



9 February 2006

Joint Statement On Amendments to the Therapeutics Goods Bill 2005

The Australian Reproductive Health Alliance (ARHA) and the Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) today released the following statement.

The current parliamentary debate and subsequent conscience vote deliberates on whether or not the discretion for the approval of a “*restricted good*” (e.g. Mifepristone (RU 486)) should be vested in the authority and judgment of the Minister for Health and Aging or the Therapeutics Goods Administration (TGA).

We hold the view that any pharmaceutical drug intended for clinical consumption on the Australian market should be scientifically evaluated and assessed by an independent body of suitably qualified and experienced professionals of certified technical expertise.

In Australia, the TGA is this independent scientifically based body. Since 1989, the TGA has been responsible for evaluating and approving over 50,000 therapeutic goods available on the Australian market. It is one of the most credible and highly regarded pharmaceutical evaluators internationally.

We see no reason to have a separate process for RU486 or abortifacients and support the proposed Bill. Millions of women around the world have safely used this drug under medical supervision.

Access to the drug would be consistent with Australian commitments made at the International Cairo Conference on Population and Development in 1994 and reaffirmed by the Prime Minister John Howard in 2004 which pledged support for the reproductive rights of men and women including the ‘right to methods of their choice for regulation of fertility which are not against the law’. It is time that we made good this pledge; 68% of the electorate support it, we have the resources to evaluate it and women and men deserve a choice that has long been denied them.

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