



HUMANIST SOCIETY OF QUEENSLAND Inc.
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SUBMISSION Re: the Inquiry into the THERAPEUTIC GOODS AMENDMENT (Repeal of Ministerial responsibility for approval of RU486) BILL 2005

This Submission takes the position that freedom of choice should extend to both a pregnant woman and her doctor in relation to the availability and appropriate usage of RU486 in Australia. To this end the veto power of the Minister of Health should be removed.

In determining which method of abortion is appropriate in any particular instance, it must lie with the doctor to make a professional decision based on rigorous and up-to-date medical evidence, confident that the best procedure indicated in each case is actually available to him or her. For a government to limit the scope of this professional practice by ruling out crucial options is to deny both patient and doctor the possibility of acting in the most responsible way under the prevailing circumstances.

The expressions of moral outrage from certain sectors of society concerning abortion in general and RU486 in particular are not relevant to determining whether a particular drug should be made available to doctors in a free society. As this is a medical matter it should be determined on professional and scientific principles alone, and then left to individual patient choice.

Since the current debate appears to be essentially over issues of risk management, the question of whether RU486 is safe, effective and of high quality is one that properly rests with the Therapeutic Goods Administration. Since this is not a moral question it should not be subject to religious considerations or any claim to moralistic authority.

We know that no medication or medical procedure is risk-free, but at present all the evidence indicates that RU486 is both safe and effective. Therefore it should be among the range of options available to patients and doctors in this country. The fact that it is not available already is certainly regrettable, but the members of our Society look forward to more enlightened times.

Yours sincerely,

Zelda Bailey,

President of the Humanist Society of Queensland.