

Grave risk in having abortion

By Charles Francis

HAVING acted for women damaged by abortion, I have learned it is always very bad advice to refer any woman for an abortion because there are so many medical risks.

Yet Senator Natasha Stott Despoja complained on these pages last week that some pregnancy counselling services do not refer women for abortions.

And that they tell women of their increased risk of breast cancer, infertility and psychological trauma after abortion.

In 1997, I acted for "Ellen", who suffered very significant psychiatric problems following an abortion.

It was already well known that abortion could cause psychiatric problems, but Ellen was never warned.

The Australian High Court found in *Rogers v Whitaker* that before any operation, the doctor has an express duty to warn of any material risk.

Ellen sued on the basis of failure to warn and her case was settled out of court.

In a similar case in NSW "Cynthia" won a settlement for \$200,000 for psychological damage following abortion.

Following Ellen's case, I was asked to act for or advise a number of women in relation to psychological problems resulting from abortions.

I came to know these women personally and realised how dysfunctional they can be. One was still highly dysfunctional three years after the abortion, with no indication she would ever be able to work again.

In May 2000 I acted for "Meg", who sued on the basis that the abortionist did not warn her of psychiatric problems and also her increased risk of breast cancer.

In 2001 her case was settled and, although it received no publicity in Australia because of a confidentiality agreement, it was publicised in the UK and United States.

A case in Pennsylvania was successfully settled, but far more significant was a case brought to trial last year in Oregon against All Women's Health Services abortion clinic.

In January last year, the clinic, conceding there was a link between abortion and breast cancer and that it had failed to warn the plaintiff, agreed to a judgment against it for damages.

Jonathan Clark, attorney for the 19-year-old plaintiff, says he believes the judgment "makes a pretty powerful statement about the science, indicating the clinic was not willing to argue against the claim that there is a link between abortion and breast cancer".

It has taken the World Health Organisation decades to warn that the contraceptive pill is a Class

1 carcinogen, in the same category as tobacco and asbestos. No doubt it may take decades for WHO, wedded to the ideology of population control, to acknowledge the link between abortion and breast cancer.

However, women need the truth now and especially on facts about which there is no scientific dispute.

The younger a woman is when she has her first full-term pregnancy, the lower her risk of breast cancer.

Conversely, women who have no children or only have children after age 30 are at increased risk.

One wonders why our cancer councils have not used the high-profile case of a celebrity, who had breast cancer, to advise women to give priority to having babies over career.

Especially when breast cancer is the major killer of pre-menopausal women and the third major cause of death in post-menopausal women.

There was a 40 per cent increase in the incidence of breast cancer between 1987 and 1997, some 28 to 38 years after the de facto legalisation of abortion following the Menhennitt and Levine rulings in Victoria and NSW.

There is no space here to cite all the studies linking abortion with infertility, but there are many well-known cases, such as Germaine Greer's.

In my view, pregnancy counselling services would be derelict in their duty if they did not warn women of their increased risk of breast cancer, infertility and psychological trauma following abortion.

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