

To:

Health, Communities, Disability Services and
Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee
Parliament House,
George Street,
Brisbane Qld. 4000

6 October 2016

SUBMISSION OF DRAGICA DEBERT

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My name is Dragica Debert. I am the mother of a beautiful Chinese boy who my husband and I adopted in March 2009.

I refer to the Abortion Law Reform (Woman's Right to Choose) Amendment Bill 2016 (hereinafter referred to as "the 1st bill" and the Health (Abortion Law Reform) Amendment Bill 2016, (hereinafter referred to as "the 2nd bill"). I did not support the 1st bill. I do not support the 2nd bill for the following reasons:

1. **Abortion is a crime and should not be decriminalised.**

Abortion is a crime against the woman, a crime against the unborn child, and a crime against humanity.

Abortion is a crime against the woman.

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May I quote here from a submission lodged with this Committee by a friend¹ who has reached out to many a post-abortive woman:

Abortion is a crime against women because it is an assault on a woman's body.

The very procedure involves a forced invasion of her womb, which is closed tight and protected by a mucous plug to guard the new life growing. Her breasts which were preparing to nurse the new baby are also left in an unnaturally arrested state of being. After abortions, women have been left with incompetent cervixes, scarred uteri, perforated wombs, some have died, and many are left with infections and heavy bleeding. Many studies have proved a link with breast cancer if the first pregnancy is terminated. Women have reported loss of libido, some have decided to be lesbian, and one woman I know had herself sterilised at 24 years old rather than risk another pregnancy.

...

Abortion is (a crime against women because it is) an assault upon a woman's intellect.

Whether or not a woman is placated by the words that she is just getting rid of a bunch of cells at the time of an abortion, at some point she will discover that this was a lie ...

She is shocked, scandalised and tormented by the fact that she was able to be tricked into an irreversible situation.

Abortion is (a crime against women because it is) an assault upon a woman's well-being.

¹ Submission lodged with this Committee by Anne Rampa, 2705 Mount Mee Road, Ocean View, dated 4 October 2016.

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The mother/child bond is a deep and primeval bond and one which no woman can escape. It is built into the deepest layers of a woman's psyche so that whatever happens to her child, affects her ...

I can speak from experience that even an adoptive mother cannot escape this undeniable truth. How heavy a burden is abortion on a woman, given this fact.

Abortion is (a crime against women because it is) an assault upon a woman's soul.

Whether a person has a belief in God or not, we can all agree that we are not inanimate matter but have become animated with life. This is what goes when we die, when all that is left is our bodies. When a woman is pregnant, she is carrying another life. If that life dies before its time, then there is great distress in the spiritual realm and this has repercussions on the mother. I have a friend who feels the presence of her baby years after the abortion happened. Women can have nightmares after abortions where they hear a baby screaming ...

Some women may deny the reality and live the lie they were fed because the truth is too difficult to accept, but somewhere in the darkest place in her soul she is broken and lost, and she justifies her mistake by upholding and validating the need for other women to access abortion.

That abortion is the solution that women need to resolve the problem of an unwanted pregnancy is the great con of recent times and one from which any caring society, upholding its women, must recoil. It is a medical solution to a social problem.

Women must be served better at their time of great need than kicked into the trenches of deceit and self-destruction.

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2. **Abortion is a crime against the unborn.**

Abortion is the taking of life of another with blatant disregard to that other. It is an unprovoked assault upon an innocent party who is voiceless, unarmed and, in every possible way, powerless to protect itself. It is the greatest abuse of power by the powerful over the disempowered. It is the greatest form of domestic violence. No reason can justify the elevation of the right of one over another to the point of killing that other when that other is blameless and defenceless. No person's plight can make the killing of an unborn child a justifiable act.

If abortion is considered to be justifiable killing, it is warfare of its most shameful kind on the child in the womb.

