




Speech By
Julianne Gilbert

MEMBER FOR MACKAY

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TERMINATION OF PREGNANCY BILL

 **Mrs GILBERT** (Mackay—ALP) (2.56 pm): In my electorate, in the local media a lot has been said about the Termination of Pregnancy Bill 2018, which is before the House. I have received many form letters and also many heartfelt letters penned by constituents telling of their personal stories, both for and against legalising abortion in Queensland. I thank the community for their participation in the debate. This is what democracy is all about.

Any termination of a pregnancy is a sad and traumatic decision for the woman and her family. I do not believe that any woman who has had a termination or will seek a termination in the future should have held over her the threat of possible prosecution. For this reason, abortion needs to be removed from the Criminal Code. I believe that women and medical practitioners have the moral and ethical capacity to make the correct decision about reproductive health. A woman, her partner, her doctor and, if she has faith, her god should be the only ones present at the consultation; there should be no room for a police officer.

I have listened to and read information from a wide range of people in the community such as Therese from the Mackay Women's Health Centre and Dorris, Jean, Jan, Carmel, Mary Anne, Therese, Angela and Coline from the CWL. I thank them for their thoughts and prayers. Letters, emails and phone calls were well organised from the Cherish Life group. A frank and honest meeting was held with Bishop Mike and Father Don. I thank all those I met for their honesty. All options are to be heard.

When I vote, it will be for the women who have had terminations and told their stories. Dianne was raped at 21 and still carries the emotional scars, 30 years later. Nicola was coerced into a termination by her partner only to find out that the real reason was that he did not want his mates to know about the pregnancy. Wendy's much wanted baby's little body and development let it down right from the beginning. Wendy was told that the medical term was that life was not compatible outside the uterus.

Forty years earlier, Louise's baby had the same diagnosis as Wendy's baby. Louise told me that she was told that it was her moral duty to carry her child to full term, even though it was not going to survive. She said that that was the cruellest thing that had ever happened to her and for her and her husband to have to endure. She already had three small children who needed her care. She wanted to be able to give birth to her child, grieve for the baby and take on the care of her little ones, who really needed her. It was a difficult time for her. She said as she went out day after day those who were well meaning would inquire about her pregnancy: 'When is your due date?' 'What are you hoping for?' There was all of the excitement that one would normally have around a birth, but she knew that she would not end up with a baby.

In a perfect world all pregnancies would be without medical issues or personal tragedies. Voting against this bill will not put an end to terminations. The estimated 10,000 to 14,000 terminations in Queensland will continue. This bill will put protections and guidelines in place for women and practitioners.

As a community we must ensure that there is a supportive environment in which to raise a child and we all have a responsibility as a member of the collective village to raise the child. Governments must also have policies and legislation to support children to have a safe upbringing and to allow them to participate fully in society.

I was talking recently to Christine who is frantically trying to find a full-time job. Her son turns eight shortly and her support for him will be cut. She has only been able to find short-term casual work. There should not be a cut-off point for a child. When a child is precious and wanted we should support them until they grow up. There should be no policies that limit the number of years that a family can stay in public housing.

Women who choose to go ahead with their pregnancies are brave so they deserve our support. There are opportunities for everyone in our community to support the raising of children, such as becoming a foster carer, even if it is for short-term respite; donating and volunteering to women's groups that are keeping women and children safe in their own homes; standing up to domestic violence; and ensuring that our children understand what a respectful relationship is so that little girls can demand a respectful relationship and boys understand what one looks like. I commend the bill to the House.