

Committee Secretary
Community Affairs Committee
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

Dear Sir/Madam

**Transparent Advertising and Notification of Pregnancy
Counselling Services Bill 2005**

The Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) is a forum for the promotion of the health of the public as well as being a professional resource for public health personnel. The Association provides opportunities for the exchange of ideas, knowledge and information on public health and actively undertakes advocacy for public health policy, development, research and training.

The PHAA fully supports the intention of the Transparent Advertising and Notification of Pregnancy Counselling Services Bill 2005. We believe that women have a right to access and the Australian Government has a responsibility to provide high quality professional counselling when dealing with any pregnancy dilemma, including unplanned and/or unwanted pregnancy.

Specifically, we support the following:

- Ensuring that the legal obligation on fee for service organizations to refrain from misleading advertising is extended to fee-free pregnancy counselling services and that this is a requirement before any Commonwealth funding is granted
- Ensuring that both anti-choice and pro-choice organizations clearly inform the public in their advertising about whether or not they will refer for abortion, so that people are less likely to be misled and more aware of the type of service they are accessing.
- The Bill's requirement for services to state whether they will or will not refer for abortion (Part 2, 6 (1)) is important to keep track of which organizations are, and

which are not, providing counselling which includes all options – continuing to term or opting for termination.

- A requirement on all pregnancy counselling services to provide evidence-based information and professional and ethical counselling.
- Appropriate and reputable organizations be encouraged, with additional government funding, to set up best practice guidelines and accreditation for pregnancy/ abortion counselling services
- When pregnancy counselling accreditation is available, any pregnancy counselling service must be properly accredited before they can be listed in the Emergency section of any phone book
- Only properly credentialed services should be listed in the Emergency section of phone books
- The requirement for telephone listings to include a “non-directional” that is, a pro-choice/options/woman-centred pregnancy counselling service

PHAA believes that pregnancy counselling services should be supported by increased government funding. Such services should only be provided where the provider is informed by a code of ethics, by health professionals who are accountable to their peers and professional bodies and supported by research and evidence based practice. Such services must be impartial and non-judgmental and provide full disclosure of any potential ‘conflicts of interest’.

We endorse the model of care that has been described in the submission from the Royal Women’s Hospital, Melbourne and similar models that provide women with a full range of options relating to pregnancy and which support women to decide whether to continue or terminate a pregnancy.

Either the Convenors of the PHAA’s Women’s Health Special Interest Group, or I would be happy to provide further information should that be useful. Dr Angela Taft, Women’s Health SIG Co-convenor can be contacted on either (03) 8341 8571 /0413 486 2131 (a.taft@latrobe.edu.au) and I can be contacted on (02) 62852373 or at plaut@phaa.net.au

Yours faithfully,

Pieta-Rae Laut
Executive Director
16 June 2006