

Australian Bishops Urge Abortion Alternatives

Bill in Victoria Calls for Decriminalization

MELBOURNE, Australia, JULY 24, 2007 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- The bishops of Victoria sent a letter to the state's Parliament calling on it to reject efforts to decriminalize abortion.

Candy Broad, a member of the upper house, is introducing a bill that would allow women unfettered access to early-term abortion services.

The state of Victoria, located in southeastern Australia, has one of the highest abortion rates in the world. One in four pregnancies end in abortion under the 1969 Menhennitt ruling, which allows the procedure if a woman's mental or physical health is at risk.

In the letter dated today, signed by Archbishop Denis Hart of Melbourne, Bishop Peter Connors of Ballarat, Bishop Jeremiah Coffey of Sale, and Bishop Joseph Grech of Sandhurst, the prelates said that the "move to decriminalize abortion would be a backward step for women and their families."

The bishops explained: "Removing abortion from the crimes act cannot make something so unethical acceptable.

"Our political leaders should be trying to find new ways to reduce Victoria's high abortion rate rather than risk taking any steps which might make abortion more widespread."

No options

The prelates called for alternatives to abortion to be offered to women with unplanned pregnancies.

"No woman," they wrote, "should have to choose between her own well-being and the life of her child. Yet all too often, women report feeling that they had no other option. Abortion has become the only 'choice' and is a reflection that we are failing women."

The bishops promised aid from Catholics, saying: "The Church is already working to support vulnerable women and their families but we want to do more.

"Catholics are ready to join with others in finding new and positive solutions to the widespread problem of abortion. We recognize too that all human rights ultimately depend on our love and support for the most vulnerable in our community."

"We condemn all violence to women and children before or after birth," the bishops wrote, "and call on all state parliamentarians to reject all moves to decriminalize abortion in Victoria."