

# **Liberty Victoria - Victorian Council for Civil Liberties Inc**

## **Supplemental Submission to the Senate Community Affairs Committee**

### **Inquiry into the Therapeutic Goods Amendment (Repeal of Ministerial responsibility for Approval of RU486) Bill 2005**

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## **1. Introduction**

1.1 In our first submission Liberty Victoria referred the Committee to international research and evidence that discredits the link between terminations and subsequent mental health problems. Since submitting that submission it has been drawn to our attention that similar research has been conducted in Australia and we wish to draw the Senate Committee's attention to that research and its conclusions.

## **2. Medical expertise and RU486: Health Impacts**

2.1 In our first submission Liberty Victoria highlighted international research that challenged the results of the findings of David Fergusson's studies linking abortion to mental health problems. Since then Liberty Victoria has received an unpublished manuscript by Melbourne Clinical Psychologist, Dr Susie Allanson, which further challenges the claims made by David Fergusson. The research undertaken by Dr Allanson, includes both international and Australian studies into the relationship between terminations and mental health. Allanson's paper examines the "growing evidence of the adverse impact of intimate partner violence, childhood violence and other violence on women's mental and reproductive health, and considers what this may mean in the particular context of women presenting for an abortion".<sup>1</sup> As with international research Allanson found that a variety of factors contribute to negative mental health problems post-termination, violence being a significant factor. According to Allanson, "Post-abortion mental health appears to be worse where there is a history of violence, when there is conflict about the abortion within usually supportive relationships or with the partner in the pregnancy, when the abortion is kept secret from others, and/or when the woman has low self-efficacy about her post-abortion coping and experiences decision ambivalence", by contrast, "mental health appears to be enhanced where there is no violence history, relationships are supportive of the abortion decision, the woman

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<sup>1</sup> Dr Susie Allanson, *Violence, Mental Health and Abortion*, unpublished manuscript on file with Liberty Victoria. The manuscript can be obtained from Susie Allanson, Clinical Psychologist, The Fertility Control Clinic, East Melbourne, Victoria.

can disclose her abortion experience, and/or she has high self-efficacy”.<sup>2</sup> To support her position Allanson uses research and reports from a variety of organizations including the World Health Organisation as well as the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women’s Health.

2.2 As Liberty Victoria stated in its earlier submission the findings of the Senate Inquiry must rely on independent scientific evidence and cannot exclude evidence or research that does not comply with particular religious views. We suggest to the Senate Committee that they contact Dr Allanson to obtain a copy of the research she has undertaken in this area.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.