



Submission to the Abortion Legislation Committee

We are UK based organisation which seeks to end sex-selective abortion. For more information please visit our website: www.stopgendercide.org.uk

Recommendation

- That the New Zealand Government amend the Bill to make it clear that sex-selective abortion is explicitly illegal under the proposed legislation.

Background

- In the Bill, abortion is available on request for any reason in the first 20-weeks of pregnancy. This makes abortion lawful for any reason, which could include sex-selective abortion. There would be no legal grounds for a health professional to refuse to perform a sex-selective abortion.
- This is change from the current New Zealand law, where abortion is only available on specific grounds and this does not include sex-selective abortion.
- Due to technological improvements in non-invasive pre-natal testing (NIPT), foetal sex can now be detected after 7 weeks. This means that, assuming passage of the proposed Bill, sex-selective abortion would soon become an explicit and viable possibility in New Zealand between 7-20 weeks. Concern that such a possibility might occur has been raised by the UNESCO International Bioethics Committee since 2015¹.
- Sex-selective abortion is a well-documented problem in a number of countries where son preference has resulted in highly skewed sex ratios. Sex discrimination carried out via abortion is well documented and has resulted in millions of “missing” girls in some societies. A study that was published earlier this year estimated that over 23 million of these “missing” girls were as a result of sex-selective abortion²
- There is evidence that sex-selective abortion has been a problem in other jurisdictions where abortion has been decriminalised and abortion is available on request without an explicit ban sex-selective abortion.
 - Canada - abortion law was struck down in 1998, introducing abortion on request.

¹ <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002332/233258e.pdf>

² <https://www.pnas.org/content/116/19/9303>

- Sex-selective abortion has been identified as a major issue with an article in the Canadian Medical Association Journal outlining that 'easy access to abortion and advances in prenatal sex determination have combined to make Canada a haven for parents who would terminate female fetuses in favour of having sons...'.³
- Victoria Australia - introduced abortion on request in 2008.
 - A recent study from La Trobe University analysing more than a million births suggests some parents could be aborting unborn female babies in order to have a son.⁴
 - Dr Mark Hobart was investigated by the Medical Board of Victoria for failing to refer a woman for a sex-selective abortion.⁵
 - An investigation by Australian broadcaster SBS found higher number of boys than girls being born in some ethnic communities in Australia.⁶

³ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3281173/>

⁴ <https://academic.oup.com/ije/article/47/6/2025/5057663>

⁵ <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2449568/Doctor-Mark-Hobart-struck-refusing-abortion.html>

⁶ <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/could-gender-selective-abortions-be-happening-in-australia>