

THE FAMILY REALLY DOES MATTER

Executive Summary

The policy discussion paper “the Family Really Does Matter” argues

- 1 The basic unit of society over thousands of years is the family and the cornerstone of the family is marriage, the union of one man and one woman.
The traditional family should be promoted, supported maintained and protected by government policy and government funded agencies.
- 2 The content of “Family Impact Statements” which accompany Cabinet submissions, must be made public and not shrouded in the charade of Cabinet confidentiality.
- 3 The overwhelming conclusion to be drawn from research in Australia, United Kingdom United States/America and Europe is that the Australian Government and business must rethink child care policies. The damaging effect of long periods in day care for infants from 0-3 years is building a huge future problem of anxiety, depression suicide and self harm, insecurity, attention deficit disorders, violence, eating disorders, binge drinking and illicit drug use.
The importance of infant/parent bonding and nurturing in the first three years dictates that mothers and fathers must be widely informed of the consequences of day care and being informed given true freedom of choice as to whether or when to return to the work force. This can be facilitated by:
 - (i) Community education
 - (ii) a home childcare allowance
 - (iii) enhanced parental leave
 - (iv) more flexible working hours and
 - (v) return to work security.The image and role of motherhood should be strongly promoted.
- 4 Pre-marriage education and counselling should be strongly encouraged to start reducing the rate of family breakdown and divorce whereas Family Relationship Centres should focus on sustainable ways to save marriages particularly where it is in the best interest of any children.
The Child Support Agency should only be involved after all avenues of compromise are exhausted.
- 5 It is time for Australia to rescind the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and replace it with an Australian Charter of Family Rights and Responsibilities (ACFRRF) which makes it clear that parents’ rights are paramount and that children have responsibilities as well as rights.
To do so will be the starting point in reversing the “Powerlessness of Parents”.

- 6 The Howard Government should abandon its internet filtering scheme and introduce legislation for mandatory filtering at ISP level or higher to block sexually explicit and other damaging material.
- 7 Current illicit drug strategies are not working and should be replaced with a policy of
- Community wide education of the dangers;
 - Criminal sanctions for possession;
 - extremely tough penalties for traffickers, dealers, growers, manufacturers, financiers, legal and financial advisers and those involved in official corruption;
 - genuine long term rehabilitation programmes
- Over time this policy will marginalise illicit drug use toward achieving a drug free society.
- 8 Special measures are necessary to tackle children's health issues including a greater focus on early intervention and the development of clinics which pursue drug free solutions to ADHD.
- 9 With nearly 8000 lives terminated and thus wasted each year in Western Australia alone there needs to be a complete rethink of the issues of sex education and respect for life values to bring young people an alternative message and to encourage adoption as a preferable alternative to abortion.
- 10 The Howard Government's baby bonus scheme needs to be seriously overhauled to include the following principles
- (i) only heterosexual married couples are eligible
 - (ii) the bonus amount should be paid in instalments tied to milestones eg birth-immunisation - participation in a parenting programme (eg Triple P) etc
 - (iii) the bonus amount should continue to increase each year until the amount is shown to have a positive effect on fertility rates.

THE FAMILY REALLY DOES MATTER

“The basic unit of society is the family, and the cornerstone of the family is marriage, the union of one man and one woman. Deeply rooted in all societies, marriage is a fundamental social institution that has been tested and reaffirmed over thousands of years. Children especially, need marriage. The family yields significant ‘social capital’ and other benefits to society and children in an intact family have the most promising life prospects. Parents have the right and responsibility to oversee the education and upbringing of their children” (i)

Therefore “the family merits the great attention it receives from both scholars and lay persons, for despite major changes over time and enormous variations across social and economic environments, it remains the most influential of all institutions” (ii)

It follows that the traditional family should be promoted, supported, maintained and protected

by government policy. The Family Law Court and the Australian Institute of Family Studies (funded by the Commonwealth Government) should be obliged to support the social utility of marriage.

