



6 October, 2016

Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee

**Please Vigorously Recommend Against Abortion in Queensland**

Dear Committee Members,

This submission is made by the **Canberra Declaration**, which to date has been signed by 69,370 Australian citizens of which 18,714 are Queenslanders. We oppose the **Health (Abortion Law Reform) Amendment Bill 2016** as we did the **Abortion Law Reform (Woman's Right to Choose) Amendment Bill 2016** and ask that you vigorously recommend against it.

Our gravest concern is that Rob Pyne's second bill continues to allow abortion right up until the day of birth. His adding the requirement that two doctors must approve an abortion after 24 weeks gestation, the age of viability, is taken to the extreme. Both doctors could work for the same abortion clinic which as a business has a profit motive. It appears that the second doctor is not required to see or even speak with the mother considering an abortion. Then if an abortion does take place without the approval of two doctors there is no penalty. All this seems to be window-dressing in order to get the Bill passed.

Another area of concern is the proposed 50-metre exclusion zone around abortion clinics. We see this as a serious infringement of the freedom of movement, freedom of assembly and freedom of speech.

Under the heading '**Religious Freedom**' the Canberra Declaration states – **"Religious freedom includes freedom of conscience and freedom of speech. The importance of these freedoms is shown in countries where they are threatened or absent. ... We affirm the basic necessity of freedom of conscience ... If these freedoms are removed – even in the name of supposed benefits – the prized values of democracy and liberty are seriously undermined. ... Thus the signers of this declaration affirm the fundamental right of Australians to religious freedom and freedom of speech, and we oppose legislation which denies such freedoms."**

It is not our desire that any person entering or leaving an abortion clinic should feel harassed or intimidated. But the proposed exclusive "protected areas" or "safe zones" where "a protest by any means" is prohibited poses a threat to the freedoms mentioned above. This means that a peaceful presence such as a prayer vigil could become a criminal offence. In the ACT, Kerry Mellor, who is part of a group that has been praying outside an abortion clinic every Friday for the last 18 years, was charged on 29 July 2016 for praying silently on the street within the exclusion zone. Angela Shanahan detailed his situation in her article in the Weekend Australian on 30 July, 'Silent Protest Against Abortion Hasn't Got a Prayer'.

Having taken part in such prayer vigils I know that the prayers offered in view of the clinic are meant for the welfare of the mothers in difficult circumstances, the babies whose lives are in danger of being lost and for the clinic staff and employees who are caught up in a business that generates wealth through the killing of unborn babies. Many babies' lives have been saved through such peaceful prayer vigils.

Please recommend that Parliament reject this Bill. Thank you for your consideration.

Yours faithfully,

**David Rowsome**

for the Canberra Declaration Team &amp; Community