



*Speaking the truth in love*

*Eph 4:15*

30 May 2018

Dear Father

**Public Health Amendment (Safe Access to Reproductive Health Clinics) Bill 2018**

As you may be aware, this bill has passed the Legislative Council and will be introduced into the Legislative Assembly soon, perhaps as early as the week of the 5<sup>th</sup> June. The bill legalises so-called 'safe zones' around abortion clinics to prevent street councillors from reaching out to desperate mothers seeking abortion and other pro-life groups from praying or demonstrating outside abortion clinics.

I am asking you to please alert your parishioners to this Bill as soon as possible and urge them to voice their opposition by contacting their local MP.

The impact of this Bill, if enacted, would be far reaching. The proposed laws present a direct threat to freedom of religion and speech and would effectively remove the ability of pro-life groups to promote the often very practical support they can provide to vulnerable woman who are contemplating the termination of their pregnancy. My experience of individuals and groups who do this work is that they are always peaceful and prayerful. Changing the law would mean that even praying the rosary within 150 meters of one of these facilities would no longer be legal.

These new laws are an overreach. The existing laws and the powers of the police already provide for circumstances where persons are harassing others entering venues. We should and must be able to trust the police to maintain order at clinics and elsewhere within their present powers. It is not necessary to criminalise variances in ideology on abortion.

Some of you may have had the experience that regularly happens at St Mary's Cathedral where demonstrations outside the Cathedral by various groups, especially pro-abortion groups, shouting through loudhailers that interrupt the Mass and holding up offensive placards.

We need to ask that if the Parliament is prepared to enact legislation to create a 150-meter 'safe access zone' around an abortion clinic will they also do the same around Cathedrals and Churches.

Most Rev. Anthony Fisher OP, DD BA LIB BTheol DPhil  
Archbishop of Sydney

Will the Parliament make it a crime, punishable by 6 months imprisonment, to interfere with any person coming to or going from church and to obstruct footpaths or roads leading to the church as in the Safe Access Bill 2018?

Will the Parliament make it a crime to communicate with person going to or leaving a church in a manner reasonably likely to cause them distress or anxiety? Will they make it a crime to take photos or video of people inside the church zone without their consent or to publish or distribute a recording of another person inside the church zone without their consent as in the Safe Access Bill 2018?

If the Parliament does not propose to make such a law for churches, or for other businesses, why not? Are only abortion clinics sacred in New South Wales?

Mr Chris Gordon the Director of the Life Marriage and Family Centre in the Archdiocese is coordinating the Pro-Life Working Party. You can contact Chris on 9307 8402 or christopher.gordon@sydneycatholic.org. He can provide you with further information, resources and suggestions for how you can best engage with your local MPs. You can also get involved through the independently run We Support Women NSW Facebook page.

I would be grateful if you could please alert your parishioners to the Bill and encourage them to be active in contacting their local state member of Parliament to voice their opposition to the Bill.

Yours fraternally in Christ

A handwritten signature in green ink that reads "+ Anthony Fisher OP". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Rev. Anthony Fisher OP, DD BA LIB BTheol DPhil

Archbishop of Sydney

---