Some Major Issues Affecting the Family

1 Family Impact Statement

CNI is pleased to see a “Family Impact Statement” is now in place to examine the possible consequences of policy decisions on the family, before Cabinet decisions are made. These family impact statements must be made public not shrouded in Cabinet confidentiality as at present.

2 Promoting the Family

(a) In John Stone’s ‘Australian Social Trends 2005,’ he discusses the encouraging economic changes of the last decade. Though many were positive “not all indicators are so comforting,” he said, especially data relating to families. Of all families with children under 15, the proportion of those living in one parent families rose from 16.4% in 1995 to 20.8% in 2004. Since research points overwhelmingly to the fact that children in intact families are less likely to live in poverty, tend to perform better educationally and socially and have a smaller proportion of drug takers, this is an issue that should be of great concern to Governments. We should be exploring every means of keeping families together.

(b) Who brings up baby?

Why is it that mothers who choose to return to the workplace soon after the birth of their child receive a child minding allowance from the Government, yet the mother who stays at home to care for her child has no equivalent allowance available to her?

Over 600,000 children are involved in child care in Australia with a public subsidy of over \$1.5 billion annually. But this raises many questions about how parental absence affects the child.

Steve Biddulph says “Nurseries, once hailed as the way to give our kids good social skills, have been found in recent studies to be a poor substitute for one to one care. We know that a baby’s brain is shaped in the first three years and that affection and responsiveness are the keys to a happy confident life.” Dr. Steve Biddulph has been researching children in childcare for three decades in UK, Sweden, US and elsewhere and has reversed many of his ideas on the value of child care to children. (iii)

“As parents, we set our children’s emotional tone for life. This is written into the structure of the brain in the first three years, so it is worth going slow,” he says .

Dr. Biddulph notes that while researching this book he talked to nursery-care staff in centres all over the world. He said their honesty was often stunning - it was as if they had been waiting to tell someone the truth about what they really thought. (iv)

The tendency in Australia for Government policy to provide more day care subsidies than home care assistance, is extremely short sighted and out of kilter with what research is finding.(v)

Madelaine Bunting reports for The Guardian. (13/2/07), that in the past 2 decades we have revolutionised how we care for children in the first 3 years of life. In 1981 only 24% of women returned to the workforce within a year of childbirth. In 2001 it was 67% and rising. The number of child care places has quadrupled in a decade. Now Mr Blair is promising nursery education for all 2 yr olds.

“But the popularity of this revolution is at odds with what the experts are saying:- research on both sides of the Atlantic has reached remarkably similar conclusions: namely that large quantities of care in day nursery before the age of three increases the incidence of insecurity and aggression in children and that these damaging effects are still evident years later.”

Child expert Penelope Leach agrees.

Since 1998 she has been co-director of the largest ever UK childhood study: Families, Children and Childcare (FCCC).

She says “It is fairly clear from data from different parts of the world that the less time children spend in group care before 3yrs, the better.”

And “The trend towards more day nurseries is out of kilter with what the research is finding.” She has been urging better paid parental leave policies.

This view is replicated in America in the national Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) and again from Prof. Jay Belsky and colleague Prof. Ted Melhuish at Birbeck University of London.

They point to the case of Sweden as evidence of what parents might want if they had a real choice.

The Swedish case is very revealing - there was high quality infant care available to all and heavily subsidised. It was widely used in the 70s and 80s, but in the early 90's parental leave was increased and now there is remarkably little use of childcare under 18 months. Parents voted with their feet.

All researchers agree on one factor, the importance of infant/parent bonding and how closeness of the relationship immunises a child against future stresses and develops resilient mental health. - Infant parent bonding cannot be achieved in a child care centre.

In the United Kingdom rapid adoption of nursery care in childrens' early years has been a huge social experiment. The first generation of these babies is now in their teens and twenties - a generation in crisis!

- Teens with behavioural problems have doubled since 1980,
- Anxiety and depression have risen by 70%
- In Britain 24,000 teens were admitted to hospital following an attempted suicide.
- Rise in self harm is 65% in 2 years.
- Attention problems, violence, eating disorders, binge drinking has risen dramatically.

