



February 3, 2006

Dear Parliamentarian:

I write to you today as president of Catholics for a Free Choice (CFFC), an international nongovernmental organization which shapes and advances sexual and reproductive ethics that are based on justice, reflect a commitment to women's well being and respect and affirm the moral capacity of women and men to make sound decisions about their lives. I urge your support for granting the Therapeutics Goods Administration (TGA) discretion over the distribution and governance of the abortion pill, also known as Mifepristone or RU-486.

We believe the current limitations on "restricted goods" (generally drugs intended to induce an abortion)—where the Minister of Health must issue written approval before the drug can be evaluated and sold—puts the health and lives of Australian women at significant risk.

It is our belief that the approval of a particular pharmaceutical, whether it is in Australia or any other country, should be decided by a technically and professionally qualified government entity governed by science, not ideology. However, it is our belief that in the case of RU-486, it is ideology and not science that is preventing its availability to women.

Most women, regardless of whether they are Catholic or otherwise, take abortion seriously and most certainly would prefer to prevent pregnancy rather than have an abortion. That, sadly, is not always possible. Even women using contraception get pregnant. And some of those women decide to have abortions.

Catholic women overwhelmingly reject the Vatican's position that the fetus is a person from the moment of conception. They also, like many women, believe that later abortions are morally more complex than early abortions. To have one more option for early abortion is morally and emotionally a significant advance. It is also an important medical advance, as earlier abortions are safer abortions.

All around the world, Catholics support a woman's right to full access to reproductive health care including the right to have a safe and legal abortion.

- In the United States, 57% of Catholic voters identified themselves as prochoice.
- In Italy, where 97% of the population is Catholic, 74% favor the use of RU-486.
- In France, 83% of Catholics stated that abortion is "not wrong at all" if a fetus has serious defects.

1436 U Street NW, Suite 301 ❖ Washington, DC 20009-3997, USA

T: +1 (202) 986-6093

F: +1 (202) 332-7995

E: [cffc@catholicsforchoice.org](mailto:cffc@catholicsforchoice.org)

- In Bolivia, 55% of Catholics feel abortion should be permitted under certain circumstances.

Most importantly, however, is the fact that support for RU-486 is overwhelming across Australia. According to a Newspoll telephone survey commissioned by the Australian Reproductive Health Alliance, when asked whether they would “personally be in favor” of RU-486 being made available for use by “qualified medical practitioners,” a full 66% of men and 70% of women supported its availability. (*The Australian*, January 19, 2006)

I urge you to vote to remove RU-486 from the restrictive control of the Minister of Health and to grant the Therapeutics Goods Administration immediate oversight of this critically important medical technology.

Sincerely,



Frances Kissling  
President