

LifeNEWS

PROMOTING THE SANCTITY OF LIFE



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Steps the LCA and its members can take to help reduce the number of abortions in Australia

Introduction

Did you know that approximately 70-80,000 abortions take place in Australia each year? This means that approximately 1 in 4 pregnancies end in abortion.¹

Research tells us that the typical woman seeking abortion is 20-29, single, childless, well-educated and employed.² Reasons women give for having an abortion tend to be psycho-social. They include: timing, feelings of un-readiness to be a mother, existing children, influence of others (family/partner), and inadequate financial resources or housing.³ As Christians, we are called to care for our neighbour, especially those who are most vulnerable. This includes advocating for the lives of the unborn. One of the best ways we can do this is by caring for expectant mothers.

While we understand that the tragedy of abortion can't be addressed with a simple 10-step solution, we offer the following suggestions about how the LCA and its members can help create a culture that values all human life, including life in the womb and the lives of

women facing difficult or unexpected pregnancies.

If you would like to read more general information about abortion in Australia see *Fact*

Sheet: General information about abortion in Australia on the LFL website, and if you would like to read more information about the reasons women give for having an abortion, see *Fact Sheet: Why do women have abortions?* Also on the LFL website.

What can we do/how can we help?

1. Encourage a culture of life in the home

Promoting a culture that values life starts within the home. It starts with how we treat our own children, spouse, and also members of our extended family. Do we treat them respectfully, as people who

have been made in the image of God? Do we love and serve them? Do we make time to listen to them and encourage them? When we serve one another as Christ serves us, we create a culture that values and affirms life as a gift, and not something to fear.

...continued on page 4

*This Issue**

1: REDUCING ABORTION THROUGH THE LCA/NZ

2: EDITORIAL

3: WORDS AND NUMBERS

6: SNIPPETS

8: REFLECTIONS ON 2018

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Editorial

KIMBERLEY PFEIFFER

Luther's two kingdom theology gives us confidence to engage with our culture on ethical issues. Luther holds that all Christians live in two realities: the eternal reality, as we exist before God (*coram Deo*), and the earthly reality, before the world or mankind (*coram mundi*). We live in eternity but also in time. Luther frequently asserted that these two kingdoms are entirely distinct yet God rules and reigns in both kingdoms - one by the Gospel and the other by the Law.

We Christians are citizens in both kingdoms. We become members of the kingdom of God by receiving Christ's righteousness passively through faith in Christ. We are justified by God and we become saints. As far as our earthly existence goes, we are but sinners living imperfectly under God's Law in the world.

The task of earthly government is to erect laws that benefit the whole community. These laws are not themselves God's Laws, at best they are imperfect replicas. But God does work through lawmakers and the laws in our land by bringing order and freedom to communities when laws are in keeping with the Law of God. Chaos and tyranny ensues when laws are outside of God's ordinances.

As Cathryn Zarnke from Queensland reminds us, the laws that have recently been passed in Australia suggest that we can expect greater community discord and more blatant injustice toward the unborn and vulnerable people. How these legislations will come to pass cannot be yet fully realised. Only time will tell.

What we can be sure of is that Christ is the king of this world. He is present in all and through all that is in this earthly kingdom.

As the LFL committee encourages us in this edition's lead article, we can promote a life-giving culture that is in keeping with God's love in our homes and churches. We can pray that God will bring grace - the riches of the Kingdom of God - to this weary world. We remember this as we prepare for Christmas: Christ has come, Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again.

Please continue to pray for the church in the world, that we can be confident as we serve our communities through promoting a culture of life. May the peace that passes all human understanding keep our hearts and minds safe in Christ Jesus.



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Words and Numbers

BY CATHRYN ZARNKE

Words and numbers are fundamental for obtaining and communicating quantitative truths, but the same words can be used to deceive or can be completely ignored.

Queensland's new abortion Bill uses the term "termination of pregnancy" to conceal the extent of the realities of the law change. It allows a woman to end her pregnancy at any stage up until birth without counselling or giving reason. The new law in Queensland is focused not on the termination of the pregnancy but the termination of the human life inside the mother's womb. It does not provide stipulations for babies born alive after a termination of pregnancy, for all pregnancies are eventually terminated; no one stays pregnant indefinitely.

