

To the people of the Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide and Diocese of Port Pirie,

I want to bring to your attention a recent social development in SA which will impact negatively on how we, as a community, deal with preborn babies, especially those considered unwanted. Last December, Greens MLC Tammy Franks proposed a Bill to decriminalize abortion. After 50 years of legalized abortion in SA, it's time to take stock of where we are and where this Bill, if passed, will take us. When abortion was legalized in 1969, no-one predicted how common abortion would become, with up to 1 in 3 women having 1 or more in their lifetime, nor how many would be adversely affected by the long term complications. At present, 84 babies are terminated every week in SA, an average of 12 per day. Of the 4350 SA women having an abortion each year, up to 30% (that is, 1,305) experience adverse mental health outcomes, including anxiety, depression, suicide and substance abuse. An even greater number of fathers, grandparents and other family members are also affected emotionally. The numbers grow each year. There are also other complications for women, such as an increased risk of breast cancer, infertility and preterm birth in future pregnancies.

Inaccurately, many of these risks are denied by advocates of abortion. As a Church community, I believe that, with few notable exceptions, we have done poorly in supporting those women and their families facing an unplanned pregnancy. They are left at the mercy of a health system which fast-tracks women to abortion and offers no alternatives. In addition, post-abortion, we have not done nearly enough to support and heal the majority of those wounded emotionally, physically and spiritually. Their grief and suffering is very real and has been enormous.

This brings me to the Franks Bill which, when carefully analyzed, aims to radically deregulate abortion and outlaw two important things - conscientious objection to abortion and the freedom to pray and offer pregnancy support near abortion clinics. The proposed Bill removes all the provisions that made 'backyard' abortion illegal in 1969. Abortion can be performed by a non-medical provider, using any method and for any reason (including sex-selection for social reasons), at any gestation (up to term), leaving babies born alive to die, and using SA Health funding without the accountability of reporting. Imposing a 'health access' zone makes pregnancy support services unlawful within 150m, restricts freedom of speech, denies potential support to vulnerable women who are ambivalent or may have been coerced, and provides excessive powers to police.

Every human life is immeasurably precious to God. Every mother facing the anguish of an unwanted pregnancy, and the child she is bearing, matter absolutely to God. It is our responsibility to love, care and support both mothers and babies in this painful situation, and to do all we can to ensure a future of life and joy to the full for them.

I implore you to take prompt action in two ways to enable all to choose life:

1. Write a personal letter or visit to your local member. For more information, visit <https://stopgreensabortionbill.com/take-action/>
2. *Pray for and positively assist* those facing a crisis pregnancy, and those who are suffering grief after an abortion.

Please pray and fast for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit on our politicians for wisdom in debating this Bill and opening their hearts to support alternatives to abortion.

I invite you to pray the Eucharist, the Rosary or Devotion that is part of your spiritual life, and to invoke Our Lady and the communion of Saints as we renew our commitment to the absolute value of all human life. May the peace of Christ reign in your hearts. Amen.

Dr Elvis Šeman 11th Feb 2019 (Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes).