

28 August 2018

To Qld Baptist Churches

Subject: Qld Baptist Statement on abortion to the Queensland Parliament

Background

The Queensland Law Reform Commission has recommended that a bill be drafted legalising termination of pregnancy for almost any reason and up to the late stages of pregnancy.

The Queensland Baptist Board prepared the enclosed statement on behalf of Queensland Baptist Churches for presentation to Parliament opposing such a bill.

Just after the preparation of this statement we learnt that Parliament is calling for submissions and plans to again hold public hearings.

Request for Action

This is an indication that the passage of the bill is not a foregone conclusion, and we urge people in our churches to take this matter up with their local members and sign a petition. A number of our churches have already made one of the circulating petitions available. If you prefer to sign on line, Rev Stewart Pieper, our Acting GS, has already drawn attention to one example – Cherish life [online submission platform](#).

We enclose the statement which we will submit to Parliament, which builds on the submission we made last year. Please feel free to use this in discussions with local members if it reflects not only your beliefs but what you believe is the most appropriate way to respectfully make a submission to our elected representatives.

Summary of our position

We believe that ethically human life begins at conception, and that each human life bears the image of God, so should not be ended through any human intervention.

We recognise that in rare instances the mother's life is in such danger that the continuation of a pregnancy would result in the death of both mother and child, and that only in such circumstances is it ethical to terminate the pregnancy.

We believe God has a particular care for the most vulnerable in our society, and that this includes unborn children. We are therefore appalled that these little ones are discarded as if they had no human worth.

However, from a pastoral care perspective we do not wish to condemn women who have taken the difficult choice, often under duress from others, to terminate a pregnancy. Rather we believe we should respond with love and concern to those in these circumstances.

Yours sincerely,

Qld Baptist Board.

Queensland Baptists view on the Law Reform Commission's report on termination of pregnancy laws – tabled in Parliament on 16 July 2018

Who we are:

Queensland Baptists are the third largest Christian worshipping community in Queensland represented by 198 churches and over 50,000 regular attendees.

What we believe:

As a Christian community of faith we believe that God is the creator and sustainer of life. We believe that God, in Jesus, has communicated His love for all He has made, and is passionate in His care for the ostracised and the oppressed, especially vulnerable women and children. On this basis we believe that all life is to be valued and cherished and this includes women, men and children of all ages including those children who are as yet unborn and carried in their mother's womb.

Pastoral Care:

We recognise that abortion is a highly distressing issue for many people within our wider society. There would be few within our worshipping communities who have not in some way been touched by the painful nature of this issue. We recognise the emotional anguish that many women have experienced when faced with an unplanned pregnancy and/or the realisation that there are serious medical concerns for the child they are carrying. As a community of faith we do not seek to condemn but seek to reach out in genuine love and care for all who find themselves in such circumstances.

What we stand for:

Since we believe that from the moment of conception a new life has been formed, in all of our deliberations we must demonstrate equal concern for both the mother and her unborn child. We recognise that there are occasions when, due to extreme medical complications, a mother's life will be in imminent danger should her pregnancy be allowed to continue. If the medical complications are of such a nature that the mother's life is in real danger should the pregnancy be allowed to continue, the first priority is the preservation of the mother's life.

In circumstances where the mother's life is not at such risk, we believe that equal concern for the unborn child is the only just approach. We are particularly concerned that there is no protection in the Law Commission's proposal for infants who are already viable. Under their proposal any two doctors "having regard for all the relevant medical circumstances" may decide to legally kill a viable term or near term infant. This goes beyond allowing an infant who has not reached viability to pass away. It means that the life of the viable infant must be actively ended. There appears to be no need for any *ethical* consideration by the doctors involved.

In our view the killing of infants at or near term, at stages when many infants have already been born and are thriving, is tantamount to infanticide and that this is an appalling breach of our responsibility to care for some of the most vulnerable members of our society. We recognise that many societies regard or have regarded infanticide as an accepted cultural practice. We note that early Christians in Greco-Roman society rescued children who were exposed, and we affirm our solidarity with their ethical beliefs.

We also consider that making abortion easier than adoption for the expectant mother unduly pressures women into abortion rather than taking the life affirming option of adoption.

In addition, we stand for freedom of conscience, so we are concerned for health professionals who may face discrimination or prosecution when they refuse to take part in abortion or are compelled to refer patients to colleagues who will support this practice. In our view the one who refers bears some responsibility together with the practitioner who carries out such a procedure, and their right to refuse to make such a referral must be preserved.

What we request:

In respect to the proposed introduction of legislation that provides for abortion of unborn children, we respectfully request that the Queensland Parliament reject the Queensland Law Reform Commissions report's recommendations.

We also respectfully request the Parliament to affirm the principle of freedom of conscience by legislating to protect all health professionals who, for religious reasons or not, believe that the unborn child is fully human from conception. Of course where the mother's life is seriously in danger health professionals have a duty of care to preserve her life even if that necessitates terminating the pregnancy.

We recognise that whilst abortion is currently illegal in Queensland there are over 10,000 surgical abortions in Queensland every year.¹ We would therefore urgently request that where medical practitioners agree that it is in the best interests of the mother to terminate the pregnancy, the following guidelines be legislated for where there is no imminent danger to the mother's life:

- (a) that independent counselling which includes all options including adoption, and a balanced assessment of the risks of terminating the pregnancy be mandatory; and
- (b) that a cooling off period be mandatory between the receipt of the advice to terminate the pregnancy and the actual procedure; and
- (c) that where pregnancy has reached 28 weeks and termination of pregnancy is considered to be in the best interest of the mother, induction of labour proceed without killing the infant before or after such induction, and that any deliberate termination of the infant's life be made illegal.

We sincerely thank the members of our Parliament for considering our concerns.

Queensland Baptist Board.

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Medicare Australia Statics 2014

http://medicarestatistics.humanservices.gov.au/statistics/mbs_item.jsp