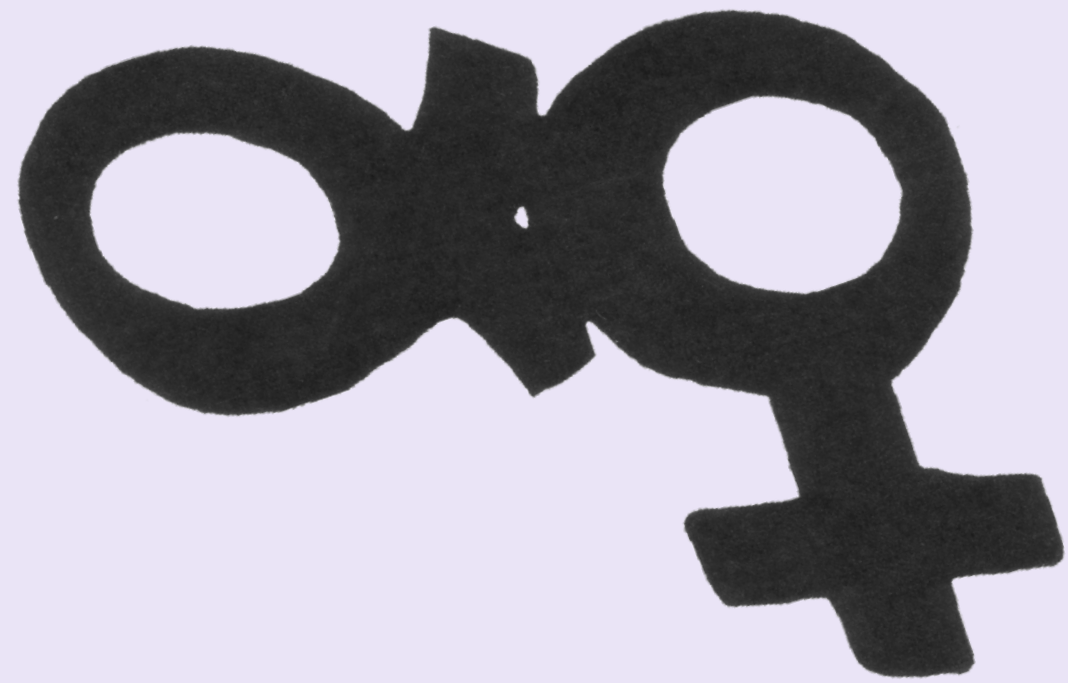


We wish to acknowledge and pay respect to the traditional owners of the land on which we meet – the Wangal clan of the Dharug peoples.



We acknowledge the impact colonialism has had on Aboriginal peoples and Country, and that this impact continues today.

We pay our respects to Elders, past, present and emerging,
and to Aboriginal people joining us here today.



50 Years of

WAAC

1972 - 2022

1990s



Let's Protest!



This man stopped funding for abortion for low-income women in the U.S. He has been invited to Australia by the Right to Life Association (NSW) to do the same here. Their conference 'Legislating for Life' = Legislating against women! Let's protest at:

Entrance to St. Margaret's Private Hospital,
435 Bourke St, Darlinghurst (just off Taylor Square)

ON: SATURDAY 25th AUGUST, 1990

AT: 9.00 a.m.

ORGANISED BY: WOMEN'S ABORTION ACTION CAMPAIGN
P.O. Box E233,
St. James, NSW 2000



NO MORE
back room deals
on women's
bodies!



Target Senator Harradine and the Coalition



NATIONAL UNION
NUS
STUDENTS

Demand Reproductive Freedom

Issue 32

Autumn 1990

Right to Choose



a women's health action magazine



In this issue:

Christian women and abortion

Is RU486 really safe?

Visiting our sisters in the States

AIDS Education: attacking on new fronts

and more ...

\$ 2.50

Registered by Australia Post, publication number NBH 2721



On the Road Again - Visiting our Sisters in the States

From mid-January to mid-February this year, two activists from Sydney's Women's Abortion Action Campaign (WAAC) group undertook a tour of the United States. The tour was financed by donations and sales of publications and campaign materials. The two activists, Margaret Kirkby and Nola Scillnato, first attended a conference in New York which was organised by the International Women's Rights Action Watch, an organisation which monitors implementation of the U.N. Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The third day of the conference was of greatest interest for the two activists as it covered the international implications of the recent (July 1989) undermining of the US abortion laws and the 1984 Mexico City decision by the US Government to cut international family planning aid if any service was deemed to be in support of abortion.

To summarise briefly some of the information exchanged at the conference:

- recent findings by the UN's International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) utilising a gender and economic analysis reveals that infant and maternal mortality are increasing and that the 'feminisation' of poverty is deepening;
- that 39 State legislatures in the US are now taking up anti-abortion legislation as a result of the Webster decision in July last year;
- that the issue of abortion will again be before the US Supreme Court during 1990 - one of the matters to be considered is the issue of parental consent - "do parents have an inherent right to know if their daughter is having an abortion" - 25 States have laws upholding parental consent, however, they will not come into effect until the Supreme Court reviews this issue in June (1990). If the Supreme Court rules that parental consent is to be required for teenagers to obtain an abortion, this will also have implications for access to contraception by teenagers. President Bush has let it be known that he supports parental consent by both parents irrespective of whether the parents are divorced and even if the young woman has had no contact with her biological parents for years!

- in Bangladesh there are 22,000 maternal deaths each year and over 5,000 of these are as a result of unsafe 'backyard' abortions;



ELIZABETH BLACKWELL
HEALTH CENTER
FOR WOMEN

Feminist Gynecological
& Obstetrical Care
routine gyn visits
pregnancy testing
abortion
educational programs



1124 Walnut Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19107
(215) 923-7577 information
(215) 923-1124 administrative

- in Ethiopia 54% of maternal deaths are as a result of botched abortions;

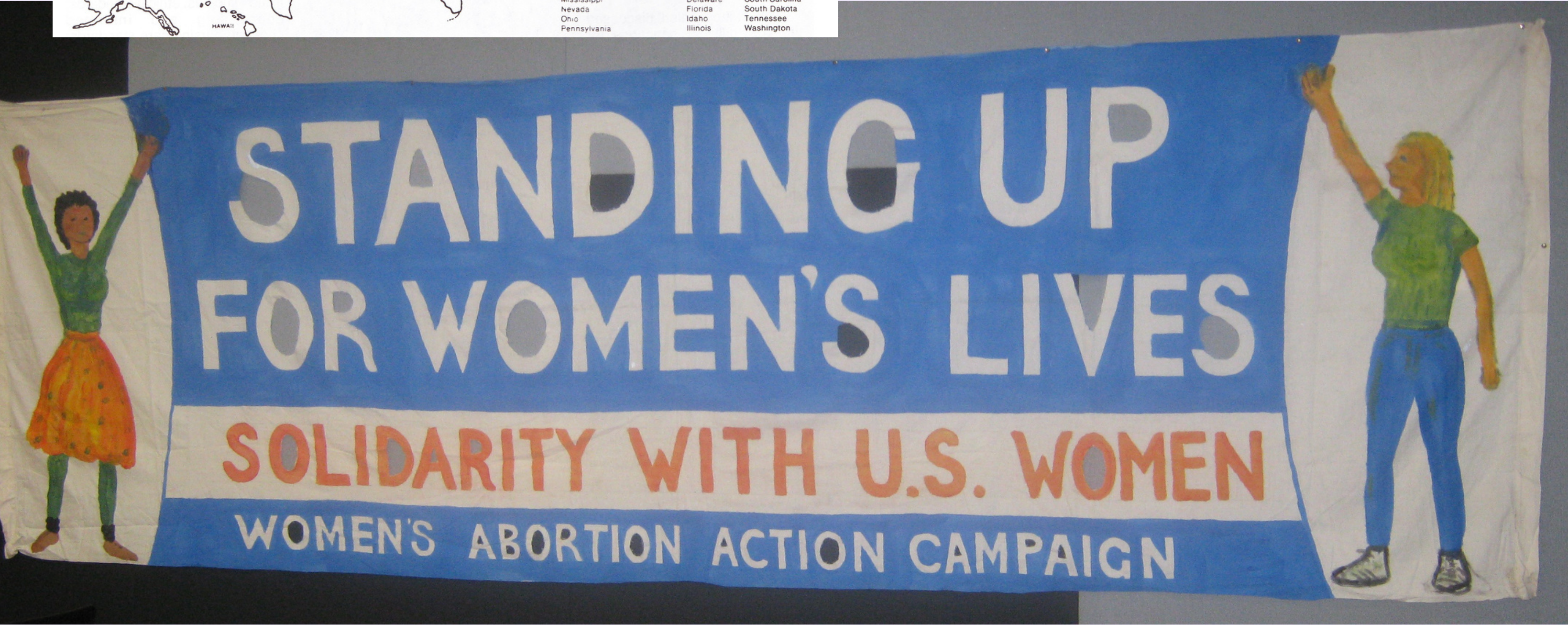
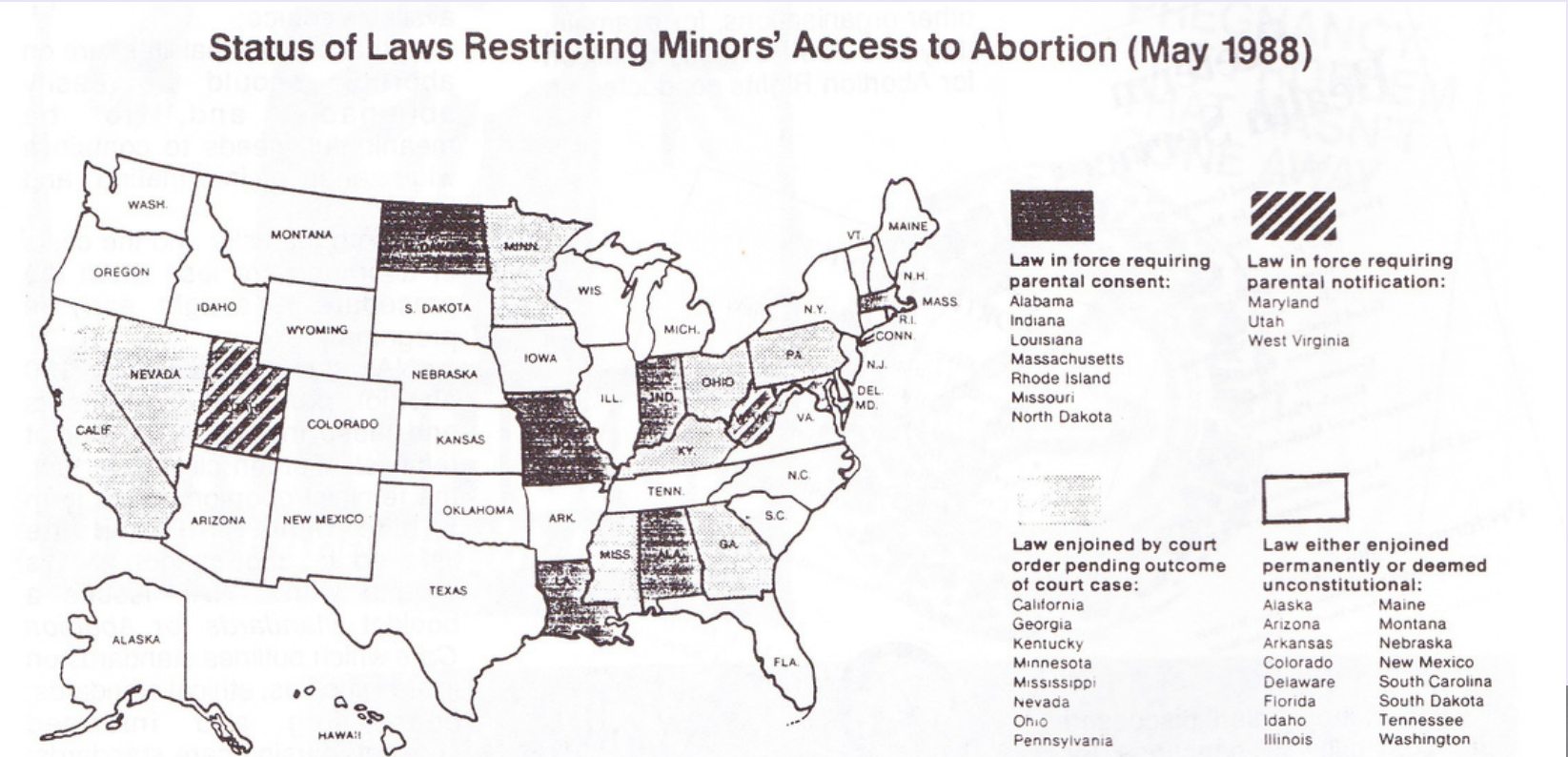
- in a study by the International Planned Parenthood Federation at the Kenyatta National Hospital (in Nairobi, Kenya) it was found that

