



**SUBMISSION TO THE SENATE COMMUNITY
AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
ON THE
TRANSPARENT ADVERTISING AND
NOTIFICATION OF PREGNANCY COUNSELLING
SERVICES BILL 2005**

MAY 2006



NGO Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations

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26th May 2006

Mr Elton Humphery
Committee Secretary to the Australian Senate Community
Affairs Legislation Committee
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Humphery

**Re: Transparent Advertising and Notification of Pregnancy Counselling Services Bill
2005**

*“A Bill for an Act to prohibit misleading or deceptive advertising or notification of
pregnancy counselling services, and for related purposes”*

Thank you for the invitation to make a submission regarding the referenced Bill.

The Australian reproductive Health Alliance (ARHA) notes the current and proposed expansion of opportunities for access to counselling related to pregnancy and termination services which are to be financed by the Commonwealth.

- (i) ARHA welcomes policy changes allowing greater ease of access to counselling services but stresses the importance of such services being delivered by recognised accredited professionals.
- (ii) Where professional counsellors are members of professional associations or their qualifications are required by Government to be formally registered (as with psychologists) there are guarantees of competence and a skills base and proper avenues for complaint about the competence of these services.
- (iii) The ethical framework of such professionals is transparent and allows people to make an informed choice about the services they are accessing. This should be demanded of all organisations financed by the Commonwealth to provide pregnancy and termination counselling.
- (iv) Advertising ought to be clear and open, and agencies whose ethical frameworks prevent them from offering options if a woman wishes to proceed to having a

termination ought to be required to specifically clarify this position in all advertising and printed material. Without this, there is a risk of misleading conduct, which is unacceptable.

ISSUES IN RURAL AUSTRALIA

The higher rates of teenage pregnancy

- (i) A lack of services generally exacerbates reproductive health issues/decisions for women in rural areas e.g., when a doctor or pharmacist withholds information or options
- (ii) Confidentiality issues - approaching or being approached by a service which deals only/mainly with pregnancy issues may result in a high risk of invading privacy; counselling through mainstream healthcare providers may be preferable

Again ARHA appreciates the opportunity to make a submission for your consideration.

Yours Sincerely,



Christina Richards
Chief Executive Officer