Decriminalising abortion makes the womb the most dangerous place for a child to be in our world today. The womb ... that place of sacred protection in which you and I were lucky enough to be safely formed, blissfully unaware of such things as violence, inconvenience, medical terminations, eugenics, unplanned pregnancies, surgical terminations, a disconnect between mother and child, cranial decompression, financial constraints, lethal injections of digoxin or potassium, sexual assault, study plans, dilation and evacuation procedures, world trips, annoyed boyfriends, RU486, partial birth abortion, dreams for the future in which ... *I don't fit, am in the way ... where the people who would otherwise love me and be excited about me could consider "getting rid of... it"?*

3. **Abortion is a crime against humanity.**

Abortion is a callous and barbaric act of extermination of the inconvenient. Options that do not revert to acts of violence which degrade our society and mute our consciences must be explored, adopted and embedded in legislation so that our future generations turn around this desensitisation to killing children.

5.

Every politician and person involved in the decriminalisation of abortion must be considered to be personally and individually responsible for the death of millions of humans as a result of such legislation. It is a killing unjustifiable and inexcusable in or outside of the law and will be an indictment upon our government and society if we legislate to the contrary.

Abortion is a crime and our Criminal Code must clearly state so.

4. **Out of the 7 Australian jurisdictions, only 3 have decriminalised abortion. It cannot be said that Queensland needs to be “brought in line” with the other states and territories when the majority still have enshrined in their laws the principle that abortion is a crime.**
5. **Late term abortion is unnecessary and should thereby attract a total ban on all its procedures.**

It is important to remember that 85 percent of Queenslanders believe that there should be a ban on all late-term abortions in Queensland, and 72 percent are opposed to mid-term abortions post 13 weeks' gestation².

There is in fact no medical reason or need for abortion from 24 weeks' gestation. If a mother has a life-threatening condition at 24 weeks and beyond, caesarean section can be performed and the pregnancy terminated by the delivery of a viable baby who can be afforded the best neo-natal care, a chance for survival, and, if the mother does not want the child, a loving adoptive family!

How can adoption be considered more traumatic for the mother in a crisis late-term pregnancy than the mother enduring the killing of her fully-formed baby in utero by lethal injection or otherwise? How much more traumatic for the mother to experience a failed act of foeticide so that, instead, the mother delivers a living child which is left to die ...

² Galaxy Research “What Queenslanders Really Think about Abortion” 2016.

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Whilst there are 80,000 unborn children killed annually in Australia by abortion, there are long adoption waiting lists in Australia. Last year there were only 54 adoptions in Australia to non-relatives. Adoption is the fairest (to **all** parties) and the most rational outcome in cases of proposed late-term abortions.

6. **The requirement that abortions after 24 weeks have to be approved by two doctors is a sham and a facade, and the current drafting provides a clear conflict of interest .**

The second doctor, under the 2nd bill, is not required to even see or speak with the patient or even look at her file. Even worse, there is no provision for independent approval from the second doctor, as the two doctors could essentially be from the same profit-making abortion facility and would profit from the procedure going ahead.

Is there not a clear conflict of interest here, the advantage of which weighs in heavy imbalance toward the facility and NOT toward the mother or child? How can such a conflict of interest be in the best interests of a woman?

It is astounding that, under these circumstances, the bill provides that a breach of this provision by a doctor who kills a viable baby does not even constitute an offence.

7. **An investigation into live births and the circumstances surrounding them MUST be undergone before the need and efficacy of the procedures provided for under this 2nd bill can be objectively determined and voted upon by the members of Parliament, particularly having regard to Terms of Reference No 1 wherein it is provided that the Committee must consider ... existing practices in Queensland concerning termination of pregnancy by medical practitioners.**

I refer to p 69 of the Committee's Report No. 24 into the 1st bill in which it is stated that the Committee sought clarification from Professor

Ellwood of Queensland Health on policy regarding late-gestation abortions and live deliveries. I note in the answer quoted in the report that the Professor only referred to terminations for lethal foetal abnormalities and made reference to some parents in those circumstances who choose induced labour and whose babies are likely then to be born alive.

If this be so, it is an area of unfinished business. The matter of failed foeticide procedures in late-term abortions for maternal psychosocial reasons [and not for congenital abnormality (possibly making them incompatible with life)], where healthy viable babies are born alive and left to die³ MUST be investigated and the findings published before a relaxation of current abortion laws can be made to include the decriminalisation of late-term abortion.

