



RTLA

THE RIGHT TO LIFE AUSTRALIA INC.

RIGHT TO LIFE NEWS

APRIL MAY 2026

MARGARET TIGHE

(1932-2026)

My 58 Years Protecting The Unborn and Vulnerable

Pro-life Warrior Margaret Tighe interviewed by Emeritus Professor Judith Brett on 20/03/2023

We hope you enjoy this edition of the RTLA News – featuring an original interview capturing Margaret Tighe's amazing, historical account of her life as Australia's renowned pro-life leader.



PICTURED ABOVE:

1981 – Margaret Tighe, President Right to Life Association, Victoria addresses the March for Life 12 April 1981 on the steps of the State Parliament, Melbourne.



PICTURED RIGHT:

Margaret Tighe, President of The Right to Life Australia Inc December 2025.

Two years ago (on 20 March 2023) Mrs Margaret Tighe, President of The Right to Life Australia Inc. was interviewed by Emeritus Professor Judith Brett, La Trobe University, Melbourne as part of her research on the political history of the women's movement in Australia in the 1960's and 1970s. Margaret Tighe was born on 16 January 1932 and spent most of her adult life advocating for the life of the unborn child and against euthanasia.

After Mrs Tighe's passing at the age of 94 on 15 February 2026 Right to Life Australia Inc. was privileged to receive the original recording and transcript of the following interview - a remarkable personal record of the political life of Margaret Tighe. The content of the oral interview and transcript is edited here.

We thank Ms Brett for her contribution to recording Margaret's vast historical knowledge.

J: Thank you for meeting with me at your home today Margaret. I look forward to hearing your history of involvement in 60 years of the right to life movement in Australia.

Margaret: Thank you Judith. As far as the issue of abortion is concerned I recall I had become very interested in the issue about 1967 after the passage of the UK Abortion Act 1967. I was about 35 years old at the time.

MELBOURNE, VICTORIA 1967:

We were concerned this type of bill (passed in the UK) may be introduced in Australia. And rightly so.

Newspapers in Australia - particularly "The Age" published articles and editorials saying legislation should be passed allowing for abortion.

They didn't state it should be abortion on demand, but they claimed abortion should be available "just" for rape, incest and deformities.

The Abortion Law Reform Association Victoria was being formed at the same time. Even the Abortion Law Reform Association Victoria was not calling for abortion to be freely available. They always marketed it - "to have restrictions".

The Abortion Law Reform Organisation had started meetings and I then became busy myself with a few local people here in Essendon (one of my group a clever woman lawyer and nine years younger than I sadly passed away several weeks ago).

I was like a dog with a bone. I couldn't let it go!

In 1968 we had meetings here at my home in Essendon with a few women. I remember my friend Ellen Nora's husband's aunt would bring her typewriter and sit on the dining room table and type out things for us! The home meetings were very important.

The first thing we were advised to do was to take up petitions against abortion. Well, petitions are just name-gathering exercises as you would be aware and they're very useful to gather names. But if you want to exert pressure, you have to have big letter-writing campaigns and personal lobbying.



1977 Margaret Tighe, President Right to Life Association, addresses the Rally for Life National Right to Life Day - 27 March 1977

FEDERAL CAMPAIGN 1973 'MCKENZIE- LAMB BILL'

One of our successful very early campaigns was against the federal "McKenzie-Lamb Bill" in 1973 (formally known as the Medical Practice Clarification Bill 1973).

Gough Whitlam was the Prime Minister of Australia during the introduction of the bill and at the time of the defeat of the bill.

I had my son Matthew at the time. Matthew was about 10 months old so I was pushing a pram at that stage.

The Medical Practice Clarification Bill 1973 arose and another little group formed - they were slightly younger people - probably in their twenties. One of them was a young Catholic priest - Eugene Ahern - he was very smart politically and had a very good head for politics. The group which included midwives met at a home in Gore St, Fitzroy as they were concerned the Queen Victoria hospital could start performing abortions. The midwives had been told by a woman gynaecologist in the hospital that they were planning to start performing abortions in a Labor ward.

Defeating the McKenzie-Lamb bill entailed a huge campaign organising letter-writing and lobbying.

The first newsletter of the Victorian Right to Life Association was published in July 1973 at a price of 10 cents. The newsletter has continued to be published since that time and copies are held in the State Library in Melbourne. As early as July 1973 the newsletter reported a permanent office had been opened at 190 Elgin Street Carlton in Victoria. A range of books pamphlets and slides was available for inspection.

I also then became involved with the group of younger people. The first President of the Right to Life Association Vic was an obstetrician gynecologist Dr Michael Somerville (Right to Life Association Vic Newsletter September 1973). I believe he lived in Pradley Avenue, Kew. He was very busy in his practice and it was difficult for him to have the time to give to the Presidency. I was elected Vice President, with Secretary Peter Harris, Assistant Secretary Joan Doyle and Treasurer Brian Bourke. After the McKenzie-Lamb bill was defeated, I was the Vice President while the group found somebody better. They tried to find a new President, which did not happen. When Dr Somerville retired my name came up in 1974. So, it became "Oh - you better be the President, and my Presidency went on for years, and is still the case today!

Our first state assembly was held in the Central Hall, Fitzroy on Saturday 11 August 1973 where we adopted our constitution for Right to Life Association Victoria. The beginning of our movement is surely understandable if you care about opposing killing people and if you care about people having justice in their lives. There are many things that people who are or are not Christians care about and we see so many organisations for people who are deaf and blind and the hospitals, aged care facilities, people with disabilities.

I think our group followed what the Americans were doing. We were involved in constant political lobbying, going up to Canberra and meeting with politicians all around the country.

ACT 1978

After the defeat of the McKenzie Lamb bill in 1973 we were active in a major campaign in 1978. We opposed a motion moved by Senator Susan Ryan, Senator for ACT 1975-1978 (ALP) that aimed to facilitate access to abortion services in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT). The motion was decided on a conscience vote and defeated.

J: It is a bit hard to find newspaper reports because they're not on Trove at this stage, but it appears the Right to Life organisation actually lobbied pro-abortion MPs too.

Oh, yes, that has been the case for a long time.

After the McKenzie Lamb bill we had a lot of support from many Labor MPs but the nature of Labor politicians has changed, very much so. Some of them were most helpful in those days.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA 1983:

I recall Mr Lloyd O'Neil, federal member for Grey in South Australia in 1983 said to me "If you want to go and see somebody influential, go and see Senator Graham Richardson - he's just been elected to the New South Wales Senate."

And I remember going to see Senator Richardson.

It was in the old parliament building and he was sitting at a little desk with phones at the ready.

He was most helpful to us and others were too.

These interactions really set us on a path of the importance of lobbying politicians and speaking to them.

NEW SOUTH WALES (NSW) 1988 AND 1989:

Another young woman who lobbied closely with me was Heather McCormick - it was fortunate her husband worked for an airline, so she was availed of a discount on air fares.

She turned out to be very effective. She was younger than I am and slim and attractive.

I remember one of Heather's claims to fame was leading up to one of the elections in New South Wales, maybe 1988. This was some years later when Barry Unsworth was Premier of New South Wales. (July 1986 – March 1988).

Heather was in NSW and a photograph of her appeared on the front page of the Daily Telegraph standing beside Barry Unsworth.

The front-page heading was "Unsworth, Premier of the Abortion State." It was a fantastic coup.

You may have heard of the famous John Richard "Johnno" Johnson MLC from 1976 in the Parliament of New South Wales. He was influential in New South Wales politics. And had four adopted children, apparently. Anyway, he didn't like us hanging around Parliament and annoying them.

Marie Bignall MLC, Member of the New South Wales Parliament moved a motion in the New South Wales Upper House in June 1988. It led to the house affirming the legally recognised and protected sanctity of an unborn child's life and upheld Sections 82-85 of the Crimes Act 1900 to eliminate the practice of abortion on demand.

They were giving her a hard time because she wanted the law in NSW to be enforced.

Johnno Johnson MLC was wishing we'd all go away, you see. Finally, we won him in the end by pressuring him - in his own electorate. And I can remember, I said to him "Oh, congratulations on your speech, Mr. Johnson. It was a wonderful speech.." He said "Getaway, Mrs Tighe.. Don't bother me." "" Finally we won him over.



1978 Right to Life March in Washington DC, USA. Congressman Chris Smith (New Jersey) on left and Rep Henry Hyde (Illinois) centre, with Margaret Tighe (right). Henry Hyde (passed away in 2012) was a true leader of pro-life forces in the Congress – responsible for a ban on public funding of abortions in the USA known as the Hyde Amendment. It is an amendment to the US Budget Appropriations Bill first passed in 1976 and subsequently passed annually. Congressman Smith is still working today on pro-life policies recently lobbying to halt the use of embryonic stem cells and fetal cell lines obtained through abortions



1978 The President of RTLA Margaret Tighe always worked with fellow pro-lifers around Australia. From left to right, Mrs Eileen Doyle, Director of RTLA Pregnancy Action Committee, Mrs Heather McCormack RTLA, Lutheran Pastor Overduin and Margaret Tighe.

