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Hon Simon O'Brien MLC  
Chairman  
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs  
Legislative Council  
26 April 2016

Dear Committee

**Petition No 115 – OPPOSE ABORTION**

Thank you for your letter dated 6 April 2016, and for the opportunity to provide this written submission in support of our petition. I write both personally and in my capacity as chairman of the Association for Reformed Political Action (ARPA).

The factual information at points 1 - 4 of the petition arises from our concern that the unborn members of our society do not have the ability to defend themselves. As such, the unborn cannot state their case and require another to do so. The few statistics noted within the petition are well documented within the health department and can be considered as a basic scientific knowledge since the legalisation of abortion in Western Australia in 1998. As the petitioners, we request that the unborn life is recognised at law as a separate legal persona, and as such, has the right to a defense prior to an action to harm it against its knowledge.

That many abortions are carried out for suspected or identified disabilities is also a matter that is worthy of inquiry. What message are we sending to those many within our society who suffer disabilities? Are we suggesting that they are less worthy, indeed that if we had known before birth of their condition, they might have been aborted? It is a tragedy that this implicit message is imparted to those most vulnerable, those most needing our support and protection, those who have so much to contribute if only we open our eyes to the blessings they bring.

That an unborn child constitutes human life is unarguable. We are thankful that this has been explicitly acknowledged recent work to introduce foetal homicide laws within WA. These laws recognise the validity and vulnerability of the unborn life.

The Health Department report notes that WA has the second highest abortion rate in Australia, with 22.3% of all pregnancies ending in abortion. It also notes that our abortion rates are significantly higher than many developed countries, including The Netherlands, Germany and Canada, some of which are well less than half of our rates. We humbly submit that these numbers are of such significance that Parliament ought to inquire into the cause of this high rate of abortion, and the impact it has upon our society. Why are our rates so much higher than other states, and other countries? What ethical impact does it have upon our society, given that unborn life constitutes human life?

We further urge you to recognise that the signatories to our petition represent but a small portion of the people who are concerned about abortion. In May of every year, many attend the annual Walk and Rally for Life, ending on the steps of Parliament House. The bipartisan support, shown by the presence of so many Members of Parliament each year (including some from your own Standing Committee), is not only heartening but shows the widespread concern expressed by many on this issue. Indeed, we would invite your committee to attend the upcoming rally in May in order to experience firsthand the heartfelt concern of many on the issue.

We note that ours is also not the only petition that has been presented to Parliament in recent time dealing with the subject of abortion. We are sure that you, along with our petitioners, also find the rate of abortions in WA to be unacceptably high and worthy of an investigation.

We humbly submit that this issue is worthy of an inquiry, with a view to having abortion rates reduced and its social impact limited by way of legislative initiatives.

We advise that we have not taken our complaint to the Ombudsman.

In the event that you require any clarification or further information, or seek an attendance in person before your committee, please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned.

With Christian greetings,

Len van Burgel  
Chairman

**About ARPA:** The Association for Reformed Political Action (ARPA) is a non-partisan Christian organisation that encourages our elected representatives to maintain and promote the Christian foundations of our Australian society. ARPA provides advice and leadership on social and political issues to its grassroots supporters and encourages them to engage in the public sphere. ARPA is affiliated with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, whose 4000+ members form 15 congregations and operate seven (7) John Calvin Schools across Australia.