The danger signs are there for us to see.

In relation to Australian children Professor Fiona Stanley highlights an “epidemic of emotional and behavioural problems and increased rate of depression, anxiety and teenage suicide.” She suggests some of these problems in today's teenagers could be blamed on a lack on nurturing at an early age by working mothers. (vi)

As Steve Biddulph suggests in more advanced countries such as Sweden Governments are moving towards the “Big Three”:-

- Paid parental leave
- flexible working hours and
- return to work security and to do so would be a more effective use of taxpayers funds (vii).

This encourages mothers to defer career options while their children are very young but at the same time provide more freedom of choice.

The Swedish approach would appear to be the right one as in a UN survey of childhood well-being in 21 developed countries Sweden is ranked in the top three by comparison the UK is ranked last, the USA second last and Australia in the middle of the range. (viii)

Australian mothers must be given true freedom of choice as to whether they wish to stay home to care for their children or whether they wish to return to the workforce. The inequity of the taxation system which penalises the single income family versus the dual income family must be corrected. This can be done by restructuring the Federal Government’s Family Tax Benefit arrangements to effectivity provide a home child care allowance (HCCA) as a substantial direct payment to mothers or (fathers) who choose to stay at home to care for their children.

For those who choose not to stay at home there should be no obligation on Government to subsidize their childcare costs.

It can be argued that to place very young children into day care at child care centres in the knowledge of the deleterious effects which flow from these would be in a sense “bad parenting”.

Well respected Canadian Dr. Mustard, a medical doctor who has specialised in childhood development, has cited the latest research into the human genome to warn governments and parents of bad early-childhood environments. He says “Gene structures are susceptible to nurture, touch, sleep, movement, smell and so on” Genes for learning problems - and more serious problems such as depression and anti-social behaviour - could be turned on by bad early-childhood environments.

But good environments could lead to genetic structures that were resilient and could “insure against” learning difficulties and more serious problems. (ix)

Spending a year or more in a long-day care centre increases the likelihood that a child will be disruptive at school according to a recent study by National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (x)

The overwhelming conclusion to be drawn from all of this research is that the Australian Government must change direction and accept an obligation to inform families of these research results so that being informed they can make better choices about what they want for their children. To help them do so key policy changes must include a substantial HCCA, more

generous parental leave, more flexible working hours and return to work security. Government must also work with employers to encourage and facilitate training and education of young people to effectively fill the gaps as more mothers choose to stay at home.

Failure to do so will lead to a bleak and costly future of rising levels of mental illness in the nation's young.

(c) The image and role of motherhood should be strongly promoted. As Dr Elizabeth Reid Boyd lecturer in International, Cultural and Community Studies at Edith Cowan University, says, "all mothering work is undervalued." (xi) We need to value this as the most important work of all.

3 The Lost Art of Childhood

Is modern life killing off childhood?

Eminent Australian and British childhood experts agree that our fast paced lifestyle, electronic entertainment, rampant consumerism and advertising aimed at ever younger children, is producing what psychologist Dr Michael Carr-Gregg calls "age-compression". He says, "We're fast tracking children into adolescence - seeing little girls behaving as teens." (Reported by Jane Hutchinson for Sunday Times 10/12/2006).

In October 2006 Canberra based 'Australia Institute' released a report slamming media and advertisers for "sexualising children via a barrage of suggestive images and inappropriately sophisticated information." In the report, 'Corporate Paedophilia', Dr Emma Rush points to advertisements showing children in provocative poses, Tween magazines featuring make-up fashion labels and star gossip way ahead of their age group.

Gillian Calvert, the Commissioner for Children and Young People in New South Wales, says for the first time in history, companies are marketing their products to children. "The problem is, developmentally, children don't have the capacity to understand that marketing, in order to make informed choices or resist it": Ms Calvert says, "As a society we should be asking: Does it benefit kids? If it doesn't, should we be doing it?" (Taken from Teen Queens, Sunday Times 10/12/06).