J: Did they give her (Marie Bignall) a hard time?

They didn't want to know about the issue – even though there was a late-term abortion clinic right opposite Parliament House.

And at one stage they had a blockage in the sewage. It was bones. Terrible. Really.

J: Just going back to organisation of the pressure against the McKenzie-Lamb Bill - on the day it was debated - 10th of May 1973 there was a big protest outside Parliament House in Canberra. Did you attend?

No, as my son Matthew was only 10 months old at that time.

J: How did you organise all the letter writing?

Well, there were other groups as well, there was a group in Queensland and Sydney and South Australia.

J: I read that the name Right to Life Association came from America,
That's right.

J: And did it start in Brisbane?

Yes it did start in Brisbane - a group of doctors were meeting because they were concerned about what had already happened in England, though we (Victoria) were the most active group. They started Right to Life Queensland. Greg O'Dwyer led the first meeting of Right to Life Queensland, and served as secretary, but died three years later. Mrs Egan stepped up as secretary and eventually president of the state group.

J: The Victorians?

Oh, yes, definitely. We definitely were because we were more politically active.

I presume you've heard of the National Civic Council (NCC) -some people assumed we were aligned with this group. Well, I didn't know anything about them. I believe they did not like us being politically active and wanted to confine us to education, not political action.

J: So were you in a Catholic parish?

Yes, but our work didn't emanate from Catholic parishes, though.

In relation to having material distributed, I guess we would have made use of the churches initially, but it doesn't always follow now. And now there are other Christian churches and groups involved.

But to return to the NCC – my recollection is I believe at one stage they tried to shut us down to confine us to just doing educational material. We had a battle over that.

My memory is we did face that problem at one stage when I believe they tried to stack a big meeting.

J: Why do you think that was?

It was because we managed to defeat Barry Simon, a Liberal MP in the federal seat of McMillan. The fact that he was a Liberal, and we were non-party political caused them to turn their attention to us.

FEDERAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN 1980

The defeat of Barry Simon MP Federal Liberal member for Macmillan in 1980 was one of the biggest campaigns we were ever involved in.

Barry Simon was defeated after serving only one term from 1975 to 1980.

There was a Human Rights Royal Commission (1974–1977) which was an influential Australian inquiry established by the Whitlam government.

Following on from that there was legislation in the Parliament called the Human Rights Commission Bill 1979. Barry Simon moved an amendment to torpedo its effectiveness.

At the election in 1980 - it so happened the Labor candidate standing against him was a supporter of ours, more or less. His name was Barry Cunningham.

So we ran a pretty tenacious campaign against Barry Simon.

J: Did Right to Life want the Human Rights Royal Commission to happen?

Yes, that's right.



1978 Margaret Tighe pinning a VOTE PROLIFE badge on lapel of Mr Bruce Goodluck MP, Federal Member for Franklin (1975-1993) – an outspoken defender of life.

J: Why was Right to Life supporting the Human Rights Royal Commission?

It was all about the value of human life. It was designed to address practices by or on behalf of the Commonwealth that violated human rights.

J: I think Hon. Dr Race Mathews, Labor MP federal Member for Casey 1972-75 tabled a bill originally about male-female relations. Under Malcolm Fraser, it was expanded and passed with bipartisan support.

I remember there was a member from Western Australia, John Martyr Liberal MP, House of Representatives (1975-1980) and later Senator for Western Australia (1981-1983) who moved a successful amendment too.

But - Barry Simon MP blotted his copybook! So we ran a pretty successful campaign against him.

We had locals down there in various towns like Murray and Morwell. We travelled down and had meetings with them in the towns.

As well as that we had a lot of media, I used to do a lot of interviews. The phone would ring at 6.30am in the morning sometimes and I'd get out of bed for the interview and then another phone call came, it would be another radio station.

J: So did you have any training ?

No, no, I didn't really.

J: You must have just been good at it.

After a while you sort of get used to it. I've received a lot of flack, a tremendous lot of flack, like the likes of Derryn Hinch. That was during one of the interviews about the euthanasia issue. He said "Get out of my life, Margaret Tighe, get out of my life. I said, "Thankfully for me, Derryn , I'm not in your life!"

I've been abused waiting at the concert hall waiting for my friends years ago. Three women walking past, I was sitting in the foyer. I heard one of the women say "There's that awful Margaret Tighe." I've been abused in the supermarket and the greengrocer's shop in Sydney Road.

J: I suppose once you are on television, people know your face.

A few months after I was abused at the concert hall I saw a woman looking at me. She kept looking at me and I thought, "All right, what are you going to say?" And I went into the toilet and there she was washing her hands. She looked at me again and I thought, Oh, here goes." And she said,

"You're Margaret Tighe, aren't you?" And I said, "Yes, that's right." And she said. "I'm Director of Nursing at the Queen Victoria Hospital and I just want to say to you, keep up the good work."

Oh, I could have kissed her. Because the abuse is not very pleasant.

Anyway, I take the good and the bad.

J: Information I've been able to gather shows there was a human life research foundation that had existed in the Catholic Church.

That wasn't us -it was probably a few doctors, like Dr Billings, Melbourne pioneer of natural fertility regulation - a method supported by the Catholic church. There was also a Dr Joe Santamaria, brother of B. A. (Bob) Santamaria. He was a very nice man.

I think his specialty was drug and alcohol dependence.

I remember once going to a meeting at the University in Canberra and I took my daughter, Elizabeth. She was a big baby.

In the lunch break I had her in the pusher and he said "Can I take the baby for a walk for you?" I really appreciated that, and he did.

I've always thought highly of him for doing that. Two women, not part of the group also offered help, but there were other women at the meeting and none of them had offered to help.. But he did.

J: So you have this informed group of people meeting here in your lounge room. How does that turn into Right to Life? Did you incorporate?

Yes that's right. We did eventually incorporate. But we didn't have an official title at the beginning in 1968.

What happened was there was another group of local people in Essendon, – one couple in particular (both lawyers) were having meetings at a person's home about the threat of abortion. They concluded: "Well, we won't do anything now. We'll wait and see what happens and if they legislate then we can do something. Have you ever heard of anything more stupid?."

I mean, fighting it after it's happened. Just letting it happen!

Anyway, so our little group just persisted from 1968 onwards.

I joined the organisation in England, now the Society for Protection of Unborn Children, (SPUC) because there wasn't one here and we didn't have a formal organisation here still.

And I used to receive SPUC's educational material.

I kept on agitating and saying we should have a properly formed group.

The McKenzie-Lamb bill triggered our activities off really - that is – activating us to be properly mobilised and organised.

J: I was reading it was an extremely successful letter writing campaign and organising lots of people to Canberra to protest on the day.

They weren't all from Victoria but the driving force was from there.

There was a lot of help from some of the Labor members like Kim Beazley Senior, Minister for Education. He was very keen and very helpful behind the scenes as was The Hon Fred Daly AO who was the Leader of the House at the time.

And there were many Catholics in Labor which would have helped. However the nature of Labor MPs has changed over the years.

J: In Melbourne, there was a March for Life on the Sunday (6 May 1973) before the vote on Thursday (10 May 1973). Do you remember that?

Yes, I remember it and I would have attended it. The McKenzie-Lamb bill was voted on and defeated in the Australian House of Representatives on Thursday, 10 May 1973.

In the days leading up to the vote (including the weekend before), there were significant demonstrations by both supporters and opponents of the bill outside Parliament House in Canberra.

J: It seemed to be a pretty big demonstration.

Yes - we had Marches every year for years and years. We also held a week-long walk in Victoria from Bairnsdale to Melbourne which was for fundraising as well as having a rally at the end of the walk. Walkers were billeted along the route of the walk. The Right to Life News May June 1977 edition headline is "10,000 Protest Free abortions Mrs Tighe urges letter writing effort" in our ongoing campaign against the use of the public's money to pay for abortions. This is the police estimate of the number of attendees!

J: So what was the relationship with the Catholic Church?

Despite what you may think we have had links with Catholics themselves but not the Church. The Catholic Church of its own hasn't been effective or really helpful to us. Knights of the Southern Cross and other groups would have been writing letters.

Before the McKenzie-Lamb bill debate our group from Essendon was feeling impatient!

