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Wednesday 14th August 2019
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No. of Attachments: 03
Bishop's Office

Bishop Daniel
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The Coptic Orthodox Church – Diocese of Sydney & Affiliated Regions.
Opening Statement at the Parliament Upper House to the Standing Committee on social
Issues for inquiry and Report, on Wednesday 14 August 2019 Regarding the
Reproductive Health Care Reform Bill 2019

To the Hon Shayne Mallard MLC, and the members of the Standing Committee on Social Issues ,
Upper House, Legislative Council , NSW Parliament , Australia ...

- I would like to thank Australia the Country of all, as this year we celebrate the Golden jubilee of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Australia. (Attachment #1).
- I would like to thank the committee for giving me the opportunity to attend today and contribute to the Reproductive Health Care Reform Bill 2019.
- The rushing of this matter is questionable and can only be interpreted as an opportunity to minimise public debate.
- I am disappointed that such a significant public interest matter is potentially being passed through parliament in just a couple of weeks, without adequate time being afforded to this highly important issue which has caused so much public division and anger.
- As Bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Sydney & its Affiliated Regions, (NSW, QLD, NT), I represent a congregation of more than ⁷²70,000 people, who have not been offered enough time to digest and understand how this Bill will affect them.
- My objection to this Bill has been detailed in the open letter from Christian and Muslim Religious leaders dated 3rd August 2019, which was sent to the Legislative Assembly Members. (Attachment #2).
- On Sunday 11th August 2019, I attended a Meeting with Religious Leaders from many denominations to discuss our response to this very rushed Bill (Attachment # 3) , We have

resolved that we ask this committee to postpone voting on this Bill for a period of 6 months to allow an adequate consultative process to take place, also we resolved another actions.

- May I remind the committee that Queensland has taken more than 2 years to consult its publics allowing all stakeholders to participate, yet NSW wants to rush this process in 2 weeks.
- Again, I thank you for the opportunity to be here today and pray that you will take our concerns into your consideration.

Bishop Daniel

Bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Church Diocese of Sydney & Affiliated Regions

28 Abib, 1735AM
Sunday 4th. August, 2019
Our Ref: B.D.02.86.18.19
No. of Pages: 8
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Bishop's Office

(Attach #1) .



COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH
DIOCESE OF SYDNEY
& AFFILIATED REGIONS
NEW SOUTH WALES



The Coptic Orthodox Church, See of St. Mark, Diocese of Sydney and its Affiliated Regions. The speech of Bishop Daniel; Bishop of the Diocese of Sydney, in the occasion of the Celebration of the Golden Jubilee of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Australia (1969-2019).

1= Introduction:

1.1: Giving thanks to the Lord: I bow down, and give thanks, to our Lord Jesus Christ, as out of His uncomprehend, and unconditional love, He incarnated, and became man to save those who believe in Him, from their sins.

1.2: Respect the owners of the Land: I pay my respect and gratitude to the owners and custodians of the land, both past and present, I value their contribution to the culture of this great nation Australia.

1.3: Greetings from the church Hierarchy: I, forward to you all, the cordial prayers and greetings, from the father of the fathers, His Holiness Pope Tawadros II, Pope of Alexandria, and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark, the Members of the Holy Synod, from the Priests of Sydney Diocese, the Deacons the Servants, and all its Specialized Committees' members.



2= In the beginning Egypt was there:

2.1: The legacy and heritage of the Egyptians is outstanding, as Tales¹ the father of the Greek philosophy 634 BC, received his teaching in Egypt, Homeros was born in Teba in Egypt, and Solon the father of the Greek law studies the laws of Nacho the Phero of Egypt.

3= Australia the great nation and the land of all:

3.1: The NOM, In² 2016-17, Net overseas migration increased from the previous year, recording an end of financial year estimate of 262,500 persons, which was 27.3% (56,300 persons) more than in 2015-16 and represents the second consecutive increase after three years of decreases. In Australia³, there are 340 Cultures, and in New South wales, within Holsworthy as advised by Ms Melanie Gibbons residents speak 170 languages.

3.2: Australia is a land of many nations: There are over **500 different** cultural groups around the continent, many with distinctive cultures, beliefs and languages.

