



22 July 2007

Re: Crimes (Decriminalisation of Abortion) Bill 2007

In its callous disregard for the value of human life, the great wrong of abortion touches on so much of what *Medicine With Morality* stands for.

The doctors of *Medicine With Morality* acknowledge the complexity and agony that women face in unwanted pregnancy. We pledge our support to women with unwanted pregnancy and to those who may be distressed because of previous abortion.

But we need to state that abortion is the killing of a human life – consistent with our view on the intrinsic value of all human life from the time of fertilisation as expressed in the *Manifesto of Human Life* as per our website. Though not yet expressed, individuality is inherent and real in the genetic programming from the time of fertilisation!

The present situation where so many abortions are performed in Australia in the name of 'family planning' we regard as being totally unacceptable and we oppose any legislation that will facilitate this further.

But it is not just the life of the unborn that is devalued – with all its implications – it is the life of the pregnant woman as well. The consequences for the pregnant woman will be argued cogently by others but in valuing her future health and relationships there is a need to fully discuss such matters as an essential part of the good medical practice of informed consent. *First, do no harm* applies to the pregnant woman as well as the unborn.

It is also necessary to examine other implications of abortion that are brought into sharp focus when considering abortion through to term as is proposed in Victoria.

Foetal pain.

This is a hotly debated issue but it has recently been argued that 24-week premature babies do actually feel pain and that withdrawal from noxious stimulus is more than reflex. Quite apart from the innate gruesomeness of abortion procedures that are performed in late pregnancy, the issue of foetal pain should concern us. There is surely a need to consider foetal anaesthesia for *Partial Birth Abortion* when the brain is sucked out after scissors have penetrated the base of the skull. Likewise for the scalding – internal and external – caused by hypertonic salt solutions? Why is even the *possibility* that such pain may be felt hidden from the mother?

Foetal abnormality.

Which lives should be terminated? And what does our answer say about our view of the disabled in our world? What does it mean to have a world free of 'imperfection' whatever

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that might mean to a particular generation or government? What implications does this have re cost to the community and distribution of scarce funds? Already parents refusing termination are being labelled as 'genetic outlaws' for bringing this 'financial impost on the community'. We are practicing eugenic purification without calling it that. This also raises the problem of incorrect intra-uterine diagnosis and prognosis of disability.

The stage of development at which termination occurs.

If termination for eugenic reasons is performed up to term then should this be extended – as has been suggested by very prominent ethicists – to early life outside the womb before self-awareness is apparent? How can this be resisted when it will be argued that infanticide with anaesthetic is more humane than partial-birth abortion as it can be performed *with no distress* to the now delivered infant?

These are some of the matters concerning the value of human life that impact when consideration is given to legalising abortion through to term. Those of the personal choice and autonomy mindset will continue to deny the reality of what is at stake both now and in the future but the threat to our society consequent upon the devaluation of human life is too great for us to ignore.

It is now incumbent on our Members of Parliament to uphold and preserve ethical and moral values that honour our country.

Dr Lachlan Dunjey MBBS FRACGP DObstRCOG (contact person)
33 Bunya St Dianella WA 6059
mob 0407 937 513

(signatories follow)

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