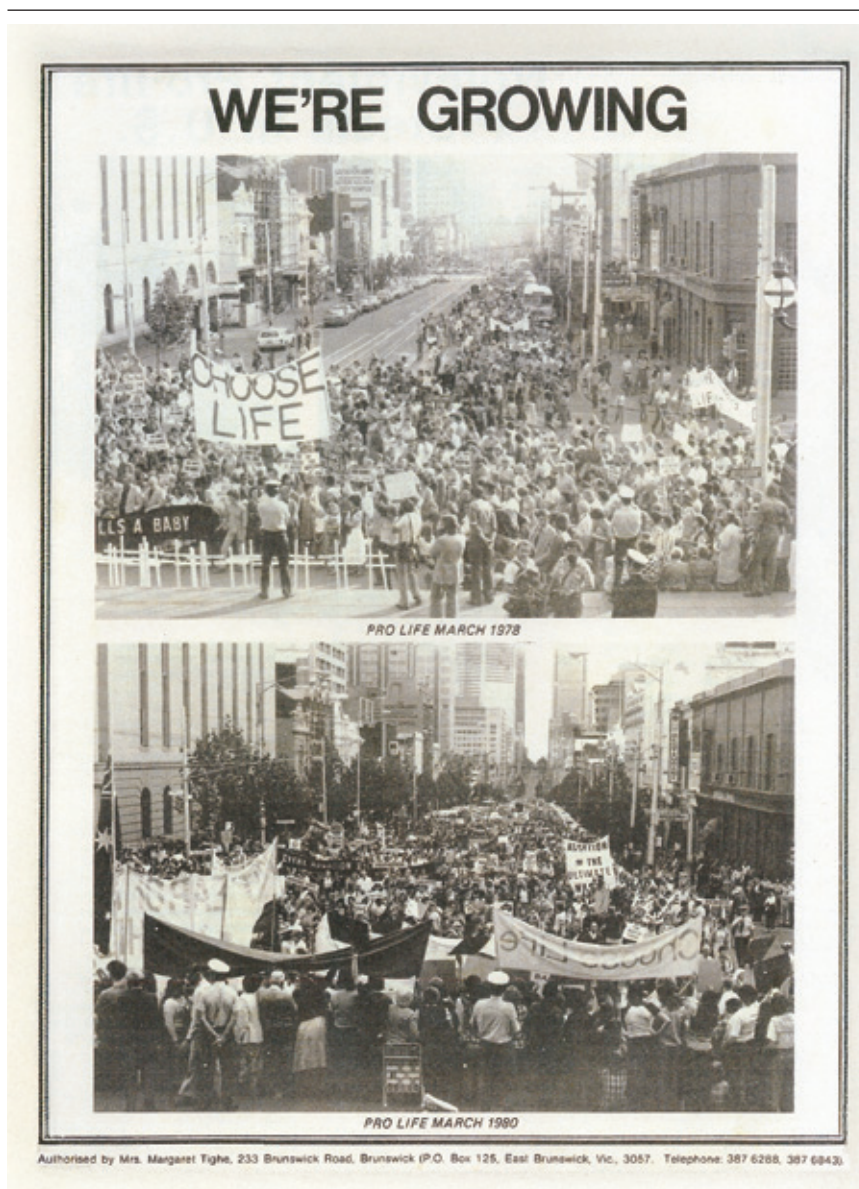
We decided something should be established.

My friend Ellen Nora (since passed) was a lawyer and her husband's a GP, I was a pharmacist. And there was another man - a secondary school teacher, We visited the

Catholic Archbishop - Archbishop Knox at the time. He became Cardinal Knox. He was very nice but said "it's a job for experts!" What a joke - when all of us had a tertiary education!.

J: When you have a successful pressure group like that, how did it get organised? What was the role of the parish structure, even if it was informal?

We would certainly have appealed to people at those churches but orders weren't coming from on high. Definitely not.



1978 and 1980 Right to Life Rally held in Melbourne showing the huge increase in numbers of attendees. Photo from Right to Life News authorised by Margaret Tighe.

J: So would you get support from the pulpit in some of the churches?

Oh, in some places, yes. So you'd get support from some priests and not so much from others. Yes we did certainly use the churches. And as the years went by, other churches came on board too.

J: It wasn't just Catholics who were involved?

I suppose in the early 70s it would have been, a lot of the priests would have been Irish Catholics priests - now they're Italians and Vietnamese.

Whilst we were able to make use of people in the pews really, if it was left to the people on high - some could be very good, but some others not so good.

J: So was your worry about it turning into abortion on demand or was it opposition to abortion in all circumstances?

Well, I mean, it's killing people. And look where it's progressed.

Initially, "The Age" was saying abortion is just for rape and incest and deformities.

Now I don't know how many Down Syndrome children are alive. There wouldn't be too many born today. It's terrible. They're aborted.

A young nurse who was involved with us was carrying a baby with a disability. And she was pressured and pressured to have that child aborted. That little boy is at school now and it hasn't been easy. He's had some big operations in the children's hospital. But he started school and he's got a lot of go in him. And she was subjected to a lot of pressure to have that child aborted.

And, oh, well, and then you see the single mothers, the ones who could have had an abortion and didn't. And you can see, they've been rewarded.

Even Hon Anthony Albanese MP, the current Prime Minister. His mother must have found it very tough living in government housing in those days. His mother met his father on a ship. He was a steward. She brought Anthony up well, and he had a good education by the Catholics, he went to Cathedral College. I mean, who would have thought now he's the Prime Minister?

J: So your organisation's concern was it was the thin edge of the wedge?

Oh, yes, because look at it now. Over 4,000 late-term abortions now, official figures. (Over 4000 late term abortions in Victoria (2009-2020) www.safercare.vic.gov.au)

It's killing babies, killing people. So that's really what drives me. I'm the same about anything like that, e.g. capital punishment - Don't kill people.

In 1970 when I had become involved with the younger group, they arranged for the late Professor Sir William Liley to speak. He was the Obstetrician and Gynaecologist professor who developed the technique of transfusing babies in the womb and the treatment of "blue babies".

He was a leading fetologist, a New Zealander. He was an atheist, appointed to the Vatican's Pontifical Academy of Science and was the first President of the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child (SPUC) in NZ.

There were over 2,000 people at a meeting held in the Melbourne Town Hall in 1970.

There was even talk perhaps they should have a woman speaker as well!

At that meeting, I can remember, there was a doctor from Adelaide, who has passed away now. His name was Dr Ted Cleary. He spoke and said if we allow abortion to become legal and commonplace the next thing they'll be wanting to legalise is euthanasia. I thought, he must be exaggerating.

He wasn't exaggerating - was he?

I mean, look at the latest? They're pushing for telehealth for access to euthanasia.

That is - being able to discuss it by telehealth for the people who live remotely. They will give you the go ahead and advising you. They haven't even seen you just talking about it over the telephone. They're doing it in Canada and the numbers have skyrocketed,

It is ironic that we've always worked to prevent suicide haven't we?

I was a volunteer for Lifeline years ago, and if you did the midnight shift you'd receive calls from suicidal people. And we were there to try and save their lives, trying to prevent people committing suicide.

It's so dangerous - we know the pressure people can be subjected to.

J: If there's terrible pain, one can understand why people might seek it...

Well, you can, but there's very good pain control today. Most doctors are opposed to it. And they've made so many advances in treating various diseases.

I look at my friend dying of Parkinson's and dementia and then unable to walk. But you don't kill people, you care for them.

Because if you say, oh, you can kill them, you're not going to try too hard to try and develop cures for diseases.

It's easier and cheaper and quicker to kill. I think it's terrible.



1981 Margaret Tighe together with Bishop John Kelly (Left) and Eugene Ahern (Right) leading the Right to Life Rally in Melbourne CBD. Note the number 96 tram to East Brunswick in the background!

J: According to a newspaper article there was a view that Right to Life was really about getting women back into the home..

I was out of the home a lot of the time. I know that. I didn't work at pharmacy very much once I became involved in this cause I really felt I wanted to do something.

I volunteered for Lifeline before Right to Life had started.

But I do think a lot of people, particularly if they haven't had any much contact with religion find it hard to understand people whose motivations are very different from their own.

It's really not religion that drives me. I mean, I'm conscious of the fact that it's a child inside you. We're taught so much about life in the womb. You've got the ultrasound.

You can see the baby moving, sucking its thumb. You can feel it moving, I mean.

No, that's NOT religion. .

I never heard them talk about abortion from the church pulpits.

I went to a Catholic school and they held a retreat. The priest was speaking. He made some reference to the word abortion.

And I can remember thinking; I wonder what that is? I hope I haven't done that. I didn't know what it meant!

I know it's easy to cast us in that light and think, it's all very well for those religious people. When a woman has a miscarriage and she sees that baby she's not thinking about her religion. She's thinking about the child. A lot of women have had abortions.

