

6/88 Deliberate Termination of Human Life

This report was received by the Synod of the Diocese of Sydney in October 1989.

Membership of Committee and Terms of Reference

1. Resolution 6/88 is as follows.

"Synod appoints a committee ... to consider, in the light of the report of Standing Committee on Synod Resolution 31/85 (the Status of Human Life), the available statistics on the very high number of deliberate terminations of confirmed pregnancies at present being performed in Australia, and to assess available research on the characteristics of the women concerned, with a view to recommending to Synod any courses of action additional to those now being pursued within the Diocese, which will bring the Christian response more effectively to that situation."

2. The committee met on four occasions, its membership consisting of -

The Rev Philip Blake (nominee Deaconess Jean Talbot)

The Rev Michael Corbett-Jones (nominee Mrs B. Boadlander)

Mr Mark Fitzgerald

The Rev John Livingstone (nominee Mrs Shirley Durkin)

The Rev Bill Payne

Observations

"The available statistics on the very high number of deliberate terminations of confirmed pregnancies at present being performed in Australia"

3. This year in Australia -

- (a) 245,000 women (and in NSW 85,000 women) will give birth to a child.
- (b) A further estimated 60,000 women (and in NSW possibly as many as 40,000 women) will terminate a normal and viable pregnancy this year funded through Medicare.
- (c) Medical researchers suggest a further estimated 40,000 plus women will terminate a normal and viable pregnancy without claiming on Medicare and for which there are research estimates but no national statistics.
- (d) The Australian Bureau of Statistics, Birth 1987 and information provided by Senator Harradine from the Commonwealth Department of Community Services provide the following statistics -

MEDICARE TERMINATIONS OF PREGNANCY

Year	BIRTHS		MEDICARE TERMINATIONS OF PREGNANCY			
	Australia	NSW	Item	Item	Item	Item
			6469	274/2375	6469	274/275
1986/87	243,408	84,531 *	61,215	558	30,525	184
1985/86	247,348	87,786 *	57,106	604	29,447	184
1984/85	234,034	77,994 *	55,441	579	28,323	168
1983/84	242,570	83,307	48,355	615	25,178	195
1982/83	239,903	83,908	38,830	641	19,952	216

* Late regn.

"To assess available research on the characteristics of the women concerned"

4. In Sydney, a woman who wishes to terminate a pregnancy has a range of facilities publicly available -
- (a) termination clinics (city and suburbs)
 - (b) her local GP
 - (c) hospitals

The federal government provides a subsidy for the "evacuation of the contents of gravid uterus by curettage or suction" (item 6469) of \$97.50. The operation costs \$130. There is one rebate for the "induction and management of second trimester labour (12 to 24 weeks into pregnancy)" (item nos 274 (GP) and 275 (Specialist)) which is \$178 (Medicare rebate \$135.50).

Available Statistics

5. The 1987 statistical report of a NSW termination clinic on over 4,500 women who had a first termination in that year gave the following profile -

Age

Under 20	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	over 39
21.72%	31.64%	23.48%	13.81%	7.11%	2.23%

Marital Status

Single	Defacto/Married	Separated/ Divorced/Widowed
60.75%	28.54%	10.7%

Religion

Protestant	Roman Catholic	Other	No religion
35.11%	25.83%	6.93%	32.11%

Education Standard Reached

Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	Other
1.58%	56.42%	41.2%	0.81%

Referral Agency

Doctor	Clinic/Hospital	Friend/Relative	Other
61.88%	13.22%	11.32%	13.58%

Occupation Status

Employed	Student Secondary/ Tertiary	Housewife	Pensioner/ Unemployed	Not Stated
43.97%	12.37%	7.66%	22.83%	13.17%

Gestation Period

0-5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12+
weeks	weeks	weeks	weeks	weeks	weeks	weeks	weeks
0.5%	9.66%	24.83%	26.3%	17.38%	11.41%	5.39%	4.45%

Contraception at Conception

None/ Withdrawal	Total OC	Total IUD	Total Condom	Total Diap/Cap	Other Excl W/drawal
51.51%	15.6%	1.05%	16.04%	6.83%	8.96%

6. A woman who wishes to terminate a pregnancy treats this as a medical problem and mainly (75.1%) seeks medical advice (doctor/clinic/hospital).

7. Medical opinion will consistently be that from the physical point of view, if the termination is conducted within the first 12 weeks of conception under proper medical conditions by skilled workers and with appropriate counselling, there will be minimal complications for early termination.

Courses of action now being pursued within the area covered by the Diocese

8. The Federal Government -
 - (a) Recognises termination of pregnancy as a Medicare item.
 - (b) Provides Supporting Parents Benefits to unemployed single parents.
 - (c) Provides indexed family allowances to mothers.
9. The State Government -
 - (a) Provides in sections 82 to 85 of the Crimes Act 1900 legislation which covers intentional miscarriages and in particular section 83 which reads.

"Whoever ... (in relation to) any woman whether with child or not ... unlawfully administers any drug or noxious thing or unlawfully uses any instrument ... with intent in any case to procure her miscarriage shall be liable to penal servitude for ten years."
 - (b) Regulates medical standards in termination clinics.
10. The State courts -
 - (a) Interpret the law in these terms.

"in my view it would be for the Jury to decide whether there existed in the case of each woman any economic, social or medical ground, or reason, which in their view would constitute reasonable grounds upon which an accused could honestly and reasonably believe there would result a serious danger to her physical or mental health."

Regina v Wald, NSW District Court 1971 J. Levine
 - (b) Judge Levine in the same case rejected the following argument for the defendant.

