

TRANSPARENT ADVERTISING AND NOTIFICATION OF PREGNANCY
COUNSELLING SERVICES BILL 2005

SUBMISSION TO SENATE COMMITTEE

By Richard Grant

From my reading of this Bill, a primary objective is to require “pro-life” pregnancy counselling centres (PCC’s) to include in their advertising a notice to the effect that “this service does not provide referrals for terminations of pregnancy”

Such a requirement implies that pregnancy counselling services have the legal right and authority to refer women for abortions. However this is definitely not the case. A referral for an abortion is essentially a medical matter which can only take place after a woman’s indications for abortion have been assessed by a qualified medical practitioner.

From this viewpoint, therefore, this part of the proposed Bill is fundamentally flawed. For it would obviously be absurd to force PCC’s to state in advertisements that they do not do something that they are not legally qualified or entitled to do in the first place.

Another section of the Bill is aimed at denying Government funding to pregnancy counselling services that do not offer referrals for abortions as part of their charter. For the reasons discussed above this would also be manifestly unjust.

From a philosophical viewpoint, I would argue that there is no valid reason why PCC’s whose primary objective is to offer pregnancy support should be denied Government funding or be prevented from advertising in the Health and Help Section of the phone book. There is surely a place for these organisations which are non-profit and which focus on loving alternatives to abortion.

To these organisations, “pregnancy counselling” entails discussing ways to support the pregnancy in the interests of both mother and child. Destruction of the child through terminating the pregnancy is alien to this approach. However the issue of abortion would almost certainly be discussed from time to time during counselling sessions.

In regard to the issue of transparent advertising by pro-life PCC’s, it appears to me that the use of the phrase “alternatives to abortion and post-abortion counselling” as currently used by Pregnancy Counselling Australia in the Health and Help Section of the phone book adequately and accurately describes the nature of their services.

Finally, I would argue that to prevent pro-life non-profit PCC’s from advertising their services in the phone book while allowing, as is presently the case, the commercial abortion providing Fertility Control Clinic to do so would be highly discriminatory and unjust.