We used to hear from them on our telephone support line.

VICTORIA STATE ELECTION 2010

We have been campaigning for some time and one of the most successful campaigns was in the 2010 state election here (in Victoria) and they'd passed the Abortion Law Reform Act in 2008.

Daniel Andrews was the Health Minister at the time and chaperoned the bill through the Parliament.

We campaigned in nine marginal seats at the 2010 Victorian state election and seven of those MPs who voted for the abortion bill lost their seats.

The seats we targeted were Burwood, Frankston, Seymour, Gippsland East, Mitcham, Essendon and Bendigo East, Mount Waverley and Mordialloc. They all voted for the Abortion Law Reform Act 2008. Three of the nine targeted were Emily's Listers. These were Maxine Morand in Mount Waverley, Janice Munt in Mordialloc, and Jacinta Allan in Bendigo East. Only Allan survived the pro-life challenge. The other five targeted were Tony Robinson in Mitcham, Bob Stensholt in Burwood, Alastair Harkness in Frankston, Justin Madden in Essendon and Ben Hardman in Seymour. All but Madden were defeated.

In relation to the seat of East Gippsland, the MP Craig Ingram was an Independent.

The government used to rely on him for his vote. Brumby, the Premier in 2010 was up at the Broadmeadows Town Hall waiting for the results. I can remember him saying, I think it might be a hung parliament. And then Craig Ingram lost his seat. He blamed Right to Life Australia on ABC radio. We really ran a very tough campaign down there in East Gippsland with brochures and a mobile billboard.

We used a very effective leaflet we distributed in the electorate which had a photo of a baby who was born at 24 weeks of pregnancy. (we called the brochure "Baby Nicholas"). The mother allowed us to use the photo of the little baby in the hospital.

The other part of the brochure showed him later in life. He had fortunately survived after a lot of treatment and care. And we contrasted with wording about a similar aged baby being discriminated against and aborted. It was most effective and Brumby lost office.

We learnt that to do leafleting it's more effective to use Australia Post rather than solely having volunteers.

Baillieu was the next Premier but he was not useful in progressing our cause.

J: I found many of the records of the Abortion Law Reform Association. They didn't last very long, did they?

Well, they got what they wanted.

J: Beatrice Faust was President in 1973/1974 followed by Leslie Vick. It appeared to peter out. I think the Abortion Law Reform Association was big in the women's movement in the 60s and early 70s, but the women's movement had many goals.

The women's movement took on so many issues such as women in bureaucracy, anti-discrimination laws, about jobs and about positions. Abortion became much less of an issue, whereas for the right-to-life people, that was our focus. However today abortion up to birth is available in every state and territory. Terrible.

J: So you stayed more focused as a sort of a single-issue organisation.

Oh, yes. It's just entirely that – both life issues of abortion and euthanasia, we don't get involved in any other issues.

WEEKENDS IN THE LOCKUP

I haven't told you about the arrests and the weekend in jail.

J: Oh, were you in jail?

Yes, I was in the lock-up in Melbourne for a weekend.

I'd not paid the fine. I've been arrested five times, actually. I'm not aggressive but, passive. The first time was when we got into Bertram Wainer's (abortuary) - we just sat down in the corridor. Another time was in Queensland when the government closed down Peter Bayliss's abortuary which performed abortions in the late 1970s, then raided by police in 1985.

Bayliss and his anaesthetist, Dawn Cullen, were arrested but subsequently acquitted. He ran the clinic until his death in the mid-1990s.

Bertram Wainer went to Queensland and said he was going to help keep them operating. So some of us went to Queensland and managed to gain access into the clinic. We were sitting down and Wainer came out and said "Oh, it's you Margaret, what are you doing up here?"

A police inspector then arrived and I said to him "Arrest this man!" However, they arrested us instead took us off and locked us up. There were a couple of women from Sydney, I think there were four of us all together. They took us to the central lockup in Brisbane. I can remember one of the policemen coming in -there were two of us in the cell. And he said, I don't believe it.

(I thought, "oh, here goes..") But, he said, "Fancy locking you people up." We had a quick hearing in the magistrates court later that day and caught the four o'clock plane home! Back in Melbourne I once again had to serve the weekend in the Essendon lock-up because we hadn't paid a fine. The fine was because we were arrested in the front of an abortion clinic and did not "move on".

For a long time, I attended conventions in the United States. The movement is very strong there. I think that's really where we took a lot of ideas from about being politically active.

The first of those conventions I went to extended for two weeks. There were women who hadn't been politically active before, who stood up and gave speeches and then joined the party. I remember attending a speech by the late Professor Charles Rice.



1982. Margaret Tighe speaking at her 50th birthday celebration 16 January 1982. A news headline in The Sun Tuesday 21 April 1981 p 58 said "If babies could vote this woman might be the next Prime Minister." The statement was framed by pro-life friends and given to Margaret at her birthday event.

He explained the importance of political activity and said there was a Right to Life Party in New York State. He said there was a state legislature election and the Right to Life Party were quite effective. In fact, he said that when the legislature resumed again a question was raised - hey, where's Vince? (one of the MPs).

The response was "Oh, he's pumping gas some place!"

This type of surprise loss was thought of after the defeat of David Kennedy in the Federal seat of Bendigo at the 1972 election - defeated by Liberal candidate John Bourchier. The Labor party was returned to government for the first time since 1949. Kennedy was elected to the House of Representatives for Bendigo, Victoria at a by-election in 1969.

Despite the Labor Party forming government, Kennedy was a surprise loss, largely due to our strong opposition over his views on abortion alongside a challenge from the Country Party. It was a massive campaign.

J: Were you a very effective political organiser?

Well, I think I have become a bit that way.. I think I've learned a bit.

And I've talked to a lot of people. Even Paul Keating once sent me to the airport in a Commonwealth car. He wouldn't do that today!

I also met Bob Hawke in Oxford. He wouldn't remember that. But I worked in Oxford.

I had two years in England on a working holiday. And so another woman and I had jobs in Oxford. I worked at the major hospital, Radcliffe, in the Pharmacy. We knew some Rhodes Scholars. They were from New Zealand and Commonwealth countries. They were renting a house and we were around at the house this particular afternoon making scones. This fellow came in and I recall he was short and had very black hair and had a woman with him. He spoke to the men for a short while and after he left they said he was a Rhodes Scholar from Western Australia. It was Bob Hawke. Rhodes Scholars weren't allowed to be married then. I haven't forgotten meeting him though he wasn't in the room (of the house) for very long.

J: In relation to Paul Keating, he's getting on now...he's about 78.

Yes. One thing Paul Keating did which really helped us was to write an excellent piece on euthanasia in 2017. It was very clever. We made good use of it during our campaign against euthanasia in the Victorian debate in 2017.

MY UPBRINGING

I remember when the war started, I was seven. My mother Ivy had very little schooling - only two years of formal schooling. She was brought up in Tasmania. We discovered in recent years, that she was descended from convicts.

My great-great-grandparents were British convicts, I don't think my mother was aware of that.

Her mother must have taught them well because my mother was very well read. She read Charles Dickens and similar writings. I think she was pretty intelligent because she wrote excellent letters. And when the war was on, we'd be having our breakfast, getting ready for school. I grew up being very conscious of the war as my mother would be listening to the radio and explaining the news to us. She was also a very good, pianist and violinist. I will remember going past the newsagents and seeing a banner headline, "Japs bombed Darwin". I remember feeling really scared.

J: So where did you go to school?

I went to a parish school in South Camberwell, St Cecilia's (now in Glen Iris), and then I obtained a scholarship. There were diocesan scholarships in those days.

They had a series of scholarship schools and I went to one in Ripponlea called Holy Redeemer (now in Surrey Hills).

I then sat for the junior government scholarship, which was available for everyone in the state of Victoria. And I got one of those scholarships, so I went to a Presentation Convent School in Dandenong Road, Windsor. I should have gone to a school a bit closer to my home in South Camberwell. I then was successful for a Commonwealth scholarship and studied pharmacy. I think they became available, but unsure whether it was through Gough Whitlam as I wasn't at university then. Commonwealth Scholarships were based on your matriculation results and were means tested.

J: So what did your father do?

My father, he left school at the age of 15, a small Christian brother's school in South Melbourne. He had a job at the Victorian Railways as a junior office boy and finished up second in charge of the railways. He was very successful in the end, having left school at the age of 15 to become a junior office boy.

He was very active in the football league with South Melbourne the first life member of the Victorian Football League before it became "AFL" and was also involved in football politics.

There were six children in our family but my mother's first baby died at one month. She had a septic navel. At the birth of baby Mary, my mother only had a midwife as an attendee. The midwife had put Fuller's Earth on the navel, apparently.

