

WIRE Women's Information
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16 January 2006

Dear Community Affairs Committee,

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

WIRE Women's Information is a statewide women's information and referral service across Victoria. We have contact with over 18000 women annually.

We would like to raise our concerns with yourselves related to the whether it is the role of the Minister for Health or any Minister to make a decision related to the availability of any drug and in this instance on the availability of RU486.

We believed the responsibility for such a decision is an explicit function of the Therapeutics Goods Administration TAG. The TGA is regarded by the Government as being qualified to manage the risks associated with any therapeutic goods that are used (or proposed for use) in Australia.

As such one could reasonably assume that it is also qualified to manage the risks associated with abortifacients such as RU486". We believe the attempt to shift the body responsible for this decision is related to this particular drug only.

We argue that it is the responsibility of the TAG, not politicians, religious leaders, academics or political activists to decide if RU 486 poses an unacceptable level of risk to Australian women.

Making a non-surgical option available to women will not increase the abortion rate

WIRE as a service along with the vast majority of Australians support a woman's right to choose and believe that abortion is a matter between a woman and her doctor.

We believe it is important that women in Australia like women in many other countries have the right to choose over a surgical or a medical abortion. We do not believe the availability of RU486 will result in an increase in women seeking an abortion but rather provide women and the medical profession with an additional choice in the method of termination.

We would argue that Medical abortion, like surgical, requires appropriate medical supervision and women in most states will still need to persuade a medical practitioner their abortion is "necessary" for them to comply with relevant state criminal codes regulating the procedure.

We urge you to consider this submission and ensure the decision about RU486 is one that remains with Therapeutics Goods Administration not with politicians or any other religious groups or body of people.

Yours sincerely

Samiro Douglas

MANAGER