



Hon Steven Miles MP
Minister for Health and
Minister for Ambulance Services

5 OCT 2018

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Mr Neil Laurie
Clerk of the Parliament
Queensland Parliamentary Service
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

I write in response to your letter regarding petition number 3004-18, tabled in Parliament on 5 September 2018, in relation to Termination of Pregnancy.

The petition proposes voting against the Termination of Pregnancy Bill 2018.

Termination of pregnancy is a sensitive issue and I acknowledge that members of the community have diverse and strongly held views. Access to safe and high-quality abortion services is a significant women's health issue worldwide, making it an important public health matter that deserves detailed, thorough and widespread consideration.

Clarifying the law regarding termination of pregnancy in Queensland will provide certainty for women and health practitioners regarding the circumstances in which they can lawfully seek, obtain and provide termination of pregnancy services.

In June 2017, the Palaszczuk Government requested the Queensland Law Reform Commission (QLRC) conduct a review and investigation into modernising Queensland's abortion laws. The QLRC report, Review of termination of pregnancy laws, contained 28 recommendations to amend current laws to remove abortion from the Queensland Criminal Code, and introduce new legislation to clarify and modernise the law.

The Palaszczuk Government accepted the QLRC's recommendations and, on 22 August 2018, in line with the 2017 election commitment, introduced the Termination of Pregnancy Bill 2018 into Parliament. The Bill reflects the QLRC's recommendations to remove termination of pregnancy from the Criminal Code and ensure termination is treated as a health issue.

The purpose of the Bill is to enable reasonable and safe access by women to terminations of pregnancy and to regulate the conduct of registered health practitioners in relation to terminations.

Key aspects of the Bill include that:

* medical practitioners may perform a lawful termination on a woman upon request, up to a gestational limit of 22 weeks

* after 22 weeks, a lawful termination can only be performed if at least two medical practitioners, having considered all relevant medical circumstances, a woman's current and future physical,

psychological and social circumstances, and professional standards and guidelines, agree that the termination is appropriate in all the circumstances

* registered health practitioners are required to inform a person of their conscientious objection to termination of pregnancy, and to refer or transfer the care of a woman who seeks advice or treatment about a termination

* safe access zones be established around premises where terminations are performed to prevent harassment and intimidation of people as they enter.

The Bill has been referred to the Parliamentary Committee for Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention for detailed consideration. The Queensland Government will consider and respond to any recommendations made by the Committee regarding this legislation, following the tabling of the Committee's report in the Legislative Assembly.

Further information on Queensland abortion law reform, including a link to the online fact checker, can be found at website <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/system-governance/legislation/specific/queensland-abortion-law-reform>.

Labor Members of Parliament have been granted a conscience vote on the Termination of Pregnancy Bill to allow them to vote according to their personal conscience.

I trust this information is of assistance to the petitioners.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Miles', with a stylized flourish at the end.

STEVEN MILES MP

Minister for Health

Minister for Ambulance Services