It is not only the deceitful use of words but particularly the strange silence surrounding such socially changing legislation that has contributed to a lack of words from people who might otherwise have had something to say. Speaking at a number of Lutheran Churches in the Lockyer Valley prior to the passing of this bill, revealed that very few people were aware of any proposal to make such changes. Many struggled to believe our society could allow such killing of innocent life and talked of feeling numb, like they were in a dream or something. Words that are absent in the bill and media regarding the changed law, fail to communicate that masses of human lives will be able to be indiscriminately destroyed during these terminations. Fathers to children in the womb are left without rights to protect their unborn children, parents of pregnant minors need not be informed of the procedure, no counselling is required for people considering abortion, and medical professionals who refuse to refer for the operation

may face legal action. Something needed to be done.

Many Queenslanders did voice their opinion about this situation through polls, petitions and letter writing but the words and numbers did not change the situation. I and others wrote letters to James McDonald, Deb Frecklington and Annastacia Palaszczuk requesting a reconsideration of the Bill and a vote against the Bill which accurately reflects the desires of Queenslanders. According to an independent poll taken by YouGovGalaxy in February 2018, Queenslanders do not want the decriminalisation of abortion in Queensland. 62% of Queenslanders agreed that at 23 weeks gestation the foetus is a person with rights. 73% of Queenslanders opposed abortion at this stage with 60% in opposition at 13 weeks. 50 other members of Queensland Parliament voted for this state-sanctioned killing of unborn babies until birth (Cherish Life, 2018). Thankfully Labor MP for Bundamba, Joanne Miller, had the courage and integrity to cross the floor and vote against the bill.

Whatever the status of words and numbers, we as Christians can always pray to our Heavenly Father who listens to our prayers. We can speak the truth in love to others and write to our leaders. In Ohio recently, a bill was passed reversing the abortion laws to only allow the termination of pregnancies without a heartbeat (14 days after conception), a time when many people would not know they were pregnant, so this greatly reduces the number of lives lost to this heinous act. Let us continue to use our words and be part of the numbers that speak for the voiceless lives that count.

2. Encourage a culture of life in our local churches

Promoting a culture that values life also starts in our local churches. Do we welcome children and single parents into the church? Do we congratulate those who announce they are expecting a baby? Do we offer them love and support? As a church we are here to support all sisters and brothers in difficulty, including helping carry the load of a new baby. Some practical suggestions include:

- Encouraging one another to lend a hand and/or offer a word of encouragement to new parents, single parents and parents with multiple children.
- Arranging meal rosters for parents with new babies, and additional support for single parents or parents who have children with special needs.
- Taking steps to make our church a baby and child friendly environment. For example, ensuring change table facilities in both male and female toilets (it's not always mum who changes the baby's nappy!).
- Offering activities during the week like play groups or bible studies with child-minding facilities.

Initiatives such as these are important because they show that children are welcome in the church, and that the church is a place that supports those in need.

3. Promote an annual Life Sunday

LCA congregations might like to host an annual "Life Sunday" and use this opportunity to promote the value of human life, share stories that are life-affirming and suggest practical ways that we can assist those who are vulnerable. The festival of the Annunciation on March 25 (or the closest Sunday) would be especially appropriate for this. This could also provide an opportunity to pray as a church for babies in the womb, for their mothers and fathers (especially those facing "crisis" pregnancies), and those lives lost or affected by abortion. Mother's and Father's Day can also be times when prayers like these could be timely. See also point 8.

4. Acknowledge miscarriages and abortions

Many couples suffer the grief of miscarriages, which involves the loss of a child. As Christians we can offer pastoral care in private, and where

appropriate public acknowledgement in worship services to honour the life which has been lost. This is another aspect of cultivating a culture which values life in the womb, and so can offer encouragement for couples not to choose abortion.

