

MEDIA RELEASE

Deceptive advertising has no place in Australian law Australians demand transparency in pregnancy counselling

Australians are writing in the thousands to their local papers, and their politicians, demanding an end to a loophole in the law that allows pregnancy counselling agencies to deceive and mislead women seeking help and advice for an unplanned pregnancy.

The campaign, launched yesterday by GetUp and Reproductive Choice Australia, is mobilising public support behind a cross-party Bill that requires *all* agencies to state in their advertising material whether or not they refer for termination of pregnancy. The Bill is co-sponsored by a new alliance of women senators.

“Most of us take it for granted that service providers aren't allowed to deceive and mislead us in their advertising,” said Reproductive Choice Australia President and Spokeswoman Dr Leslie Cannold. “Why should women in a time of crisis be legally allowed to deceive women by refusing to disclose their philosophy on abortion?” asked Dr Cannold.

“The current system is failing, and this failure is likely to affect many of the 50 per cent of Australian women who face an unplanned pregnancy at some point in their lives,” said GetUp's Campaigns Director, Lilian McCombs. “Thankfully, these women senators have united to do something about it. Now the public is rallying to support them, and rightly asking the Health Minister and Shadow Health Minister to do the same.”

The ***Pregnancy Counselling (Truth in Advertising) Bill 2006*** is co-sponsored by Senators Natasha Stott-Despoja (Democrats), Judith Troeth (Liberal), Carol Brown (Labor) and Kerry Nettle (Greens), **In just 24 hours more than 2,000 letters to newspaper editors around the nation have been sent in support of the Bill, with hundreds of phone calls, faxes and personal emails sent to decision-makers inside the Liberal and Labor parties.**

“The community pressure for transparency couldn't be more timely, with Tony Abbott's \$15.5 million 'Pregnancy Helpline' set to launch next Tuesday,” said Ms McCombs. “Consumers still don't know what services it will offer, despite recent findings showing 81% of Australian women want pregnancy counsellors to be able to refer for all three options: parenting, adoption and abortion.”

“This Bill should be the next RU486 – a win by women, for women. It simply requires honesty from agencies that claim to be there for women at a time of personal crisis,” said Dr Cannold. “We urge the ALP to listen to the community, and endorse the Bill at their National Conference this weekend.”

The campaign can be found online at:

www.getup.org.au/campaign/JoinVoicesForTransparency

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