50 women are admitted daily with complications from 'backyard' abortions;

- that fewer people have died from AIDS since it was diagnosed than the number of women who die each year from pregnancy-related deaths (reference: Allen Rosenfield, Dean, Columbia University School of Public Health);

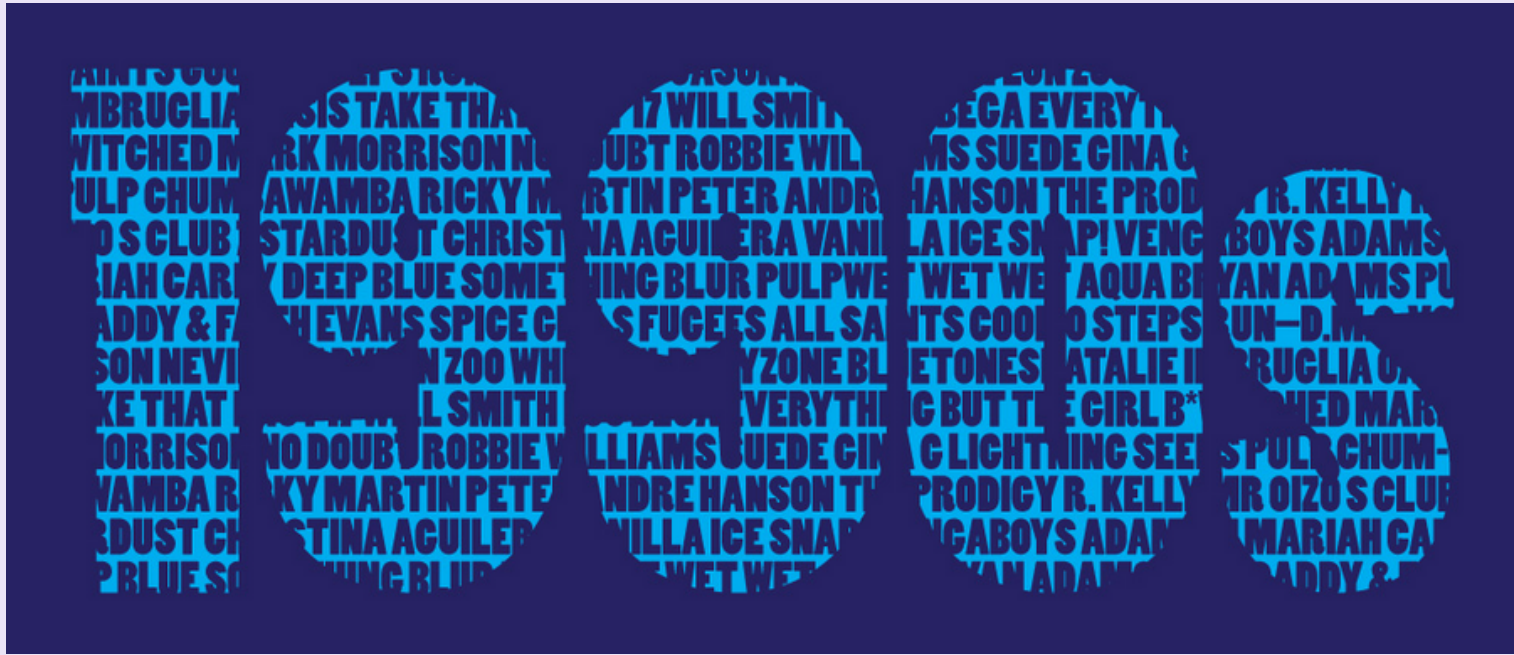
- that the US anti-abortion group 'Operation Rescue' which blockades abortion clinics and prevents women gaining access to them has now been exported to the UK, Europe, Australia and Africa;

- an activist from Malaysia, Shaanthi Dairiam, member of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development, gave a comprehensive critique of family planning and population control programmes in the developing world. She argued that family planning programmes are often-times implemented with population control as the goal rather than the improvement of access to better health facilities. She argued that family planning cannot replace social justice and it is only social justice which can improve the development and position of people in the world. Family planning programmes have not really brought a decrease in maternal mortality or child mortality - coercion into programmes has been an issue for some years now as women and men are offered financial





**International Women's Day 1992 (Sydney).
Photographs by Kendall Lovett**



International Women's Day 1992 (Sydney).
Photographs by Kendall Lovett

1972 – 2005 Honouring the ACTIVISTS



WAAC Activists picket in 1972

for the tenacity and bravery of the women involved. They gave their time and abilities freely in pursuing rights for women.

In addition there were many more thousands of women, all round Australia, who helped organise rallies, pickets, posters and publications to help disseminate information – to make sure the general public knew of the misery suffered by many women, and their families, to whom a safe abortion was not available.



WAAC 10 year anniversary

These women lobbied politicians, church officials and those people who were against a woman's right to choose.



WAAC Activists picket against Newman

Many of the advances made in women's health over these years would not have been achieved if it wasn't for the tenacity and bravery of the women involved. They gave their time and abilities freely in pursuing rights for women.

Over and over again women won battles. They were always ready to speak out in favour of freedoms for women who were suffering oppression through lack of education or poverty.



WAAC activist Angela Mulvaney at protest



WAAC 20th

The ACTIVISTS were always ready to marshal the troops to ensure these Bills were defeated.



WAAC picket at Murrumbidgee 1985

**They always won.
They were on the side of the majority!
We owe them a great deal.**



Vale - Megan Sassi

Regular *Right to Choose* readers will be saddened, like we were, to hear that Megan Sassi, long time ALRA (WA) activist died in mid 1991. We can still remember Megan contacting us many, many years ago in regard to a report she was preparing for the UN Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in regard to access to abortion services in Australia. Megan was highly commended for preparing the report and drawing this matter to the attention of the CEDAW. Megan was an inspiration and, though now gone, she will not be forgotten.

ABORTION

Judgement threatens abortion rights

Under the New South Wales Crimes Act, abortion is still illegal in this State and the government may have been given all the ammunition it needs to enforce the legislation following a ruling by Justice Newman in the Supreme Court on 18 April.

The 26-year-old woman at the centre of the court case had taken to court three doctors who failed to detect she was pregnant during five consultations between 27 November 1986 and 22 January 1987. She claimed she would have had an abortion if she had known earlier.

However, Justice Newman ruled against the woman, saying she would have been in breach of Section 82 of the Act if she had gone ahead with an abortion. The judge said it was an offence in NSW for a woman to have an abortion unless there was evidence that her physical or mental health would be jeopardised by the pregnancy.

