**Abortion**

**1. Assumptions and apologies**

**2. Cultural context**

2004 Tony Abbott’s speech at Adelaide University

2005 approval of abortion drug RU486

2018 NSW 150 metre ‘exclusion zone’ around abortion clinics

2019 *Reproductive Health Care Reform Bill* > *Abortion Law Reform Act 2019*

difference between Australia and USA

1973 Supreme Court USA decision *Roe v. Wade*: women’s right to privacy

1973 *Doe v. Bolton* (1973) “all factors […] relevant to wellbeing of patient”

Abortion on demand

2.2 *Recent attitudes in NSW*

Galaxy poll on attitudes to abortion in NSW (2017)[[1]](#footnote-1)

**3. How many and why?**

estimated one in three Australian women will have at least one abortion

between 20,000 to 30,000 surgical abortions performed each year in NSW

1 out of six women in evangelical churches have had an abortion (USA)

reasons given by women for having an abortion: (compares 1987 and 2004)[[2]](#footnote-2)

1) Having a baby would dramatically change my life—74%

Would interfere with education—38%  
Would interfere with job/employment/career—38%

Have other children or dependents—32%

2) Can’t afford a baby now—73%

3) Don’t want to be a single mother or having relationship problems—48%

4) Have completed my childbearing—38%  
5) Not ready for a(nother) child—32%

Adoption regarded as a ‘double death’[[3]](#footnote-3)

**3. What are we talking about?**

3.1. Methods of abortion

Medical abortion (e.g., RU486)

does not include ‘morning after pill’ if given *before* ovulation

Surgical abortion (includes ‘late term abortions’)

3.2. Contraception and IVF

some forms of ‘birth control’ destroy human life not prevent it beginning

consider how many embryos to create, and using all those created

3.3. The effects of abortion on women

Claims linked to breast cancer, infertility, and psychological harm

even “progressive, outspoken, pro-choice feminists” keep abortions secret[[4]](#footnote-4)

#shoutyourabortion campaign

Melinda Tankard Reist, *Giving Sorrow Words* (2000)

Effect on men

**4. Abortion and Feminism**

4.1. Feminist orthodoxy

first wave feminism: Margaret Sanger (1879–1966): ‘the problem of motherhood’

e.g., Feminist Majority Foundation

Women’s march Washington DC (2017)

‘Christian feminists’

4.2. Abortion and language

need to interrogate the terms and narrative

**5. The ethics of abortion**

no direct teaching on abortion in OT or NT

abortion is killing an innocent human life made in the image of God

situations where preserving life of mother takes precedence

sexual assault

medical conditions ‘incompatible with life’ or ‘quality of life’

screening for *treatable* conditions v. screening where treatment is to abort child

interview with Helen Thomas about Zoe[[5]](#footnote-5)

**6. The Way Ahead for Churches**

6.1. Prevention

Personal level

Policy level

Health professionals

Church Community

6.2. Pastoral Response

the cross of Christ offers complete and wonderful forgiveness

a) for women who have had abortions

sin, grief and trauma

b) for men

c) for parents and friends

d) for health care workers and counsellors

**Status of the unborn**

‘No discussion of the medical aspects of abortion should ignore the facts of prenatal development. Advances in medical knowledge are making it increasingly clear that human life of a very special order is being destroyed every time an abortion takes place. Eighteen to twenty-five days after conception, the baby’s heart is already beating. At eight weeks, brain waves can be detected and fingerprints have already formed. By the ninth and tenth weeks, the thyroid and adrenal glands are functioning, and the child can squint, swallow, and move the tongue. By the twelfth and thirteenth weeks, the child can suck his thumb and recoil from pain if pricked with a needle. By the fourth month the unborn child is eight to ten inches in height. All the changes occur before the fifth month, when the mother usually is first able to detect movements within the womb.’

J. J. Davis, *Evangelical Ethics*, 144.

**Pregnancy Support and post-abortion counselling**

* Real Choices Australia: [www.realchoices.org.au](http://www.realchoices.org.au)
* Zoe Support: [www.zoesupport.com.au](http://www.zoesupport.com.au)
* Embryo Donation Network: [www.embryodonation.org.au](http://www.embryodonation.org.au)
* Priceless Life Centre (Qld): [www.pricelesslifecentre.org.au](http://www.pricelesslifecentre.org.au)
* Karinya House (ACT): [www.karinyahouse.asn.au](http://www.karinyahouse.asn.au)
* Brave Foundation (teen pregnancies and help for carers/schools/health professionals): [www.bravefoundation.org.au](http://www.bravefoundation.org.au/)
* Diamond Women’s Support (Sydney): <https://diamondwomensupport.com/services/>
* Hope House (Western Sydney): <http://www.hopehouse.com.au>
* Rachel’s Vineyard retreats (Roman Catholic): <https://www.rachelsvineyard.org/weekend/sites.aspx?c=Australia>

**Resources for pastoral care**

* Denise Cooper-Clark: <http://www.ethos.org.au/online-resources/engage-mail/unspoken-grief-pastoral-care-around-abortion>
* ERLC on counselling men affected: <https://erlc.com/resource-library/articles/how-we-can-speak-to-men-in-the-abortion-conversation>
* ERLC on speaking to women about abortion: <https://erlc.com/resource-library/articles/why-our-hearts-matter-when-talking-about-abortion>
* Andrew Cameron on abortion ethics (2004): <https://sydneyanglicans.net/blogs/indepth/1721a>

**‘Pro-life’ Resources**

* Australian Christian Lobby: <https://www.acl.org.au>
* Evangelicals for Life—Peter Barnes <http://evangelicalsforlife.com>
* March for the Babies (Vic): <http://marchforthebabies.org>
* Women’s Forum Australia (secular): <http://www.womensforumaustralia.org>

**Ministry Ideas**

* Open <http://www.weareopen.org.uk>
* Gateway Women’s Care <https://gatewaywomens.care>

**Recommended Books**

Best, Megan, *Fearfully and Wonderfully Made: Ethics and the beginning of human life* (Kingsford: Matthias Media. 2012).

Davis, J. J., *Evangelical Ethics: Issues facing the Church Today*, (Presbyterian and Reformed: New Jersey. 2004).

Ling, Lizzie and Vaughan Roberts, *Abortion* (Denmark: Good Book Company, 2020)

Stott, J., *Issues Facing Christians Today*, (London: Marshall Pickering. 1999).

Wyatt, John, *Matters of Life and Death: Human dilemmas in the light of the Christian faith*, (Nottingham: IVP. 2009)

1. <http://www.abortionrethink.org/images/Documents/Galaxy_Research_NSW.pdf> Accessed 17 January 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://www.guttmacher.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/tables/370305/3711005t2.pdf> Accessed 25 January 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <http://socialissues.org.au/pdf/reports/SIE_Abortion_-_a_Christian_response.pdf> Accessed 23 January 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <http://www.dailylife.com.au/news-and-views/dl-opinion/shoutyourabortion-if-youve-had-an-abortion-you-have-nothing-to-apologise-for-20150921-gjrmc6.html> Accessed 23 January 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. <https://www.publicchristianity.org/zoes-story-where-life-begins-and-ends/> Accessed 30 October 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)