SOCIAL QUESTIONS COMMITTEE
CATHOLIC WOMEN’S LEAGUE OF VICTORIA & WAGGA WAGGA INC.
Reg. No: A0017514ER
ABN: 8074198828

Mary Glowrey House
132 Nicholson Street,
Fitzroy, VIC 3065

Mr Edward O’Donohue. MLC
Chairperson,
Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee
Parliament House,
Spring Street,
East Melbourne, Vic. 3002

Dear Sir,

RE: Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities

The Catholic Women’s League was founded in Victoria in 1916 by a group of professional women led by Dr. Mary Glowrey MB,BS, MD who in 1920 sailed for India, entered the JMJ Religious Order and became the first Nun Dr. Missionary and whose cause for sainthood is in its first phase.

Today we endeavour to carry on the work done by those valiant women of yester year. It is our faith which motivates our charitable works as we follow in the footsteps our founding sisters.

We opposed a Charter of Right in our first submission to SARC. Unfortunately the Charter was foisted upon us by the previous government.

Additional Human Rights to the Charter:

As it stands, the Charter discriminates against the unborn – Section 48 of the Charter- as it has allowed through Articles 6, 7 & 8 of the Abortion Bill the killing of children in the womb right up till birth and taken away the right of conscience from those working in the health system through the Abortion Bill. We note that not one binding UN document (Charter, Convention etc) takes away a person’s right to conscientiously object to participate in abortions, to refer or to even prescribe contraceptives.

Therefore we support the inclusion of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in the Charter noting that in its Preamble it states “the child by reason of his physical and mental immaturity needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth”.

Article 6 of the Convention states: “States parties recognise that every child has the inherent right to life”.

The inclusion of this Convention would require the Government to change the Abortion Bill which at the moment does not protect a child’s inherent right to life.
As with the above convention, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights would mean that many issues would need to be added as the current Charter excludes many important issues. This covenant in Article 6:1 states very clearly that "every human being has the inherent right to life. That life shall be protected by law. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his life". Providing that these issues are not discarded, we support its inclusion.

No Charter of Human Rights should make it a right for a woman to be the mother of a dead child. This shows a total lack responsibility to the unborn child and the mother.

As the CEDAW monitoring committee reads into this Convention items that it does not actually state we are opposed to its conclusion.

There are a number of issues in the 'Terms of Reference' which we have chosen not to comment upon.

We ask the question – What good is a Charter on Human Rights when it takes away the right of the majority of its citizens while supporting the minority groups that pushed for it in the first place? Wikipedia lists 31 nations as having a Bill of Rights and a good percentage are run by dictators. Today in many of these countries, it is Christians that are persecuted or taken to court simply because of their faith.

In our previous submission we called upon the review committee to maintain an independent and impartial view point (rather than an entrenched one) when it comes to making such important recommendations to Government. We ask the same of this committee.

Yours faithfully,

Madge Fahy
Social Questions Committee
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