

ABORTION IS WOMEN'S BUSINESS BUT...

By Kevin Glancy

I've always considered and not withstanding religious views, that in the abortion debate it's a woman's decision and not much business of mine or any male's for that matter, political or otherwise. Although I do believe that at the very least; when an abortion is being considered that the decision is one made with the father if a relationship exists.

In fairness to women and putting aside the availability of modern birth control, we males can throw our seeds around without much care at all. Getting pregnant is not a problem we face, so how would we know what it encompasses, emotionally or physically. However, I can't help but hear a BUT.

It's been triggered by the fact that in Queensland there is a bill before parliament to amend the abortion law to allow females to legally obtain an abortion up to twenty-two weeks during their pregnancy.

Five months into a pregnancy seems like a long time to decide the fate of a potential human being. Some genetic scientists believe that week twenty one is when the foetus may be regarded as a baby but aside from that view; at the point of conception a human life is being formed. It is with this in mind, that I'm afraid the change being sought got me thinking about a subject that I would normally view as none of my business.

Currently, abortion is lawful in Queensland when a doctor believes a woman's physical and/or mental health is in serious danger. Now that criteria is not infallible and can be a subjective life or death decision made by a doctor. It's a huge call for any doctor to have to make. Under the state's

existing law; rape, incest and foetal abnormality are not lawful grounds for an abortion.

Despite these restrictions, Australian Christian Lobby Queensland director, Wendy Francis said abortion was not hard to access in Queensland. She suggests that 'about 14,000 abortions a year were performed across the state'. I'm not sure how Ms Francis has determined that figure or whether it's accurate but given the availability of the abortion pill RU486 through the mail, discrete abortions are available beyond the curfew of the current law. Let's not kid ourselves either. Illegal abortions have been available and conducted in Australia since colonisation, despite the range of anti-abortion laws in place across the country. Those pregnant now have up to twenty two weeks to decide whether to terminate that budding life or not.

In any event, a change to any law in a democracy should reflect the wishes of the majority. It rarely does, as many laws are made in Australia without that mandate. I'm a glass full type of citizen with regard to democracy and subscribe to the perspective of legendary, independent federal and state politician, Ted Mac's perspective. 'Democracy is warts and all'.

Putting aside those usual suspects who, in their rush towards socialism believe that their kind of democracy only includes those citizens who agree with them, it's a case of majority rules for me, whether I agree with an outcome or not. Unfortunately, many decisions are made in Australia based on the views of the louder vocal minority. In this instance as a concerned citizen, I feel the need to express a personal view on the proposed change to abortion law for what it's worth. As a white Anglo/Celtic male, living in this era of identity politics, I appreciate that as an outsider, my opinion probably doesn't count.

In December 2010, Keli Lane a former Australian water polo

player, was convicted of the 1996 murder of her newborn, two day old Tegan, and three counts of lying under oath. Lane is currently serving an 18-year prison sentence and will be eligible for parole on 12 May 2023. Putting aside the 'why she did it' one can still speculate.

Some did at the time. Suggesting that Kelli saw the baby as a hindrance who interfered with her carefree lifestyle. True or false it's hard to say. They may have been correct.

During the trial that commenced 9 August 2010, the Crown produced evidence that, as a motive for Tegan's murder, Lane was prepared to abandon her children at birth to increase her chances of representing Australia in water polo at the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. There was also evidence she believed children would interfere with her educational plans, her social life, and the regard in which she was held by parents and friends.

This was despite the fact that Tegan born in 1996 was not her first child. Lane initially denied the existence of another child born earlier. She had also given birth to yet another child in 1999. Relevant to the proposed change under consideration, this was after she had been refused an abortion in Queensland. That baby was put up for adoption.

The Crown also alleged that Lane fell pregnant five times over seven years during the 1990's; she had terminated the first two pregnancies; placed two babies up for adoption and allegedly murdering her two day old baby, Tegan, on 14 September 1996. The jury heard that Lane concealed her pregnancies from her family and friends in order to protect her personal image and reputation.