Those who have had an abortion or have been involved in an abortion decision may also seek pastoral care. They may appreciate being offered private confession and absolution so that they can receive Christ's word of forgiveness. They might also appreciate being involved in a rite of prayer and remembrance for the unborn child that died.

5. Draw attention to the existence of the church's public teaching on abortion

Many people within our church are unaware that the LCA has public teaching on life issues, including the Doctrinal Statement and Theological Opinion ("DSTO") on abortion.⁴ The bishops and/or pastors may like to draw attention to this teaching from time to time, and suggest practical and life-affirming ways of bringing this teaching to life in the church.

6. Develop or support educational opportunities for youth and young adults

We live in a culture that regularly outsources many of the teaching areas that once were the domain of parents. This is often the case in Christian families too, with a tendency to leave instruction to schools and other institutions. In light of this, the church can encourage or support educational initiatives for youth and young adults that affirm the value of human life. This might include:

- Celebrating the miracle of life by looking at the development of life in the womb and biblical teaching about the value of the human from conception.
- Sharing pre-existing resources on various life issues. For example, Lutherans for Life has developed some group discussion/ bible study resources which are available on their website. See: lutheransforlife.lca.org.au
- Offering values-based sex and relationship education which explores God's design for sex within the context of marriage, and connects the reality of sex and babies.

Many secular sex education organisations promote contraception as the answer to reducing abortion. However, no contraception is 100% effective and young people need to be taught that pregnancy is always a possible result of sex between a man and a woman. Some Australian organisations which teach a more values-based approach to sex education include the following:

- SA: beREADY – <http://www.beready.net.au/org/programs/>
- ACT/NSW: Choicez Media – <https://www.choicez.com.au/>
- NSW/National: Your Choicez – <http://yourchoicez.com.au/>

7. Support pregnancy and post-birth support agencies

Around Australia there are numerous agencies who extend care, compassion and material assistance to women and children in need. Other pregnancy and post-birth counselling and support organisations are listed on Lutherans for Life's website.⁵ These organisations are most worthy of our attention, promotion and financial support. Our own Lutheran Community Care (mostly in Adelaide) lists on their website: Assistance to Families/Parenting Support, Playgroups, Counselling, Support and Information for Teenage Mothers, New Parent Support Groups.⁶

8. Advocate for the unborn and the vulnerable

The LCA can continue to encourage and equip its members and Assistant to the Bishop in Public Theology to:

- Engage in parliamentary inquiries and other processes with respect to abortion law and other issues.
- Speak to MPs about pregnancy counselling that truly explores all options for pregnant women.
- Speak to MPs and encourage all State and Territory governments to keep complete data, and report on abortion numbers.

9. Pray as a Church and as individuals

As Christians we are called to pray for those in need, including babies in the womb and their mothers and fathers, especially those in crisis. We also need to pray that we will serve one another at these times in Christian love. See also the comments above under point 3.

1 John 5: 14-15 says "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him".

10. Preach the Gospel, make disciples and teach our true identity as Christians

We can also pray that as we preach the Good News the Holy Spirit will bring people to faith in Jesus Christ. As Christians we are given a new identity – an identity that embraces a culture of life rather than a culture of death. In our Baptism, Jesus Christ restored our identity as "heirs" of eternal life and through Christ's sacrifice we are declared holy and equipped by the Holy Spirit to love and care for the most vulnerable, including the unborn and those facing crisis pregnancies.

Conclusion

Abortion is common in Australia, and no doubt affects people within our pews. This is not just a women's issue. For every woman that has an abortion there is a father and two wider families that are potentially affected.

The LCA and its members can help reduce the incidence of abortion by taking steps to create a culture that values life in all its stages, and by bringing Christ's life-giving word into pastoral situations.

Further reading

For more general information about abortion in Australia see *Fact Sheet: General information about abortion in Australia* and *Fact Sheet: Why do women have abortions?* on the LFL website www.lutheransforlife.lca.org.au.

