

From Dr. Carol Deller [Mrs. Carol Pocock.]

I have just learned of this Inquiry and wish to make my opinion on this matter known. I worked for over 30 years in the field of Reproductive Health, both in U.K. and in Western Australia. In the course of this work, I have seen thousands of women who were experiencing an unplanned pregnancy or who had experienced one previously. I can only recall ONE woman in all my working life who told me that she was glad that she had given her baby up for adoption. I saw hundreds of women who wept as they told me of the pain of having had a child, and being unable to know if they were alive and if so, where they were living, what they were doing etc. I also heard of the joy some women and some adoptees had if they were reunited.

Another source of great distress and pain was the way in which some pregnant women were treated by some “Pregnancy Counselling” services. Pregnant women, agonising over whether to have their baby or whether to undergo an abortion were called “Murderers”, were shown photos of well developed fetuses torn apart, and then told that was what would happen if they had an abortion, even though **they** were at a very early stage of foetal growth. Vulnerable women were told by such agencies that to have an abortion would render them infertile, cause breast cancer and mental breakdown, and many other dire illnesses.

With my many years of offering counselling that gave ALL THE OPTIONS regarding an unplanned pregnancy, I can honestly state that very few women faced their predicament lightly. The women who suffer after having an abortion, and there certainly are some, are those, in my experience, who are forced to have the abortion by others, e.g. their parents, husband or boyfriend, or who rush into the abortion without really thinking of all the options. These latter women are some of those who do not have any or adequate counselling.

It is vitally important that women in the crisis situation of an unplanned pregnancy are given full facts regarding their options and are encouraged to work through all the possible scenarios before making a decision. Agencies that operate on fear, moralistic judgements or religious persecution have no place as accredited and Government funded Counselling agencies.

I therefore ask that the Inquiry gives careful consideration to the credentials of Pregnancy Counselling Agencies that are chosen to be funded by Government money, to ensure that they make very clear in any advertising **their stance on all of the options available to a woman facing an unplanned pregnancy.**