

<b>Title</b>	<b>Reproductive Choice and Sexual Health</b>
Policy type	Complete policy
Policy Working Group	Special – under National Policy Coordinator, residual responsibility with Health.
Policy history	New policy, based on part of the Health Policy (balloted 1 July 1998) and parliamentary work largely undertaken by Senator Natasha Stott Despoja 2001 – 2008.
Status	Final Draft – to be circulated for comment
Date	20/1/2010
Feedback	Formal submissions and comment should be emailed to <a href="mailto:policy@democrats.org.au">policy@democrats.org.au</a>

## Overview

The Australian Democrats support the rights of Australians to full access to all options and information regarding pregnancy and reproductive choice and health. This includes sexual health awareness and education, access to all three options on confirmation of a pregnancy, and support throughout and after pregnancy.

## The Issue

Currently there is an enormous variation in the knowledge levels of Australians about sexual health and reproductive issues. There is also great variation in the availability of services and the legality of accessing certain options. The Australian Democrats believe that all Australians should be able to access the same choices and have the information they need in regards to their sexual and reproductive health.

## The Proposal

The Australian Democrats will seek a number of reforms in three key areas:

### Sexual Health Awareness and Education

- Conduct an audit of all primary and secondary schools to identify what is taught to students in sexual and reproductive health education
- Ensure comprehensive, evidence based, age appropriate sexual health and relationships education is provided by adequately qualified professionals in all schools
- School and University-based or linked health centres for health education and access to health care for young people
- Appropriate funding for sexual health awareness campaigns in the general community, including specific targeted campaigns for at-risk communities
- Appropriate funding for free and confidential sexual health centres providing information, advice, counselling, STI and pregnancy testing, and contraception. In remote or small rural centres where a separate service cannot be maintained full time a visiting service or agency service (such as through a pharmacy or other health centre) should be provided

- Provide support for parents to talk to their children about these issues, particularly for parents of children who mature early

## Pregnancy counselling

- Push for the enactment of the cross-party Pregnancy Counselling (Truth in Advertising) Bill 2006, which requires pregnancy counselling services to advertise which of the three options they provide advice on (abortion, adoption or keeping the baby)
- Lobby to have counselling services who do not offer all three options to be prevented from calling themselves pregnancy counselling services or for advertising to that effect
- Implement a federally funded pro-choice 24-hour pregnancy counselling service
- Make counselling available for both expectant parents with both planned and unplanned pregnancies to support the mental health and wellbeing throughout their pregnancy and, where applicable, the transition to parenthood

## Reproductive Choice

- A full range of safe, affordable contraception on demand, including over the counter access to the oral contraceptive pill, placement of all forms of contraception on the PBS, and ready access to free or low cost condoms and emergency contraception in schools, universities and sexual health centres
- National public education campaigns on emergency contraception and preconception health
- Equal rights for all potential parents who want access to assisted reproductive technologies, regardless of marital status, sexual orientation or financial capacity
- Uniform national laws for abortion, surrogacy and adoption
- All women having access to legal, free and safe pregnancy termination services including unbiased counselling where requested and chemical abortion (RU486)
- Uniform national guidelines for routine antenatal care for all antenatal providers
- A National Maternity Action Plan to give all pregnant women greater choice in where and how they give birth, including home and other non-hospital birthing options and the option of publicly funded midwifery services throughout pregnancy and childbirth with a single caregiver throughout the process
- Equal access to most common birth options, including the right of the mother to choose a natural birth or epidural and other pain management
- Postnatal care and support which is flexible and tailored to individual needs, including funding support for advocacy and support groups
- A national home visitor program for families with a new baby offering a range of services to supplement those of midwives and maternal and child health nurses

## The Goal

Our goal is to ensure the sexual and reproductive health of all Australians by empowering them with information, options and support. We hope this will result in a lower rate of STI transmission, fewer unplanned pregnancies (particularly amongst young girls), and healthier and happier babies and parents.



# Australian Democrats National Policy

## Timeline

We anticipate most of these reforms could be rolled out in under 18 months. The review of sexual education may take up to two years. The National Maternity Action Plan may have elements that take longer to implement due to safety and or insurance issues.