

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

16/06/2006

To the Committee Secretary,

I am a pregnancy counsellor with Pregnancy Counselling Australia (an independent, self funded counselling body) and wish to present some information on what we provide the many women who use our free, twenty four hour counselling service.

Women and sometimes men, ring to seek advice for a variety of pregnancy related problems or just for a chat and some reassurance. We make it quite clear from the onset that we are here to support women in their pregnancies and are not a medical or a legal service. If a caller is requiring information on abortion, we provide them with this and out of our duty of care, we counsel them to consider other options and advise them of the physical, psychological and emotional effects they could face after having an abortion. Our callers are not all seeking abortions: many are in a panic and highly emotional state and some are not even sure that they are pregnant. They want someone sympathetic and unrelated to their problem, to talk to.

We are receiving an increasing number of calls from women who have had one or sometimes several abortions and these women are often extremely distressed. We are able to refer some to appropriate counselling or help and others are just wanting to talk to us about how they are feeling.

We advertise our service as providing 'Alternatives to abortion and post abortion counselling.' The advertisement appears in the front of the Yellow Pages in the section for Health and Help 24-Hour Services. The cost for making a call from any distance and for any length of time, is only a local charge. This service is available anywhere in Australia. Sometimes our calls appear completely unrelated to seeking pregnancy and or abortion information but often the underlying distress turns out to be a poor woman in grief over a pregnancy loss.

Yours sincerely,

Elizabeth Ransom