear whether it provides legal protection to health workers who do not wish to be involved in performing abortions. This protection is vital, and 79% of Queenslanders are in favour of conscientious objection for doctors and nurses (Galaxy opinion poll, May 2016)

Also this Bill does not address the lack of compulsory independent counselling for women considering an abortion.

Neither does it address the parental consent issue for girls under the age of 16. This means that young girls can be left to face this decision alone, without input and support from parents and family. As a parent of a 15 year old girl, I see this as a very dangerous loophole, especially as mental health implications*of abortion can put that girl at risk later on, without family awareness and therefore support. What does this mean for schools and their Duty of Care, for example, if a school nurse refers a girl without parent knowledge?

I have worked with pregnant women whose lives are less than ideal. With accurate information, and the right supports made available, many were able to work through or overcome issues that put them at risk of choosing abortion and the accompanying possible

health dangers* that come with that decision i.e. higher rates of breast cancer , mental illness and future premature births.

Australian women and families deserve more information and safeguards regarding abortion. Please reject this Bill.

Yours Sincerely

Kerri-Ann Caswell

*Sources

- Coleman, Coyle, Shuping and Rue. (2009). "Induced Abortion and Anxiety..." *Journal of Psychiatric Research* Vol.43, pp.770-776 - Martin and Kumar Gill. (2016).
- "HUSH –A Liberating Conversation about Abortion and Women's Health ", DVD produced by Mighty Motion Pictures. hushfilm .com
- www.realchoices.org.au