



Summary of Senators Statements

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

Senate Debate: Hansard from 8 Feb 06

Ref: <http://www.aph.gov.au/hansard/senate/dailys/ds090206.pdf> (pgs 58-118)

Issue

This is a summary of key statements made by Senators arranged by those who supported the Bill and those who opposed it. ACL's position was opposed to the Bill. The Bill was passed in the Senate on 9 Feb 06 by 45 votes to 28.

The objective of the Bill was to remove the Ministerial approval of the drug RU486 and to transfer the approval of the drug to the Therapeutic Goods Administration.

Who voted for and against

The Senators divided as follows:

Those who opposed the Bill (noe)

Name	Party	State
Conroy, S.	ALP	VIC
Hogg, J.J.	ALP	QLD
Hutchins, S.P.	ALP	NSW
Polley, H.	ALP	TAS
Stephens, U.	ALP	NSW
Fielding, S.	FFP	VIC
Abetz, E.	LP	TAS
Barnett, G.	LP	TAS
Brandis, G.H.	LP	QLD
Calvert, P.H.	LP	TAS
Chapman, H.G.P.	LP	SA
Eggleston, A.	LP	WA
Ellison, C.	LP	WA
Ferguson, A.	LP	SA
Fierravanti-Wells, C.	LP	NSW
Heffernan, W.D.	LP	NSW
Humphries, G.	LP	ACT

Those who supported the Bill (aye)

Name	Party	State
Adams, J.	LP	WA
Allison, L.	AD	VIC
Bartlett, A.	AD	QLD
Brown, B.	AG	TAS
Brown, C. L. [2]	ALP	TAS
Campbell, G.	ALP	NSW
Carr, K.	ALP	VIC
Colbeck, R.	LP	TAS
Coonan, H.	LP	NSW
Crossin, P.M.	ALP	NT
Evans, C.	ALP	WA
Faulkner, J.P.	ALP	NSW
Ferris, J.	LP	SA
Fifield, M [3]	LP	VIC
Hill, R.	LP	SA
Hurley, A.	ALP	SA
Johnston, D.	LP	WA



Kemp, R.	LP	VIC
Lightfoot, R.	LP	WA
Mason, B.J.	LP	QLD
McGauran, J.	LP	VIC
Minchin, N.	LP	SA
Parry, S.	LP	TAS
Ronaldson, M.	LP	VIC
Santoro, S. [1]	LP	QLD
Boswell, R.L.D.	NATS	QLD
Joyce, B.	NATS	QLD
Campbell, I.	LP	WA

Kirk, L.	ALP	SA
Ludwig, J.W.	ALP	QLD
Lundy, K.	ALP	ACT
Macdonald, I.D.	LP	QLD
Marshall, G.	ALP	VIC
McEwen, A.	ALP	SA
McLucas, J.E.	ALP	QLD
Milne, C.	AG	TAS
Moore, C.	ALP	QLD
Murray, A.	AD	WA
Nash, F.	NATS	NSW
Nettle, K.M.	AG	NSW
O'Brien, K.	ALP	TAS
Patterson, K.C.L.	LP	VIC
Payne, M.A.	LP	NSW
Ray, R.F.	ALP	VIC
Scullion, N. G.	CLP	NT
Sherry, N.	ALP	TAS
Siewert, R.	AG	WA
Sterle, G.	ALP	WA
Stott Despoja, N.	AD	SA
Troeth, J.	LP	VIC
Trood, R.	LP	QLD
Vanstone, A.	LP	SA
Watson, J.	LP	TAS
Webber, R.	ALP	WA
Wong, P.	ALP	SA
Wortley, D.	ALP	SA

Statements from Senators who supported the Bill

Sen NASH (NSW)

...passing this bill is the right thing to do...this bill will be of benefit to people in this country...

Sen TROETH (Vic)

...I believe strongly in the reasons for this bill...this is not a debate about abortion...



Sen ALLISON (Vic)

...of course it would be good to reduce the number of unwanted pregnancies – there is no doubt about that..but there is no cause to panic. It has nothing to do with ethics...it is okay for people to hold particular ethical or religious views that lead them to oppose abortion but it is not okay for them to impose their position on others who do not...an estimated one in three women have had an abortion, and I am one of them...

Sen MOORE (Qld)

...I commend the people who made the effort to be part of the process, to contact the senators and to be involved, but I beg that you actually fully understand what we are debating and not get confused with some other debate... (she is referring to the abortion issue)

Sen NETTLE (NSW)

...unfortunately, this debate we are having now is not around that issue [abortion]...the Greens are proudly a pro-choice party...

Sen ADAMS (WA)

...I think that education is really the only way that we will be able to reduce these abortions or terminations of pregnancy...I believe the TGA and its respective advisory committees are the correct group of people to make the decisions as to whether this drug is safe...

Sen Faulkner (NSW)

...this is not a bill to change the laws concerning abortion; those are state matters... there are those who have treated this bill as an opportunity to raise a question most Australians consider settled [abortion]...

Sen BARTLETT (Qld)

...I see my role as a Senator and indeed as a Democrat to stand with those women in their right to choose...where choice means having all of the options both available and affordable...

Sen MARSHALL (Vic)

...at the end of the day, abortion is a subject for discussion between a woman and her doctor and a decision for the woman...Australians of all religions and cultural backgrounds have good reason to oppose the influence of faith rather than logic-based



arguments in policy decisions...Australians must hold on to our principles that religion has no place in politics...

Sen MILNE (Tas)

...Parliamentarians in State Parliaments around Australia have determined that termination is legal in Australia today...whilst I respect everyone's views on the matter of whether abortion should be legal in Australia, I do not think it is appropriate to confuse that issue with the matter before us...

