

6 October 2016

Inquiry Secretary  
Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic  
and Family Violence Prevention Committee  
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Dear Inquiry Secretary:

I am writing to urge you to defeat the Health (Abortion Law Reform) Amendment Bill 2016. It is severely deficient in a number of key areas:

1. **Late-term abortions are medically unnecessary.** If a mother wants to end a late-term pregnancy, there is no reason why the baby has to be killed in the process. There are plenty of infertile couples who would love to adopt an unwanted baby. There are long adoption waiting lists in Australia, and last year there were only 54 adoptions of Australian-born children to non-relatives. This is due in large measure to the fact that approximately 80,000 unborn children are killed by abortion in this country every year. There should be an absolute ban on all late-term abortions. This is supported by 85% of Queenslanders. In fact, 72% of Queenslanders also are opposed to mid-term abortions past 13 weeks of pregnancy (Galaxy poll, May 2016).
2. **Women have the right to full and impartial information about their decisions.** The law on abortion should have safeguards for women and particularly be addressing a woman's right to know. Ninety-four percent of Queenslanders believe that before having an abortion, a woman should receive free independent counselling and information on the development of her unborn baby, the nature of the procedure, the physical and psychological risks of the operation and the alternatives of keeping the baby or adoption, so that she can make a fully informed decision.
3. **Safe zones are a violation of free speech.** No one supports women being harassed or intimidated. However, this 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. The Bill ironically describes proposed no-protest zones around abortion clinics as "protected areas". Of course, there is no protection inside abortion clinics for either mother or baby, as with every abortion, the toll is one dead, one wounded.
4. **Conscientious objection rights should not have exemptions.** It is unnecessary that the Bill includes an exemption to conscientious objection rights in the case of an "emergency" abortion, because there is no such thing. Abortion is understood by the public to mean an operation or procedure which has the intention of killing an unborn child. Thirty-seven years ago, the world's leading fetologist, Sir William Liley, of New Zealand, who performed the first inter-uterine blood transfusion, said: "The only thing medical about abortion is that doctors do them and must handle the complications afterwards. No matter how bad mother's heart disease, renal complaint, diabetes or mental illness, no one would be suggesting abortion

was essential if mother wanted the baby.” The truth is that abortion is a medical solution to a social problem.

5. **Pre-abortion counselling should be mandatory in all cases. No exceptions.** 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.
6. **Protect women from coercion.** 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.
7. **Protect parental rights.** As for parental consent, 75% of Queenslanders believe this should normally be required for girls under the age of 16 to have an abortion. Of course, 16 is the age of consent in so far as sexual relations are concerned. 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. It is totally unacceptable that this has been taken out of the hands of parents. 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.

I urge the committee to defeat the Bill in its current form, and include the above points in any Bill that may be submitted in future.

Most sincerely,



Nina Jurewicz

