

Inquiry Secretary

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

Parliament House

George Street

Brisbane, QLD 4000

6/10/2016

Dear Sir / Madam,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Mr Pyne's proposed amendment bill raised on 17th August 2016.

The wording is unclear in section 21 which allows for abortion beyond 24 weeks' gestation if there is a "greater risk of injury to the physical or mental health of the woman than if the pregnancy were terminated". The terminology is loose, and permits abortion for social reasons such as an unsupportive partner who may verbally harass the woman, regardless of her wishes to continue the pregnancy. Much ambivalence is experienced in the decision to proceed with abortion, and though some come to terms with the decision, a significant number do not, with long term adverse psychological consequences, as I have encountered in clinical practice.

The paragraph on conscientious objection does not intrinsically support freedom of conscience of medical practitioners, since a doctor "has a duty to perform an abortion if it is necessary to save a woman's life or prevent serious physical injury". This means that a doctor is compelled to perform an abortion if the woman has disclosed to them that her partner has threatened her with physical aggression due to lack of support for the pregnancy. Thus the provisions for conscientious objection are ineffective.

To better support women with distressed pregnancies, instead of spending parliamentary time discussing this bill, why not spend time talking about prevention of domestic violence, funding women's shelters, and raising a culture of respectful men?

Yours faithfully,

Dominica Ho

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