3.3: Thanks to Australia: this great nation, which has hosted people from every corner of the globe

4= The church and the state, and the presence of the Premier of the NSW and the Politicians at our Golden Jubilee celebration tonight, of the emergence of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Australia.

4.1: The church and the state are by no means independent of each other, they are jointly engaged which enables the safe practising of our Coptic Orthodox faith. The church is offering petitions⁴, prayers, intercessions and thanksgiving to all people, and all those in authority. The reasons for this, is that, the people of our nation, may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. The church petitions, prayers, intercessions and thanksgiving, pleases God our saviour.

¹ - Egypt taught the world, Wassim El Sisi, 3rd Edition 2017, P 87.

² - <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/3412.0Main%20Features52016-17?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=3412.0&issue=2016-17&num=&view=>

³ - This what had been said to me, in my meeting dated Friday, March 14th, 2019, In St. Mark Coptic Orthodox College, in Wattle Grove, from 2:30 to 3:30 PM, with Minister Ray Williams, Minister of Multiculturalism, and Ms Melanie Gibbons, member of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly representing Holsworthy.

⁴ - 1 Timothy 2:1-4.

4.2: The Church and the state : So, rest assured Premier that we are committed to the teachings of Christ when He said, "*Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's*". Caesar being a depiction of the state and that we worship God. As Orthodox Christians we are committed to all regulation and rules of this great nation.

Premier you, and all who are working with you, are in our daily prayers.

5= Lessons from the first Coptic Orthodox Settlers in Australia: 1960's to 10th March 1968:

The first seed of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Australia:

When we look back to the 1960's, we see that just a few Coptic Orthodox families immigrated from Egypt and Sudan to Australia the land of all, and we can characterise these few families with these descriptions:

5.1: They were courageous persons, they thought, and made hard decisions, to which they acted upon, immigrating to the land of the unknown. Life is about, taking an evaluated risk and managing it. Every one of us must continue their hard work and take the managed risk, **Will Rogers⁵ said: "Even if you're on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there."**

5.2: They were also very determined people, they acclimated and the acculturated with another nation's identity, the Australian identity. Yet the Coptic Orthodox settlers preserved their own identity with pride.

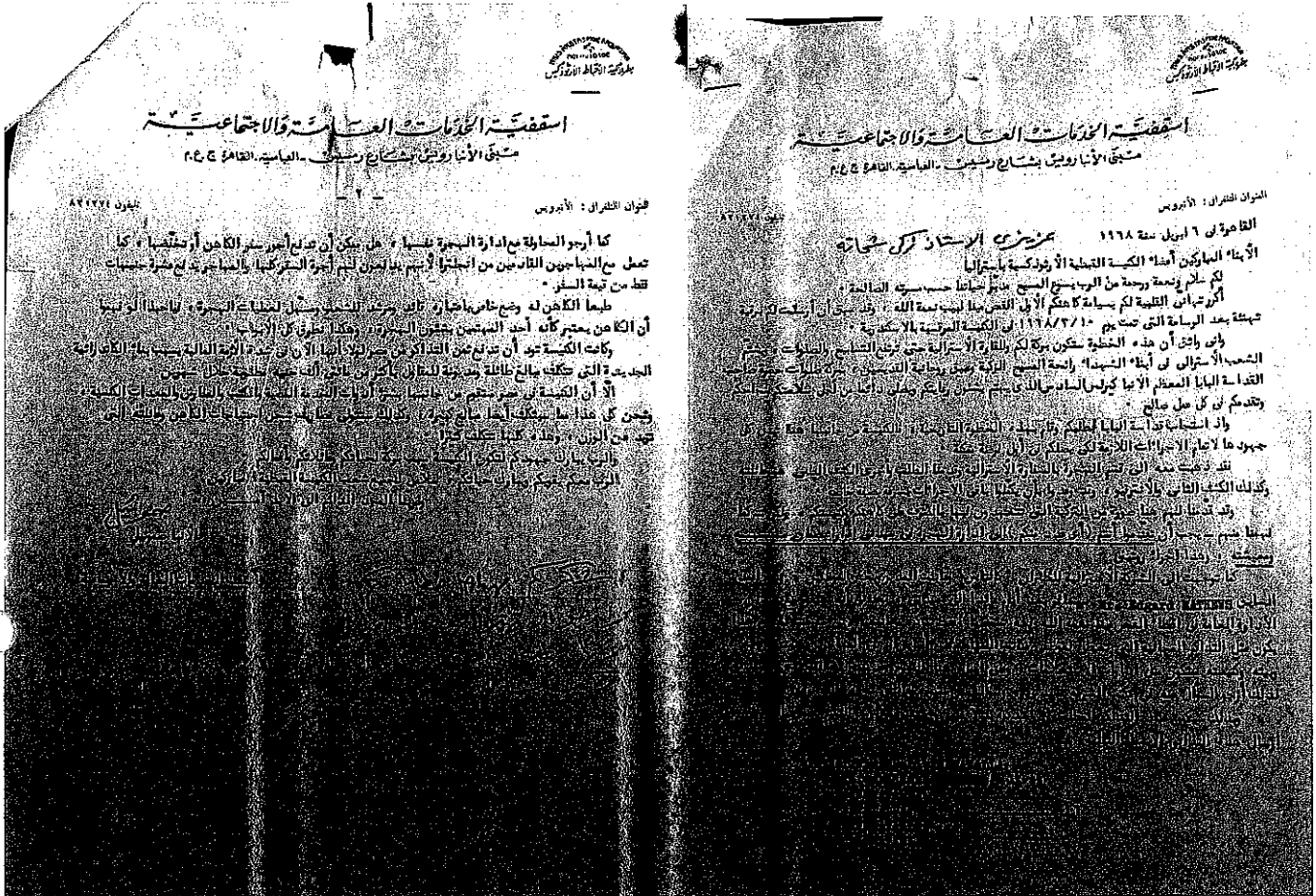
Together as families they learned the English language, worked to feed their families and were pillars of supporting strength to each other.