1. <http://notbornyet.com/real-information/>
2. *Abortion or Termination of Pregnancy Facts, Abortion FAQ Australia*: <http://abortion-faq.com.au/abortion-faqs/pregnancy-termination-facts/>.
3. Kirkman, M., Rowe, H., Hardiman, A., Mallett, S., & Rosenthal, D. (2009). *Reasons women give for abortion: a review of the literature*. *Archives of Women's Mental Health*, 12(6), 365-378.
4. <https://lca.box.net/shared/static/nt26xftbkh0uz7gxicom.pdf>
5. <http://www.lutheransforlife.lca.org.au/public-resources/pregnancy-support/>
6. <https://www.lccare.org.au/about-us/where-to-find-us/>

NSW Premier commits to new Zoe's law to recognise foetus

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Gladys Berejiklian has promised to introduce new laws to recognise the death of an unborn child killed during a criminal act if her government is returned at the state election in March. The proposed bill is being carefully framed to exclude abortion and to define a foetus as being a minimum of 24 weeks. This is the third attempt at such a law since Brodie Donegan lost her unborn baby Zoe after being struck by a drug-affected driver in 2009.

Euthanasia around Australia

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Victoria

The Hope team write that the election result in Victoria (on 24 November) is a devastating blow for the vulnerable people in that state, who will be at great risk under the voluntary assisted dying (lethal dose) law to come into effect on 19 June 2019. Before the election the familiar voice of Andrew Denton was heard by thousands of voters on robocalls, playing on the fears of the elderly that they faced dying painful deaths. No mention of the advances in palliative care, which continues to need greater funding to ensure that non-violent end of life care is available to every person who needs it. The Victorian law will allow a person affected by depression to access euthanasia provided they appear to have decision-making capacity. Paul Kelly comments - "It is surely extraordinary that people sceptical of the ability of governments to get trains running on time fool themselves into thinking they can confidently manage a regime that sanctions the termination of human life."
(www.no euthanasia.org.au)

Western Australia

Also in November the WA Labor government announced that it is pushing ahead with legalising assisted dying (lethal dose), despite the advice of palliative care specialists in that state. Progressive politicians are saying they will vote for the new law even before the bill is drafted. The Select Committee into Elder Abuse found that up to 75,000 older people in WA are at risk of elder abuse, mostly by perpetrators who are closely related to the victim. Scaring people into thinking that a lethal injection is their best option at the end of life is a recipe for elder abuse. Activist Dr Philip Nitschke goes a step further and argues that personal autonomy means a lethal dose is the right of every adult person who is of sound mind. Tamara Tabo notes that we have yet to discover a poison which cannot have unpleasant side effects. Oregon USA has used pentobarbital for over 90 per cent of assisted suicides, and Tabo finds "the risk of an extended, painful death is very high."
(www.no euthanasia.org.au)

Queensland

With this parliament having only one house it is easier for the government to push new laws through swiftly, as they did with their bill to allow abortion right up to the time of birth. Labor premier Palaszczuk announced in November an inquiry into end of life choices including voluntary assisted dying (lethal dose) law, to report by 30 November 2019. The inquiry will look for evidence that the (60 plus) safeguards around the new law in Victoria are effective. Again, the premier and many others already hint that they favour such a law. Joseph Parkinson comments - "If all suicides are tragic, how can some suicides be considered good - and indeed, authorised by the state?"
(www.theaustralian.com.au)

New Zealand parliament expected to pass a new abortion law

The mainstream media in NZ are saying that abortion should become a health issue, not a crime. Umm .. it hasn't been a crime for 40 years, and no woman was ever convicted. Since 1977 there have been more than 500,000 abortions in NZ. There were 13,285 abortions reported last year. The Law Commission reports that 69 per cent of 3,419 submissions received support the current law or one that protects the life of the unborn baby.

(www.chooselife.nz)

United Nations: Right to life means states must provide abortion

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which is binding on all member states of the UN, states: "Every human being has the inherent right to life. This right shall be protected by law. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his life." (art.6 (1) There is no mention of abortion anywhere in the ICCPR. The UN Human Rights Committee has now decided this article requires states "to provide safe, legal and effective access to abortion where the life and health of the pregnant woman or girl is at risk, and where carrying a pregnancy to term would cause the pregnant woman or girl substantial pain or suffering, most notably where the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest or is not viable."