The poor parents didn't have a car and wanted to take the baby in to see a specialist in the city, by tram. My mother then asked the specialist to visit us and said we can pay for the visit. The specialist said "Save your money. I haven't got anything to treat the baby with."

There were no antibiotics, penicillin only became available just near the end of the war.

And so poor baby Mary Elizabeth died.

So, I named my daughter Elizabeth after my sister.

She was called Mary Elizabeth, so I called my daughter Elizabeth Mary.

Then they had six other children. We've been a pretty close family.

I didn't like Rupert "Dick" Hamer Premier of Victoria (1972-1981) at all. I met with him and he told me he was in favour of the Roe versus Wade decision in the United States. Then there was an election and they lost a seat or a few seats because of us. Then they gave us some money for our pregnancy counselling service. It was as if they said "We had better give them something because they've had a bit of an effect upon us! In the next election, it must have been when John Cain Jnr was elected in 1982 and Tom Roper was Minister of Health (1982 - 1985)

They had hardly taken office. And we had two smirking women sent down to our office to withdraw the money and to tell us that they would no longer be giving us money for the pregnancy counselling. Oh, right. I'll never forget that. "Snappy Tom" they used to call him.

But John Cain was a very decent man.

He was probably the best of the ones they've had, I think.. But I never forgot that it was one of the first things the Cain government did.

PREGNANCY COUNSELLING SERVICE AND SOCIAL ACTION:

J: So how long did you run the pregnancy counselling service?

Oh, for years and years. At one stage we even had a building in Clarendon Street, East Melbourne.

The women were trained by a psychologist. We even employed a social worker at one stage.

It was all to do with money. In more recent times it became a 24-hour phone service.

There was a group also operating for a long time - called 'Women Hurt by Abortion', and they were very effective too.

I think we probably should start one of those social help groups again because there's so many women who have had abortions and are struggling.

STANDING AS A CANDIDATE FOR SEAT OF KEW, VICTORIA 1976

I stood as an Independent candidate in the Legislative Assembly seat of Kew at the Victorian state election on 20 March 1976. We had a campaign rally at Kew High School and used letter writing and media releases to gain support for my candidacy.

As I said, I didn't like Rupert Hamer at all. He was the Liberal Premier of Victoria (1972 to 1981) and told me he was in favour of the 1973 Roe versus Wade decision in the United States.

As described in the Right to Life newsletter of February-March 1976:

I said "I want to give the voters a clear choice, they can vote for life or they can choose the sordid cheap solution of abortion. Mr Hamer has allowed abortions to be freely performed by Mr Wainer and his associates who have grown rich on unfortunate mothers. In Kew my campaign committee and I will work to put the issue of life or death in front of the voters."

I was not successful in winning the seat however 5% of voters gave me their first preference and in Kew a larger group gave me their 2nd preference indicating a level of support for Hamer enforcing the law. Hamer's Liberal party was returned. I didn't stand as a candidate again - it was just something we tried. We continued as advocates for life using political campaigns and educational work for example - our newsletters.

SETTING UP OUR CONSTITUTION.

When we were first established there was a constitution drawn up by Peter O'Callaghan QC a Melbourne QC now deceased. The constitution stated we are non-denominational and non-party political and we were to work in three ways. The three arms were educational, political action and social action. And that's the way we've always worked all those years



1983 Margaret Tighe with her lifelong supporter, husband Ron Tighe at a Right to Life Australia fundraising dinner.

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL ACTION

J: So what does 'social action' mean?

Well, it meant providing women who may consider an abortion another alternative. We operated a pregnancy help centre near the Mercy Hospital in East Melbourne. We assisted women with practical help to keep their babies, prams, clothing and other goods.

Later on we visited a group in New Zealand who operated a pregnancy counselling telephone line and we used this model to set up a 24-hour telephone line service which we have operated for many years. So many of our supporters have given their time and donations to assist pregnant mothers at risk and this is the vital third arm of our work. So they've done a lot of good to save a lot of lives.

RECOLLECTIONS: EUGENE AHERN

Margaret Tighe was a faithful volunteer with Lifeline prior to her starting with the right to life movement. She had formal training for the role and continued volunteering for many years - only ceasing when she had her second or third child. At least once a week she worked on the overnight shift.

Margaret was also was a founder of the Carolyn Chisholm Society in Melbourne, a community organisation dedicated to supporting pregnant women and families with young children who are facing hardship.

Margaret's antecedent work explains in part why she began her role working for the protection of the unborn child. Her friend and lifelong colleague Ellen Nora Connors who has since deceased formed a group in Essendon and have many recollections of how the movement started.

By about 1976 over 50 years ago we were producing 6 editions of the newsletter every year. It was a big job putting it all together. Paul van Gamet was on the Committee and he and I put the newsletter together using Letraset - not very many people know what that is these days.

It was a revolutionary graphic design aid in the 1960s-80s and allowed designers to apply typefaces directly onto artwork.

It was a great compliment that prominent American Congressman Henry Hyde sponsored a dinner in Washington DC in 1980 and honoured Margaret Tighe.



1985 Speaker Guy Ostertag from Philadelphia USA (centre) with Margaret Tighe (left) at Right to Life rally in the City Square, Melbourne CBD at the end of the annual week long Walk for Little Feet (Bairnsdale to Melbourne)

PROTEST IN LONDON - APRIL 1973

I recall some of our protests about abortion – one of which was actually held in London in 1973. Professor John “Jack” Scarisbric was co-founder of the charity Life in England at that time, and I can’t recall how I came in contact with him but I knew very few other people.

I recall The Hon Kim Beazley AO (Snr) was heavily involved in campaigning against the McKenzie Lamb bill. He contacted me and asked me what was going on in relation to our campaign against the McKenzie Lamb bill. This occurred around two weeks before Easter in 1973. Kim Beazley Snr was a great supporter of right to life, a man of great principles. He led the opposition to the debate.

He was education minister in the Whitlam government from 1972 to 1975 and lobbied so many of the federal politicians. (He greatly influenced the Labor party members and played a pivotal role in the bill being defeated 98:23 in May 1973).

I think it was Palm Sunday night that he contacted me and we had a long discussion.

The following morning a man called Pat Cox and another called Dan Murphy (who had a big electrical business of maybe 40 employees) called me. Pat may also have been an electrician.

They said “we want to see you” and told me they had an idea that I could fly to London to organise a protest outside Australia House where Prime Minister Gough Whitlam was located on an overseas trip.

In April 1973 Prime Minister Gough Whitlam was in London and Europe having meetings aimed at reshaping Australia’s relationship with the United Kingdom. It was Easter time. My Parish Priest was Fr Tom Cummins and the parish office was at High St Northcote. I had to ask him about taking the leave and said “would you mind if I go to London for Easter?” I then told him the reason was to organise a protest against Gough Whitlam outside Australia House in London.

He replied “OK, that won’t be a problem.”

I then had to hastily arrange an airline ticket. It was a busy time over the Easter period. My father was still working in the ANZ bank and luckily they had a travel department. The flight was like a milk delivery round via the Middle East.

It was difficult at that time to get a passport with barely any notice. I had to put in a regular passport application. It was at the Commonwealth building in Spring Street, Melbourne.

When Pat Cox left me after our meeting he said he would “get the Minister out of Parliament” in order to speed up my passport application and he obviously did. Funnily enough the Minister for Immigration helped me obtain the passport at lightning speed.

I boarded the plane on Holy Thursday. I stayed with Mary my cousin, who I am still in touch with. As I said I had no contacts except a few people in SPUC (Society Protection Unborn Child). I organised the protest outside Australia House on Easter Monday – but in hindsight it was probably not the best of days and unfortunately Gough Whitlam wasn’t there.

However the representatives of Australian newspapers were there and they were very interested. The protest was reported on the front page of an Australian newspaper on Easter Monday 23 April 1973. Meanwhile, I went directly from the protest to Heathrow airport to fly home!

PROTEST AT STATE LABOR PARTY CAMPAIGN LAUNCH – MELBOURNE 1973

Another protest involved organising a rally which then proceeded to a Labor Party meeting in Melbourne. It was on Palm Sunday 15 April 1973 and was held at the Mitcham High School. The meeting was four weeks before the McKenzie Lamb Bill 1973 was being debated in the Federal Parliament.

Prime Minister Gough Whitlam attended the meeting as well as John Cain. It was the launch of the Victorian Labor party campaign as there was a state election being held on Saturday, 19 May 1973.

The federal McKenzie Lamb bill was the biggest abortion debate that had ever been in Australia. We held meetings at the Northcote Presbyterian Church Hall in James Street, Northcote, Melbourne, opposite the Catholic School.

On this day, we rallied at the Uniting Church Whitehorse-Maroonah Highway Melbourne and walked about 1 km – to the Mitcham Town Hall. There were 500 people who turned up to the protest.