As one journalist remarking on why he brought his family home from Britain said, "The children of Britain seem to be in some futuristic time tunnel that makes them look, think and behave like adults way before their time."

But are children any different here in Australia?

Dr Jensen, Archbishop of Sydney believes we've lost the art of raising kids. "Children have abundant material possessions but suffer from a serious hope deficit. It's not as though most parents have suddenly become unloving or neglectful. It is just that we have forgotten some of the basic arts of raising children." (West Australian 18/9/06)

4 Family Law and Divorce

'A New Family Law System' as of July 2006, contains many positive initiatives particularly for separating couples, with more equity in child support, access and shared responsibility for children. However serious concerns remain especially in stemming the ever rising divorce

rate, highest in WA.

Family Relationship Centres are a great step forward but 65, (only 15 in 2006), is not nearly enough. “Divorce has to be the biggest cause of deep unhappiness in Australia thanks to a culture that has elevated choice while down grading commitment,” writes Andre Malan. (xii)

These Relationship Centres need to be readily accessible to people in crisis and staffed with people who have the necessary skills to help people resolve difficulties. Anecdotal evidence points to so called ‘counsellors’ being more interested in how to ‘divvy up’ the assets rather than seeking a sustainable way to save the marriage.

The Relationship Centres therefore need very clear guidelines on their function and the goal to save marriages where possible and in the best interest of the children. The guidelines need to ensure that both males and females are treated fairly and bias is eliminated.

Pre marriage counselling should be strongly encouraged and promoted as should early preparation by teaching at high school about the social utility of marriage.

5 Fatherless Families

Social changes of the last twenty years or so, have left many fathers feeling confused and devalued. Their fathers’ role was clear cut as families lived generally on one income, (usually that of the fathers), and the mother was largely the primary carer of children and the homemaker. With the advent of ‘equal opportunity’, made easier by the arrival of “the pill” and legal abortion, the whole social fabric was shifting - women delayed having families and entered the workforce. Many women sought independence from homes and marriages and divorce rates soared. This means hundreds of thousands of children are left with only one parent and we know that after some years, the parent who is not the major care-giver often disappears out of his or her life.

According to Steve Biddulph writing in ‘Manhood - An Action Plan for Changing Men’s Lives’, boys need men (preferably their fathers) to turn boys into safe, life-loving men. But the reality of it is a great number of boys are horrendously under-fathered. Speaking to dads they say, ‘We should never underestimate the importance of children seeing you aligned with your wife in thought and action.’ Male psychology has identified “father hungry” as a most important cause of grief, loneliness and lack of emotion.

Boys need the pleasure of doing and making, striving together, learning the joy of being a man from men who knew these things and are willing to share them. Sons especially need their fathers’ love and approval.

However Dr Bruce Ellis, psychologist in Sexual Development at the University of Canterbury in Christchurch (cited in ‘Early Menarche in Catalyst, ABC TV 2/10/03) says “There seems to be something special about the role of fathers in regulating daughters sexual development.”

Studies across different cultures have found that girls raised without fathers are more likely to become sexually active earlier, become pregnant as teenagers, have pre-marital births and broken marriages.

Surely society should aim to preserve marriage, and where that is not possible, value the role of the father, giving him every opportunity to play a meaningful part in the upbringing of his children.

6 Child Support Agency (CSA): A misnomer?

Frequently the services of the CSA only aggravate the delicate balance in affairs between separating couples. The Government must provide sufficient funds for mediators so that couples can negotiate an arrangement which is fair and equitable and gives each party the best opportunity to rebuild their lives. This is crucial to the well being of the children. The CSA should only be involved after all avenues of compromise are exhausted

7 The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

The UNCRC should be replaced with an Australian Charter of Family Rights and Responsibilities of the Family (ACFRRF) which makes clear that parents rights are paramount and that children have responsibilities as well as rights. For too long well meaning agents have espoused the rights of children whilst neglecting their reciprocal duty of responsibility. This should be enshrined in ACFRRF. The UNCRC has led to what might be termed “the Powerlessness of Parents”.

