



8th June 2006

Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

To Whom It May Concern:

SUBMISSION regarding *Transparent Advertising and Notification of Pregnancy Counselling Bill 2005* (Senator Stott Despoja)

Young Parents Program is strongly supportive of introduction of this Bill. Some pregnancy counselling organisations are able to give misleading or false information in their advertising as they are not subject to the Trade Practices Act if they do not charge for services and this Bill will address this issue. If an organisation represents itself as providing objective information about all options with an unplanned pregnancy (abortion, adoption and parenting) then they ought do this. We are concerned that some organisations take a pro-life stance and, in fact, do not provide objective information about abortion as an option for women.

At a recent local workshop, a worker identified herself to a worker from Young Parents Program as being from Pregnancy Counselling Australia (an initiative of Right To Life). She said she was very keen to work with our organisation and explained that her organisation had changed over recent times and now gave objective information about all options for an unplanned pregnancy. When asked what the response would be if a young women contacted her organisation and had clearly decided that she wanted to proceed with an abortion and wanted contact details, she said that she would be directed to the phone book to find the contact details herself and offered post abortion grief and loss counselling. When asked if she would pass on contact details for our organisation, she enthusiastically responded "of course" she would.

This does not appear to be unbiased support and information. It is then of concern what approach counselling would take. While most young women who contact Young Parents Program have decided to proceed with a pregnancy, they may have subsequent further

pregnancies which they are clear that they do not want to proceed with for some reason or other. Workers at this organisation would offer to refer the young woman for counselling to explore the options and get more information. We are concerned that while Pregnancy Counselling Australia represents itself as being objective and unbiased about all options, in fact, they are not. A vulnerable young woman may self refer to the organisation being unaware of this and find they do not receive the unbiased information they were seeking.

This is just one recent experience with an organisation that has demonstrated that it does misrepresent its position about unplanned pregnancy options. It is therefore clear as to the need for regulation of advertising incorporated within this Bill to prevent similar incidents from occurring.

Shirley Pepler
Coordinator