They also held dear their spiritual practices through the use of other denominations facilities.

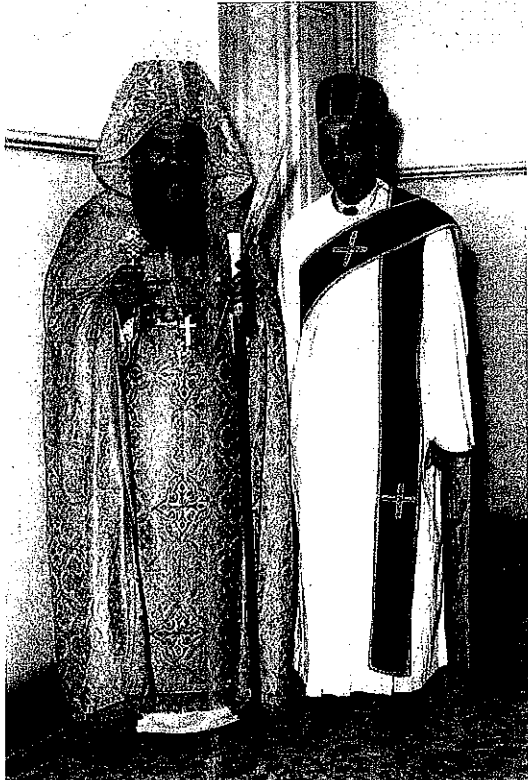
5.3: The First Coptic Settlers sowed the first seed of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Australia.

I had the original letter dated 6th April 1968, from the late His Grace Bishop Samuel, the General Bishop of General and Social Services, to the late Mr. Zaki Shehata.

⁵ - Us Humourist & showman 4/11/1879 -15/8/1935



In his letter, the Bishop informed Mr. Shehata the His Holiness Pope Kyrillos the sixth approved the ordination of the first Coptic Orthodox priest to Australia, and he was ordained on 10th of March 1968, by the name of V.Rev.Fr. Mina Nematalla.