It also calls on states to remove criminal sanctions on abortionists who provide illegal abortions, to remove existing barriers to abortion, and urges them not to introduce new barriers, including barriers created by health care workers exercising their right to conscientious objection. Many nation states, notably in Africa, have rejected this advice. (www.spuc.org.uk)

What price for a wanted human embryo?

An unprecedented legal case over the loss of 50 embryos at a fertility clinic following a power blackout plus the failure of a back-up generator in 2016 has been settled out of court by the SA state government. Each couple or single who lost embryos has received a payment of \$20,000, and excluded from legal costs. One mother who lost 12 embryos said a payment of \$1,666 for each of them was ridiculous. The court treated the embryos as property and ignored the emotional impact on the parents. The Crown Solicitor's office found a human embryo has no value in law, and an unborn baby has no rights in law until born alive.

(www.adelaidenow.com.au)

International commercial surrogacy remains a global problem

Men and women from places like the USA, Canada, Australia, Germany and the Netherlands travel to places like Thailand, Nepal, Mexico, Laos and Cambodia to take advantage of lax legislation, inequality and extreme poverty. Women and girls are trafficked out of their homes and held captive while they breed babies to be sold. Surrogacy has become a bazaar where would-be parents are overcharged and surrogate mothers are underpaid. Babies born with any defect or simply the wrong gender are abandoned in the street. In 2015 commercial surrogacy was banned in India, but sadly it has moved to countries where the laws are more lax.

(www.mercatornet.com)

Reflections on Life: 2018

BY DR ROB POLLNITZ



December 7 is one year since our federal parliament voted in favour of same-sex marriage, and from my point of view that began a disappointing year for pro-lifers and Christians and conservatives. At the time my medical colleague Dr David van Gend wrote - "For gentle gay couples who need social affirmation, this law will bring comfort. But for serious LGBTQ activists, this debate has never been about marriage - which they despise - but about power: capturing the legal high ground from where their full coercive agenda can be implemented .. same-sex marriage remains forever untrue and unjust, untrue to nature, which alone defines the male-female essence of marriage; unjust to future children who will be deprived, by law, of their mother or their father. Corrupting of our children's minds through the imposition of disturbing and indecent LGBTQ sex education and gender ideology. Coercive of any who dissent from the new gay orthodoxy, harassed into silence by anti-discrimination law."

The year began with a Queensland push for the legalisation of abortion right up to the time of birth, with the consent of two (abortion clinic) doctors, on any grounds including psycho-social reasons. Our federal government decided to provide an extra \$19 million of our tax money to help strengthen sexual and reproductive health (read abortion) in the Indo-Pacific region. The Daniel Andrews Labor government in Victoria formed an "expert" panel tasked with creating "safe" assisted suicide laws. The Millennium Cohort Survey followed the lives of

20,000 children born across the UK between 2000 and 2002, and found that children really do benefit from living with two married biological parents. Our Northern Territory passed a new abortion law to allow the use of RU486 for abortions up to 9 weeks, despite evidence that the drug is not safe to use in rural and remote areas. In Western Australia new Labor premier Mark McGowan called for euthanasia (legal doses) to be legalised. All of this in the first half of 2018. The busy little one-house parliament in the NT then sought to overturn the federal law preventing them from passing assisted suicide legislation, and this attempt was defeated 36-34 votes in the federal senate. A busier one-house parliament (Queensland) decided in September to join the push towards "dying with dignity" law. It was reported that suicide rates in Australia rose in 2017 to the highest rate in a decade, with the 3,128 deaths being a 9.1 per cent increase over the previous year. Over 75 per cent of Australian suicides are male, with six men taking their lives each day. In November the Victorian government announced a \$6 million grant to a deceptively named "palliative care support line" for when their lethal dose law begins in June 2019. The successful provider will also be compelled to provide advice on the lethal dose option. All along, disability groups have pointed out the inherent discrimination and empty pretence of safeguards in this law. Why does everyone else get suicide prevention while old, frail and disabled people get suicide assistance?

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