



6 October 2016

The Health, Communities, Disability Services,
Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee
Parliament House
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To the Committee,

Inquiry into Abortion Law Reform Bill and laws governing termination of pregnancy in Queensland

The Australian Association of Social Workers is the key professional body representing more than 10,000 social workers throughout Australia. Social work is founded on the principles of social justice, human rights and professional integrity. It aims to enhance the quality of life and support the development of the full potential of each individual, group and community in society through practise that is ethically accountable, professionally competent and transparent. The profession's values are embodied in the profession's national and international Codes of Ethics, Practice Standards and the theoretical perspectives that underpin Social Work's professional knowledge and evidence base.

The Queensland Branch of the AASW (herein the AASW) welcomes the renewed discourse regarding the decriminalisation of abortion in Queensland and commends the Queensland Government for its continued review of legislation that denies women access to fundamental rights over their reproductive and sexual health. The proposed changes to legislation would align Queensland with existing legislation in Victoria and Tasmania and fulfil Australia's obligations as a signatory to the Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

The AASW would in particular like to reiterate our previous concerns including that existing legislation contributes to the inequality already faced by women, especially those experiencing disadvantage, inclusive but not limited to young women, women experiencing homelessness and/or poverty, women with a disability, women experiencing domestic and family violence and women from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

The AASW supports changes to legislation that promote women's autonomy over their reproductive and sexual health, is inclusive of all women in Queensland and upholds the principles of human rights and social justice. Pursuant to the recommendations in our submission to the initial 2016 consideration of reform in this area, the AASW:

1. recommends that sections 224, 225 and 226 of the Criminal Code be repealed to decriminalise the act of a woman seeking out termination of pregnancy;
2. supports the inclusions of evidence based reproductive health information within 'healthy relationships education program' to young people in school; and
3. supports increased funding to specialist sexual assault services.

The AASW would further support legislative measures that protect women when they are exercising their reproductive and sexual health rights.

The AASW welcomes future opportunities to assist the Government in the development of a legislative and policy framework to implement this significant law reform.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fotina Hardy'.

Dr Fotina Hardy

Fotina Hardy (BSW, M Comm; Doc Soc Sci)
MAASW (Acc)
President Queensland Branch
Australian Association of Social Workers