



FERTILITY CONTROL CLINIC

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Inquiry into Health Legislation Amendment Bill 2005

Selection of Bills Committee

The Senate

October 12th 2005

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Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Inquiry into Health Legislation Amendment Bill 2005.

As a health provider, we are most concerned that the proposed Bill does not provide sufficient mechanisms to (i) ensure that decisions to impose conditions, limitations and restrictions are made in line with scientific evidence, and (ii) prevent arbitrary application of power by the Health Minister. We are not at all clear why there is any necessity to change the current system.

Our concerns apply to various health areas, but most particularly to the area of reproductive health. The current Health Minister, Mr Tony Abbott, has been outspoken in his personal, moral views about reproductive health, in particular, his opposition to women's access to safe affordable pregnancy termination. His expressed anti-choice, anti-abortion views conflict with the majority of Australians and with decades of reputable scientific evidence. This evidence indicates, in part, that:

- (a) Currently, 80% of Australians believe in a woman's right to safe elective abortion;
- (b) Worldwide, where safe, affordable abortion services are accessible, the abortion rate decreases, women's reproductive health improves and women and their families enjoy better quality of life;
- (c) Worldwide, where safe abortion is made inaccessible, because of prohibitive cost or limited services, women will access unsafe abortion with consequent reproductive morbidity and mortality.

Given the above, there is a real danger that the Bill would allow the current Health Minister, and any future Health Minister, to privilege his own moral agenda above the genuine health needs of Australians. The current Health Minister could make abortion inaccessible to some, or all, women by imposing conditions on the Medicare rebate for pregnancy terminations, or by excluding pregnancy terminations from receiving a Medicare rebate at all. This would not be consistent with our democratic principles, nor with evidence-based best medical practice, and would be a disaster for the health of women and their families.

Yours sincerely,

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