

**PRESENTATION AT THE EURONGOS CONFERENCE 2006 –
ADVANCING SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS WORLDWIDE**

Notes for PowerPoint presentation.

The Therapeutic Goods Amendment (Repeal of Ministerial Responsibility for approval of RU486) Bill 2005

- Senator Brian Harradine (independent) was a driving force behind the development of the original legislation which gave power to a single Minister, the Health Minister to decide on abortifacients in Australia or not. Every other drug is regulated by the Therapeutic Goods Administration, the regulatory arm of government for medicines.
- Although abortion was legal, the Harradine legislation led to a restriction on all forms of Abortifacients for all uses of the drug
- The public debate regarding the drug's possible reintroduction onto the market was initiated by Senator Lyn Allison, leader of the Democrats party and furthered by support from medical bodies such as the Australian Medical Authority and RANZCOG

The Repeal Bill was a unique Bill – put to government by four female members from all major political parties. Three out of the four females were members of the Parliamentary Group for Population and Development (PGPD) for whom ARHA is the Secretariat. It is a cross party parliamentary group that supports the ICPD PoA Agenda. The PGPD provided a political network and a working environment for the development and growth of ideas

Hearings

- Held over three days in three different states
- Selected organisations (including ARHA) were called upon to submit evidence
- Provided an opportunity *for the public to make written submissions*

Public Submissions – New dynamics of advocacy

- Google Campaign; Crikey.com
- Every angle was covered– brain tumours, rural, disposal of foetuses, endometriosis, breast cancer, fertility rates
- Form Letters from the Right to Life associations were prominent

- It was a Domestic issue with an International response
 - ARHA and Evidence base. Pro choice organisations focused on reliable accurate information to media and to parliamentarians.
 - Ozbytes was extensively sued as an information provider and poster
- The Senate made no findings. It was a rare event in Australian Politics and Parliamentary practice as it was a conscience vote. There were divided opinions in major political parties and public opinion put additional pressure on politicians from marginal seats

Advocacy Methodologies

- Evidence based materials
- Materials used were produced to target politicians and the media during the campaign – no generic material
- Polling vs Push Polling
- Get-Up campaign
- Public opinion played an influential role in the debate
- Particular politicians with opinionated positions found themselves labelled by the public
- Proposed amendments to the Bill towards the end were introduced to confuse public opinion

Lessons learned

Importance of NGO community sharing information

Importance of networking

Consistency of language by pro-choice groups very important

Media relations – TV, radio. Letters to the editor

Importance of Polls.

Chris Richards