6. Lessons from the journey of the Coptic Orthodox settlers from 10th March 1068 to 1st of July 2000:

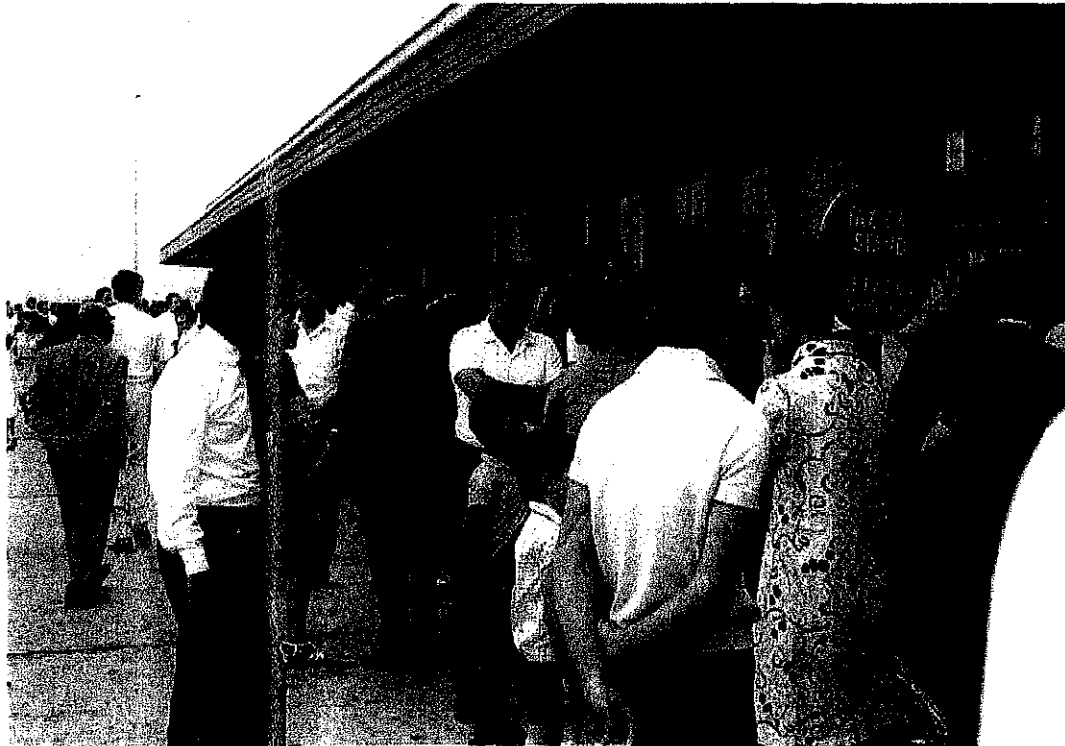
The first tree of the Coptic Orthodox Church, in Australia.

6.1: Following the footsteps of the first settlers: The second regiment of the Coptic Orthodox settlers followed the footsteps of the first troop of the Coptic Orthodox Settlers, they continued on to what they started. This included the continued support of the Australia's first Coptic Orthodox priest.

They were committed to attend the rented hall to pray with the new father.

6.2: Irrigating the seed of the First Coptic Orthodox church in Australia,

The second group of settlers irrigated the seed by their love, zeal, dedication and loyalty, where the First Coptic Orthodox Priest arrived to Sydney on 24th January 1969, with the joy and happiness of the Coptic Community.



6.3: The second group of the Coptic Settlers not only irrigated the seed of the Coptic Orthodox church in Australia, but also nourished it, by their contributions, both physically, and financially to the degree that with the first Coptic Orthodox Priest the congregation were able to purchase the First Coptic Orthodox Church in Sydenham,



not only this but also they were so determined and invited the Patriarch of the Coptic Orthodox Church, the late His Holiness Pope Shenouda III to visit them in 18th November 1989,

• Pope Shenouda III is heading for Perth.

Coptic Pope to visit Perth

POPE Shenouda III, leader of the Coptic Orthodox Church, will make his first visit to Australia next weekend.

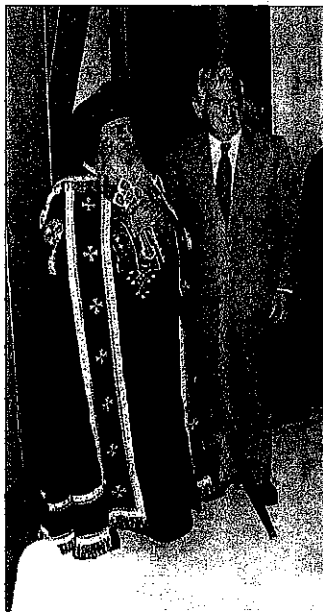
His Holiness, the leader of the largest Christian religion in the Middle East and a member of the Egyptian synod of Alexandria.

