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MEDIA RELEASE

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FAMILY FIRST: PRO-WOMAN AND PRO-CHILD

Family First is pro-woman and pro-child.

That is why Family First opposes legalising abortion, where abortion would be legal under any circumstances, regardless of the age of the unborn child.

Victoria's Attorney General Rob Hulls recently spoke about the "sanctity of life" as he flew to Singapore to plead for the life of Nguyen Van.

Just days later, his party voted unanimously to legalise abortion - meaning it would be okay to abort an eight month old unborn child for any reason.

While Family First opposes abortion, it is not calling for a change in the law to restrict access to abortion.

But independent research reveals the community thinks the number of 90,000 abortions in Australia each year is too high and should be reduced.

The research, by the *Southern Cross Bioethics Institute*, shows that at least 64 per cent of Australians think the abortion rate is too high and 87 per cent believe it should be reduced.

Family First is pro-woman, which is why we are also concerned about separate research released last week revealing how abortion harms women.

The report, by *Women's Forum Australia*, finds many women have abortions because they lack financial or emotional support.

It also reveals substantial evidence of psychological harm associated with abortion.

While abortion may offer a short-term 'solution', the research shows 10 to 20 per cent of women suffer severe negative psychological complications, and many more women experience emotional distress, such as feelings of sadness, shame and guilt as well as depression and anxiety.

Women who have experienced abortion are also at greater risk of substance abuse and self-harm as well as psychiatric problems.

Supporting the legalising of abortion does not address women's real needs.

Family First believes women considering an abortion should have independent counselling from a GP – so they can have all the facts and make an informed decision.

The Federal Government should fund this independent counselling by GPs through Medicare in the same way it funds other medical advice.

The counselling should be followed by a 72 hour cooling off period to give women time, free from daily pressures, to absorb the information and consider the many issues involved.

The *Southern Cross Bioethics Institute* study found almost unanimous support for counselling, with 72 per cent saying it should be mandatory.

Family First believes we need a sensible and mature discussion about abortion that is pro-woman and that ensures women have real and genuine choices about whether or not to have an abortion.

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