We arrived before the meeting started and took up all of the front row seats. We were very respectful. Eventually Bob Hawke spoke – at that time he was ACTU President. He said we were “Santamaria thugs” which infuriated us!

I still recall there was a lot of press about the incident and this together with many other activities certainly made an important contribution to our very successful campaign in preventing the passage of the McKenzie Lamb bill. Today as in the late 1960’s and 1970’s we still work to uphold the sanctity of human life, albeit in different ways – for every life is precious.

The Right to Life Australia Inc wishes to acknowledge Wightons Pty Ltd who have produced EVERY edition of the Right to Life News since the inaugural production of Vol 1 No 1 - July 1973. Without the support of Wightons so much of the history of Right to Life Australia would not have been captured nor been able to be retrieved and on display today. We sincerely thank Pat and her team for their work in compiling the special edition of Margaret Tighe’s pro-life work and for their commitment to the pro-life movement for over 50 years.

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RIGHT TO LIFE

NEWSLETTER
OF VICTORIAN
RIGHT TO LIFE
ASSOCIATION

JULY 1973

Vol. 1 — No. 1

Price 10 cents

The killing continues in America

Abortion first —

Euthanasia next

Two Melbourne nurses, Mrs. Kathy Ragg and Miss Marita O'Leary, returned to Australia last month with a dire warning about the link between abortion and euthanasia.

Mrs. Ragg said that in 3 American State legislatures, euthanasia proposals have been introduced — usually under the slogan "Death with Dignity". Powerful euthanasia societies are agitating for legalised murder of the aged.

This is the next logical step now that the U.S. Supreme Court has decided that the unborn are not persons and so may be killed at any stage of a preg-

nancy — even right up to nine months. And infanticide is only one step after euthanasia; in one American city recently a hospital starved to death a mongoloid child whose parents had rejected it.

Miss O'Leary said that there was no difference between de-

stroying a life at six weeks gestation and one at 90 years; human life is a continuum.

An Abortion Clinic

Mrs. Ragg, who is seven months' pregnant, commented on their visit to an elaborate, air-conditioned, Minneapolis abortion clinic.

"Twelve or more young women were in the waiting room. When I asked about obtaining an abortion, I was told that this particular day they were too busy, but that if I came back tomorrow with a doctor's certificate that I was pregnant, a blood group certificate, and \$185, I could obtain an abortion by saline poisoning. This would be quite an easy procedure and the next day I would be free to go home."



Mrs. Kathy Ragg & Marita O'Leary

CONSCIENCE VOTE RATIFIED

The A.L.P. Federal Conference in voting to maintain the "conscience vote" recognised the strong pro-life convictions of many Labour parliamentarians.

In moving the amendment for the retention of the right of members to a free vote on the issue, S.A. Premier, Don Dunstan, argued that any other course would bring down his own government.

Delegates were left to imagine the effect of a binding pro-abortion policy on Mr. Whitlam's government.

The actual votes taken on the abortion issue reflect the recognition which Right to Life's activities have received.

In Launceston, the conscience vote won narrow approval, but now it was given overwhelming support, because delegates realised how resolute the opponents of abortion have actually become.

While the retention of the conscience vote can be applauded, it is disturbing to note the strong body of opinion evidently in personal support of liberalised abortion laws. The Party did nothing about the pro-abortion policy of the Victorian branch, which had cost the Party many votes in the recent State elections.

RTL NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING

"There has been a 1700% increase in the number of abortions performed at the Royal Melbourne Hospital." This figure was given by Mrs. Margaret Tighe on her return from a two-day meeting in Sydney of RTL delegates from each State.



The National Association is gravely concerned at the erosion of the abortion laws in Victoria and N.S.W. In neither of these States is a doctor ever prosecuted for performing an abortion.

Many Melbourne and Sydney hospitals perform a large number of abortions each year. Mrs. Tighe believes that we need to examine this situation to see what can be done to tighten the working of the law in practice.

A Royal Commission

The crux of the abortion issue is — when does human life begin? The biological facts indicate that it begins at conception and the Right to Life Association insists that all human life must be given its due rights and protection.

Human Rights and Protection

The Victorian Right to Life Association would insist that any judicial enquiry should recognise as an inviolable principle that demonstrably human life must be accorded full human rights and protection.

The Victorian RTLA will work to ensure that the terms of reference of any enquiry would lead to a reduction in the number of abortions and recommendations for positive solutions to the social conditions that lead women to seek abortions.

STATE OFFICE

A permanent State Office has now been opened at 190 ELGIN STREET, CARLTON, close to Lygon Street. Members are most welcome to call in during office hours.

A range of books, pamphlets, leaflets, slides, etc. is on sale and deserves your inspection.

The office telephone number is 34 74111

Bring your family and friends
to a
TEACH-IN
on the theme
LIFE IS A CONTINUUM
31st August, 1973
10 a.m. to 10 p.m.
Melbourne Town Hall
AN EXHIBITION
on
HUMAN LIFE
at every stage from
CONCEPTION TO OLD AGE

If you want to know —

How does the unborn child develop from conception to birth?
Does human life really matter?
Does readily available abortion lead to euthanasia?

Come and see —

Films
Slides
Posters
on these themes.

Come and hear —

Doctors — Politicians — Nurses
Social Workers — Teachers — Sportsmen
Entertainers
speaking hourly on these topics.

HON. ARTHUR CALWELL

role in the campaign against the McKenzie-Lamb Bill and regretted that he could only send messages of solidarity to meetings which his health prevented him from attending.

**NORTHERN TERRITORY
ABORTION BILL**

There is an "Abortion on Demand" Bill due to soon come before the Northern Territory Legislative Council. The Bill would allow abortion up to 23 weeks in cases where two doctors believe that the risk to the life or the physical or mental health of the mother is greater than the risk from terminating the pregnancy, or where there is a substantial risk of deformity.

The mother's actual or reasonably foreseeable environment may be considered when the doctors make their judgment.

There is a small but enthusiastic RTL group in the Northern Territory.

The Association wishes to add its tribute to the late Arthur Augustus Calwell, who was an esteemed member of our Association. Many tributes have been paid to him, but a recognition of his concern for the value of human life is perhaps the highest tribute which can possibly be paid.

In his book, "Be Just and Fear Not", he condemns increasing demands for easily obtainable abortions and says, "All this adds up to infanticide".

Appropriately, his last public statements were in defence of human life. He took an active

SOCIAL ACTION**PREGNANCY SUPPORT
SURVEY**

Mrs. Maureen Trezise, mother of seven, Chisholm electorate co-ordinator during our campaign, and in charge of the Social Action Committee of Right to Life, reports that a most successful training day was held recently at the Mercy Hospital.

Mrs. Trezise was very impressed with the enthusiasm and community spirit of the 100 or more men and women who attended, some from as far away as Warrnambool.

One of the highlights of the day was an address by Mr. G. Morgan, Managing Director of Gallop Polls Pty. Ltd.

The object was to train a group of volunteers to conduct a skilled survey of the existing services for pregnant women and to discover, in particular, what inadequacies there are within those services.

Once RTL members have a good knowledge of the services available, they will be able to publicise them among those who may be in need of help, but unsure how to obtain it.

Once the inadequacies are known, action can be taken to try to ensure that they are remedied, that whatever further services are needed will be set up.

The Social Action Committee anticipates that later on there will be further surveys into all those facilities and aspects of community care where possible inadequacies could lead a woman to choose to have an abortion.

Mrs. Trezise insists that this initial survey will be invaluable in simply bringing the Association into contact with various social assistance agencies. "We should keep in contact with

those services covered by the survey and offer help where necessary."

Pregnancy Support

Pregnancy support is obviously one of the services which Mrs. Trezise hopes the Association will be able to help. The service is functioning from its Collingwood office — tel. 419 3766.

Editor's Note: Mrs. Trezise is anxious to keep her committee in close touch with the membership and may be contacted by phone, on 288 2844.

News from Abroad**DAMAGES TO UNBORN**

A born child should be able to sue for damages sustained before birth. The British Law Society has reached this conclusion, according to the 'Times' of 11th June.

This would apply to injuries caused either directly or through an injury to the mother — the only condition being that some third party is at fault.

The Society holds that, under existing law, children can sue in respect of such antenatal injuries, but that the law should be reformed so as to spell this out more clearly. The Society was divided on the question: should the mother herself have liability.

ABORTION KILLS MOTHERS

Abortion has been the largest single cause of maternal deaths in England for the past nine years. This is reported by the Chief Medical Officer of Health, Sir George Godbere.

