



Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

2 February 2006

Dear Members and Senators,

I write to you following the recent Senate Inquiry into RU486 and the upcoming parliamentary debate around its use in Australia.

Over recent months there has been significant media coverage of this issue, including a marked focus on the views of Churches, other religious organisations and lobby groups from all sides of the debate.

Given the enormous emphasis placed on this subject by the media, I felt it important to write to you and outline the Uniting Church's views on this issue.

It is our view that the current campaign against RU486 confuses medical, moral and political issues. As the Uniting Church understands it, the issue is whether or not this particular drug is safe to be released for use in a country where abortion is legally available. This is a decision that should be made by the Therapeutic Goods Administration using sound medical evidence and advice.

It is our belief that RU486 should not be made an exception from this independent process purely due to its application as an abortifacient. Termination of a pregnancy is legal in Australia, however fraught politically or morally. As such, the drug should be evaluated by proper trials in the same way as any other therapeutic drug or procedure. Public policy on the matter should depend on scientific evidence as to the safety and effectiveness of the drug. This issue should be viewed separately to a debate on the moral and ethical issues of the abortion procedure itself.

The Uniting Church has no unified national position on the abortion procedure. We do, however, reject two extreme positions: that abortion should never be available; and that abortion should be regarded as simply another medical procedure. We respect the rights and opinions of others involved in this debate; and we recognise that within our own church, there will also be a variety of views. However, we do not believe this current debate about the use of a particular drug should be used as a plebiscite on the broader issue of abortion.



For your information, I have attached a copy of a statement issued last year by the Uniting Church President when public debate around abortion was again in the media. The statement draws heavily on decisions taken previously by the Synods of NSW, Queensland, Victoria (as it then was) and Western Australia. I have also attached copies of the relevant resolutions made by each of those Synods.

I urge you to consider all the issues in this debate with an open mind and to ensure you are well informed when you are asked to vote. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like clarification on any point.

Yours sincerely,



Rev. Elenie Poulos
National Director
UnitingJustice Australia