Soon after his arrival in Perth on Sunday night, Pope Shenouda will join the congregation of St. Mark's Church in Victoria Park.

Mass will be celebrated there on Sunday morning.

The Pope is the 117th successor of St. Mark, the apostle who founded the Coptic Orthodox Church.

He is well-known for his devotion to Christian unity and in 1973 became the first Coptic leader to visit the Vatican since the great St. Mark's Church in



and it was a historical visit, as it was the first visit of the Pope of Alexandria to Australia. Fr. Mina Nematalla departed in peace in 1st July 2000.



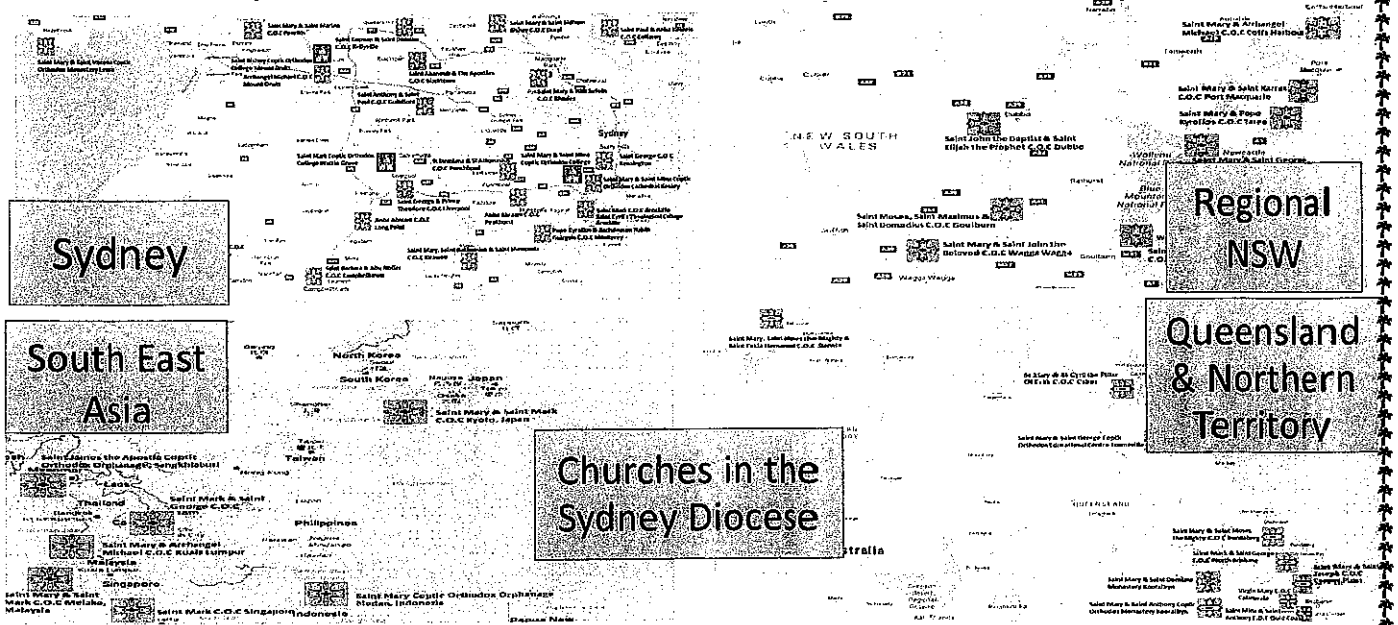
7. Lessons from the Journey of the Coptic Orthodox settlers from 1st of July 2000 till 2019:

The trees of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Australia:

7.1: The third generation of the Coptic Orthodox Settlers, reaped the fruits of the first Coptic Orthodox tree, the first fruit they reaped was the ordination of many priests, by the grace of God the number of the Priests in the Diocese of Sydney till Saturday 20th July 2019 is 77 priests from Coptic Community, to look after the growing number of the settlers.



7.2: Then the third-generation kernel of the fruits and planted them in other soils, the number of the churches increased from one church to be 31 Churches in NSW, and 9 churches in QLD, and one church in NT, and 9 churches in South East Asia.



