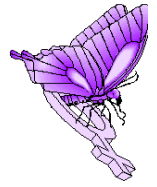




Logan Women's Health and Wellbeing Centre Inc.



16 June 2006

Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee
Parliament House,
Canberra ACT, 2600

Re: Enquiry into the Transparent Advertising and Notification of Pregnancy Counselling Services Bill 2005

The Logan Women's Health and Wellbeing Centre (LWHWC) is a community-based, not for profit organisation currently funded by the National Women's Health Program, Queensland Health. It is a service run by women for women. LWHWC provides a range of health services for women including clinical, counselling and information services. The last financial year saw us provide 8, 752 occasions of service to the community.

The LWHWC supports the aims of the Transparent Advertising and Notification of Pregnancy Counselling Services Bill 2005 proposed by Senator Natasha Stott Depoja. We are concerned that any counselling service would misrepresent the range of available choices for women, in particular either refusing to explore the option of abortion or providing misleading and false information about this option to vulnerable women with unplanned pregnancies

The LWHWC supports a counselling best practice model that ensures that women are given information on all aspects of their situation to promote full informed consent and that this is done with impartiality regardless of the personal religious or cultural views of the practitioner. Of particular concern is the services called Pregnancy Counselling Australia which by its name suggests an impartial and non-directive service, yet we are aware the service is run by a pro-life organisation and will not refer women for terminations. It is extraordinary that this service is allowed to advertise in the white pages and can get away with providing a partial service while purporting to be impartial.

While we have not kept specific records of women with unplanned pregnancies who have experienced misleading or unhelpful advice, the counselling team does come into contact with women who have accessed religious based organisations and other services who have refused referral on termination options or provided distressingly misleading and traumatizing information on the effects of terminations. Our service has then had to deal with the effects of this for women and assist them to process the experience as well as the betrayal of trust experienced from the service.

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A Centre for Excellence - Transforming Women's Health

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We are very keen to see that pregnancy counselling services are fully transparent and clear in what they provide and do not hide behind gaps in the legislation. Pregnancy counselling services need to offer all three alternative options for women with unplanned pregnancies (raising the child, adoption and termination) and assist them to come to a decision that fits the woman and her situation.

If the committee would like further information on any of the issues raised, contact can be made with the Acting Manager, Sonja Mahs on 07 3808 9233 or via email on sonjam@loganwomen.com.au. Many thanks for your consideration of this submission.

Yours Faithfully,

Sonja Mahs

LWHWC Acting Manager

Transforming Women's Health

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