




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR HILL

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TERMINATION OF PREGNANCY BILL

 **Mr KNUTH** (Hill—KAP) (5.26 pm): The Termination of Pregnancy Bill 2018 seeks to, among other things, legalise termination of pregnancy by a medical practitioner up to birth. As Peter Gleeson writes in today's *Courier-Mail*, it is about the most sacred of all topics, the involuntary right to be born or, more specifically, the right to choose to kill an unborn baby. My KAP colleagues and I have been opposed to this bill from the outset and have been greatly concerned by the way this bill allows the abortion of a child right up to birth. We would not be having this discussion if the bill were about determining whether a mother should have the legal right to terminate the life of an infant up to two years old due to the stress of the way the child impacts her social situation.

Those opposing the bill—of the 4,855 public submissions, 78 per cent were opposed—are saying that both the mother and the child have equal value, that the lives of both are equally important. The myth that this is about women's rights has been clearly debunked by the fact that 90 per cent of people outside the parliament gate this morning were women and that 95 per cent of the protestors outside the parliament gate over a month ago were women. This demonstrates that many women believe that the right of the mother to choose does not supersede the right of the child to live. The view that life begins at conception is not a scientific view; it is a belief about the value of human life itself.

The health of the mother and the right to choose have been the reasons given for changing the laws surrounding abortion in Queensland, but this bill does not restrict the decision to terminate a pregnancy to health reasons alone. Part 2, clause 6, states—

- (1) A medical practitioner may perform a termination on a woman who is more than 22 weeks pregnant if—
...
- (2) In considering whether a termination should be performed on a woman, a medical practitioner must consider—
 - (a) all relevant medical circumstances; and
 - (b) the woman's current and future physical, psychological and social circumstances ...

The bill does not even define the physical, psychological or social circumstances that warrant a termination. The bill has been modelled on the Victorian law, under which almost half of the late-term abortions in recent years have been performed on healthy babies of healthy mothers for so-called psychosocial reasons. This is not happening in Queensland now, but this bill will allow the same thing to occur if it is passed. YouGov Galaxy research showed that, when asked specifically about the provisions of the bill to allow late-term abortions for social reasons, 70 per cent of Queensland women said no, with only 18 per cent in favour.

The argument that women have the right to decide what happens to their body is a valid one. We all have the right to choose what we do. Nobody should ever be forced to make decisions that they do not want to make, but we must also bear some of the responsibilities for our choices. Saying that this bill will ensure women have the right to choose whether they have a baby or not ignores the fact that

the bill will also make it easier for mothers to be coerced and bullied into terminating a pregnancy without their wishes. In a recent Galaxy poll one in four Queenslanders said they know at least one woman who made the decision to have an abortion following pressure from another person.

The high-profile case of Jaya Taki, which featured in the national media, reflects a situation that is repeated daily in our communities but is unseen and unreported. A rising NRL star forced his girlfriend, Jaya, to abort their child as it would ruin his career. The player told Jaya Taki that she should terminate the pregnancy and that he would not support her if she decided to have the baby. In the end Taki said, 'I gave in to him. I was so sick and so tired. He won.' What protections do we now give to women in Jaya's situation? What message are we sending by saying that life inside the womb has less value than any other life outside? This bill legitimises those who wish to force someone to terminate a pregnancy for social or psychological reasons. Safeguards for women that are missing from the bill include independent counselling, informed consent requirements and a cooling-off period, which is supported by 80 per cent to 90 per cent of Queenslanders.

The government has ignored the majority of people who have expressed their opposition to the bill. In a recent YouGov Galaxy poll, 62 per cent of Queenslanders believed that the unborn child at 23 weeks of pregnancy is a person with human rights. That figure went up to 69 per cent of females. The reality is the current laws in Queensland do not demonise women who have abortions. The Queensland Law Reform Commission report found between 10,000 and 14,000 terminations were performed in Queensland each year, with most performed in the first trimester of pregnancy. The report found that later terminations were comparatively rare. This finding indicates that the current laws ensure later terminations only ever occur when the life of the mother is generally at risk. In Queensland abortions are currently regarded as generally lawful if performed to prevent serious danger to the mother's physical or mental health. There are already safeguards in place for the protection of the mother's life in life-threatening situations.

This bill removes the right of medical practitioners to conscientiously object but opens the way for unsafe abortions up to the full term of a pregnancy with no legal accountability. This does not achieve the desired result of safety for women but enshrines in legislation the power to terminate a life with no personal, legal or medical accountability but simply for the right to do so. The KAP made its position clear. We support the sanctity of life and we strongly object to the Termination of Pregnancy Bill.