

Public Hearings Program
Abortion Law Reform (Women's Right to Choose) Amendment Bill 2016, and
Inquiry into laws governing termination of pregnancy in Queensland
Opening statement of David Rowsome
in support of the Canberra Declaration submission
11:20 to 11:50 am Monday 1 August 2016
Parliament House, Brisbane

My colleague Teresa Martin and I thank you for inviting us to give evidence at this important Inquiry.

My name is David Rowsome. I married into Australia in 1983 while serving as a missionary in PNG. My wife Marilyn and I have three daughters and six Queensland grandchildren.

I am a full-time volunteer with the Canberra Declaration. This is a one-page statement which calls for the protection of Religious Freedom, Marriage and Family and the Sanctity of Human Life. Largely based on the Judeo-Christian belief system, these are the values we believe have made Australia a great place to live.

But with the loss of Christian consensus in our society these values have been steadily eroded and undermined.

The almost indiscriminate abortion we already see in Australia today reflects a rejection of the Biblical view of human dignity.

The Canberra Declaration states that **“we believe that all human life being made in the image of God has intrinsic and equal value from conception to life's natural end”**.

To expand on this statement we produced this leaflet *“the Unborn and the Image of God”*. It includes a number of Biblical reflections including the happy story of Mary with the newly-conceived Jesus within her visiting her relative Elizabeth who was in her sixth month of pregnancy. The Bible records these words of Elizabeth to Mary **“as soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy” (Luke 1:44)**.

Modern science confirms that a newly-conceived baby is a distinct human being with its own genotype or unique set of chromosomes. Then as the baby develops in its mother's womb he or she can experience emotions as well as physical pain.

The Canberra Declaration also states that **“the very heart of a civilised society is based on the way it treats its most vulnerable and innocent members including the unborn and the disabled”**.

One of the major signs of decadence of the Roman Empire was that its unwanted babies were ‘*exposed*’, that is abandoned and left to die. Can we claim that contemporary western society is any less decadent because it consigns its unwanted babies to institutional and commercial abortion?

The debate over abortion is complex and highly emotional.

We appreciate that those who emphasise the rights of the mother as does this Bill, which highlights the Women's Right to Choose, appeal for compassion for women who face difficult situations and even great personal suffering with an unwanted pregnancy.

While such cases arouse Christian compassion we cannot, for theological and moral reasons, accept abortion as a just response. We need to do everything possible to respect the right to life of unborn babies finding ways of helping their parents in the difficult situations they face. We also ask that the Queensland government consider opening better avenues of adoption of unwanted babies for the long queues of infertile couples longing for a child.