I also refer to Question on Notice (883, 2016) by Mark Robinson MP wherein he requested that the annual reports from private abortion clinics provided to the Chief Health Officer be made available to him as MP⁴. Why did the Health Minister fail to supply these reports to the Honourable Member and, instead, only provide global annual quanta? This information – and other abortion data which the Honourable Member requested in two further Questions on Notice - as to the number of late-term abortions provided in private abortion facilities, for what reasons, and the data regarding live deliveries, is critical information which should be afforded to ALL members of Parliament in order that an informed decision might be made on this bill.

p.106.

⁴ Submission No. 1219 of Mark Robinson MP to the HCDSDFVP Committee on the Abortion Law Reform (Woman's Right to Choose) Amendment Bill 2016 and Inquiry into laws governing termination of pregnancy in Queensland.

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Surely, the Committee itself must also have disclosure of this data to enable full and complete consideration of all material necessary to make its recommendation.

8. **The importance of the Committee and the Members of Parliament viewing video-recorded late-term abortion procedures which are to be decriminalised under this bill cannot be under-stated, and I raise the question as to whether this has occurred or is intended to occur.**

I refer to the arresting submission of Dr David Van Gendt, Queensland President of the World Federation of Doctors Who Respect Human Life⁵ with regard to the 1st bill. I note that reference was made in the submission that video links, diagrams and descriptions of late-term abortion procedures were provided and formed part of his paper. I was astounded to note that this information was blanked out from view on the website. I am keen to know whether the Committee viewed these video links and deliberated upon the diagrams and descriptions, and whether the Members of Parliament were or would be afforded an opportunity to likewise examine this vital information. If it is so that the sensibilities of Committee members and MPs is considered superior to the realities of the grave matters upon which they must deliberate, thereby shielding them from viewing the very procedures which they are called upon to decriminalise, it is matter of gross negligence, irresponsibility and cowardice.

This also applies to the removal of the information from the website. Why is the general public prevented from witnessing the truth of what is proposed as lawful killings by these bills? Too ghastly to view? ... not too ghastly for a child to endure. To insist that truth is in poor taste is the very height of hypocrisy.⁶

⁵ Submission No. 1216 lodged with the HCDSDFVP Committee on the Abortion Law Reform (Woman's Right to Choose) Amendment Bill 2016 and Inquiry into laws governing termination of pregnancy in Queensland.

⁶ Naomi Wolf.

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It is the Committee's and the MPs' job to view in detail these procedures which is, above all else, the most relevant information in this abortion debate.

Although a submission lodged with respect to the 1st bill, the submission of Dr Van Gendt is relevant to the 2nd bill. I wholeheartedly support all of the matters raised and arguments made in Dr Van Gendt's submission with respect to the 1st bill.

On this issue, may I also draw to the Committee's attention to the matter of New Jersey, USA. In New Jersey, lawmakers were shown videos of abortion procedures prior to a committee vote on partial-birth abortion. New Jersey is now supporting limits on abortion, and the New Jersey experience was typical of the national trend where 31 States passed measures restricting access to abortion.⁷

Is the fear that viewing live abortion procedures or merely looking at diagrams will force abortion advocates to defend the indefensible or prove their arguments to be false?

The material must be viewed by the Committee and each Member of Parliament.

The material must be made accessible for viewing on the website.

9. **Section 225 of the Criminal Code MUST be retained as a deterrent to a woman self-administering abortion drugs without any medical supervision.**

⁷Klusendorf S: *The Vanishing Pro-Life Apologist: Putting the "Life" Back into the Abortion Debate*. Christian Research Journal, Volume 22, No. 1 (1999).

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10. **There is no provision of safeguards under this bill and, as such, it fails women.**

There should be mandatory independent counselling before an abortion is undertaken, including the provision of an informed consent booklet. This should be 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, support agencies, and, in particular, alternatives to abortion, including keeping the baby and adoption. There should also be a mandatory cooling-off period of at least 72 hours or 3 days.