Kelli Lane claimed that she didn't murder Tegan but had given the baby to an Andrew Norris or Morris. An Andrew Morris did eventually come forward to testify but was told he was not required at the trial. He admitted that he had unprotected sex

once with Kelli on a Sydney beach in June 1994 but he also denounced her claim, that she had given Tegan to him. In any event, chronologically, their liaison does not align with the time of Tegan's birth, two years later.

Without going into further trial details, the point I make is that had these proposed Queensland abortion laws been in place, Kelli Lane may well have taken advantage of them to rid herself of any of her five unwanted pregnancies. Merely as she says, on the basis that she was afraid of how her parents and friends would react. Or, to rid herself of an inconvenient pregnancy that inhibited her preferred lifestyle. The question I would ask in view of the proposed change to abortion law; are these kinds of reasons enough justification for any woman to abort a 'life'?

Will other women take advantage of the new twenty-two week proposal for similar 'lifestyle' reasons? I ask that in the knowledge that in any event; choosing an abortion must be an extremely difficult decision for any woman to make and not one made lightly. There are always exceptions of course and that's the problem.

On the other hand. There are many reasons for terminating a pregnancy and I am not in a position nor qualified to judge their validity. So for me the issue comes down to this. When, from the point of conception to the point of delivery, are we talking about the death of a human being when an abortion is performed?

While there are various scientific and religious views my biggest difficulty is in reconciling with what I have actually witnessed. The burning grief of mothers to be, who have suffered a miscarriage has left me in no doubt whatsoever; at the time of their bereavement they were dealing with the loss of a tangible life. For them, that growing life within was as alive as if it had already been born. It may not be scientific but their grief was very real all the same.

Whatever the reasons that some believe justify the change to abortion laws, perhaps that very real loss endured by women who miscarry while carrying 'their baby' should be considered when weighing up the humanity at risk.

To also ask themselves;

When the law provides the right to terminate a twenty-two week old life form growing within the womb; a natural wonder that will result in the birth of a human being – is there a cautionary lesson to be heeded? Particularly when you consider the reasons why Kelli Lane terminated two pregnancies and murdered two day old Tegan. Is the change in the law a license to be careless, selfish, indulgent, callous, deadly or just irresponsible?

Should those who want change also be concerned that having turned that corner, how soon will it be before we find it so much easier to argue for an extension to that twenty-two week abortion period?

UPDATE: The abortion bill was subsequently passed by the Queensland Labor Government. The success of the bill's passage provoked a party atmosphere inside and outside parliament with Labor women and their female supporters cheering and hollering. It was a disturbing spectacle which I found hard to comprehend given the loss of life they were celebrating. It also lacked any empathy or sympathy for the thousands of women who would give anything to have a child but who can't for a myriad of reasons and not due to any fault of their own. I do not believe that the passage of the bill was any cause for celebration and should have been received with dignity and for those who wanted it – a quiet appreciation at best. Shame on those who participated.

Women in Queensland now have up to 22 weeks to decide whether they will terminate that budding life or not. Five months suggest to me that, by then life, in whatever form it has

taken has well and truly advanced into becoming a living being.

Postscript: More food for thought in what is a complex issue

NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian said she will consider changing the law after it was revealed the driver who killed heavily pregnant Sydney woman Katherine Hoang cannot be charged with manslaughter for the death of her unborn twins.

Hoang, 23, was just a week away from giving birth to her twin boys when unlicensed driver Richard Moananu, 29, crashed into her car, killing her, her unborn babies and her 17-year-old relative and injuring her husband, Bronco Hoang, earlier this month in Sydney's west.

Ms Berejiklian said she would seek advice from police and wanted to hear community views about whether there should be criminal charges for people whose acts lead to the deaths of unborn babies so close to birth.

"Of course you think about those issues in terms of what it means about recognising those unborn children, whose lives were dramatically and horrifically cut short," she said.

"I know how complex the issues are around this, but I also know from a human level what most people would feel," she said.

Courtesy of the Daily Telegraph 13th October 2018