8 (i) The UNCRC and the Powerlessness of Parents

As pointed out in 1997 in CNI’s submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties there were, and we believe, there remain, many flaws in adoption of these “Rights” including:

- Inherent dangers in issuing a detailed list of “rights” without any corresponding obligations ie. giving the message to children that it is all “one-way”, that they have all the rights and parents have none. Is this really the self-centred message we want our children to grow up with?
- It does not give any message about “compromise”ie, relationships are all about compromise so we are not teaching our children the basic ingredient of family life.
- It does not give any credence to family discussion or problem solving but rather implies that the “Government” will somehow make it all happen. In fact the UNCRC states “that the Government has a responsibility to make sure your rights are protected and they will help your family to protect your rights....”
- There is overwhelming evidence that providing our children with these rights has either lead to new problems or at the least has not solved the big problem areas:- eg the problems facing many indigenous children have not been alleviated (Hall’s Creek);
- Whether or not parents actually agree with the Rights, due to overwhelming media pressure, they are taking on the principles anyway.
- Misinterpretation and simplification by parents - ie. “We no longer have any rights therefore it is not our fault that our children are on the streets, stealing, vandalising etc for example a report in the press in 2005 detailing a huge increase in Violence Restraining Orders - VRO’s - taken out by parents against their children, at that date

at least 30 per month. Although many of these are desperate parents who have tried their best, it has also been suggested that children were increasingly becoming the victims of parents looking for an ‘easy fix’.

(It is quite difficult and time consuming to discipline children and the “rights” can be used as an excuse.)

- Childhood obesity/Type 2 Diabetes/Anorexia and many other health problems may be put down to the powerlessness of parents. There is overwhelming media advertising, peer’s etc. putting pressure on parents to feed their children unhealthy food and drink. Have parents still the right to set what their children can and cannot eat and drink?
- Teenagers are still becoming “homeless”/Contracting Sexual and other communicable diseases at ever increasing and younger rates - children often interpreting the boundaries set by parents as contravention of their “rights”. Parents can be powerless in the face of officialdom and are unable to set the boundaries for their children.
- The child’s right to freedom of information is particularly problematical in relation to Internet pornography as discussed at (9) below.
- The fact that medical and sexual health problems can be, and no doubt are being, discussed with the child in the absence of a parent? In some cases children would be encouraged to discuss their problem with their parents but there is apparently no legal requirement for parents to be informed.

9 Pornography on the Internet

Research shows that minors including young children, are exposed both accidentally and deliberately to sexually explicit material via the Internet. Internet pornography merchants are resorting to ingenious tactics to ensure that net surfers can even accidentally come across pornographic images.

One of the really big concerns about the Internet is the explosion in the number of sites devoted to paedophilia including ‘Chat rooms’. In Victoria police recently uncovered a ‘slave market’ where paedophiles were swapping children.

The Federal Government says it will roll out a system offering all households Internet filters commencing this year at an estimated cost of \$93million. The evidence, however, is that such a system will fail as it relies on the vigilance, time and commitment of parents to effect the filtering. In relation to school and library computers it relies on the integrity of school principals and Council librarians to install the filtering. The pornography and paedophilia merchants are also likely to outsmart the most diligent efforts of committed parents, school principals and librarians as recently discovered by a team of researchers at the university of New Hampshire in USA. (xiii)

The dangers to children, families and the community at large are obvious. This must stop.

We call on the:

“The Howard Government to abandon its Internet filtering scheme and to introduce legislation for mandatory filtering to block sexually explicit and other damaging material at ISP level or higher.” (The Opposition has already given a partial commitment in this regard.)

10 Illicit Drugs

In Australia - Closer to the Brink? (xiv) CNI outlined a detailed policy aimed at achieving a drug free society through:

- Community wide education of the dangers
- Criminal sanctions for possession
- Extremely tough penalties for traffickers, dealers, growers, manufacturers, financiers, legal and financial advisers and those involved in official corruption.
- Genuine long term rehabilitation programmes.

