

Submission to the Health Committee re the Health (Abortion Law Reform)
Amendment Bill 2016

I am a doctor who offers Medical Abortion to my patients both within Queensland Health and in my private clinic.

I gave evidence to the Health Committee when they visited Cairns and was very grateful for the opportunity to explain some of the coalface issues faced by medical practitioners like myself offering safe compassionate abortion care to my patients.

I understand the concerns and reservations of people who work outside the area of health and who may not understand the processes that govern how doctors assess their female patients requesting abortion to ensure timely safe appropriate care is given.

I feel the amendments proposed to the Health Act will give reassurance to the general public and members of the Health Committee and the MPs who will vote on this issue, that the process will continue to be regulated – in fact more readily and clearly than it is currently when it sits in the criminal code.

The areas covered include:

- 1 ensuring only health professionals (doctors and nurses may offer abortion)
- 2 Remove the possibility of the woman herself suffering prosecution (as did unfortunately happen in Cairns in 2009)
- 3 Providing extra guidelines for the rare pregnancies over 24 weeks where abortion may be indicted (generally only for severe or fatal foetal abnormality)
- 4 Protecting the rights of health professionals who have conscience objection to abortion to not be directly involved
- 5 Offering safe zones round clinics to protect vulnerable women from harassment

I would urge the committee to recommend that the amendments to the Health Act be put to the vote in parliament either before or at the same time as the amendments to the Criminal Code.

Queensland needs to move into modern healthcare practices where health is regulated by the Health Act – with no need to revert back to the archaic criminal code written over 100 years go.

I'm happy to give evidence again to the Health Committee if this would help them in their decision.

Dr Heather McNamee

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]