

June 9 2006

I wish to tender a submission re our services to the community.

I am a volunteer counsellor for Pregnancy Counselling Australia and have taken part in this work for 24 years. In most cases the outcome of the calls are unknown to us. We have a huge amount of calls. Approximately 35% are callers who wish to share their post-abortion experience with us: complications, feelings of sorrow and despair. It is for this reason, I believe, that it would be a breach of our duty of care to refer for abortions.

Our role is to listen to callers. Women and men contact us, and we give them a chance to tell their story. Callers feel their situation is overwhelming. Our role is to empower the callers with the ability to cope with the situation, and very often listening patiently and empathising with them goes a long way to achieving this goal. Discussing and assessing what they see as the problems and, subsequently, helping them to make positive decisions to enhance their well being. I have also been a volunteer at Life Line Australia for 20 years, where the calls are more varied, but the technique is the same.

Our callers can freely phone any time of the day or night. When a call comes in the caller is usually very upset already and typically feels hopelessness in the options with nowhere to turn.

We feel our service is a very important one for the community. In most cases we are then able to refer them to a credited service in their area, to speak further of their situation. In most cases the outcome is unknown to us.

I remain yours sincerely,

Mary O'Connor
Pregnancy Counselling Australia
Co-ordinator of Warrnambool, Western Victoria
Cnr of Liebig & Lava Streets
WARRNAMBOOL VIC 3280
(PO Box 313)