



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND COMMUNITY WELLBEING
Mr Johnathan Davis (Chair), Mr James Milligan MLA (Deputy Chair),
Mr Michael Petterson MLA

Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into Abortion and reproductive choice in the ACT

Submission Number: 07

Date Authorised for Publication: 6 September 2022

Standing Committee on Health and Community Wellbeing
ACT Legislative Assembly
Canberra ACT 2601

LACommitteeHCW@parliament.act.gov.au

12 August 2022



Dear Sir/Madam,

On behalf of the Australian Christian Lobby (ACL), thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the ACT Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Health & Community Wellbeing regarding the *Inquiry into abortion and reproductive choice in the ACT*. The Australian Christian Lobby (ACL) is a grassroots movement with around 250,000 supporters in Australia, approximately 3,400 of whom live in the ACT.

The Australian Christian Lobby strongly opposes the Minister for Women's recent announcement that the ACT Government intends providing access to free abortions, i.e., abortion services with no out-of-pocket expenses.^{1 2} The provision of 'free' abortions implies an expectation that there will be an increase in the number of abortions performed in the ACT. Abortion services with no out-of-pocket expenses makes abortions an unfortunate and routine alternative to safe and non-destructive contraceptives, particular for women in low socio-economic situations. **The Australian Christian Lobby opposes legislation that increases the number of abortions.**

Increasing accessibility to abortions –

- Amplifies human rights abuses. Research says 15% of people seeking counselling after unplanned pregnancies experience behaviour that interferes with their own decisions.^{3 4} Coercion by a partner to undergo an abortion is an abuse of human rights and the provision of free abortions feeds into that abuse.
- Increases the number of sex selection abortions which are already on the rise in Australia. Generally, between 102 to 106 boys are born for every 100 girls in world. For Indian and Chinese communities in Australia, the numbers are as high as 108.2 and 109.5 respectively, something experts say could indicate gender-selection abortions.⁵
- Although the ACT specifically allows abortions up to 16 weeks gestation, "In specific cases, the Canberra Hospital can provide abortions, including at later gestations."⁶ This is referred to as a 'late-term abortion.' Sometimes a baby is born alive in a 'late-term abortion' procedure. Between 2005 and 2015, 204 babies were born alive as a result of abortions in Queensland and in 2016 in Victoria, 33 out of 310 babies aborted after 20 weeks gestation were born alive.⁷ Increasing access to

¹ <https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/7846353/act-to-provide-free-abortions/> (accessed 11/08/2022)

² https://www.cmtedd.act.gov.au/open_government/inform/act_government_media_releases/yvette-berry-mla-media-releases/2022/canberrans-to-have-free-access-to-safe-abortion-services (accessed 11/08/2022)

³ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/03/australians-seeking-pregnancy-counselling-report-coercive-pressure-as-poll-shows-support-for-abortion-care> (accessed 11/08/2022)

⁴ <https://theconversation.com/how-forced-pregnancies-and-abortions-deny-women-control-over-their-own-bodies-96982> (accessed 11/08/2022)

⁵ <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-11030603/Gender-selective-abortions-Australia-rise-Indian-Chinese-communities.html> (accessed 11/08/2022)

⁶ <https://www.health.act.gov.au/services-and-programs/sexual-health/abortion-access> (accessed 11/08/2022)

⁷ <https://www.georgechristensen.com.au/bornalive> (accessed 11/08/2022)

abortions also increases the number of babies born alive as a result of botched abortions. A recent poll conducted by YouGov to a nationally representative sample of 1506 Australian voters online between 14-17 July 2021 indicated that 56% of voters agreed; *"They must be given medical care to the same extent as other premature babies. This would be life-sustaining care if they are viable and compatible with life"*. Only 18% of voters agreed; *"They should not be given medical care and can be allowed to die"*.⁸

SUMMARY

Providing free abortions potentially increases human rights abuses. The unintended consequences of free abortions, and increased accessibility to abortions, potentially increases human rights abuses. This is an unacceptable outcome.

One of the goals of the Standing Committee on Health and Community Wellbeing should be to reduce the number of abortions by providing:

- Education on suitable and safe contraception
- Pregnancy support for women in financial hardship
- Thorough background checks on abuse and coercion of pregnant women
- Government support for adoptions

The Australian Christian Lobby calls on the Committee to reconsider the consequences of providing free abortions and consider more positive outcomes for ACT women.

I am available to discuss any issues which may arise from this submission.

Yours sincerely,



Rob Norman
ACT Political Director, Australian Christian Lobby

⁸https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/qld/pages/355/attachments/original/1626905281/Cherish_QLD_Late_Term_Abortion_Results_July_2021_expanded.pdf?1626905281 (accessed 11/08/2022)