During the case, the woman claimed her life had changed, her tertiary studies, business and social life were adversely affected, and she began suffering from depression once her pregnancy was detected and she was told it was too late to have an abortion. The child's mother and father, who separated after the birth of their now six-year-old daughter, had sued Superclinics Australia Pty Ltd, which ran what is now the City Medical Centre in George Street, Sydney.

They had claimed compensation for costs of \$52,866 to bring up the child for the first 18 months of her life, compensation for the loss of income from the woman giving up her tertiary studies, and to her business.

During the trial, the couple alleged the clinic had failed in its duty after doctors failed to detect the pregnancy on the five occasions and had failed to conduct competently a full physical examination to diagnose the pregnancy. The woman was finally diagnosed as being 20 weeks pregnant in March 1987 by her family doctor. She was advised an abortion would put her life at risk because her pregnancy was too far advanced.

Dorothy Simons, a founder of the Preterm Clinic, the first free standing abortion clinic in NSW, said the ruling might encourage anti-abortion doctors to withhold information from women. 'This has been the case for some years. Doctors who did not want to perform abortions would not tell the woman she was pregnant until it was too late and they had no choice but to have the child,' she said.

Despite these sorts of concerns, NSW Minister for the Status of Women, Kerry Chikarovski, said changes in the law were unlikely. However, she would seek advice from her ministry for the Status and Advancement of Women, adding that the case was more about misdiagnosis than abortion.

NSW Bar Association President Murray Tobias said abortion laws would not change until the government showed enough courage to take a stance on the issue. 'The government keeps avoiding the issue, because it knows the community is divided on abortion. They won't make a decision on such an emotive, moral issue, not in an election year anyway,' he said.

The government, he maintains, should reconsider the provisions of the Crimes Act. While both pro-life and pro-choice groups had put the onus on Justice Newman for the decision, the judge had been working within the framework of the act. 'They should be focussing on the message, rather than the messenger,' he said.

The Women's Abortion Action Campaign (WAAC) has decided that the only course to take is to fight for the repeal of the laws which make abortion a crime. Spokesperson Margaret Kirkby said WAAC's initial campaign would involve issuing posters, leaflets and stickers giving non-emotive facts about abortion. It is also involved in organising an International Day of Action on 28 May on women's health issues.

Reform of the laws would not be enough, Ms Kirkby said. 'The only way to go is repeal. In every country where there has been reform there comes the long list of "only if", which leads to

greater restrictions.

'We'll be trying to demonstrate to the politicians how ridiculous the wording is of the Crimes Act and we'll be calling on women to show their contempt for the Supreme Court of NSW for the ruling and to defy the law and show their outrage.'

Attorney General John Hannaford has already ruled out any review of the legislation and warned doctors they face prosecution under the Act if they perform illegal abortions.

Labor backbencher Sandra Nori has asked parliamentary counsel to draft legislation legalising abortion. But Labor officials have said Ms Nori's views on the matter do not represent those of the Opposition, which allows members to exercise a conscience vote on abortion issues.

Ms Kirkby said WAAC also planned lobbying the Federal Government to show clauses 82, 83, and 84 of the NSW Crimes Act contravened the United Nations Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women and the International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights. Two days after Justice Newman's ruling, Federal Attorney General Michael Lavarch said abortion was a matter for individual States, not the Commonwealth.

Ms Kirkby also said WAAC would write to the NSW Police Association



18 Right to Choose

and the Australian Medical Association, urging them to make a stand on the issue after comments by Right to Life. A spokesperson appeared on national television calling for the reinstatement of police abortion squads to raid abortion clinics and for the penalising of doctors who perform abortions.

Health Insurance Commission figures showed an average of 80,000 women a year had abortions, half of those in

NSW, Ms Kirkby said. Abortion was one of the 10 most common operations performed in Australia.

'The majority of Australians support abortion being available,' she said. 'The politicians are clearly out of step with community attitudes. But it is important to begin a public education campaign so people can feel comfortable about entering into the debate.'

—AAP

21 April 1994

The Repeal Abortion Campaign

Wednesday 11 May saw about 65 energetic women squash into the downstairs meeting room here at Albion Street to discuss and plan the Campaign to Repeal Abortion from the NSW Crimes Act.

Virginia Bell spoke to us about legalities, including the implications of the Newman judgement. Margaret Kirkby, of the Women's Abortion Action Campaign (WAAC), talked about the history of abortion in Australia and the need for repeal, and Helen Westwood, from the Bessie Smyth Foundation, spoke about the situation at NSW abortion clinics and the confusion in the community.

We then moved on to working out strategies for 28 May, International Day of Action. Lots of ideas and some heated debate ensued, but the final decision was for a rally at Town Hall Square at 12 noon on May 28 (backup venue, 1st Fleet Park).

Many of the other ideas which came up will be used during the continuing campaign to repeal abortion from the Crimes Act.

A WAAC Organising Sub-Committee met on Saturday 14 May to organise

Page 12

posters, leaflets, speakers and logistics for the rally. Any woman interested in becoming involved in these preparations or in the long-term plan, call WAAC on 569 3819, or turn up to the WAAC meetings on Wednesday nights at 6.30, at Liberation House, 63 Palace Street, Petersham.

WE NEED EVERYONE, WITH FAMILIES AND FRIENDS AS WELL, TO BE OUT THERE ON THE DAY. THIS IS THE MOST IMPORTANT CALL TO ACTION OF THE YEAR TO DATE. WE HAVE TO GET OUT THERE AND SHOW OUR SUPPORT AND SOLIDARITY AND LAUNCH THE CAMPAIGN TO REPEAL ABORTION FROM THE CRIMES ACT. WOMEN MUST HAVE CONTROL OVER THEIR REPRODUCTION.

Form letters have been written and petitions drawn up; they are available from the WEL office or at the rally.

— TANYA JEFFCOAT



ACTION NEEDED!

A form letter is included with this newsletter and we ask all members to send copies to their local State MP, and to the three people listed below.

We also ask you to make copies of the letter and get as many people as possible to post them off.

Mr John Fahey MLA
Premier
Premier's Department
Level 7, State Office
Block
Phillip Street
SYDNEY 2000

Mr John Hannaford
MLC
Attorney General
Attorney General's
Department
Level 19, Goodsell
Building
Chifley Square
SYDNEY 2000

Mrs Kerry Chikarovski
Minister for the
Status &
Advancement of
Women
Level 8
185 Macquarie Street
SYDNEY 2000

Feminists failed us on abortion

We run the following opinion piece from Beatrice Faust because it gives a good briefing on the history of the fight for abortion rights in Australia. Some WEL members may take issue with Faust's criticism of the feminist role in the 70s and 80s; it has never looked like being an easy task to have pro-abortion legislation passed, with one of the biggest stumbling blocks being the Catholic-dominated Right faction of the Labor Party. In the late 70s, George Peterson introduced a pro-abortion private member's bill to the NSW Parliament, but both sides conspired to defeat it.

The women's movement is big enough, mature enough and successful enough to admit, correct, and learn from its mistakes — beginning with the current abortion crisis in NSW.

The movement to reform the abortion laws began in about 1960 with academics such as the late Professor Henry Mayer, lawyers from the NSW Council for Civil Liberties and members of the Rationalist and Humanist Societies. It consolidated as Duncan Chappell and Paul Wilson published research on

community attitudes and Abortion Law Reform Associations appeared in most States. When ALRA (Vic) published *Abortion: The Unenforceable Law* in 1972, it listed support for varying degrees of change among three political parties, four medical associations, two major newspapers, several churches and the general public in Victoria alone.

The growing women's movement only needed to provide numbers and enthusiasm to carry reform through the various State parliaments. Instead, fem-

Page 13

POWELL
STREET
CLINIC



80 Wentworth Road
Homebush NSW 2140
Phone: 764 4885

PREGNANCY
COUNSELLING

ABORTION

CONTRACEPTIVE
ADVICE

WOMENS HEALTH

A FEMINIST CLINIC
RUN BY WOMEN FOR WOMEN

inists killed the move for statutory change, leaving women to the tenuous protection of case law established by Mennhennit in *R v Davidson* (Vic 1969) and by Levine in *R v Wald et al* (NSW 1971).

These judgements had nothing to do with feminism — the English legal tradition refers only to law and precedents, not to public opinion. Except for Western Australia, feminists complacently accepted the protection of case law, forgetting that judge-made law is not a guarantee like statute law.

The Women's Liberation Movement, dominated by New-Left banana Marxism, preferred to believe that there can be no reform in capitalist States except by revolution, despite the fact that by 1971 numerous European countries, England, South Australia and 16 American States had reformed their laws by constitutional means.

Preferring the excitement of demonstrations to the tedium of lobbying, the WLM contributed little to the cause of abortion reform besides slogans.

In Victoria, the Women's Electoral Lobby was slow to enunciate an abortion policy because it had a large country membership who believed that a strongly pro-abortion stance would compromise their efforts in Country Party electorates, so WEL (Vic) began with a compromise statement of support for women's right to choose rather than women's right to abortion.

The quietus came from Canberra

where WEL women were giddy with joy at the outcome of the 1972 election. They persuaded Kep Enderby and Moss Cass to sponsor reform for the ACT in a private member's Bill, despite the fact that the WEL survey of candidate's opinions gave no reason to believe that a Bill could succeed. Unused to listening to public opinion, MPs went to

water when faced with an unfamiliar and controversial issue opposed by the DLP, the National Country Party, the Catholic Church and sundry wowsers.