BIRTH RATE DROPS

The 1972 U.S. birth rate was the lowest ever recorded: 15.6 per 1000. Births were down by 303,000 on 1971. In England the birth rate fell by 8% between

ABORTION LAWS TIGHTENED

Two Communist countries have moved recently to make abortions much harder to obtain. In Bulgaria, only women under 19 or over 45 will be allowed abortions, except for those women with a severe illness.

In Czechoslovakia, married women with less than two children will not be allowed an abortion, except for strict medical reasons, and in exceptional cases for non-medical reasons.

GYNAECOLOGY — A DIRTY WORD

"Gynaecology has become a dirty word in the medical profession." This statement was made recently by Dr. Peggy Norris, a Liverpool general practitioner, in an address to a Liverpool branch of SPUC (Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child).

Dr. Norris had recently returned from a conference in France, where she found that "contempt for the British medical profession came over loud and clear from doctors of different nationalities".

This contempt arose from the fact that 90% of abortions in Britain were carried out on healthy women — operations for which doctors were, up till very recently, in danger of being struck off the Register!

Aborted Babies left to Die?

Dr. Norris went on to ask: "What happens to babies aborted between 20 and 27 weeks gestation? Alive when taken from the womb, are they left to die? Are they drowned in a kidney dish? Are they given an injection to shut them up?" 10% of babies born prematurely at 20 to 27 weeks can be saved; but there is no record of late aborted babies surviving in the U.K.

Referring to the mounting evidence that abortion often leads to sterility in women and deformity in subsequent babies, Dr. Norris asked a further question: "What manner of doctors have we in our N.H.S. hospitals who abort normal pregnancies? Are they mentally ill? Are they frightened of losing promotion?"

Or, perhaps, they dislike women and babies?"

Dr. Norris concluded by asking doctors opposed to abortion to "show a little more guts — instead of being frightened of the bullying tactics of pro-abortion M.P.'s and their supporters".

Campaign Recognised

Fred Daly, the Government Leader in the House, declared that the RTL campaign was the most massive seen since the fight against the bank nationalisation proposals of the forties; newspaper men have told us that the campaign was considerably bigger than the Liberal Party's election campaign in 1972, and much better organised than the Vietnam Protest movement.

Michelle Grattan, an 'Age' political reporter and former tutor in political science, has suggested to us that NO campaign in Australian political history could match the recent one in terms of popular grassroots action and support.

PUBLICITY AND MEDIA

Mr. Pat Cox, who is handling publicity for the Teach-In, is anxious that anyone who could be of service should contact him (tel. 277 3266). A rough check of membership cards shows that we have members working in advertising agencies and various media organisations who could play a valuable role.

CONTINUING CAMPAIGN NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT

We are underway with an extensive program of
EDUCATION — SOCIAL ACTION — POLITICAL ACTION

The Association asks every member to contribute \$1 each and so share in the on-going campaign.

The support of each member will make possible the permanent Carlton office and a successful Teach-In.

As an expression of my support of human life, I enclose \$.....

Name: Phone No:

Address:

Federal Electorate: Postcode:

— IMPORTANT NOTICE — STATE ASSEMBLY

CENTRAL HALL,
BRUNSWICK STREET, FITZROY
(between Victoria Pde. and Gertrude St.)

SATURDAY, 11th AUGUST, at 1.30 p.m.

to

- (1) Formally constitute the Victorian Right to Life Association;
- (2) Ratify the Constitution;
- (3) Elect the Executive Members of the State Council.

Note: Nominations for the positions of President, Vice-President, Assistant Secretary, and Treasurer must reach the Right to Life office no later than 4th August. The nomination must be signed by the proposer, seconder and nominee.

THE CASE FOR THE UNBORN

"Handbook on Abortion"

by Dr. & Mrs. J. C. Willke

If you want to know the facts, if you want to know how to present a cogent, rational case for the unborn, read this book.

It begins by showing what the essential question is: when does human life begin? It goes on to answer that question in a simple factual informative manner: human life begins at conception.

The Willkes describe the characteristics of the foetus at various stages (answering questions like, 'can a foetus cry?' and 'when is his brain working?'). They show the absurdity of the concept of viability as a criterion for life.

Legal Rights of the Child

There is another fine chapter on the legal rights of the child.

The Willkes make clear that an unborn child may inherit, that a child may sue for injuries prior to birth, and that the parents of a stillborn child may sue if the death is due to an accident; that the unborn may receive social security benefits; that a mother may not refuse to have blood transfusions when her unborn child needs one in order to live. Yet by some extraordinary legal anomaly, the unborn may be killed by doctors.

Read this "Case for the Unborn". It is a powerful one.

This book is a 'must' for all school libraries. — Copies available from Right to Life office.

Action among Medical and Hospital Personnel

RTL Nurses Groups

A number of nurses believe that there is a need for an official nurses' group within the Right to Life Association. They are trying to build up membership of such a group from nurses in hospitals all over Victoria.

All nurses are eligible to join this group. Contact the Nurses Group, Right to Life Association, 41 York Street, Richmond, for application forms.

Justice for Pro-Life Hospital Employees

The Hospital Employees Federation is seeking to have a provision placed in the Hospital and Benevolent Homes Determination, to the effect that no employee may be discriminated against because he objects to taking part in abortions, such a provision to apply also to prospective employees.

Mr. Graeme Caesar, Industrial Officer of the Federation, reported this recently to the Right to Life Association.

Mr. Caesar believes that his Federation's claim will be opposed quite strongly by the Victorian Hospitals' Industrial Council.

If the provision is accepted and becomes part of the Award, then any employee who believes he has been discriminated against will be able to take his complaint to the Victorian Minister for Labour, who can then offending hospital, initiate action against the

ABORTION COST A.L.P. VOTES

RIGHT TO LIFE AFFECTS STATE RESULTS

The Victorian State elections came only a week after the vote on the McKenzie-Lamb abortion bill. The disastrous performance of the A.L.P. has been attributed to its identification with abortion law liberalisation.

Yet there is strong evidence to suggest such a swing.

It was in the outer eastern suburbs of Melbourne that the A.L.P. won the seats which put it into office. To use Mr. Whitlam's phrase, they became "Labour's new constituency".

These seats of Diamond Valley, Casey and La-Trobe held by David McKenzie, Race Mathews and Tony Lamb respectively, saw the most intense debate on the bill. Significantly, Alan Jarman's Deakin borders on Diamond Valley and Casey

In these electorates a clear trend emerged. The A.L.P. vote in the corresponding State electorates declined from last December, by a significantly larger percentage than the State-wide swing.

The anti-Labour swing was 7.7% in LaTrobe, against the State figure of 5.5%. On the other hand, the Liberal vote in Deakin increased by 10%, 2% above the State-wide trend.

The figures for the four electorates must be read as a whole against the background of the intensity of the abortion debate. ment does not appear to have

cost the Liberal Party any support. The results in particular seats indicate that support for abortion did not win candidates votes and actually seems to have lost them votes.

On the other hand, close identification with the pro-life movement and actually seems to have



Key figures in the recent campaign were Peter Harris (Casey Comm. Chairman) and Rob Pardy.

gained it an increased swing as the Deakin figures show.

Just how poorly pro-abortion candidates polled is shown by Mrs. Coxedge's vote in Balwyn, where her share of the vote was even worse than the A.L.P. candidate in the disastrous 1970 poll. Her poor performance shows that pro-abortion policies do not win votes.

Right to Life Rallyes Opposition

The campaign of the RTLA has activated public opinion on the issue. It has given public expression to opposition to abortion and made it an explosive political issue.

The Victorian A.L.P., in its identification with support for abortion, has taken up an issue which seems destined to lose it support.

EDUCATING AUSTRALIA

Can a foetus feel pain? When does foetal brain activity begin? When does the heart of an unborn baby begin to beat? At what stage are all the basic bodily organs present? Is visibility a measure of the development of a baby or the measure of the development of our medical services?

Do YOU know the answer to these questions? Does your next-door neighbour know the answers? Does your local priest or Minister know the answers? Does David McKenzie know the answers? Does Claudia Wright know the answers?

Wide Ignorance

The ignorance of Australians on these matters is profound. The policy of the anti-life people is to keep everyone ignorant.



Fr. Denis O'Brien, author of this article and advocate of education.

Pro-abortion propaganda hardly ever addresses itself to these questions; it prefers instead to engage in utterly irrelevant theological, political, or even financial speculations.

Our policy must be to bring the truth about foetal life and human development before every adult and every teenager within Australia. Time and again you will hear people say, once they have seen slides showing what the unborn are like, and what abortion does to them, "I had no idea it was like that".

Even those who have opposed abortion all their lives do not know the simplest facts about the unborn.

The best slides to use are those developed by Dr. and Mrs. Willke, the famous American husband and wife team.

