

MEDIA STATEMENT
10 September 2008



Pregnancy counselling a matter of choice

The Australian Psychological Society (APS) welcomes the proposed legislation to remove abortion from the *Crimes Act* in Victoria. We note the calls to amend the Bill with provisions for mandatory counselling for women considering their options in relation to an unplanned pregnancy.

The APS believes that a decision to seek counselling should always be a matter of individual choice. Pregnancy counselling, information and support services should be readily available to women in urban and rural areas, but making counselling mandatory would be disrespectful to the many women who are already well-informed and clear in their intentions. A range of free or low-cost counselling options is already available to those who wish to use them.

APS psychologists are bound by a Code of Ethics and related Guidelines that apply to members' conduct. The guidelines make it clear that a psychologist/counsellor should recognise a woman's right to development as an autonomous and psychologically healthy person, and recognise and support a woman's capacity to define her own problems.

Forcing women to 'seek' counselling would be a clear breach of this principle.

The APS is the largest professional association for psychologists in Australia, representing more than 16,500 members. The APS is committed to advancing psychology as a discipline and profession. It spreads the message that psychologists make a difference to peoples' lives, through improving psychological knowledge and community wellbeing.

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