Whitlam refused to let two ministers sponsor a Bill that the Labor Party itself would not promote, so sponsorship

passed to David McKenzie and Tony Lamb. The Bill was defeated 98-23 and an amendment proposed by Race Matthews to set up a royal commission to investigate the issue was lost 80-42. The voting was more or less inversely proportional to community support for abortion as revealed in numerous opinion polls.

The women's movement failed to regroup on abortion, accepting instead the Royal Commission on Human Relationships, which occupied many feminists and people of goodwill from spring 1974 to autumn 1977. The report was only useful for one or two seasons but, as with the defeated Equal Rights Amendment in the United States, the web of feminist networks established during the project survived beyond it.

Nevertheless, interest in the abortion struggle had been effectively dissipat-

ed. Despite occasional crises such as raids on clinics, the Lusher Motion and Fred Nile's Bill, feminists forgot abortion was still illegal. Even the menacing example of the US did not warn them. In *Roe v Wade* (1972), the US Supreme Court affirmed that abortion laws intruded on a women's constitutional right to privacy but in *Harris v McRae* (1981) it determined that this did not include a right to federal funding. The court giveth and the court taketh away.

Women's groups should not have been surprised when Judge Newman found against a NSW woman who sued the doctors who failed to diagnose her

pregnancy in time for her to have an abortion that would have been clearly illegal under the 1900 Crimes Act and not, in his opinion, covered by *Roe v Wade*.

Women must stop waiting for the next crisis and organise to direct their votes toward electing pro-choice candidates — especially in strategic seats. Remember, the vast majority of Australian voters support a woman's right to choose.

— BEATRICE FAUST
The Australian
30 April 1994

OTHER NEWS

Depo-provera approved at last

As a contraceptive, depo-provera has had its critics. However, while we await the development of the perfect contraceptive, it is important that there be as wide a range as possible of choices in fertility control. That's why the following item must be welcome news for Australian women.

Depo-provera, an injectable drug treatment for endometriosis that is known to be a highly effective contraceptive, can now be marketed for birth control.

The Australian manufacturers of depo-provera, the pharmaceutical firm Upjohn, said the decision by the drugs branch of the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) would bring contraceptive choices for Australian women up to date with other countries.

'Australia is probably one of the few countries that hadn't approved the product,' said Mr Nicholas Maas, the general manager. 'We are looking forward to making it available as a contraceptive to Australian women.'

Depo-provera has a contraceptive effect for three months after injection. Before the recent TGA decision, the drug could only be marketed as a treatment for conditions such as endometrial cancer in Australia — although doctors were permitted to prescribe it as a contraceptive. The TGA decision follows a recent report in the Medical Journal of Australia which called for approval to market the drug as a contraceptive, citing extensive research which had found depo-provera to be safe and highly effective.

— JENNIFER CONNELL
Sydney Morning Herald
14 May 1994

Remember, the vast majority of Australian voters support a woman's right to choose.

Everywoman's Health Centre

164 Flood Street
Leichhardt 2040
569 9266 / 569 9522

- Pregnancy Counselling
- Abortion
- Contraceptive Advice
- Herbalist, Massage and other natural methods of treatment

A Feminist Clinic

run by women for women


Right to Choose ♀

A black and white photograph of a large crowd at a Women's Action Campaign rally. A large banner in the background reads "20 YEARS OF INSISTING ABORTION IS A WOMAN'S RIGHT TO CHOOSE" with a female symbol on the left and a small cartoon figure on the right. The text "WOMEN'S ACTION CAMPAIGN" is visible at the bottom of the banner. In the foreground, several women are visible, including one with her hand near her face and another wearing sunglasses.

- * Women tell their stories of abortion
- * The devastating effects of DES
- * Info on Eastern Europe
- * Well Women Clinics

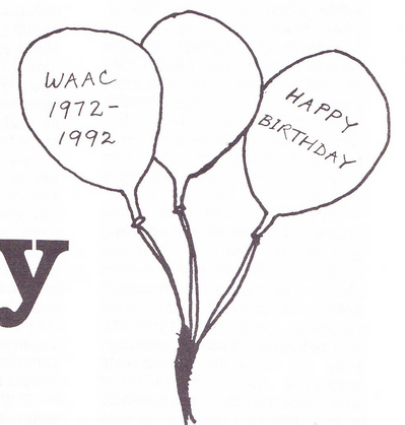
and more

\$2.50



Happy
20th
Birthday
WAAC!

WAAC
1971
1991



Right to Choose, Spring 1992 9

To: ALP Conference Delegates

Drop the conscience vote! Adopt a pro-abortion, pro-choice, repeal all abortion laws policy

Abortion is an election issue

The Justice Newman decision of April 18 made clear that women's access to abortion through the Levine Ruling is not guaranteed for all time. NSW Attorney-General John Hannaford has said that Newman "clarified the law" and the Right to Life Association NSW has called for the Crimes Act to be enforced.

The only way to guarantee women's access and allow them to make the decision themselves is to repeal sections 82,83,84 from the NSW Crimes Act.

Women's Abortion Action Campaign has launched a campaign to have these laws repealed. A major part of this campaign will make abortion an election issue in the upcoming Parramatta by-election and the State elections next year.

We will call on all candidates to make public their position on women's access to abortion and on repeal of the relevant sections of the Crimes Act.

For far too long politicians and parties have hidden behind the myth of the conscience vote - the right wing facade that has excluded abortion from the political agenda.

So we will campaign for all parties in the NSW Parliament to drop the conscience vote and adopt a pro-abortion, pro-choice, repeal all abortion laws policy.

This is just the beginning. Women won't remain silent until our access to abortion is guaranteed and removed from the Crimes Act.

Abortion is a woman's right to choose

Women's Abortion Action Campaign 11 June 1994



If you think abortion is a woman's right to choose and should be safe, affordable and accessible

... then get involved in the
Women's Abortion Action Campaign

Justice Newman and abortion laws in NSW

Women's access to abortion in NSW once again hit the headlines with the recent Newman decision when, instead of ruling on medical negligence he defacto ruled on the issue of abortion! While his ruling doesn't overturn the Levine ruling, his decision triggered public statements by the NSW Attorney-General, John Hannaford, and spokespersons for the anti-abortion group, the Right to Life Association NSW, deliberately misrepresenting the law on abortion in NSW.

Declarations that abortion is illegal; that the law will be enforced by police prosecutions and so on, confused many women about their access to abortion.

Lawful abortion is available in NSW and should a woman find herself with an unwanted pregnancy all she needs to do is look in the Yellow Pages under Pregnancy Termination Services to get names and addresses of relevant clinics.

Women's Abortion Action Campaign

63 Palace Street,
Petersham 2049
Phone: (02) 569 3819
(day hours and to leave
messages only - we will
get back to you!)

WAAC meets every second
Wednesday night at 6pm at
the above address - all women
welcome to attend.

It's time for a campaign to have abortion treated like all other medical procedures.

We all need to be aware of the political opportunities this case brings up for the anti-abortion forces and we must respond with vigor and determination to reassert that abortion is a woman's right to choose. As a McNair Anderson nationwide opinion poll in 1991 showed, 81% of those surveyed supported a woman's right to choose abortion. That means we must bring the law in line with popular opinion and go on the offensive instead of trying to maintain the status quo.

Access to abortion is not something for the courts to grant us. It's a simple and safe medical procedure which should be subject to the same legal constraints as all other medical procedures. - none. We must repeal Sections 82-82 of the NSW Crimes Act.

Get involved!

If you would like to help Women's Abortion Action Campaign in this campaign or in many of its other activities write to WAAC, PO Box E233, St James, NSW 2007 or phone Claudine on 690 1230 for more information. WAAC meets fortnightly at Women's Liberation House, 63 Palace St, Petersham.

**1974-94 - 20 years of public funding for abortion,
yet, it's still on the Crimes Act
- is this women's equality before the law?**

August 8th, 1974 was the day on which legislation was gazetted by the Whitlam government for our then universal health care system, Medibank, now called Medicare. From that day abortion became a refundable medical procedure recognised by public funding from the Federal Government. August 8th, 1994 is the twentieth anniversary of public funding for abortion which has meant that, for Australian women, the cost of the operation has been contained. Yet, abortion still remains on the respective state Crimes Acts and Criminal Codes!

This date was chosen by the recently formed, Abortion Rights Network of Australia (ARNA) as a date of national significance which all affiliated state-based abortion rights groups could utilise as a day to raise the profile of the struggle for abortion rights both within their state and across Australia. For example, this year in Brisbane a postcard campaign will be conducted by Children by Choice and Women's Abortion Campaign to lobby the Queensland Premier, Wayne Goss, who has been highly resistant to discussion of the issue of abortion within that state. Activists in other states are now in the process of organising activities for August 8th.

And we in Sydney are organising a public meeting with the theme - "1974-94 - 20 years of public funding for abortion, yet it's still on the Crimes Act - is this women's equality before the law?" The public meeting is yet one more activity in our long-term strategy for the repeal of the relevant sections of the NSW Crimes Act which relate to abortion (i.e. Sections 82, 83 and 84).

In the latter part of last year, the Australian Law Reform Commission conducted a public inquiry: "Women's Equality Before the Law" which received submissions about a range of issues, including the issue of abortion, from at least four abortion rights organisations across Australia.

Children by Choice and Women's Abortion Campaign in Brisbane each presented a submission to the Brisbane consultations; and we, Women's Abortion Action Campaign and the national network co-ordinating the National Day of Action for Abortion Rights, the Abortion Rights Network of Australia (ARNA), also presented verbal submissions to the Sydney consultations.

Yet, the preliminary report from the Inquiry makes no mention of abortion as being an issue of concern brought to the Inquiry's attention! This selective reportage from the Inquiry is highly disappointing for we in Women's Abortion Action Campaign (WAAC). The key argument presented by WAAC and ARNA was that, as in the Tasmanian anti-gay laws, the existence of sections relating to abortion in the respective state Crimes Acts and Criminal Codes is a breach of the Australian government's responsibilities under both the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights - both of which the Federal Government is a signatory to.

