



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **GSD Supports Abortion - But Wants to Cynically Masquerade as Pro-Life**

The Government is disappointed by the unnecessarily combative press statement from the GSD in which it, in effect, supports the introduction of a law on abortion if the Government makes some changes to the Bill.

The GSD has failed to state what those changes are.

The GSD should clearly state what their position is on these important issues without playing politics on this delicate and important issue. Government would welcome their detailed thoughts on the draft legislation, as indeed all other groups, organisations and individuals who respond to the Command Paper and whose representations will be considered in detail by the Inter Ministerial Group.

On this sensitive subject, it is particularly regrettable that the GSD has not responded constructively to the Government's consultation on the draft Bill in the Command Paper.

Instead, they are clearly choosing to criticise the draft without exercising their responsibility in providing alternatives.

In fact, on at least two occasions, the Government is accused of 'ramming' legislation through Parliament. This is hardly a considered description of a Command Paper which is designed to elicit the public's views on this, the most sensitive of subjects. All the Government has done to date is seek views. Indeed, many members of the public have already responded to the Command Paper consultation in a more measured manner than the GSD!

In particular, the Government notes that the GSD appears to take issue only with one part of the proposed legislation, which is the part on non-fatal foetal abnormalities. Can we therefore assume that the GSD supports the Government's thinking on all other cases in which terminations might be considered?

In respect of non-fatal foetal abnormalities, the Government asks the GSD to answer two direct and important questions.



The first question for the GSD is how it reconciles its apparent opposition to this clause with its own practice (including when Mr Azopardi was Minister for Health) in Government of supporting, allowing and funding abortions in circumstances of non-fatal foetal abnormality? It is particularly and remarkably cynical that the GSD is apparently only opposing in its statement the only abortions it supported, allowed and funded whilst it was in government.

The second question is whether the GSD would support the Bill without the clause on non-fatal foetal abnormalities - which is a question on which the Government has specifically sought feedback from the public. The clause is in square brackets for that reason. Some clarity on that would be a positive contribution to the debate.

The third question for the GSD relates to the statements from Mr Phillips on GBC's "The Opposition, Your Questions." In that respect, will the GSD now say clearly and unequivocally what abortions it wants to allow in Gibraltar, given that the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Elliott Phillips, specifically said that it was "inhuman and degrading treatment", in keeping with the findings of the UK Supreme Court, not to allow abortions in Gibraltar? Can the GSD now directly answer this direct question in respect of what the Leader of the Opposition said?

The Chief Minister, Fabian Picardo, said: "I think the GSD want to confuse the Pro-Life lobby into thinking they are taking a position against abortion, when they are not. They are camouflaging their pro-abortion position to masquerade in front of the Pro-Life groups. In fact, what the GSD has said makes clear they are pro-abortion if not pro-choice but want to change details of our draft. They talk about the Bill needing changes, but they don't constructively propose what those changes should be. They highlight only one clause on which we are seeking the public's views and are open to consider making changes. So, I urge the GSD to think again. To work with us on the details of the legislation and to propose to us the changes they say they would make to the Bill. This is too sensitive and important an area of law to just have the usual political ding-dong between us. It's not fair to the community. It's particularly unfair for the GSD to try to hoodwink the Pro-Life groups by pretending to take a position that supports their position, whilst they are in fact saying they support the need to legislate for abortions but just in another way. They should publish their proposed changes to our draft Bill so that we and the whole community can consider them. Having had the Command Paper for two weeks already, it is remarkable they haven't yet been able to propose the relevant changes. I will await the answer to our questions on foetal abnormalities and Mr Phillip's position as Leader of the Opposition as well as on the precise changes the pro-abortion GSD might propose to our draft law."