

Abortion is the name given to the situation in which a pregnancy is ended before the term has been completed. The foetus dies. This can occur naturally or it can be procured by a surgical procedure. Abortion has been legal in some countries like the UK since 1967, but in NZ this was not the case. However, in 1971 New Zealand women with means could obtain a legal abortion in the two States of Victoria and New South Wales in Australia due to a change in the law over there. Abortions were performed in New Zealand in 1974 in the Auckland Medical Aid Centre. However this was closed until a legal battle was sorted and abortion was allowed and restricted to public hospitals in 1975. The legal battles continues and although it is legal under the Contraception, Sterilisation, and Abortion Bill. After many amendments and one all-night sitting, the National bill was passed on 15 December 1977. There have continued to be challenges to the Bill since this time.

1

In New Zealand the Abortion procedures are either through 'Surgical abortion', by dilatation of the cervix and suction curettage is the most common method used in New Zealand for first trimester and some second trimester abortions. Or by a 'Medical abortion' which uses pills rather than surgery. It is more like an induction of labour and is commonly used for second trimester pregnancy. These two are known as 'induced abortions' and are different from a 'Spontaneous abortion' which is usually called a miscarriage. Early medical abortion (up to nine weeks) was introduced into New Zealand in 2001 and is currently provided in the following units (Te Mahoe Unit in Wellington, Masterton Hospital in the Wairarapa, Gisborne Hospital, Lyndhurst Clinic in Christchurch, Dunedin Hospital in the Otago District Health Board, the Auckland Medical Aid Centre (AMAC), the Epsom Day Unit and Surgery on Shakespeare in Auckland).

1

The Catholic Church says that abortion is wrong. Life begins at conception and the foetus' right to life is equal to the mother's. "From the time that the ovum is fertilised, a life is begun which is neither that of the father nor the mother. It is rather the life of a new human being with its own growth. It would never be made human if it were not human already."  
(Declaration on procured abortion of the Roman Catholic Church 1974).

2

Human beings, made in the image and likeness of Te Atua, have a value above other created beings and this should be respected and is not if an abortion is carried out. We need to live by choosing and living according to true values, which placed the sacredness of each individual from the moment of conception as of the highest priority.

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The New Zealand Catholic Bishops say, "Every human is a unique masterpiece, yet each is a likeness of God individually and separately hand-drawn by the Creator and destined, through union with Christ to live forever" (What's wrong with Abortion NZCBC 1989).

2

This means that the potential each person has to fulfil is there from the moment of conception and we would lose this if an abortion were carried out. The result of that loss cannot be measured.

3

The fact that it is an issue that still causes heated debate on both sides' shows that abortion is not an easy action to take or condone.

If people in the wider New Zealand society decided to consider that a human being was considered to exist from the moment of conception the number of abortions would probably reduce each year.

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