

To the Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee:

Re: Health (Abortion Law Reform) Amendment Bill 2016

Tabled 16th August, 2016

All of the issues I addressed in my submission to the Committee on the first Abortion Law Reform (Women's Right to Choose) bill introduced by Mr Pyne on 10th May, 2016, still apply in relation to the Health (Abortion Law Reform) Amendment Bill 2016 introduced on 16th August, 2016.

In addition, I would add the following:

Domestic and Family Violence

The definition of Domestic Violence from the Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 2012 includes behaviour that is physically, sexually, emotionally, psychologically or economically abusive; threatening or coercive; or any other way controls or dominates another person causing fear.¹

When women experience coercion from a partner to terminate a pregnancy, this is a form of domestic violence. Studies reveal that relationship problems with a male partner significantly contribute to abortion.² Coerced abortions usually occur in the context of relationships that are violent in other ways.³ Decriminalisation of Abortion to the point of birth increases the vulnerability of women to this form of domestic violence. This has serious implications for the mental and physical health of women. A woman could be tormented for her entire pregnancy with the threat of having to terminate. If there is to be abortion law reform, then the rights of women who wish to continue their pregnancies free from coercion and domestic violence need to be protected. It is a bad law that abets this type of domestic violence.

Mrs Juliet Ballinger



¹ www.communities.qld.gov.au/communityservices/violence-prevention/domestic-and-family-violence-protection-act-2012/fact-sheets-queenslands-new-domestic-and-family-violence-legislation

² Women and Abortion, Selina Ewing, Women's Forum Australia, p.9

³ www.childrenbychoice.org.au/forprofessionals/recognisingviolenceandcoercion