Sen PATTERSON (Vic)

...passing this bill will mean that, should a sponsor apply to market the drug [RU486], the TGA will evaluate the drug on its merits...

Sen BROWN (TAS)

...Of course it (abortion) is something that we should be able to counsel about as medical practitioners but it is not something we as politicians should deny from the options available to women...

Sen WONG (SA)

...I believe that there should be limits on the extent to which any of us impose our personal moral views on others, particularly when one is a parliamentarian...

Sen McLUCAS (QLD)

...the strong views on each side must be respected but in doing so we must recognize that this is a debate about the method of approval of a set of drugs, not about the legality of abortion.

Sen TROOD (QLD)

...I am deeply troubled by the estimated 85,000 abortions that take place in Australia each year...Whatever we do this evening and tomorrow in the Senate will not change that reality (legalized abortion).

Sen FIFIELD (Vic)

...there is no desire in the community to reopen the abortion debate...

Sen SIEWERT (WA)



...I would like to congratulate the proponents of this bill on having the guts to put it up in the face of a lot of opposition from what I believe is a minority – but a noisy minority – in the community...

Sen KIRK (SA)

...I believe that placing responsibility for the approval of RU486 with the minister is inappropriate...for ten years Australian women have been prevented from choosing what, for many, would have been the safest method of abortion...

Sen McEWEN (SA)

...the reason the minister currently has the power of veto is because 10 years ago a former senator who was vehemently opposed to abortion was able to exploit his privileged position as a Member of Parliament...

Sen Chris EVANS (WA)

...I am very clearly and publicly expressing my opinion that I am pro-choice...I have a fundamental problem with men trying to tell women how to handle issues of their own fertility and health...

Sen WORTLEY (SA)

...the current process of having the decision reside with the minister alone is flawed...

Sen SHERRY (Tas)

I do not agree with abortion...I note the growing tendency in public policy to wrap controversial and complex issues in the simplistic notion and slogan of 'choice'...(but) I do not believe that the decision making belongs with an individual minister...

Sen WEBBER (WA)

...rather than banning RU486, the health minister – if he is concerned about deaths – should seriously think about addressing the dangers of childbirth...This is about a small minority of people who wish to impose their views on the rest of the country...

Statements from those who opposed the Bill

Sen HUMPHRIES (ACT)



...my view is that the bill is a mistake and should not be supported...RU486 is not just another drug...the drug and the procedure it facilitates are among the most contentious and controversial aspects of modern medicine...if this bill is passed today, we give up that scrutiny; we no longer have a role in the scrutinizing process...

Sen MINCHIN (SA)

...I cannot see how you can possibly divorce from even that debate the ethical questions which are therefore raised [abortion]...I am also very concerned about the medical risks which this drug does have for mothers...

Sen FIELDING (Vic)

...this drug is a unique drug which raises major social policy and ethical issues as well as medical and safety issues...policy decisions should never be made by unelected bureaucrats...for Australia's elected politicians to wash their hands of this, to pass off their decision-making power on policy issues like RU486 to unelected bureaucrats, would be a gross dereliction of our duty...

Sen BARNETT (Tas)

...I oppose the bill because we are not dealing with just another prescription...RU486 is a killer drug. A therapeutic drug, on the other hand, is designed to cure or treat an illness...RU486 is a drug designed to end life, not to cure it. Pregnancy is not an illness...

Sen POLLEY (Tas)

...let us get this thing very clear here: RU486 is not a simple drug like paracetamol....[RU486] will expel human life, and its consequences on the health of women are varied...why are we considering allowing the TGA to make a decision about a drug that kills?...Is RU486 for therapeutic use? It is clear that it is not...

Sen SANTORO (Qld)

...as both a father and a Christian, I regard pregnancy as a blessing, a gift, an opportunity and a life...my second concern about this debate lies with the elevation of abortion choice as an incontestable right...I would also sound a call to this chamber and to this parliament to never again accept denigration of Christian or any other religious views as biased, baseless or ill-informed. These views reflect our deepest history and our core values...

Sen EGGLESTON (WA)



...it seems to be there are broader public interest issues surrounding the issue of abortion which mean that decisions about the use of such drugs in Australia require ministerial oversight...

Sen JOYCE (QLD)

...many have stated that this is not an abortion debate and that they are not driven by strong bias on that issue. I am afraid I do not believe you as I certainly have a strong view and it drives my motivations. I am sure, if you were honest, you would acknowledge it is driving yours...

Sen ABETZ (Tas)

...I cannot outsource the moral and ethical issues arising from this debate to an unelected body when I am elected by the Australian people to make these judgment calls...ministerial responsibility should remain, albeit with parliamentary oversight...

Sen HOGG (QLD)

I have a consistent approach in supporting the dignity of human life from conception to death. That is why I am: opposed to abortion; opposed to the death penalty; opposed to euthanasia...

Sen FEIRRAVANTI-WELLS (NSW)

...this is a drug designed to kill and Australians are entitled to have strong views about this... RU486 is not a therapeutic drug, it does not fall within the definition...

Sen ELLISON (WA)

...this is not just another drug. When you look at the social aspects of this and the concern that has been raised in the community about the debate on this particular drug, it is appropriate that the decision rest with the minister concerned...

Sen BOSWELL (QLD)

...the community has a stake in this decision. Who will be their expert and their representative? Who will adjudicate their interests if not the democratically elected representative of a system of parliament and executive government?

Sen McGAURAN (Vic)

...If you believe life begins at conception – that is the body grows and the soul exists – then what choice do you have but to reject the act, the aid or the promotion of abortion?



Prepared by:

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