I wish to make a submission to this inquiry from the perspective of a mother of a daughter with severe autism and intellectual impairment. I fully support sterilisation of girls where there is little or no capacity for them to care for their own child.

I am a single mother of two disabled children – my 10 year old who is severely autistic and intellectually impaired and an 11 year old son who is mildly autistic. I have no family support as my only family is an 82 year old mother interstate in an aged care facility. Her father can barely cope with her care requirements when he has her now and also has no family support. We moved interstate for the lifestyle when they told me I could not have children. By the time he walked out, the children were in school, he had an established career and would not consent to my moving to be nearer to my family.

My daughter's medical issues include:

- No physical sensation in her belly or groin area
- Total bladder and bowel incontinence (still in nappies and likely to be for the rest of her life)
- An inability to make any decisions
- has the mental capacity of less than 7
- she needs to be fed and given drinks as she cannot tell if she is hungry or thirsty
- Has no ability to self care – has to be told to bath, clean her teeth and so on
- Cannot do her own hair
- Has no impulse control
- Has no concept of personal safety
- She does not understand the physical changes that are already happening to her as she is quickly approaching puberty and talks with her are just simply beyond her comprehension
- As puberty is approaching she is becoming increasingly affectionate and seeks human touch, which was unheard of just 2 years ago – the child did not give me a hug until she was 7.

Given her medical conditions, if she were to become pregnant she would either have to face a termination or I would have to raise the child for her. Being over 50, I am just not going to be able to physically, emotionally or financially support a baby. It is hard enough having to care for her physical, emotional and psychological needs and her multiple fears and phobias.

Over the years I have seen and heard of too many of these girls become pregnant and have no knowledge of how they got there or who the father is.

Unfortunately, the statistics show that these girls are very vulnerable. I watch her like a hawk when she is in my care, but I also know what young people are like, and I have to give her the opportunities to lead her own life. With this comes the risk of her becoming pregnant.

As it is, I despair of what will become of her if something happens to me, and hope that nothing happens to me before her brother reaches his majority and can at least take on her decision making.

With sterilisation, I would have at least one worry alleviated.