It is of interest to note that the *Sunday Mail* in Adelaide on 25 July 2004 reported a significant reduction in the number of abortions performed at the Women's and Children's Hospital in Adelaide. (In South Australia, the law is that there are no private abortion clinics.) In 2003, the public hospital system changed its policy and made independent counselling by social workers mandatory. Not surprisingly, it led to a drop of 25 per cent in the number of abortions at that hospital over the next 12 months.

There are many unwanted abortions which mandatory independent free counselling could prevent. Women deserve to be able to make an informed choice. It is bad enough that many women are coerced into abortion by their parents, boyfriends or husbands ... and when the woman enters a private abortion clinic which is operating for profit, she is, in effect, sold an abortion ... yet again we see a conflict of interest weighing heavily in favour of the profit-making facility and NOT in favour of the woman.

For these omissions alone, this bill is not pro-woman and should fail.

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11. **Parental Consent should be required for girls under the age of 16 to have an abortion, and this 2nd bill, by failing to provide for parental consent, fails to protect our youth.**

75% of Queenslanders believe that parental consent should be required for girls under the age of 16 to have an abortion. It is outrageous that under current case law, Queensland parents have no rights at all in deciding whether their under-aged 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, parents are involved in the decision-making process in major life events for under-aged girls. The statute law needs to be changed to give parents their rights back, so they can protect their daughters from the harms of abortion.

12. **Protected areas, protected periods and prohibited behaviours are provisions that are so broadly and ineptly drafted that they defy common sense and deprive citizens of their right to democratic freedom of speech and religion.**

It is also a fundamental truth that the deprivation of the right of presence of pro-lifers outside abortion facilities deprives also the right of the woman entering the facility to a “last chance” of external support from coercion that she may be suffering, and a “last chance” of connecting with persons who convey the truth as to the realities of abortion and its consequences.

I have been a pro-life advocate for approximately 25 years and have been pro-active in reaching out to women facing unwanted pregnancies. In the early 90s, a friend and I would attend outside the various abortion facilities in Brisbane one morning a week. We would present to the women entering the facility a small posy of dried flowers and a leaflet on the realities of possible physiological and psychological effects of abortion on a woman, and we would make ourselves available for a

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chat. Our presence was frequently seen as a sign of hope or at least a last point of contact with a supportive party, as many were charged in by determined boyfriend/husband or grim-faced mother.

It is relevant that no woman has been charged with a criminal offence since the institution of abortion laws in our Code⁸. However, the very defence that the pregnant mother has against her significant others who wish to coerce her into termination is denied her by the decriminalisation of abortion.

In an attempt to be pro-woman, it is often the case that legislators inadvertently neglect the woman or young girl who is coerced into abortion! It is a lonely world for such a person, and no comfort is forthcoming within the abortion facility. Only words of encouragement to have the procedure are proffered by “counsellors” who give as little real information as possible to their client, downplaying all the while the grim realities of the procedure and its possible dire effects on the woman.

There are many recorded accounts via video by women who have suffered in this way at the hands of these profit-making facilities⁹. To this end, the presence of pro-lifers outside facilities should not be discredited, or regarded simply as an opportunity for “mad Christians to angrily wave banners” at the unfortunate who literally can be dragged into a clinic. They may very well be the last point of connection to practical and emotional support for a woman or girl in much need of understanding and help.

IN CONCLUSION, I urge the Committee to bear in mind that no less than 20,000 e-petitioners ¹⁰did not support the 1st bill. It is therefore clear that

⁸ With the exception of the recent Cairns case, which was more a case regarding the illegal importation of a drug.

⁹ See, for example, www.abortionrethink.org.

¹⁰ Galaxy Research “What Queenslanders Really Think about Abortion” 2016

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extreme and permissive abortion legislation, such as is proposed in the 2nd bill, does not sit comfortably with a large section of the Queensland electorate.

Finally, in the balancing act of competing interests, the overriding imperative must prevail, and I borrow the wisdom of Dr Van Gendt in his conclusion to the submission aforementioned:

Consenting adults who conceive have a duty of care to their baby which nothing can set aside. The law must uphold that duty and uphold the fundamental prohibition against intentional killing.

I urge the Committee, for the reasons stated herein, to recommend that the 2nd abortion bill be defeated.

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