



SOUTH AUSTRALIAN TERMINATION OF PREGNANCY BILL 2020

Introduction - A new bill has been introduced to the South Australian parliament under the name 'Termination of Pregnancy Bill, 2020'. The Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA) has public teaching on abortion which holds that all unborn children are *'human lives created by God and so entitled to the care and preservation which God's command ('Do not murder') provides'*. As such the LCA already has a fundamental conflict with the South Australian abortion laws as they stand. However, this new bill seeks to further liberalize the existing laws and so raises even greater concerns about our society's attitude toward human life.

What the Bill seeks to change - This bill seeks to regulate abortion under the framework of healthcare rather than the criminal code and is being promoted mainly along these lines. However, the actual detail of the bill tells a different story. Currently in South Australia abortion is available until a maximum cut off of 28 weeks gestation with the agreement of two doctors, or after that to save the life of the mother. This new bill allows for abortion *on request* until 22 weeks and 6 days, and after that if two doctors consider it 'medically appropriate'. In this latter category no upper time limit is given, nor is the term 'medically appropriate' defined. Trends from other states, such as Victoria, show that it will include psychosocial reasons and congenital abnormalities that are compatible with life. There are other concerning details about the bill, e.g, it narrows the right to conscientious objection and seeks to allow the distribution of abortion pills in rural and remote locations where women may not have the requisite access to emergency care. Nevertheless, the extension of abortion effectively *up until birth* presents one of the more disturbing shifts. It will enable abortion of viable babies who would otherwise be capable of being born alive and living independently of their mothers.

How can we respond? We encourage all members of our Church to pray that our society is moved to the conviction that all life is sacred and so in need of protection. We are convinced this movement against life in our culture is far deeper than politics and legislation and involves what the Scriptures call 'spiritual forces' (Eph 6:12). Our main weapon in a spiritual battle is prayer, and so please pray.

We also encourage those who feel able to call, visit or write to your local member of the South Australian parliament and simply, clearly and politely express your concerns about this bill. Lutherans for Life are able to provide assistance with this if needed.

On a more personal level, a bill like this is also an opportunity for spiritual reflection for all of us. Does it lead us to repentance for our lack of respect for God's gift of life in various ways? Does it lead us to reach out to that single mother we know to offer a helping hand? Does it simply lead us to deeper gratitude for the gift of life in the children of our own families? We encourage you to consider another paper we have produced, entitled 'Culture of Life: 10 Steps the LCA and its members can take to help reduce the incidence of abortion.' This is available on our website at the following link: www.lutheransforlife.lca.org.au

Conclusion - We conclude by commending ourselves and our community to God's mercy.

Almighty God and Father,

We thank you for creating, redeeming and sanctifying each one of us, and for sharing with us the abundant life your Son brings. Forgive us our sins against your command 'Do not murder' and lead us to true repentance. Have mercy on us and on our whole society here in South Australia and around our nation. Move the hearts and minds of people to everywhere to cherish your gift of life at every stage. Provide for those fathers and mothers who struggle with unexpected pregnancies and open them to the gift of life you give. Give our political leaders and representatives clarity and courage to affirm life in our legislation and laws. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.