7.3: lastly the third generation worked very hard to irrigate and nourish the new churches with an amazing two ideas: establishing Three Coptic Orthodox Schools to look after the children of the Coptic Orthodox Church , and a Theological College to train the servants, who both in the future will lead the Coptic Orthodox Church in Australia and continue its blessed journey in this great country Australia.



8. End of the speech:

I give all the glory, honour, and majesty to our Lord Jesus Christ, Glory be to God in highest, Peace on earth and goodwill to man.

Bishop Daniel

By the grace of God,
Bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Church –Diocese of Sydney & Affiliated Regions

(Attach #2).

3 August 2019

An open letter to Members of the NSW Parliament

We, the below signatories and leaders of Christian and Muslim communities in Australia, write to you regarding the *Reproductive Health Care Reform Bill 2019*.

This Bill was introduced on Thursday, 1 August 2019; and we understand that it will be debated and voted on in Parliament next week.

We are disappointed that such an important public interest matter is being rushed through Parliament without giving the public, nor Members of Parliament, adequate time to digest and understand how the Bill will affect the community at large.

Our religions, though diverse, each unequivocally teach that life begins from conception and the life of the unborn is sacred and infinitely valued by God; therefore, it must be considered with the same dignity and worth as those living.

In relation to the tabled Bill, we have four main objections:

1. Abortion on demand up to 22 weeks

The Bill allows for an abortion well into the second trimester, namely five and a half months, for any reason. The doctor performing the procedure does not need to know or even enquire as to the reason for the termination.

This may lead to catastrophic forms of discrimination such as sex-selective abortion (which may have already resulted in the deaths of over 23 million girls worldwide¹) as well as selected discrimination against those with disabilities. Moreover, there is no obligation in the Bill requiring the medical practitioner to be satisfied that the woman voluntarily consents to have an abortion, and there is no legal protection for pregnant women who may be coerced into having an abortion.

2. Abortion between 22 weeks and up to the day of birth

This allows abortion from five and a half months up until the day of birth provided that two doctors agree that "in all the circumstances" that the abortion should be performed. "Circumstances" that must be considered include "current and future physical, psychological and social circumstances".

It is unclear how a doctor may be able to predict a patient's future social circumstances because they are not medical in nature, yet a doctor is permitted to justify a termination based on a future social circumstance that may arise.

3. Self-termination

This part of the Bill (Part 3 Section 10) is most concerning as it allows for a woman to perform a termination on herself. While it may be intended to encourage medical abortions,

¹ "Systematic assessment of the sex ratio at birth for all countries and estimation of national imbalances and regional reference levels", *Proceedings of the US National Academy of Sciences* (May 2019.)

no cut-off time frame is mentioned and is vaguely left open and can be interpreted that self-termination is legal at any time during the pregnancy.

We have heard from advocates of the Bill that decriminalising abortion is to stop back yard abortions, yet this part of the Bill does the opposite in legalising back yard abortions by self-terminations. As well as ending the life of the unborn child, this process will also endanger the life of the mother.

We understand and appreciate that women face many challenges during pregnancy; however, we believe that offering the opportunity for proper counselling and emotional and psychological support is better than the false solutions proposed by this Bill.

4. Conscientious objection

The clause allowing “conscientious objection” is counter-intuitive. To require a doctor to refer a patient to another practitioner who does not have conscientious objections to abortion is itself a violation of that doctor’s conscience and, in some circumstances, their religious beliefs.

Furthermore, to place sanctions upon such doctors with conscientious objections equivalent to those sanctions applicable to doctors who perform unauthorised abortions is an outrage that fails to recognise that many doctors have signed the Hippocratic Oath that includes a promise to “maintain the utmost respect for human life from the moment of conception.”

Thank you for taking the time to read our letter, we hope that those engaged in this debate do not lose sight of the complexity of the issue or the aspirations of their constituents.

We call for the immediate withdrawal of the *Reproductive Health Care Reform Bill 2019* from the NSW Parliament until further objective discussion is conducted, where all voices have equal opportunity to be heard. We reject a parliamentary process that appears to have been intended to exclude the voices of concerned NSW citizens, including the many who belong to our faith communities.

We hope and pray that you will take the concerns raised above into your consideration.

