

*Submission to the Community Affairs Legislation Committee
regarding the Transparent Advertising and Notification of
Pregnancy Counselling Services Bill 2005*

June 9 2006

The aim of this legislation is quite clear. It is designed to prevent the operation of pregnancy counselling services established by organisations that rightly perceive that abortion makes two victims, one dead and the other wounded.

These services are run by volunteer women who have been appropriately trained to listen, without judgement and to care enough to try and help.

Callers who are faced with an unplanned pregnancy are offered crisis counselling support and contact is facilitated with sources of ongoing help in the community.

The service to which I refer is Pregnancy Counselling Australia, which is funded by Right to Life Australia, through the generosity of its supporters. P.C.A. receives no government funding.

This work is seen as a necessary part of our three pronged attack on the widespread practice of abortion today – education, political action and social action.

Ever since our organisation was established in 1973 it was considered that it was an essential part of our work to provide help for women facing an unplanned pregnancy. Indeed, we would be criticised for not doing so!

Pregnancy Counselling Australia, although funded by Right to Life Australia, is run by a separate board of management and is supported by a large team of volunteers. Those involved with the work of Pregnancy Counselling Australia are not involved with the work of Right to Life Australia.

The sponsor of this legislation, Senator Stott Despoja, and others of like mind, seem determined to prevent any avenue of support for pregnant women that does not include abortion.

We live in a country where there is literally wall-to-wall access to government funded abortions, at an approximate rate of one for every three live births.

Abortions are carried out in most hospitals with the exception of those that are philosophically opposed to abortion, as is Pregnancy Counselling Australia.

Privately owned abortion clinics operate brazenly and openly, unashamedly seeking customers through expensive ads in Yellow Pages Telephone directories.

This is a lucrative industry that is supported by taxpayers' monies in the form of Medicare rebates. It is frequently stated in these ads that "no referrals are necessary".

The main aim of these clinics is to sell an abortion. Women telephoning for an appointment are instructed to bring sufficient money, Medicare card, to come fasting and to bring an appropriate change of clothing. So called counselling is scant.

Is there any government scrutiny of the practices of these abortuaries, given the millions of dollars of taxpayer's monies, in the form of health care dollars, through Medicare, that prop them up?

Pregnancy Counselling Australia is quite open in indicating that they do not advocate abortion as a way of dealing with an unplanned pregnancy.

The P.C.A. entry in the telephone directory (White Pages Emergency section) is quite clear – "Pregnancy Counselling Australia – Alternatives to abortion and post abortion counselling".

Pregnancy Counselling Australia receives not one cent of government funding, so the section in the legislation relating to the use of government funds does not apply to P.C.A.

In defence of those services that do receive government funding, such as Pregnancy Help Australia, one might well ask – "Why not?". Should they be denied any funding because they won't advise for an abortion? **Does this principle apply to the funding of Catholic Hospitals and related agencies that don't provide abortions?**

Are they to be denied funding because of a firmly held principle regarding the sanctity of human life? Is the work they do in health care, which has benefited millions of Australians over the years, to be jeopardised because of a firmly held principle?

Those pro-life pregnancy counselling services that exist Australia wide have made an enormous contribution to the welfare of Australian women and their babies.

As one of the longest serving volunteer counsellors (now deceased) for P.C.A. was wont to say – *“They never come back to us and tell us they are sorry they had that baby, but they do come back to us telling us they very much regret having that abortion.”*

The protagonists of this legislation have absolutely no idea of the whole culture of women out there suffering because of their Medicare funded abortions. Is there to be no help for them? They won't find it at the clinic, which killed their child!

Members of the pro-abortion lobby emphatically deny that abortion causes any after effects such as grief, depression etc. That may not apply to all women who have abortions. They may well be able to suppress those feelings. Nonetheless there are a significant number of women who are badly affected and carry that with them for life. Are these women to be denied access to a compassionate listening ear?

During debate on the legislation in the Western Australia parliament in 1998 on the legalising of abortion, Dr Kim Hames, then member for Yokine, who himself referred for abortions, said “ *People whom I have referred for terminations have said to me years later that they wished they had not gone ahead with the termination and still regret it. They said that I had a blasé approach and did not care; in my determination to provide an unbiased view and to give alternatives, I should have given a much stronger point of view against terminations. Some of those women said that, had I done that, they would have made different decisions. I sincerely regret that is the case. If many doctors were aware of that and could go back to the time they were giving referrals for abortions, they would provide much better counselling than they have.*”

There are those who suggest that the trauma suffered by some women following abortion is caused by the very existence of the pro-life movement and their public utterances. The TV film (2001) depicting the life of now deceased film star Marilyn Munroe, ‘BLONDE’ was very illustrative of post abortion trauma. Marilyn had recurring nightmares of hearing a baby crying, following her first abortion! Yet there was no pro-life movement in those days. Tragically, Munroe went on to live a life of ups and downs with more abortions, substance abuse etc. and an alleged suicide.

The rationale behind this piece of legislation is nothing short of outrageous. It is clearly designed to close the door on any service that is available for those women who are facing an unplanned pregnancy, who are ambivalent about abortion and who may well be suffering following an abortion and don't want to go down that path again.

Government monies are used in the millions to prop up the abortion industry. Either no money or a comparatively small amount of government funds are used to assist pro-life pregnancy counselling services that perform a most useful service.

This legislation should be rejected.

Margaret M Tighe
PRESIDENT
Right to Life Australia Inc
45 Nicholson Street
BRUNSWICK EAST VIC 3057
(PO Box 540, Carlton North Vic 3054)