"That it is lawful for qualified medical practitioner to terminate a pregnancy upon the request of a pregnant woman without cause."
11. The medical profession -
 - (a) Appears to have a general view that a termination is standard medical procedure with minimal complications if conducted by a professionally trained person and with appropriate counselling.
 - (b) Recognises the right of a woman to decide whether or not to continue with or terminate a pregnancy.
12. Various agencies provide adoption facilities but only a nominal number of children are available for adoption (average 200 children pa in NSW in 1988 down from 3,000 children pa in the 1970's against an estimated 2,000 plus couples seeking to adopt).
13. The introduction of the supporting mother's benefit has enabled many more single mothers to continue caring for their children rather than consider adoption. Also, changes in community values and attitudes have lessened the social stigma of single parenthood and in some social groups there is a stigma associated with surrendering a child.
14. Within the diocesan organisations -
 - (a) Synod published the Report of Standing Committee on Synod resolution 31/85 (The Status of Human Life) which concludes that life commences at conception.
 - (b) Within Home Mission Society Care Force there are -
 - (i) Child and Family Services Team for children 0-12 years whose families are unable to care for them;
 - (ii) Youth Care Team, among other family services, provides a residential facility for pregnant teenagers;
 - (iii) Adoption Team for parents considering adoption;
 - (iv) Kingsedene services for the disabled; and
 - (v) Community and Parish Services providing family support services.
 - (c) Chaplaincy services are available for counselling in most hospitals to women continuing with or terminating pregnancy.
 - (d) Anglican Counselling Services offers -
 - (i) a Parenting Course;
 - (ii) pre-marriage education programme "Growing Together"; and

(iii) marriage, family and personal counselling.

15. The Australian Institute of Family Planning (Melbourne) (AIFP) is one of a number of professional organisations acting as well researched national advocates on behalf of all aspects of the Australian family.

16. The Federal Government through the Australian Bureau of Statistics produces annual reports on births, marriages, deaths and other surveys such as children in NSW Census 86 (0-14 years). From the latter report a relevant statistic amongst a number relevant to any steps the Diocese might consider taking is the following.

Table 1.10 Children: Religion NSW 30 June 86

Religion	1981		1986	
	Number	%	Number	%
Christian				
Catholic	389,161	31	387,222	31.1
Anglican	350,741	28	31,255	24.9
Other Christian	<u>256,006</u>	<u>20.4</u>	<u>240,781</u>	<u>19.35</u>
	995,908	79.4	938,258	74.5
Non Christian	25,695	2.1	40,899	3.3
Other	<u>233,117</u>	<u>18.7</u>	<u>265,334</u>	<u>21.3</u>
	1,254,720		1,244,491	

Implications

17. Of the 300,000 known pregnancies a year, it can be expected that a significant proportion were unplanned. For many women the pregnancy is accepted and the necessary adjustments made. However, where the pregnancy is not expected and not accepted termination is often seen as the alternative.

18. For the woman who has an unplanned pregnancy, the termination clinic report indicates the constraints on her. The woman must make a decision quickly and in a social environment which approves termination. As a Medicare approved expense her financial burden is minimal. She must consider her marital status (71-45% are not in a married or defacto relationship), her future (21.72% 19 years or younger), her finances (43.97% are in employment), the medical and psychological consequences and the advice available to her from the time when she finds she is pregnant. 19. The committee sees the Christian response to pregnancy as part of its response to all human relationships. There is a responsibility to make known sensitively and clearly scriptural teaching about the sanctity of human life and the implications of this teaching for family relationships.

20. The parents of over 300,000 children nominate an Anglican Church affiliation. The parents of over 75% of the children of NSW (938,258 children) declare an affiliation with a Christian denomination.

21. There may need to be improved communication by the Anglican Church to Anglicans at the parish level and to the wider community on its position in relation to scriptural teaching on the sanctity of life and family relationships.

Recommendations

"With a view to recommending to Synod any courses of action, additional to those now being pursued within the Diocese, which will bring the Christian response more effectively to that situation"

22. That this report be referred to relevant diocesan organisations[†] with a view to them coming together to consider present and future strategies in the following areas -

- (a) Facilities for counselling and assisting women with an unplanned pregnancy.
- (b) Communication of Christian teachings on the sanctity of life, pregnancy and family and marital relationships to parishes and the wider community served by diocesan organisations.
- (c) Publicising to parishes and the wider community served by diocesan organisations, the diocesan counselling, support and adoption facilities, available to women with an unplanned pregnancy.
- (d) Publicising to women with unplanned pregnancies the diocesan counselling, support and adoption facilities available to them.

23. That a working party be convened by the General Secretary, HMS or his nominee to consider ways of implementing strategies in the above areas, each of the relevant diocesan organisations to be asked to nominate a person to that working party.

24. That this report be forwarded to Area Deans with the request that the report be considered by members and any submissions or comments forwarded to the working party.

25. That Synod request the Archbishop to appoint a committee to consider the establishment of a diocesan research unit to make submissions on behalf of the Diocese at state and federal level in relation to proposed or anticipated government changes to legislation affecting the family on an ongoing basis and to improve diocesan liaison with other professional organisations representing the family. For and on behalf of the Committee

M. FITZGERALD

Convenor

2 June 1989

† The committee considers "relevant diocesan organisations" to include Home Mission Society (HMS), Board of Education, Youth Department, Information Office, Boys' Society, Girls Friendly Society, Moore Theological College, Anglican Counselling Centre, Mothers' Union, Anglican Schools.