



ABN 91323005375

Catholic Women's League of Australia Inc

Member Organisation of the World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations (WUCWO)
NGO Consultant (roster) status with the Economics and Social Council of the United Nations



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Catholic Women's League of Australia Inc.

Submission to the White Paper

March 2017

Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches

1. Introduction

Catholic Women's League Australia Inc. (CWLA) is the national peak body representing the League's six member organisations located throughout Australia. We are a Non-Government Organisation and have consultative (roster) status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. The CWLA is also a member of the World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations. One of CWLA's four principles aims is to influence legislative and administrative bodies at all levels of government in order to preserve the dignity of the human person and thus we seek to address the terms of this inquiry.

Website: www.cwla.org.au [find us on facebook](#) www.facebook.com/CWLAustralia [follow us twitter](#) [@CWL_Australia](https://twitter.com/CWL_Australia)

President: Mrs Anne Marie Clark

Secretary: Mrs Joan Young

Treasurer: Mrs Geraldine Davis

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2. Catholic Social Teaching

The CWL State of Queensland looks to the Catholic Church's social teaching, which we believe to be a rich source of wisdom and guidance about building a just society and living an ethical life amidst the challenges of modern society. Our social teachings are articulated through a tradition of papal, conciliar, and episcopal documents.

One important social teaching theme relates to that of the "life and dignity of the human person". The Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral and ethical vision for society. We believe that the human life should be at all stages of its being valued and protected. It is our strongly held belief that each and every person, whether existing within or outside the womb, is precious and should be protected to ensure his or her survival.

3. White Paper Questions

On behalf of the Catholic Women's League of Australia Inc. we wish to make a submission to the White Paper in order to express our concerns with regards to the Australian government's focus in the spending of the humanitarian aid budget.

Some of the questions posed within the White Paper, to which we wish to respond, are as follows:

- How should our values underpin Australia's foreign policy?
- What should we do differently?
- How can we do better?
- How can our foreign policy, including our overseas development assistance program, support a more prosperous, peaceful and stable region?

4. Abortion Funding

It was with concern that the CWLA learned of the announcement last week by Foreign Minister Julie Bishop to provide \$9.5 million dollars in funding to global abortion advocate, Planned Parenthood International. She stated during the announcement the following:

Today's funding announcement brings our total contribution to the program to \$26.3 million since 2007. Through SPRINT, Australia and the International Planned Parenthood Federation have helped over 890,000 people access sexual and reproductive health services in crisis-affected places, including in response to recent disasters in Fiji, Nepal and Vanuatu."

We are opposed to the dedication of funding to abortion providers. This move appears to be a response to advocacy by the Labor party urging the government to fill a funding gap created by President Trump's withdrawal of tax payer funds being made to pro-abortion organisations and their affiliates. The Australian Christian Lobby spokesperson Wendy Francis, summarized our position as follows:

"Australian taxpayers' money should not be funding the abortion of the children of women in countries where they don't even have the proper birthing facilities. The greatest risk to women's maternal health in the developing world is a lack of access to clean birthing facilities, not lack of access to abortion. Our aid money should not be used to fund sex-selection abortions, something practiced in many cultures where this money is going. This sort of public policy makes the Coalition unattractive to Christian voters who want our nation to be generous with our aid budget, but do not want it used to fund the killing of unborn babies in poor countries"¹.

The AusAid website states the following as it's overall objective:

"Promoting Australia's national interests by contributing sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction".

This is an honourable objective but we fail to understand how funding abortion is something that fits within this objective. Even if one were to argue that smaller families result in less financial expense, this does not account for the emotional, psychological and physiological harm that the act of abortion creates for women who undergo abortions.

¹ < <https://www.theglobaldispatch.com/australias-julie-bishop-pledges-9-5-million-for-planned-parenthood-95675/>> last viewed at 19 March 2017.

5. Human Rights Framework

There are a number of international human rights instruments, which we believe support the rights of the unborn person. These are as follows:

Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states unequivocally that “everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person”. No differentiation is made between the unborn and the born.

Article 6 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child states at article 1 that “State Parties recognize that every child has the inherent right to life” and at article 2 “State Parties shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child”.

