

Leichhardt Women's Community Health Centre Inc
55 Thornley Street Leichhardt NSW 2040
PO Box 240 Leichhardt NSW 2040
T: 9560 3011



17 January 2006

Senate Community Affairs Committee
Parliament House
Canberra
ACT 2600

Dear Committee Members,

Inquiry into Therapeutic Goods Amendment (Repeal of Ministerial responsibility for approval of RU486) Bill 2005.

We are a non-government women's health centre in Sydney's inner west. The majority of our clients live in Sydney's inner west, women also attend from Sydney's eastern and northern suburbs where there is no comparable women's health centre. Our services include general practitioner and women's health nurse clinics, alcohol and other drug counselling, assessment and referral, naturopathy and acupuncture and a group education/support program. In the 2004-5 year 84% of women attending the centre indicated they had an income of \$20,000pa or less.

The service's focus is on the particular issues affecting women including sexual health (including pap smears, breast checks, contraceptive advice, childbirth groups, menopause, sexually transmitted infections, thrush, continence); mental and emotional health including eating issues, depression, anxiety, stress and the health effects of violence and other health issues including Hepatitis C and chronic fatigue.

A strong ethos of this organisation is to provide women with extensive health information and to support women to make their own health care decisions. It is for this reason that we strongly support the lifting of the current restriction on RU486. It is not appropriate that this drug be made an exception to the accepted protocol where the Therapeutic Goods Administration has responsibility for regulating standards and availability of medication to Australians.

As you would know, one of the accepted uses of this medication is to procure a medical (non-surgical) abortion. This organisation supports women's rights to access non surgical abortion as an option when required and when recommended under medical advice. We join the many other organisations who support the lifting of the ban on this particular drug, including:

- * The World Health Organisation
- * The Royal Australian New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists

- * The Public Health Association of Australia
- * The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (UK)
- * The Australian Medical Association
- * The American Medical Association
- * American Association for Advancement of Science
- * Federal Drug Administration (US)
- * The Rural Doctors Association of Australia
- * Federation of International Gynaecology and Obstetrics (FIGO)
- * American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
- * Cochrane Collaboration

Medical decisions should be made on the basis of up-to-date medical evidence. In Australia, the Therapeutics Goods Administration is the appropriate body to monitor usage and standards of medication and RU486 should not be an exception.

Yours sincerely,

Roxanne Cameron
on behalf of the staff of Leichhardt Women's Community Health Centre
55 Thornley Street Leichhardt NSW 2040
T: 9560 3011 (ext 17)

Leichhardt Women's Community Health Centre Inc
General Practitioners
Alcohol and Other Drug counselling
Women's Health Nurse clinics
Assessment and referral
Education programs including groups, information evenings and outreach
talks in community venues
Naturopathy and Acupuncture
Limited long term counselling