These policy initiatives must be adopted and pursued vigorously if the scourge of illicit drugs devastating young lives and many, many families is to be gradually eliminated.

Governments should be alarmed at the experience in Western Australia where about 350 women addicted to illicit drugs, gave birth at the State's main maternity hospital; this is about 7% of births at the hospital. The drug related damage to the infant can lead to serious mental and physical problems and developmental delay. Continued drug use by the mother leads to child neglect and a consequent huge cost to the State.

The "soft on drugs" harm minimisation policies of the States and the ineffectively implemented "Tough on Drugs" policy of the Commonwealth Government have contributed to the increasing drug problem and will never correct it. There is no validity in the term "recreational drugs" and the term must be expunged from all official literature.

11 School Chaplains.

The Howard Government is to be congratulated on its initiative to provide funds for chaplains in schools, however there needs to be a great deal more detail. School chaplains have proved invaluable in some West Australian schools where they work under the banner of Youth Care. It is not their role to proselytise but to offer support for children, families and staff in bereavement, accidents, family breakdown, illness etc and to co-ordinate mentoring programmes for students experiencing difficulties.

12 Health

The problem of obesity is an ever escalating one, bringing with it the added dangers of diabetes and other health issues.

As a matter of priority governments should:

- ban junk food (pies, cordials etc) in school canteens
- provide more positive education in schools and the media about healthy eating choices.
- proscribe the re-instatement of compulsory physical education and sport to the school curriculum.
- deem allowing children to become obese as a form of child abuse.
- early intervention programmes for children's health and behaviour should be strengthened and adequately funded NOT scaled down as is the case in Western Australia.
- finance and promote more clinics, such as that at Bentley Hospital, Western Australia, focussing on drug free solutions for children diagnosed with attention deficit

hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)

13 Abortion

“Pregnancy Shock” One in Four Babies Aborted.”

This was the headline for a report by Cathy O’Leary “The West” 20/7/’05

More than 1500 teenagers, (35 under 15), had pregnancies terminated in 2003 according to WA Health Dept. report. The report contains the first official abortion statistics compiled in Western Australia and shows 7,847 abortions were carried out in WA in 2004 (xv)

The WA abortion rate is 18.2 per 1,000 women of child bearing age.

^The national estimate is 19.7 per 1,000!

Dr Judy Stratton, the Department’s (then) director of Child Community Health said the report was “reassuring” because the rate had fallen slightly since 2002!! Clare Pike, Respect Life executive officer says “a lot of young women consider abortion a routine procedure.”

How can this be?

If this many people had been killed in car accidents the Government would be in an up roar.

And this - 40yrs after the arrival of THE PILL.

And 30 years (at least) of sex education for our youngsters in schools.

Views seem to be changing elsewhere for example women of the 60's and 70's fought for the right of women to have abortion on demand and have fiercely opposed a revisiting of the issue in the 21st century - citing it as a religious conspiracy by Roman Catholic, patriarchal males. However the thruth is that the issue is being revisited and by realists and high profile women in the US; such as Hilary Clinton, (previous hero of feminism and the pro-abortion lobby.)

“There is an opportunity for people of good faith to find common ground in this debate,” she said. That common ground includes preventing unplanned pregnancies, supporting sexual education, including abstinence counselling - and encouraging adoption, the New York Times reported.

Ms Clinton goes on, “We can all recognise that abortion in many ways represents a sad, even tragic choice to many, many women. The fact is that the best way to reduce the number of abortions is to reduce the number of unwanted pregnancies in the first place.” (As reported by Miranda Devine, The West Australian 4/2/2005.)

In Australia, any calls made for a rethink by politicians such as Tony Abbot, are met with crushing derision, but in December 2004, 800 women made up of academics, politicians and full time mums, moved to create a new women’s organisation. “We want to develop a new way of talking about the abortion issue,” said Rachel Patterson, lecturer in law at Deakin University, Melbourne. “We are concerned that the voices of women wanting to see a reduction in the levels of abortion and who want the government to provide better support and practical options to women, are being stifled.” We should be asking why?