WAAC and ARNA urged the Inquiry to recommend to the Federal Government to use its external affairs powers under the Federal Constitution to pressure state governments to repeal sections of their Crimes Act or Criminal Code which relate to abortion, as their existence is a direct contravention of the above two International Covenants. The Federal Government is already using this external affairs power to pressure state governments in the area of industrial relations law and has indicated it may use it in regard to the anti-gay provisions in the Tasmanian Crimes Act. Given the silence of the Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC), we further urge the ALRC to comprehensively report on all issues brought to its attention in its second report from the Inquiry.

Join us at our public meeting to mark August 8th this year and to find out how to become involved in WAAC so to advance the view that abortion is a woman's right to choose and not for the law to grant us permission to have.

Written and authorised by Women's Abortion Action Campaign, PO Box E233, ST. JAMES NSW 2000 as part of our contribution to the NSW abortion rights campaign and to the August 8th, National Day of Action for Abortion Rights, co-ordinated by the Abortion Rights Network of Australia (ARNA), also at PO Box E233, ST. JAMES, NSW 2000 (July 1994).



20 years of public funding for abortion, but abortion is still part of the NSW Crimes Act!

REPEAL ALL ABORTION LAWS



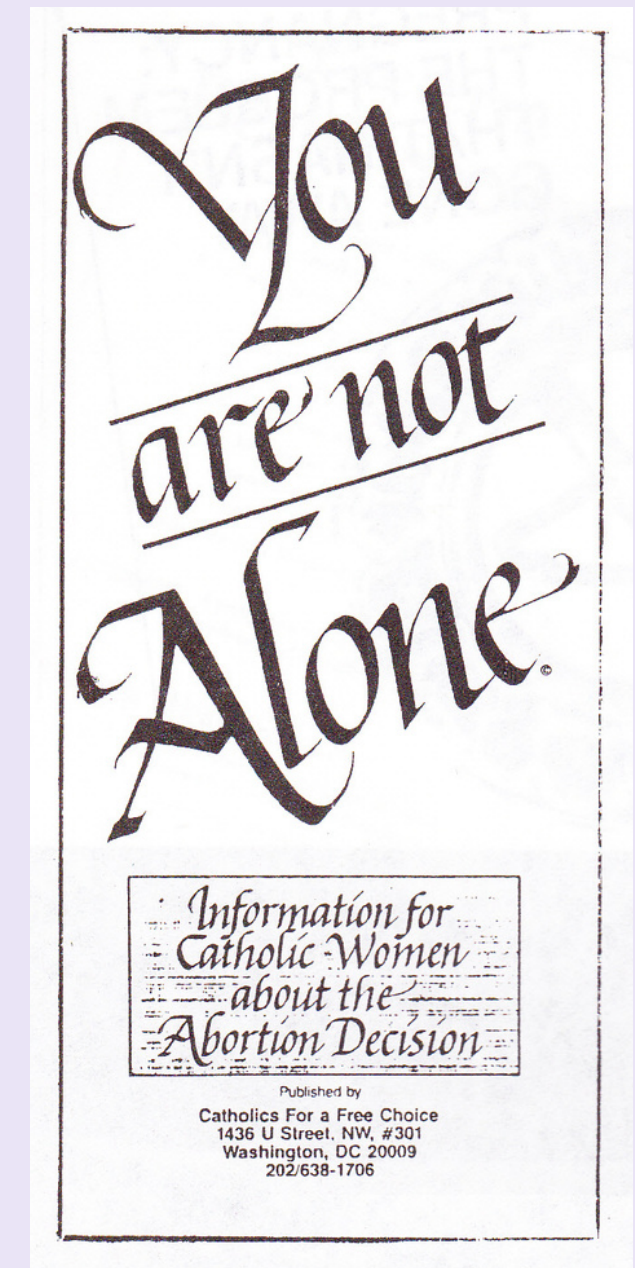
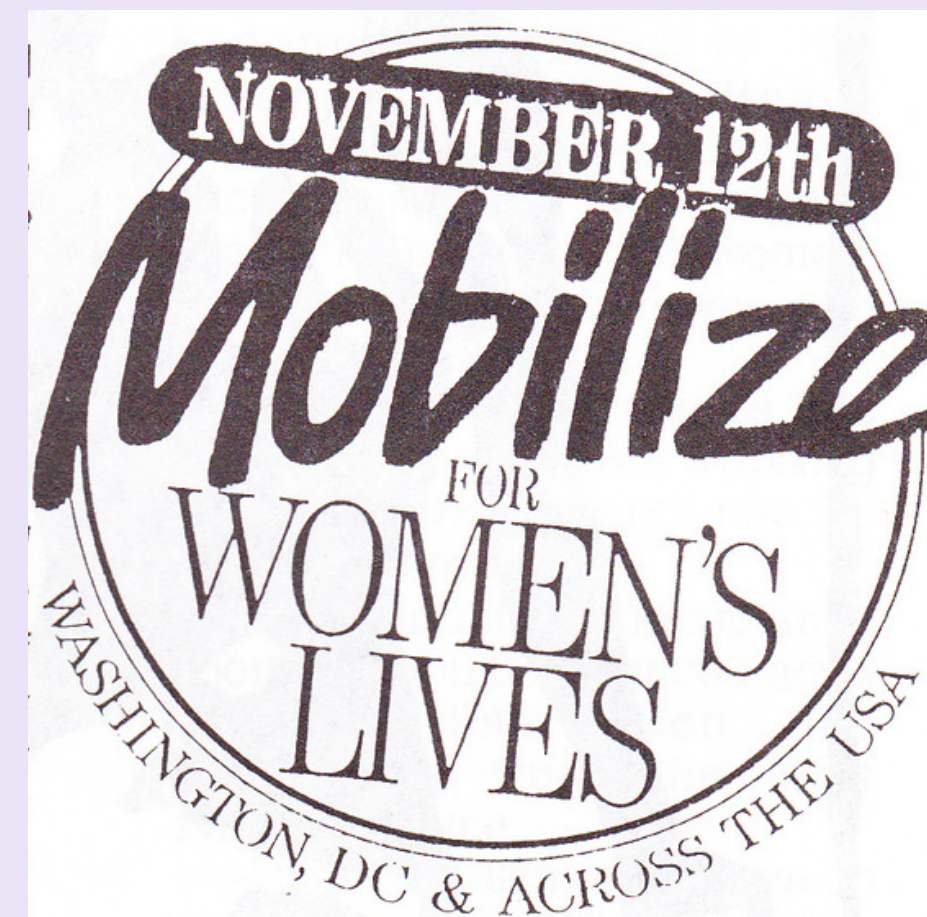
Monday 8 August 7 pm
YWCA, Wentworth Ave, City

Part of National Day of Action for Abortion Rights coordinated by Abortion Rights Network Australia
 Authorised by Women's Abortion Action Campaign PO Box E233, St James 2000. More info Jenny 550-2805





Margaret Kirkby, 1997
at the SRC (Sydney
University)



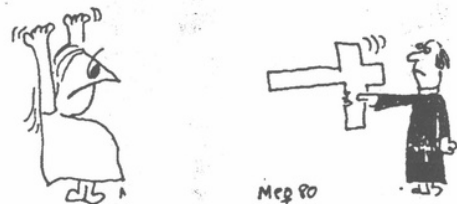
For over a year in 1998/99, the residents of Salisbury Road, Camperdown faced constant harassment by a well-organised group of street pests calling themselves 'anti abortion protestors'. Residents had to deal with large numbers of people coming to the street from outside the area, causing traffic and parking congestion. They also blocked the footpath, especially around the entrance to the Salisbury Road Clinic, targetting people entering and leaving for medical care with lurid signs and disgusting comments.

Peaceful Protest or Harassment and Intimidation?

Background

We from the activist group, Women's Abortion Action Campaign, were approached by residents who live across the road from the Australian Birth Control Services clinic on Salisbury Road, Camperdown. The residents are deeply distressed by the activities of the anti-abortion protesters outside the clinic

We will outline what we know about the anti-abortion protesters and we make some suggestions at the end about ways this can be responded to in a way which affirms women's right to make the decision to terminate a pregnancy **unimpeded** and which exposes the hypocrisy of the organisers of these anti-abortion protests.



The *modus operandi* of the anti-abortion protesters - harassment and intimidation

For the entirety of 1998, anti-abortion protesters congregated outside the Salisbury Road abortion clinic on the third Saturday of each month between approximately 9.30 am and 11.30 am. The protest is organised by a group calling itself the **Helpers of God's Precious Infants**.

They advertise in the *Catholic Weekly*, the newsletter of the Right to Life Association of NSW and other publications to attract people from suburban churches to attend their protest. Their advertisements emphasise that it will be a 'peaceful' protest. What actually happens on the third Saturday of each month outside the abortion clinic cannot be described as 'peaceful' for the women who attend the clinic (and their partners who may be accompanying them).

For this description to make sense we need to describe the clinic a little - the clinic is a two storey building on Salisbury Road, Camperdown. There is a car park beside the clinic where clients can park but clients need to walk out of the car park onto the pavement (public property) to walk to the door which leads into the clinic. There is entry to the car park from both Salisbury Road and from a rear lane. Immediately outside the front door of the clinic there is a bus stop.

The organisers of the anti-abortion protest, the **Helpers of God's Precious Infants**, undertake a complete stake out of the clinic. They have people immediately outside the front door of the clinic. They have 1-2 people immediately outside the car park gate on the Salisbury Road entrance to the car park and they also have 1-2 people just outside the car park gate in the rear lane. In addition, there is usually 1-2 other anti-abortion protesters milling around in between the front door to the clinic and the car park gate on Salisbury Road.

