

## **Inquiry into Transparent Advertising and Notification of Pregnancy Counselling Services Bill 2005**

Dear Senators,

I wish to make some comments regarding the Transparent Advertising and Notification of Pregnancy Counselling Services Bill 2005:

### **1) Why is this bill limited to Pregnancy Counselling Services?**

We all would want Transparent Advertising and Notification of ALL services funded by the Federal Government. A bill to ensure this would be a wonderful ideal.

However I assume this bill is limited to Pregnancy Counselling Services, because it is understood that the ideals behind this bill are very hard to uphold in legislation, or are unnecessarily restrictive.

If this is the case, why is this being attempted with Pregnancy Counselling Services? If this is not the case, then this bill should be extended to cover ALL Federal Government funded services.

This would then uncover all the problems with trying to define “transparency” in public services, and the problems with simplistic notification requirements. Solutions could then be found which are not dependant on the very polarised debate surrounding Pregnancy Counselling Services.

### **2) The crucial element in non-directive counselling is not ultimately the options as to where to refer a client, but on the nature of the counselling in the first place.**

Much counselling from organizations that ultimately would refer clients to providers for all 3 options actually are heavily biased toward 1 option anyway. For example, so-called “pro-choice” counselling often is heavily biased towards termination, and I know of many pregnant women who have NOT been presented with the option to keep or adopt the child, nor the support available under these options.

It is easy for a “pro-termination” counseling service to appear “non-directive” just by being prepared to refer to all 3 options, whereas it is heavily biased towards counselling to termination.

### **3) Thus if the Federal Government should only fund “non-directive pregnancy counselling services” there should be a full evaluation on whether the counseling provided is genuinely “non-directive”.**

This should not be merely on the simplistic criteria of whether it “will provide referrals to termination of pregnancy [or other] services where requested”.

**4) The bill is heavily biased towards those who wish referrals to termination to be the predominant option.**

The fact that “referrals to termination of pregnancy services” is highlighted as a requirement to be a “non-directive pregnancy counselling service”, when in fact it is unnecessary as it is already included in the beginning of the description of “non-directive”, indicates that this bill wants to enshrine referrals to termination of pregnancy as THE available option.

The bill should be re-written from a neutral perspective to enshrine “non-directiveness” in ALL aspects of pregnancy counseling, especially in the nature of the counselling itself, not just referrals.

While this Bill upholds a great ideal -to have transparency in the services funded by the Federal Government -it actually is heavily weighted to supporting services that not as “non-directive” as they might like to appear, and thus should NOT be passed in its current form.

Yours sincerely,

James Poland