Isn’t it time to give our children a different message?

Perhaps they need to know that sexual intercourse can have a number of serious consequences, not the least of which maybe the creation of a new human life.

Unplanned pregnancies are not a health issue - they are a responsibility and respect issue, as Andrew Landsdown (Life Ministries Inc. 1998) writes, “Human Life is

immensely precious and ought to be afforded protection before and after birth.”

All this loss of potential Australians should be considered in financial and economic terms, (even if morality is ignored).

- A 3 year national study for the Federal Government revealed teenagers are “crying out for better advice on sexual intimacy and relationships. “Chief researcher, Associate Professor, Moira Carmody says young people are experiencing more and more pressure to be sexually active at younger ages - the lack of parental guidance and effective education leaves them with little support. “(The West Australian 11/12/2006)”The 3yr study started in March 2006 after growing concern that the existing policy was “out of date”
- In the US, the Federal Government is providing funding to bring young people an alternative message. One such message being introduced in Australia is the ‘Teen Star Programme’. “It aims to teach responsible decision making and communication skills on a sound basis of teen’s understanding and self esteem.”
According to polls, parents are strongly in favour of children being given the abstinence message, at least until they are in an adult relationship leading to marriage.(Family Update Vol 21, No 3. March/April 2006)
- Another alarming trend among the young is sexually transmitted diseases.
A report by Steve Pennells for West Australian Feb 5th 2007 says new cases of gonorrhoea are being reported in WA at twice the national average and the number of cases of chlamydia has doubled in the last 5 yrs with more than 5,500 cases in the last year. More than half of the 11,045 cases recorded in this state since 2005 have been in 15-29 yr olds.

There needs to be more factual and balanced information available to young women contemplating abortion. They need to know:-

- What the procedure entails,
- the risk of injury (such as uterine and cervical damage)
- possible complications for future pregnancies,
- emotional consequences,
- depression leading to - drug addiction and even suicide
- childbirth is a safer option
- adoption is a worthwhile alternative.

Dr David Reardon of the Elliot Institute, USA which studies abortion and it’s complications says, “Induced abortion produces unnatural physical and psychological stress that results in a negative impact on women’s general health.” (xvi)

14 Adoption must be enhanced.

In Western Australia, in the Perth District Court on 19th April, 2007 two homosexual perverts pleaded guilty to 27 charges of kidnapping a thirteen year old boy, indecently dealing with him and sexually penetrating him whilst keeping him captive for three weeks. They have pleaded not guilty to a charge of conspiring to wilfully murder the boy but a jury found them guilty

It is appalling and totally unacceptable that, if they had a clear police record prior to committing these offences then, under Western Australian law, these two male perverts would be eligible to apply to adopt a child.

The adoption of infants by worthy married heterosexual couples should be encouraged and procedures implemented to facilitate this. Education programmes encouraging women with unwanted/unplanned pregnancies to consider adoption as preferable to abortion should be implemented

15 The Baby Bonus

The Federal Government should be commended for introducing a baby bonus plan to encourage and a reverse of the declining fertility rate in Australia. The plan however needs to be seriously overhauled to include the following principles:

- (i) because of the considerable advantages of marriage only heterosexual married couples are eligible
- (ii) the bonus amount should be paid in instalments tied to milestones eg birth - immunisation - participation in a parenting programme (eg Triple P) etc
- (iii) the bonus amount should continue to increase each year until the amount is shown to have a positive effect on fertility rates.

These principles should reduce the cost to taxpayers of teenage single pregnancies, other single parents and donor babies where the sperm donor accepts no responsibility for the ongoing cost of raising the child and the single mothers then rely on the taxpayer for their welfare.

30th April, 2007

Footnote

This policy discussion paper was prepared prior to the announcement of the 2007 Federal Budget, which includes new initiatives in relation to child care and families. These initiatives are being analysed and a further paper will be produced if appropriate.

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