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states at Article 6 (1) that “every human being has the inherent right to life”; that “this right shall be protected by law”; and “that no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his life”.

Human rights should lie at the foundation of every action of the Australian government, including actions relating to how we spend our aid budget. We cannot deviate from these essential laws and principles. Dedicating aid money to fund abortion providers is, we believe, one a significant derivation from these principles.

6. Do No Harm

One very important cornerstone of all humanitarian aid lies in the principle of “do no harm”. If humanitarian aid is supposed to do no harm then it is difficult to understand why Australian aid money should be dedicated towards funding organization that engage in abortion practices, which as we have discussed, we believe to be harmful to the unborn child and to be a violation of essential human rights laws and principles. Could we not instead choose to use this money in a more productive and beneficial way, so that people from developing countries or facing humanitarian crises are better supported and able to live lives where they can access their fundamental human rights?

The United Nation's 5th millennium development goal aimed to reduce maternal mortality around the world by 75% by 2015. Maternal mortality in developing countries has been demonstrated to be related to factors other than abortion availability. A major study to assess the chief factors related to maternal mortality reduction in Chile² was conducted over 50 years, from 1957 to 2007. Since 1957 maternal mortality in Chile has been declining. Koch et al observed the slope of the decline became more steep between 1965 and 1981 with an accelerated reduction in the maternal mortality ratio of 84%. (Maternal mortality ratio is the number of maternal deaths related to childbirth divided by the number of live births). 1965 was the year educational and maternal health policies were implemented, having a significant observable impact on further lowering of maternal mortality.

In 1989 Chile introduced the most restrictive abortion laws anywhere in the world. Following this prohibition, the maternal mortality ratio in Chile decreased further from 41.3 to 12.7 per 100,000 live births. This was a decrease of nearly 70% in 14 years. The study shows 'a dramatic decrease in maternal mortality ratio' occurred without abortion access. Furthermore, there is practically nil illegal abortion related mortality in Chile at the time of this study. This study exemplified that progress in maternal health in developing countries is a function of:

1. An increase in the general educational level of women
2. Complementary nutrition for women and their children
3. Access to improved maternal health (prenatal care and delivery by skilled birth attendants
4. Postnatal care
5. Availability of emergency obstetric units
6. Changes in reproductive behaviour
7. Improvements in the sanitary system

The lowest maternal mortality in European countries such as Poland, Ireland and Malta³ where abortion has been severely restricted is consistent with the findings in the Chilean study.

² Koch E, Thorp J, Bravo M et al. *Women's Educational Level, Maternal Health Facilities, Abortion Legislation and Maternal Deaths: A Natural Experiment in Chile from 1957 to 2007*. Determinants of Maternal Mortality Reduction May 2012. PLoS ONE vol 7 (5). Doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0036613

³ Hogan MC, Foreman KJ et al (2010). *Maternal mortality for 121 countries, 1980-2008: a systematic analysis of progress towards Millennium Development Goal 5*. Lancet 375: 1609-1623.

7. Recommendations

Thus, our recommendations in response to the questions asked are as follows:

- How should our values underpin Australia's foreign policy?

Australia's foreign policy should be firmly entrenched in the principle of ensuring that we do no harm. Aid money should only be dedicated to promoting the rights, welfare and well-being of people who need it and should never be used to harm others. For the reasons we have provided above we do not believe this money should ever be used to fund abortion providers.

- What should we do differently?

The Australian government needs to realign its practices to ensure that all aid donations and contributions that are made from taxpayer money should be solely used to fund causes that do no harm to any human beings, including the unborn child. We need to reassess our proprieties and values as an aid agency and make sure that what we are funding falls within good humanitarian best practice.

- How can we do better?

We can do better by ensuring in the future that where we dedicate our funds does not harm other human beings and works in furthering the common good.

- How can our foreign policy, including our overseas development assistance program, support a more prosperous, peaceful and stable region?

By ensuring that we always work within human rights frameworks including humanitarian principles and always reflecting on how we achieving this before we do something that contributes our essential objectives and values.

We wish you well in your consideration of all submissions.

Yours sincerely,

Anne Marie Clarke

President

Catholic Women's League of Australia Inc.