

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

**to the**

**Senate community Affairs Legislation Committee**

**Parliament House**

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## **“Misleading advertising’ under the Trades Practices Act 1974?”**

Many of the services provided by Pregnancy Problem House and other pro-life bodies are not included in their general advertising. Pregnancy Problem House centres its advertising on offering counselling to women considering abortion, for this is its primary business. Most of its advertising does not include that it also provides maternity and baby clothing, baby furniture, pre- and ante-natal classes, mothercraft training, temporary accommodation, and far more. Part of the reason for this is that the costs associated with advertising of all of its services would be prohibitive.

The people promoting the present Bill are concerned that some agencies such as Pregnancy Problem House do not advertise that they do not refer for abortion, and thus claim this constitutes “misleading advertising.” This is nonsense. The advertising done by Pregnancy Problem House, and other agencies like it, is not misleading in any way. It is simply intended, just like all other advertising, to reach and provide a service to as many people as possible. Most businesses only advertise what they *do* provide, with no obligation to mention what they do *not* provide. Would it be misleading, for example, for Bunnings, who advertise that they carry almost everything that the home-handyman could ever need, to fail to mention that because they are open on Sundays the law prohibits them from carrying certain items?

*We reject the allegation of “misleading advertising” by the promoters of this Bill.*

## **“Non-directive counselling”**

Women need to give “informed consent” before having an abortion. Women have the right to know about well-documented abortion related complications. Giving women this information does not constitute directive counselling. Not giving them this information constitutes an abrogation of duty of care.

Over the past twenty years, when counsellors at Pregnancy Problem House have provided women with accurate and complete information about abortion and foetal development, many have decided against abortion, resulting in the birth of hundreds of children (some now approaching adulthood) who are enjoying life just like the rest of us, and who bring joy and love to their families. Many of these women who received help from Pregnancy Problem House have had ongoing contact with the agency for many years, and without exception they are grateful for the factual counselling and practical support they received.

Many of these women were seriously considering abortion because of their circumstances. Many were not aware of the harmful side effects of abortion. Many were not aware of the facts relating to foetal development. Many were not aware of the practical help and support available to them during and after their pregnancies. When these options were presented to them, many abandoned their initial intention to procure an abortion, and gratefully and eagerly carried their children to term.

Pregnancy Problem House also provides post abortion counselling. Many women who had previous abortions have told us that they received little or no counselling before their

abortions, and no offers of practical assistance. These women were not adequately informed about abortion risks, foetal development, abortion procedures, or emotional problems that could arise from abortion, and as a result have experienced a deep sense of loss and regret.

Pregnancy Problem House believes that women have the right to know all of the facts relating to abortion, and when these facts are presented, and when they learn of the support structures that are in place to help them, they will often abandon plans for abortion.

*It is agencies like Pregnancy Problem House that provide at critical service to women considering abortion that the Bill is seeking to exclude from public funding and equal access to advertising in phone books.*

### **Is Family Planning “non directive” in terms of providing “all three pregnancy options”?**

The plain answer is “No!” According to their own statistics, about 75 per cent of the women they “counsel” are referred for abortion. What does this suggest about them being “non-directive”? What does this suggest about their intention for every abortion counselling agency?

The counsellors at Family Planning betray and abandon women. They betray them in that they fail to provide accurate information to them about foetal development, the risks of abortion, and any negative sequelae of abortion. They abandon them by failing to offer any long-term practical and material support to help them carry their babies to term. Their primary focus is on helping the woman end her pregnancy, and not on meeting her or her child’s ongoing needs.

### **Conclusion**

*Providing ongoing practical help and support has always been the central role of the “pro-life” pregnancy crisis counselling agencies that this mean-spirited Bill wishes to silence.*

*The Bill would do nothing to reduce the current abortion rate, which even “pro-choice Australians claim is too high.*

*The Bill is nasty and socially divisive. It is the construct of pro-abortionists. It attempts to silence caring agencies that provide practical help to women at a distressing time in their lives. The Senate should give it no further consideration and drop it.*