



## **AUSTRALIANS AGAINST RU486: THE SAME OLD SHEEP IN A NEW SET OF CLOTHES**

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Today's "National Day of Action" is more of the same, from the same vocal minority, according to Dr Leslie Cannold, spokeswoman for Reproductive Choice Australia. "Australians Against RU486 is made up of the same vocal minority who have been fighting against proper evaluation of this drug from day one. The re-badge is a desperate attempt to disguise the fact that most Australians would like to see all the self-appointed experts step-aside so the proper authority for evaluating drugs, the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA), can do its job in relation to RU486".

1996 amendments to the Therapeutic Goods Act, which give ultimate power over whether the drug is properly evaluated to the Health Minister, have led to its effective banning in Australia. The Prime Minister has promised a conscience vote on a private member's bill to remove these amendments early in the 2006 Parliamentary year.

Opponents of choice are a minority in Australia. The 2003 Australians Survey of Social Attitudes found that 81.2% of Australians support a woman's right to choose, while data from the 2004 Australian Election Study found only 4% of Australians believe abortion should not be allowed in any circumstance. A 2006 survey by Newspoll showed a considerable majority of Australians favour RU486 being made available in Australia for use by qualified medical practitioners.

While nearly all those opposed to choice are religious Australians. 77% of religious Australians are pro-choice. Even a majority of Catholic and Evangelical Protestant Australians support a woman's right to choose, according to the 2003 Australian Survey of Social Attitudes.

"Legitimate research shows that Australian women, couples and patients would like to have the same opportunity as their counterparts in the US, the UK, New Zealand, and most of Western Europe to access RU486, which has not only been shown to be safe and effective in ending very early pregnancies, but has clinical benefits for patients suffering from a variety of serious and life-threatening illnesses", said Cait Calcutt, the coordinator of Children by Choice and a member of the Organising Committee of Reproductive Choice Australia.

Reproductive Choice Australia is a coalition of over 20 organisations including Sexual Health & Family Planning Australia, Children By Choice, the Public Health Association of Australia, the Australian Women's Health Network, the Women's Electoral Lobby, and all state based pro-choice coalitions.

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