

# Abortion doesn't offer some kind of quick fix

Consider the grief and the living foetus, says  
**Heather Sertori.**

MEDICAL science has now established that a foetus is a completely separate being from its mother.

I say this in reply to Dr Ann Taylor's article "No time to terminate a woman's choice" (*The Herald*, November 13, 2004).

Certainly the foetus is attached to its mother and dependent on her, receiving nourishment through the placenta as it will receive nourishment after birth through breast milk or formula.

But intrauterine photos and video unequivocally illustrate the existence of a living, moving human being in utero.

Despite accusations that abortion is a religious issue – it is not. It is a civil rights issue – the right of allowing a human being to live.

From conception the foetus has its own DNA, chromosomal pattern, blood group, and unique features different from its mother and deserves to be allowed to live.

At three weeks' gestation its heart is beating, at six weeks brain waves are measurable and at eight weeks an electrocardiogram is viable, it can feel pain and suck its thumb.

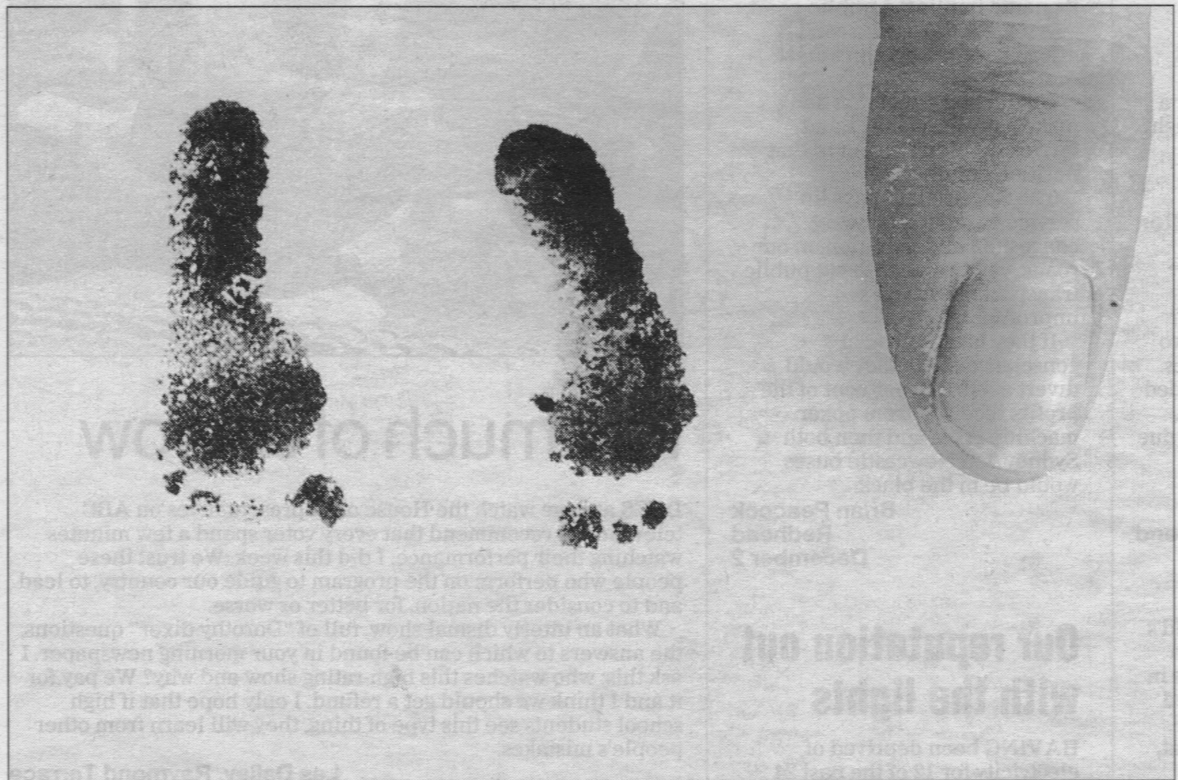
At 10 weeks its body is completely formed even to individual fingerprints. It is alive – it is human – certainly dependent on its mother as it will be after birth until it is at least 10 years old.

Another of the myths in Dr Taylor's article is that women recover best from distress of abortion when their decision has been respected and carried out quickly.

In my experience many women and girls who come for post-abortion counselling bitterly regret that they were not given all the information about the possible after-effects, both physical and psychological.

They suffer grief, depression and guilt – not from the "education proposed by conservative groups" or "emotional propaganda designed to make them feel guilty" – but because they regret they were not counselled adequately before the abortion.

They were not aware that on the due date of the baby's birth they would shed copious tears for the



IT'S A LIVING THING: Many women regret they were not counselled adequately before their abortion.

baby whom, under different circumstances, they would be holding. That when they see a pregnant woman, or a baby in a pram their eyes fill with tears.

This is not sentimental imagining on my part, it is the evidence I have heard from those women/girls. They were not made aware of the possible consequences – they were not given the opportunity to make an informed decision about their pregnancy.

The repeated cry is that if only someone had told them the consequences. Sadly this is not the information they received at the clinic.

I have no quarrel with sex education in schools as long as it provides students with: correct information about their sexuality; the value of abstinence for both physical and psychological reasons in their future life; and that sexual intercourse for teens cannot only result in unplanned pregnancy which is distressing enough, but can also result in sexually transmitted diseases and future relationship problems.

While it is true some women agonise about whether or not to have an abortion, in my experience of counselling women and girls, many consider it to be the easy way out of an unplanned pregnancy. Just present yourself to the clinic, have some anaesthetic and, like pulling a tooth, it is all over in a short while.

They are often encouraged in this way of thinking by mothers or boyfriends who pressure them into having an abortion. Our counselling concentrates on allowing the woman/girl to tell her story, explain the options and the consequences of those options and then allow her to make an informed decision.

Perhaps "rich women made fortunes for unscrupulous medical practitioners" before we had so-called "legal" abortions, but today abortion providers are making even greater fortunes because of the greatly increased number being performed and funded by Medicare.

Further, women are still experiencing infections and other gynaecological problems not to mention psychological problems

which result in years of depression.

While on the subject of health, there is now research that closely links breast cancer to abortion, particularly in young women who abort their first pregnancy.

On the subject of adoption, rather than it being the haunting, desperate outcome of an unplanned pregnancy, adoption is a loving and courageous decision.

Firstly, the baby has a life. Secondly, adoption is a vastly different process from that of 25 years ago. The biological mother can opt for open adoption which allows her access to her child at certain times, she can have information about her baby as it grows and she can send gifts to the baby/child.

When her child reaches 18 years of age, mutual arrangements can be made for a meeting between mother and child.

There is no doubt abortion causes more problems than it solves.

**For the past 30 years Heather Sertori has been a counsellor for the Newcastle Pregnancy Help Service.**