Dr. Ibrahim Abu Muhammad
Grand Mufti of Australian and
New Zealand

Sheikh Youssef Nabha
Imam Masjid AL Rahman

Bishop Robert Rabbat
Melkite Catholic Church
President of AMEC

Bishop Daniel
Coptic Orthodox Church
Diocese of Sydney and its affiliated regions
Vice-President of AMEC

Members of AMEC (Australasian-Middle East Christian Apostolic Churches):

Melkite Catholic Church

Chaldean Catholic Church

Maronite Catholic Church

Antiochian Orthodox Church

Syriac Orthodox Church

Ancient Church of the East

Coptic Orthodox Church, VIC

Coptic Orthodox Church, NSW

Armenian Apostolic Church

Armenian Catholic Church

Syrian Catholic Church

Coptic Catholic Church

The Minutes of AMEC (Australasia Middle Eastern Apostolic Churches Council), in the Hospitality of The Most. Rev. Bishop Robert Rabbat, the Bishop of the Melkite Catholic Church of Australia and New Zealand, in His Grace's Head Office at 80 Waterloo Road, Greenacre, Sydney, NSW, Australia on Sunday, 11th August 2019 from 9:00pm to 11:30pm.

(Attach # 3).

The Minutes of AMEC (Australasia Middle Eastern Apostolic Churches Council), in the Hospitality of The Most. Rev. Bishop Robert Rabat, the Bishop of the Melkite Catholic Church of Australia and New Zealand, in His Grace Head Quarter office, in 80 Waterloo Road, Greenacre, Sydney, NSW, Australia, Sunday August 11th, 2019, from 9:00 to 11:30 PM.

Romans 6:5 "For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection."

1. Attendees:

S/N	Name	Church
1.	Bishop Robert Rabbat.	Bishop of the Melkite Catholic Church and President of AMEC.
2.	Bishop Antony Charbel Tarabay.	Bishop of the Maronite Catholic Church.
3.	Archbishop Nigerian.	Bishop of the Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church.
4.	Bishop Bacillus.	Bishop of the Antioecian Orthodox Church.
5.	Bishop Daniel.	Bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Sydney.
6.	Msgr. Marcelino Youssef.	Vicar General of the Maronite Catholic Church.
7.	Representative of HG Bishop Nona.	Chaldean Catholic Church.
8.	Representative from the Maronite Catholic Church.	Key stakeholder from the Maronite Catholic Church.
9.	Fr. Joseph Joseph.	From the Ancient Church of the East.

2. Outcome/ Actions from the meeting:

S/N	ACTION	WHO	BY WHEN
1.	Each Church leader will appoint a representative from his church to work, coordinate, and share with the Committee. Those that have been appointed by AMEC, and the Catholic Church of Australia, include Francis Tamer and Tony Mattar from the Maronite Catholic Church in Sydney, as well as Monica Doumic, representing Archbishop Anthony Fisher of the Catholic Church in Australia, to do three things:		
1.1:	Each Church to encourage its congregation and youth to immediately send objecting submissions against the abortion Bill to the Parliament.	Each Bishop.	Tuesday 13 th August 2019 before 5:00pm.
1.2:	Each church to encourage its congregation and youth to sign the petition designed by the organisation Right to Life, and then to collect	Each Bishop.	Sunday 18 th August 2019.

The Minutes of AMEC (Australasia Middle Eastern Apostolic Churches Council), in the Hospitality of The Most. Rev. Bishop Robert Rabbat, the Bishop of the Melkite Catholic Church of Australia and New Zealand, in His Grace's Head Office at 80 Waterloo Road, Greenacre, Sydney, NSW, Australia on Sunday, 11th August 2019 from 9:00pm to 11:30pm.

the petition and give it to the committee formed above.

- 1.3: Each church to encourage its congregation and youth to attend the protest against the Bill, in front of the Parliament of NSW. Each Bishop. Tuesday 20th August 2019 from 6:00 to 9:00 pm.

3. End note.

As church leaders, we do trust and depend in the Lord's Promise when He said:

Matthew 16:18 "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."

Bishop Daniel

Bishop of the Diocese of Sydney and its Affiliated Regions.

Coptic Orthodox Church.



Sydney on Monday 12th August 2019 at 10:40pm.