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ETHICIST CALLS ON FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO DEFUND PREGNANCY COUNSELLING FAKES

In the wake of a successful cross party meeting with Federal parliamentarians in Canberra yesterday, Reproductive Choice Australia has launched a new analysis showing the 5 ways anti-choice pregnancy counselling services deceive pregnant women.

“They use false and misleading advertising,” says Dr Leslie Cannold, an RCA spokeswoman. “They use neutral names to conceal their anti-choice position. They answer telephone enquires evasively, they are directive in their counselling tactics rather than empowering women to identify their own values and act on them and they refuse to refer for abortion.”

According to Dr Cannold, “Legitimate pregnancy counselling allows the values of the woman drive the decision. The values of the counsellor or counselling organization shouldn’t enter it”.

“This is why”, she continues, “legitimate pregnancy counselling must support and refer for all three options with an unplanned pregnancy: adoption, parenting and abortion”.

Cannold, an ethicist at the University of Melbourne, believes the Federal government should not fund false providers. According to Senate Estimates, The Australian Federation of Pregnancy Support Services received \$245,580 in 2004/5.

The Prime Minister recently claimed such services deserve support because they offer an “alternative” to abortion. Cannold flatly rejects this. “All-options counselling offer women factual, up-to-date, unbiased information and support no matter what decision they make. Services that don’t do this - that let their own values drive the information and referrals process - are alternatives women can do without.”

At the very least, the RCA analysis concludes, false providers should be prohibited from engaging in false and deceptive advertising. “They should be required by law”, says Cait Calcutt, from Children by Choice, “to clearly state on all their advertising material that they will not refer for abortion and they should be prohibited from advertising on the 24 hour health and help call pages of each alphabetical public number directory.” A Democrats bill designed to achieve this, the Transparent Advertising and Notification of Pregnancy Counselling Services 2005, remains on the Senate notice paper.

For more information, contact Dr Leslie Cannold on 0417 114 859, or Ms Cait Calcutt, on 0413 800 842.