There is also 1 or 2 or 3 people along that section of Salisbury Road between the clinic and the set of lights nearby at the junction of Salisbury Road and Kingston Road. These people are usually handing out anti-abortion propaganda (the usual of foetal images - didn't you know foetuses can survive without a woman's body!).

There is usually a sandwich board anti-abortion sign on the pavement just near the bus stop sign - again this has the usual 'dead foetuses in a bucket' images - these images would have to date from the 50's or 60's when hospital/clinic disposal policies were far less sensitive than they are now. But the anti-abortion protesters want to keep dragging out these images because of their shock value and let's face it they are pretty confronting images. There's no subtlety about anti-abortion protesters.

Over the road, directly opposite the clinic, there is usually a crowd of up to 90 people from suburban churches (you should check out the Virgin Mary image on a banner held up by the anti-abortion protesters - it's made from very expensive materials and looks like it comes straight out of a church - **we ask which church does that come from?**). This crowd sings for the whole two hours that they are there. The songs are a mixture of church hymns and anti-abortion songs (you know that one they sing 'where have all the babies gone, long time passing, where have all the babies gone' etc etc).



Using tactics developed by anti choice organisations in the USA, they made selective videos and used these as 'evidence' that they were being harassed by residents, provoking altercations which led to at least one arrest.

In mid 1999, residents asked for WAAC's support to stop women, clinic staff and residents from being harassed and intimidated.

WAAC members who had been part of the resistance to USA attacks on abortion rights such as the misleadingly named 'Operation Rescue' were able to offer advice to prevent the anti-choicer group having 'free rein' of Salisbury Road, and to raise public awareness of what was occurring.



**July 1999:
Salisbury Road
Clinic counter
protest against
Helpers of God's
Precious Infants
anti-choice
zealots**



Above: WAAC members Nicky and Joanne outside the Salisbury Road Clinic.

Right: Residents and WAAC activists next to the 'Peace Bus' - used to block anti-choicer access to vanatge points used to harass residents and Clinic staff and patients.





Awareness raising was one of the aims of WAAC activists protesting the actions of anti-choice zealots in Salisbury Road. Public support by 'honking' was always high!



Some of the anti-choice zealots trying to interfere with the legitimate activities of the Salisbury Road clinic and its clients were well known 'regulars', others were new to the business of harassing women in public places



Report regarding the counter action
held on Saturday 15th May 1999

* to occupy the space usually taken up by the group of singers who position themselves directly opposite the clinic - **ACHIEVED** - we arrived earlier than they usually do and occupied their usual site - this forced them to be positioned further down Salisbury Road and no longer directly opposite the clinic:

* to show the Helpers that they no longer have a free rein on Salisbury Road and that the community will ensure that women and clinic staff are supported - **ACHIEVED:**

A number of local residents who are Christian in their beliefs find the actions and words of the Helpers of God's Precious Infants offensive as the bible states that prayer is a private thing and should be done in private.

**WOMEN'S ABORTION ACTION CAMPAIGN,
PO BOX A2233, SYDNEY SOUTH NSW 2000,
PH/FAX (02) 9569 3819**

Report regarding the counter action
held on Saturday 19th June 1999

* to occupy the site usually taken up by the hardliners from the Helpers of God's Precious Infants, that is, the pavement immediately outside the clinic - **ACHIEVED** - we arrived very early and set up an old door on some plastic crates and displayed abortion rights placards and banners immediately outside the clinic. This meant that the hardline 'Helpers' had to position themselves further down Salisbury Road past the clinic, hence, their sandwich board sign with the 'dead foetuses in a bucket' images was barely visible to women attending the clinic and to passing traffic.

* to park out the street so that the 'Helpers' van could not be parked opposite the clinic - **ACHIEVED** until approximately 10.30 a.m. when an unknown resident moved their car and the 'Helpers' were able to whip in with their van;

* to collect donations in a bucket which are to be directed to assist the local resident who incurred \$3,000 in legal fees defending themselves before the courts against the 'Helpers' - **ACHIEVED** - \$100 was collected on the day and the bucket will be circulated every month that we hold a counter action so to assist this local resident.

* to show our support for women attending the clinic, and for clinic staff - **ACHIEVED** - two abortion rights banners were taped to the walls of the clinic, clinic staff came out to thank us a number of times and we were able to warn women approaching the clinic that the anti-abortion protestors were there.

Finally, at an evaluation meeting held on 7th July 1999 to discuss the 19th June counter action, the following was resolved - we wish to make it clear that these counter actions are non-confrontational. Just because the 'Helpers' call themselves Christians and we are opposing them and their actions, this does not mean the local residents and/or Women's Abortion Action Campaign (WAAC) are anti-Christian. WAAC activist, Vicki Potempa, drafted the following statement and all at the evaluation meeting agreed it was an appropriate final statement for this report:

To the 'Helpers': your religious tenets are your own concern and we respect that. It is your fanaticism that is obnoxious and disruptive.



Free Salisbury Road of anti-abortion protestors **NOW!**

Date:
Saturday, 17 July 1999

Time:
7:30 am - 12 noon

Where:
135 Salisbury Road,
Camperdown

What to bring:
Thermos, croissants,
bongos and other
musical instruments,
your singing voice,
hacky sac and your
sense of humour.

The residents of Salisbury Road Camperdown invite you to participate in a non-confrontational resident action to free Salisbury Road of anti-abortion protestors. You may not be aware that local residents have for over a year now had altercations with the anti-abortion protestors who call themselves the Helpers of God's Precious Infants.

One of the altercations resulted in the arrest of a local resident. The anti-abortion group are clearly well trained in how far they can go so to not be charged with assault or obstruction. They also have a person with a video camera ready to catch on film any altercations so that they can lay charges, **hence our emphasis on a non-confrontational action.**

We also have the support and advice of the feminist grassroots abortion rights group Women's Abortion Action Campaign.

This action is to show our support for a woman's right to choose abortion and to support abortion clinic workers.

Take action to **stop** harassment and intimidation of women, clinic staff and residents

KS:MK 8.7.99

WAAC continued to mobilise actions at the Salisbury Road Clinic over the years, as the premises became a target for anti-choicers.



WHAT IS WOMEN'S ABORTION ACTION CAMPAIGN?

Women's Abortion Action Campaign (WAAC) is a grassroots activist abortion rights group which was established in August 1972. Our aims are:

- * that abortion is a woman's right to choose;
- * free, safe abortion on demand;
- * free, safe contraception on demand;
- * the repeal of all abortion laws;
- * no forced sterilisation.

WAAC is a part of the Women's Liberation Movement and organises rallies, pickets, petitions and a myriad of other activities to ensure the continued availability of safe, affordable and accessible abortion for not only all women in NSW but across Australia and internationally.

What were some of our activities in 1998?

(a) Solidarity with Western Australian women

In 1998 we were part of the national campaign of solidarity (via the Abortion Rights Network of Australia and other networks) with Western Australian women after the arrest in February 1998 of two abortion providers, Drs Victor Chan and Hoh Peng Lee from the Nanyara Clinic over an abortion they performed in November 1996. Subsequent to their arrest, threats were made by some of the remaining abortion providers that they would cease to perform abortions if the WA Parliament did not make moves to change the laws on abortion.

The Western Australian parliament did change their laws on abortion, however, the changes have resulted in less access to abortion than previously as there is now a requirement that every WA woman seeking an abortion see two doctors; there is a limit on access of up to 20 weeks gestation (after that a woman has to be seen by at least two out of a panel of six doctors) and access for under-16 year olds is greatly restricted in that parental consent is required.

During 1999 we will continue our work monitoring and analysing the new laws on abortion in Western Australia. There are many stories waiting to be told by the women of WA about the events of 1998 and how they affected their perception of themselves and their lives. We are already aware, for example, that the number of abortions performed in WA in the second half of 1998 is less by approximately one-third compared to the same period in 1997. During the parliamentary debate, which went over the months of March/April/May at least two women were admitted to hospitals in Perth after having attempted to self-abort. **THESE STORIES NEED TO BE HEARD AND TOLD. AS GERMAINE GREER IS SAYING, WE NEED TO GET ANGRY AGAIN!**

It is undoubted that WA women are still recovering and trying to understand the meaning of the restrictive environment they now face when accessing abortion.

(b) Solidarity with ACT women

In the later part of 1998 we undertook solidarity activities with women in the ACT at the time the anti-abortion Osborne bill was first introduced (in September) and when it was re-introduced (in November). We were fortunate in that one of our members was able to sit in on the ACT Legislative Assembly on 25th November to the early hours of 26 November last year when the second version of the Osborne bill was debated and, unfortunately, adopted although greatly amended.

We understand that there is an approximate six month period before the new abortion laws will be in practice in the ACT under the Osborne bill and there is some difficulty in assessing the full impact of the Osborne bill due to wording in many of its sections which are open to interpretation. There is also



case for saying the one abortion clinic which operates in the ACT should ignore the Bill as it is not enforceable and they would be better off to take their chances with the possibility of prosecution under the ACT Crimes Act provisions which relate to abortion.

The ACT Crimes Act provisions which relate to abortion are word-for-word the same as those in the NSW Crimes Act but the ACT does not have the benefit of a liberalising court ruling like we do in NSW (known as the 1971 Levine ruling). However, it is generally recognised by the legal profession that it is more likely that the liberalisation enacted in the NSW Levine ruling would be upheld as being applicable in the ACT if a prosecution for abortion under the ACT Crimes Act ever came up in a court in the ACT.