It was Dr. Willke's showing of these slides to New York legislators that won them over to vote for a repeal of that State's

liberal abortion law that had been passed just a year or two before. With the slides there is an excellent taped commentary.

These slides should be shown at home meetings, in school classrooms, to mothers' clubs, to youth groups. Ideally, they should be shown by a doctor or trained nurse, who will be able to answer questions and comment on the various slides. It is hoped that we will be able to train a large team of speakers who will be able to go all over Victoria to spread the pro-life story.

WHY A STATE ASSEMBLY?

The time has now come to set up the Victorian division of the Right to Life Association in a proper constitutional manner.

It is important that the Association be so structured that ordinary members have a real share in determining who the officials of the Association are, and what their policies should be.

It is for all these reasons that the forthcoming State Assembly is so important. All members of the Right to Life Association are urged to attend; all are eligible to vote on the matters that will be placed before the Assembly. The most important topic will be the ratification of a Constitution.

Nominations for State Executive

The second task for the Assembly will be the election of a President, a Vice-President an Assistant Secretary, and a Treasurer, for the State Council of the Victorian division of the RTLA.

It is felt that it is appropriate at this initial stage of our organization, that the first office-bearers should be elected by an assembly of individual Right to Life members, rather than by their representatives.

Nominations for these positions should be forwarded to the present State Secretary (see box present State Secretary (see notice of State Assembly, P.3).

Authorised by E. H. Ahern, 140 Westbourne Gve., Northcote.

FINANCIAL MEMBERSHIP

This first Victorian Newsletter is being sent to all our members. In future, costs will force us to send it only to financial members. If you are a non-financial member, we ask you to tick on this slip with your subscription, to ensure future copies of the Newsletter and other literature.

MEMBERSHIP

Agreeing with the aims and objects of the Victorian Right to Life Association, I wish to make application for membership and enclose my annual subscription.

Signed:

Name: Phone No:

Address:

Federal Electorate: Postcode:

NOTE - Membership fee is \$2 per annum. Subscription to the National Newsletter is an additional \$1.

Wightons Print, 42-44 Moreland Road, East Brunswick, 3057 - 36-2756

ACTION ALERT

STOP THE USE OF TELEHEALTH FOR ASSISTED SUICIDE (AS) and EUTHANASIA

- As you are aware all states and the Australian Capital Territory have legalised assisted suicide (AS) and euthanasia. A bill to legalise it expected to be tabled in the Northern Territory later in 2026 year.
- Under Australian federal law (Criminal Code Act 1995) contact between doctor and patients (in relation to AS and euthanasia) must be in person.
- In 2023/2024 RTLA with you, our committed supporters campaigned successfully against code changes to remove this vital safeguard.
- Once more we must oppose a move by proponents of AS and euthanasia to remove this VITAL safeguard.

Please write to both:

Hon Anthony Albanese MP and
Prime Minister of Australia
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Or email: www.pm.gov.au/contact#no-back

Hon Michelle Rowland MP
Federal Attorney-General
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Or email: Michelle.Rowland.MP@aph.gov.au

YOUR KEY MESSAGE:

**DO NOT ALTER current law which prevents doctors
using telehealth for assistance to suicide and euthanasia.**

SUGGESTED POINTS:

- **Safety first:** VAD delivered by telehealth may be "convenient" but is UNSAFE. Almost all VAD assessors are unknown to the patient. To think doctors are able to make proper VAD assessments for patients they have never met before for this IRREVERSIBLE undertaking - and are able to exclude depression and coercion and establish motivation - is fanciful.
- **Lack of safeguards/exploitation:** Increased risk of inability to detect coercion in a brief video-link - "abusers" may well be present at the session.
- **Difficulty Assessing Mental Capacity:** An in-person assessment is vital determine if a patient has mental capacity to make the decision and not suffering from treatable depression, -difficult to gauge via a screen and without the ability to judge body language.
- **"No Substitute" for Face-to-Face Care:** There is no replacement for in-person consultation, allowing for better rapport, physical examination, and holistic assessment. Patients may have other physical issues requiring a hands-on approach which cannot be provided via an e-consultation.
- **Physical constraints increasing risk:** Old or frail patients may be unable to hear properly. In a face-to-face appointment an assessor is able to lean over and adapt their voice to assist the patient - not possible on telehealth. Patients who are weak may not even be able to move a camera screen!
- **Expansion in the future:** Expanding the availability of "VAD" and euthanasia by telehealth would allow states to use telehealth for any future expansion e.g. including for mental illness or for children.
- **Technology impairment** - conversation break-up in remote areas, static on the line, other diversions including visual or hearing impairment can affect discussions and increase vulnerability to make quick decisions.
- **Doctor Shopping** - Availability of telehealth makes doctor shopping easier, increases risk that factors impairing judgement (e.g. depression) are not detected.

Dr John Daffy, Medical Specialist from **Australian Care Alliance** expressed concern:

"Through in-person consultation you get to know patients... pick up on their unspoken body language, which can't be ascertained through the internet...you're talking about people killing themselves... and it would seem inappropriate to do it via telehealth." "... It's actually the most serious thing anyone would ever be involved in, and it would seem inappropriate to do it via telehealth." (The Age, 4 May 2021, p. 4)

We are able to help compose your letter – please feel free to phone or email the Right to Life Australia office

Stop telehealth for "VAD" and Euthanasia

SAMPLE LETTER

Dear Prime Minister

I am writing to oppose any change in the law to allow the use of telehealth for access to assisted suicide and euthanasia. VAD delivered by telehealth may appear convenient but I believe it is unsafe.

Almost all assessors are unknown to the patient. To think doctors are able to make proper assessments for patients they have never met, establish motivation, exclude depression and coercion - is unrealistic. In relation to coercion "abusers" may well be present - hidden from view.

Problems with technology connection and static on the line in regional areas can interfere with discussions and increase vulnerability to make quick decisions.

Old or frail patients may be hard of hearing - in a face-to-face appointment a doctor is able to lean over and adapt their voice to assist the patient - not possible on telehealth.

An assessor cannot ascertain unspoken body language through the internet. Patients who are frail may not even be able to move a camera screen to see the assessor properly.

As you will appreciate my concerns are for the safety of vulnerable patients who deserve good palliative care at the end of their lives. Yours faithfully, NAME, ADDRESS.

Your name

Address

WESTERN AUSTRALIA SUPPORTERS:

Since December 2021 eight babies were born alive during abortion procedures and left to die without life-saving or palliative care. A total of 39 babies have been left to die since 1998. Courageous Maryka Groenwald MLC introduced her Public Health Amendment (Born Equal – Care and Protection) Bill 2025 known as the "Born Equal" bill to persuade the WA government to debate the issue. Please sign a petition asking the Legislative Council to prioritise immediate debate and vote on the Public Health Amendment (Born Equal – Care and Protection) Bill 2025. The petition closes on 22 June 2026. www.parliament.wa.gov.au/Parliament/LCePetitions.nsf/petitions/26-0007

Additionally, it is important to contact your 37 Members of the Legislative Council (MLCs). As of the 2025 WA state election, the electoral system for the Legislative Council has changed. **There are no longer separate electoral regions for MLCs. We must contact ALL 37 MLCs.** You may prefer to write one letter, photograph it and send it by email to every MLC. Tell MLCs they must debate the "Born Equal" Bill.

RIP LES JONES – PRO-LIFE WARRIOR

We send our condolences to the family of Les Jones who passed away on 13 March 2026. We are grateful for the many years of faithful service Les gave to upholding the sanctity of life. Les was an integral part of the organising team for the annual Right to Life Walks in Victoria for over 20 years. The walk commenced in country towns like Bairnsdale or Warrnambool ending in Melbourne one week later - raising awareness of the unborn child and fundraising for The Right to Life Australia Incorporated.

Bequests – so important to us!

The Right to Life Australia Inc works tirelessly on protecting human life – against abortion and euthanasia.

We are grateful to our supporters who are responsible for generous donations which fund our entire operation.

Not only do we work on educational campaigns and keeping our supporters up to date with our work but our office must be staffed to comply with the complex financial compliance requirements of any business.

To those of you who may wish to leave something to one of the many charities that abound, PLEASE consider our work – saving the lives of the precious unborn and those who may become victims of euthanasia legislation.

It is important the wording of your will accurately identifies the beneficiary of your choice.

Please ensure correct details for our organisation are recorded in your will.

I give, devise and bequeath to:

The Right to Life Australia Incorporated

Registration Number A0042146V

ABN 12 774 010 375

of 161a Donald St, Brunswick East, VICTORIA 3057, AUSTRALIA

PO Box 2029 Brunswick East, VICTORIA 3057, AUSTRALIA

xx % of my residuary estate,

(OR the sum of \$xxx xxx for the general purposes of The Right to Life Australia Incorporated)