In the interim, it can be safely stated that the new abortion laws in the ACT are, like the WA laws, also greatly restrictive. They introduce a 72 hour “cooling off” period between the time when a woman obtains information (from a doctor, not a counsellor or nurse) about the risks and complications of the abortion operation and when she has the operation. In effect, this also means the introduction of a two doctor system in the ACT, albeit in a slightly different way to the way it has been introduced in Western Australia.

The Osborne Bill also establishes an Advisory Panel which “may” authorize material to be shown to women which will outline the information on risks and complications of the operation (and, like the WA laws, compared to carrying a pregnancy full term) and it “may” authorize a series of images of foetuses at different stages of development to be shown to women seeking an abortion.

The Advisory Panel is made up of 7 people, three of whom must come from the privately-run and Catholic-owned Calvary Hospital so the ACT Legislative Assembly has, in effect, weighted the Advisory Panel with anti-abortion members. In this context it is likely that being shown foetal images before one has an abortion will be forced upon all ACT women by later this year!

AGAIN, WE SAY IT IS TIME FOR WOMEN TO GET VERY, VERY ANGRY!



Some of our plans for 1999:

- * continue monitoring and analysing the impact of the new laws in WA and the ACT as practice develops under the new regimes. We will be very active in ensuring that similarly restrictive abortion laws are **not** introduced into NSW or to any other state or territory.
- * continue our international linkages via our membership of the Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights (based in Amsterdam) and through our networks with other organisations such as the Boston Women's Health Book Collective, Catholics for a Free Choice and so on.
- * continue the development of a Trust Fund to provide financial assistance to women who are seeking an abortion.
- * continue our work monitoring standards of care in abortion clinics and exposing poor practices when possible. It has become obvious over the last five years that for-profit abortion clinics have prospered whilst the not-for-profit and woman-centred clinics are faltering. Too many abortion providers have reduced the length of time for counselling or offer inadequate or no counselling services; too many abortion providers run their services with a 'doctor-is-god' perspective and fail to provide information in a supportive, non-threatening and non-clinical manner. This imbalance needs to be redressed and the women's movement needs to take these issues up again NOW!

All women are welcome to attend our meetings.

Our next meetings are on: Wednesday 17th March; Wednesday 31st March; Wednesday 14th April and Wednesday 28th April. The meetings begin at 7.30 p.m. and are held at Level 1, 26 Hutchinson Street, Surry Hills.

Women's Abortion Action Campaign, PO Box A2233, Sydney South NSW 2000 ph/fax: 61-2-9569-3819.

THE BESSIE SMYTH FOUNDATION

We believe that:

- women should not be forced into parent-hood,
- women should not be forced into having a termination, and
- women, when considering their options in relation to pregnancy, should have access to unbiased information to help with decision-making.

Our staff are committed to the right of women to control their own fertility and to be treated with care and respect whether they are exercising that right to continue or terminate a pregnancy.

The Bessie Smyth foundation provides:

- pregnancy decision-making counselling;
- abortion information, referral and advocacy;
- ante-natal and pregnancy service information, referral and advocacy;
- pre- and post-abortion counselling;
- promotion of women's rights to control their own fertility;
- training and resource development for women's services and other community, health and welfare groups; and
- practical assistance to women seeking a termination of pregnancy.

"I've just found out I'm pregnant and I'm not sure what I want to do – is there a service which will provide decision-making counselling which is not anti-abortion?"

"I'm from overseas on a holiday visa – where can I get an abortion and how much would it cost?"

"I've been ringing around and discovered that not all abortion clinics provide counselling – how can I find out which clinics provide counselling support?"

"I was on Depo Provera and did not realise I was pregnant until yesterday – I'm in the second trimester and want to terminate. How can I find out which clinics provide second trimester abortions and how can I be sure that the operation is safe?"

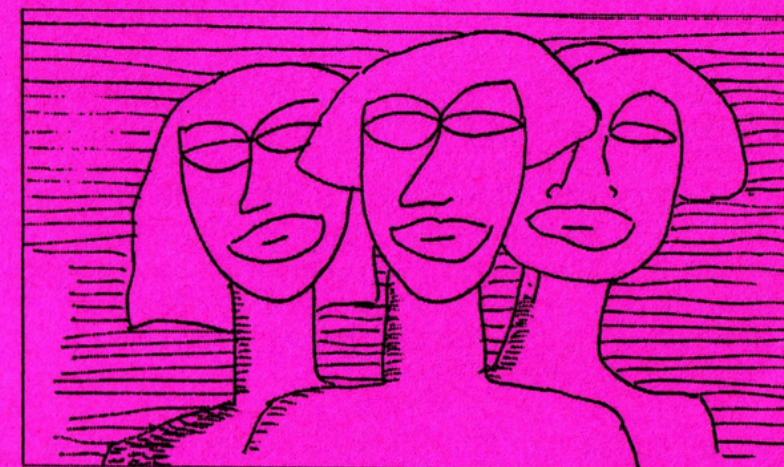
"I live with a disability and would like to continue my pregnancy but my family won't support me—where can I get help?"

The Bessie Smyth Foundation
39 North Parade
Auburn NSW 2144
PH: (02) 9649-9744
FAX: (02) 9649-8144
Email: bessie@zip.com.au
Website: www.bessiesmyth.org.au



THE BESSIE SMYTH FOUNDATION

PREGNANCY & ABORTION INFORMATION



Counselling Line
(02) 9649-9744

Website
www.bessiesmyth.org.au

If a woman has a right to decide on any question, it certainly is as to how many children she will bear".

Bessie Smyth 1893



WAAC supported the work of feminist abortion providers such as The Bessie Smyth Foundation, which operated the Powell St Clinic at Homebush

SOME COMMON QUESTIONS WE ARE ASKED

How much does it cost to have an abortion?

As of 14th June 2005, the cost for an abortion has increased at some NSW clinics as a result of threats by Medicare of substantial fines if clinics continue to bulk bill. This has resulted in a dramatic increase in the up-front cost for an abortion at some clinics.

In general, an abortion up to 12 weeks of pregnancy will cost anywhere between:

\$160 to \$520 in Sydney and
\$300 to \$600 in regional NSW
depending on the clinic you attend.

You will get approx \$300 back from Medicare (if charged \$520) or, if charged \$160, the clinic submits a claim to Medicare on your behalf and this will result in cheques from Medicare (for the approx \$300) being posted to you and you will then need to post them to the clinic.

If you are concerned about your privacy if cheques from Medicare are to be posted to you contact us for more information about what you can do to avoid this.

The upfront cost for an abortion over 12 weeks is also much higher now. Phone us for more detailed information on cost in your area.

Will an abortion effect my ability to fall pregnant in the future?

A safe abortion completed under appropriate medical conditions, as offered in Australia, will have no impact on any future pregnancies.

IF YOU KNOW YOU ARE PREGNANT AND
HAVE RESOLVED TO HAVE A TERMINA-
TION PHONE US FOR INFORMATION AND
ADVICE ABOUT SERVICES AVAILABLE

Is abortion legal?

Each state or territory in Australia (except the ACT) has provisions in their crimes act which talk about 'lawful' and 'unlawful miscarriages' and they are all different.

In NSW, abortion clinics carry out abortions lawfully as per the Levine ruling of October 1971.

Will my parents/husband/partner be told/ find out?

If you under 14 years a parent will be required to give permission for the procedure. If you are under 16 years and there are child protection issues the law requires that the Department of Community Services be informed. In all other circumstances your privacy will be respected.

How long will I be at the Clinic?

- Under 12 weeks pregnant - 2 to 4 hours
- 12 weeks to 16 weeks - 3 to 4 Hours
- Over 16 weeks - you will be required to attend the clinic two days running, 2 hours on the first day and 2 to 3 hours on the second day.

How long will it take for me to recover?

You should rest for 24 hours. Abortion is a surgical procedure and your body needs to recover. You should not participate in strenuous activity or sport for a further two weeks. You must use sanitary pads not tampons and you can not have sex for two weeks.

PREGNANCY COUNSELLING AND DECISION-MAKING

The Bessie Smyth Foundation counselling service provides an opportunity for women to explore their feelings about their pregnancy and the alternatives available to them.

Bessie Smyth counsellors are experienced, supportive and non-judgemental.

The Foundation maintains comprehensive referral information about services women can access for assistance once they have decided whether to continue or abort their pregnancy.

ADVOCACY

Advocacy for low income, disadvantaged women and women with particular needs includes:

- representation to clinics for fee reduction;
- negotiation with clinics to ensure a woman's particular needs are met (e.g. for women with disability; for women for whom English is not their first language; for refugee women and so on);
- referral and support for women who are continuing their pregnancy but who need further assistance and support;
- representation to ensure that all women are treated with dignity and respect regardless of their pregnancy choice.

BESSIE NEEDS YOU!

Develop your skills and confidence as a decision-maker. Join the Board of Directors of the Bessie Smyth Foundation and ensure the future of Australia's first and only feminist abortion clinic, set up in Homebush 22 years ago.

Please phone the Co-ordinator, Carolyn Morey, on 9764 4133 for more info.

THE
Bessie Smyth Foundation

♦ THE POWELL ST CLINIC ♦ 80 PARK RD HOMEBUSH NSW 2140 ♦
PHONE: 9764 4133

LOTL, November 1998

1994-2005

1994

April 19
Justice Newman brings down his judgement in the medical negligence matter, CES v Superclinics (See the Abortion and the Law exhibition board for further details). In the case, the plaintiff (CES) was suing the medical centre and doctors for compensation for forced parenthood as a result of their failure to diagnose her pregnancy in time so that she could have a termination. Justice Newman ruled against the right of CES to compensation, arguing that her stated wish to have an abortion would have in fact been an 'illegal' act under the Crime Act and therefore she was not entitled to compensation.



April 19
State Attorney General, John Hannaford, fails to rebuke Justice Newman over his erroneous assertions as to the law on abortion in NSW.

WAAC issues press release condemning Newman's judgement.

May
WAAC produces comprehensive summary of the Newman judgement in the CES v Superclinics case outlining the implications this case has for all women.

May 28
WAAC holds rally in Town Hall Square condemning the Newman judgement and calling for repeal of all abortion laws. A new T-shirt produced for this action with slogan: 'I've had an abortion and I'm not a criminal' on the front and, on the back, 'Repeal Sections 82, 83 and 14 of the NSW Crimes Act' is printed.

June 11
WAAC circulates leaflet to ALP state conference in Sydney demanding in aid to the conscience vote and urging the ALP to adopt a pro-abortion, pro-choice, repeal all abortion laws policy.

after half of 1994
WAAC continues the community campaign against the Newman judgement and is active in ARNA in order to inform interstate activists about the implications of the judgement.

1995

throughout 1995
WAAC continues to participate in ARNA and accepts responsibility for organising some of the national conferences of ARNA activists.

December
The NSW Court of Appeal rejects Justice Newman's decision and holds CES appeal. The Court finds that Justice Levine's 1971 ruling is applicable in the interpretation of NSW abortion laws (See the Abortion and the Law exhibition board for further details).



December 25
A national meeting held in Sydney. Reports presented by activists from the ACT, Sydney, Newcastle, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia.

December 26
A second national conference: Abortion: Potential Crime or Factual Service?

January 26
WAAC maintains watching brief on anti-abortion activity and continues to be an active participant in ARNA and in ARNA teleconferences.

January - October
The CES v Superclinics case - a further appeal by the defendant.

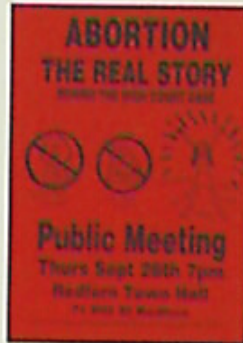
Superclinics comes before the High Court of Australia. There is outrage as the High Court Justices permit the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference to be admitted to the case as 'amici curiae' or 'friends of the court'.

Overnight WAAC participates in conferences with legal representatives and abortion providers with a view that the Abortion Providers Federation of Australasia should also seek leave of the High Court for admission to the case as a friend of the court. They are admitted the following day.

Mid - October
Two WAAC activists attend members meeting of the Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights in Amsterdam. WAAC activists provide reports on the High Court case and its possible implications for NSW women.

Mid-October
High Court matter, CES v Superclinics, is settled out of court. Details of the out of court settlement are not available to the public. As such, NSW abortion laws are not addressed by the High Court of Australia.

1997
Approx June
ARNA national teleconference hears report from Western Australian (WA) activists that police investigations are taking place in Perth following a complaint about an abortion performed in November 1996. The teleconference hears a report that the police are suggesting they will charge the woman (of Maori background) under the WA Criminal Code for having an abortion. The woman, following her cultural practices, had requested to take home the foetal products for burial and the clinic had agreed. Unfortunately her son had unintentionally revealed part of the story at school and this led to a Police investigation.



December
ARNA national meeting scheduled to be held in Perth cancelled due to inability of activists to raise the money for airfares. WAAC hears from WA activists the Police were considering charging the counsellor that had given the foetal products to woman. WA activists from the Association for the Legal Right to Abortion (ALRAWA) were maintaining a watching brief on the matter.

1998
February 14
Two doctors brought before the Western Australian Courts in relation to an abortion operation they had performed in November 1996. The initial aim of the investigation by the WA Director of Public Prosecutions was to indict the woman who had undergone the procedure. Pressure from abortion rights activists resulted in Cheryl Davenport MLC from the ALP proposing a partial repeal bill to the Legislative Council.

March - May
The WA partial repeal bill was carried with a majority in the WA upper house of 22 to 11 votes. However, in the course of the bill's progression through the lower house of Parliament, a number of amendments were made. The result was a highly compromised piece of legislation that emerged as a reform bill rather than a repeal bill, as originally envisaged by activists. In its final form, the bill continued to single out abortion for special notice in the WA Criminal Code and in the WA Health Act.

April 24 - 26
Abortion Rights Network of Australia (ARNA) National Weekend of Action.

May
ARNA national meeting held Melbourne. Tension emerges regarding tactics and strategies adopted by WA activists in WA campaign and in terms of the interpretations of the new WA abortion laws. New ARNA National Coordinator and National Coordinating Group appointed.

May 26
New WA abortion laws are gazetted. Clarification of WA abortion laws achieved but women's access to the operation actually decreases.

June 14
ARNA national teleconference held - this subsequently becomes the last ARNA national teleconference.

June
Right to Choose Issue No. 34 is published after a six year break.

1999
April-May
Preparation of submission by Sydney WAAC and Western WAAC to the Australian Tribunal on Women's Human Rights. Convened by the Women's Rights Action Network of Australia (WRANA) held in Melbourne on May 21 1999. The submission outlined two testimonies of women's experience of trying to access abortion and recommended repeal of all abortion laws as is required by Article 2 of the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

April - August
Public meeting held first at Newtown Neighbourhood Centre to consult with local residents of Camperdown in relation to the actions of anti-abortion protesters outside the Australian Birth Control Services Clinic at Camperdown.

Commencing May 15, each month counter demonstrations were held by WAAC and supporters outside the ABC clinic in Camperdown to defend women against the vitriol of anti-abortionists. These actions had great support from local residents, however, they proved to be a huge exercise for a volunteer group such as WAAC.

Approx June
Preparation of submission by WAAC to the Queensland Taskforce on Women and the Criminal Code. The submission outlines the case for repeal of all abortion laws in Queensland.

2000

During 2000
WAAC energies strongly directed toward abortion service delivery issues.

November 12 - 14
Paper presented by WAAC activist to Australia 2000 International Congress of the Humanist Movement held at University of Technology Law Faculty. The paper addressed the issue of 'Abortion - why repeal rather than reform'.

At the same conference, WAAC activists presented a certificate of appreciation, a gift and flowers to long term WAAC activist, Vicki Potempa, in recognition of her hard work over the years for women's continued access to abortion. The Humanist Movement also made presentations to Vicki, in recognition of her work both for abortion rights and for the humanist movement since the 1960's.

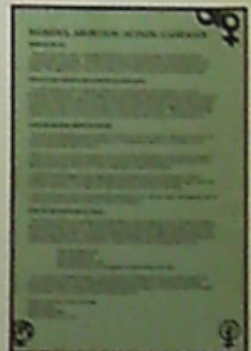
2001

July
Murder of security guard, Steve Rogers, at Fertility Control Clinic, Melbourne by anti-abortion maverick. Overnight, Australian abortion services have to rethink their security strategies.

August
WAAC holds public meeting to discuss the implications of the murder of the security guard.

November
WAAC activist attends bi-annual conference of The Abortion Providers Federation of Australasia held in Adelaide.

2002
During 2002
WAAC activists involved in decision by The Bessie Smyth Foundation to sell The Powell Street Clinic.



INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

WAAC has always been committed to the struggle of women throughout the world to access free and safe abortion on demand. This is reflected in the range of international campaigns and Australian tours of activists, organised by WAAC. It is also evident from the extensive coverage of international struggles in our magazine, Right to Choose.



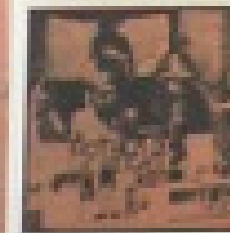
During the 1970's and early 1980's, feminists realised that the so-called 'humanitarian' development work to developing nations had substantial strings attached. These strings were based on poor countries undertaking population control measures, such as forced sterilisation of indigenous women, prior to aid being dispensed. This led to the formation of ICASC to coordinate the international movement.



WAAC has been an active member of international abortion campaigns. The International Campaign for Abortion Rights (ICAR) was formed in 1976. Annual slogan: 'ICAR advocated of activists from mainly white Anglo-Breton countries such as New Zealand, Australia, United Kingdom, United States of America and Canada.

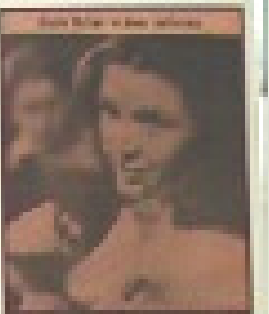


ICAR's focus was purely abortion rights and it was attracted some understandable criticism from other women's health activists and from women in developing countries. As a result of feminist evolution and debates, the international campaign was extended to include contraception and anti-sterilisation campaigns.



This new focus of the international campaign led to a broader coalition under the banner of the International Campaign for Abortion and Sterilisation Campaign (ICASC). One of the strengths of ICASC was its connection with critiques of the Western medical profession and of the use of institutional drug companies in exploiting women's bodies around the world.

ICASC continues the campaign for reproductive rights, which are viewed as a series of rights that enable all women - without discrimination on the basis of nationality, class, ethnicity, race, age, religion, disability, sexuality or marital status - to decide whether or not to have children. Reproductive rights are basic rights. Some of the actions undertaken include: Solidarity and financial support to mothers, doctors and others who had been arrested for performing abortions. Campaigns opposing or opposing specific research findings, such as Daps, Provera and the anti-pregnancy vaccine. Campaigns against population control programs. Ongoing publication of newsletters and pamphlets supporting the work of member organisations, such as WAAC. Convening international conferences and women's health meetings to enable grass-roots activists and progressive academics to strategise, exchange information and support each other. Coordinating world-wide activities to acknowledge May 28 as the International Day of Action for Women's Health.



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