

Senate Committees

The sterilisation of people with disabilities in Australia

An Easy Read guide to the inquiry

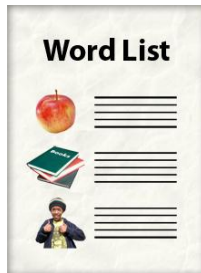


How to use this document



This information is written in an easy to read way.

We use pictures to explain some ideas.



Some words are written in **red**. We explain what these words mean. There is a list of these words starting on page 19.



This document is a summary of another document.



You can find the other document on our website at www.aph.gov.au.



A friend, family member or support person may be able to help you read this document.

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What is this document about?



This document is about the way that people with disabilities can have a say about whether or not they want to have babies.



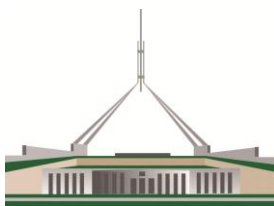
Some people with disabilities have not had the chance to make this choice for themselves.



We want to find out more about the choices people with disabilities have.

To do this, we have set up an **inquiry**.

An inquiry is when a group of people look into an important issue.



This inquiry is being run by the Australian Senate, which is part of the Parliament of Australia.



You can tell us what you think about the ideas in this document.

We explain how to tell us what you think on page 15.

Sex, contraception and periods



Many people choose to have a romantic relationship with another person.

This might include a boyfriend or girlfriend, or a husband or wife.



Romantic relationships often involve sex – kissing, cuddling and sharing your body with another person.



Sex is how women get pregnant and make babies.

A lot of people use **contraception** so that they can have sex without having a baby.

Contraception includes things like:



- condoms for a man to wear
- pills for a woman to take



- injections of medicine into a woman's body

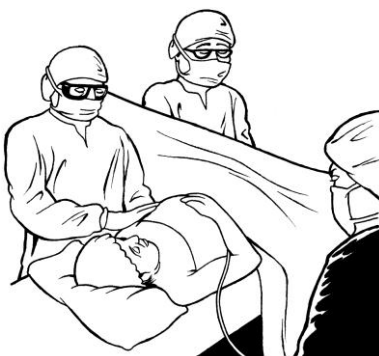


- objects, such as diaphragms, that are placed inside a woman's body.

All of the options listed above are temporary.

They do not last forever.

If you use one of these types of contraception, you can change your mind later if you decide to try to have a baby.



Sometimes, people have an operation that stops them having babies.

This kind of operation is called **sterilisation**.

Sterilisation is permanent.

It will last forever.

You cannot change your mind if you decide to have a baby later on.

When someone has had this type of operation, we say that they have been **sterilised**.



Both men and women can be sterilised.



Some people choose to be sterilised after they have already had babies.

This is usually because they do not want to have any more children.



Sometimes, people are sterilised for health reasons.

This might be because they had a problem with their body after they had a baby, or if they have a lot of problems with their periods.

We explain what periods are on the next page.



A doctor will usually only say that this kind of operation is needed after other options have been tried first.

What are periods?



In order for a woman to get pregnant, she needs to be having periods.

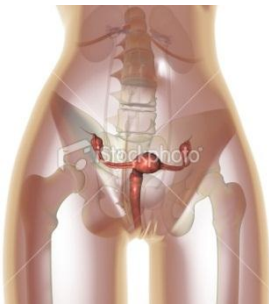


Periods are when blood comes out of a woman's vagina.

Women need to wear pads or tampons when this happens.



This usually happens about every 28 days.



Periods are part of the way that a woman's body prepares to get pregnant.

When you get your period, you know that you are not pregnant.

Some women use contraception to manage their periods.



This might help if you have painful periods, or if there is a lot of blood each month.



A lot of people choose to talk to their doctor about how to manage their periods.

Making personal choices



Deciding whether or not to have a baby is a personal choice.



So is the way that you choose to manage your periods.



The type of contraception you use is also a personal choice.



Most people need information and advice to help them make good choices.



Some people with disabilities need help communicating.

It's hard for them to explain what they want.



Because of this, some people with disabilities do not get to make personal choices for themselves.

Other people make the choices for them.



Or, they are talked into a choice that is not right for them.



This means that some people with disabilities have an operation or an injection against their wishes.

What will the inquiry do?



The inquiry will look into the choices people with disabilities have about:

- contraception
- whether or not to have a baby.



It will work out the number of people in Australia who have had an operation against their wishes.



The inquiry will try to work out what happens when people are made to do things they don't want to do, such as:

- use contraception
- have an operation.

For example, having an operation you don't want could make you feel sad.



The inquiry will look at what the **law** says.
The law is the set of rules we all must follow.

It will look at the different laws in each of the states and territories around Australia.

And it will see if there are ways to improve these laws.



In 2011, the law in Australia was reviewed by the **United Nations**.

This is a group of countries from all around the world who work together on important issues.

The United Nations said that the laws in Australia can be improved to prevent women and girls, including people with disabilities, from being sterilised against their wishes.



The inquiry will also look at laws in use in other countries around the world.

We may be able to improve the law in Australia using ideas from laws in other countries.



The inquiry will look into ways to:

- find out what people with disabilities want
- make sure people can have a say about what's happening to them
- support people who have difficulty explaining what they want.



The inquiry will work out what kind of information, support and advice people with disabilities need.



And it will look into what families, friends, carers and doctors need.

These people can support people with disabilities to make choices.

They might need more information and advice to help them do this.

How to tell us what you think



There are 3 ways for you to tell us what you think:

1. Use our website
2. Write to us
3. Telephone us.

Each of these is described in detail below.



You need to tell us what you think by
22 February 2012.

Please also see the important information about
your ideas on page 17.

1. Use our website



You can visit our website at www.apf.gov.au.

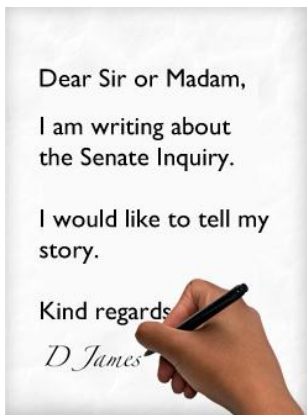
Follow the links to Committees and then
Senate Committees to find out more about
sending your ideas to us.



You will need to type your ideas on your
computer before you can send them to us via
our website.

Please send us a Word document or PDF.

2. Write to us

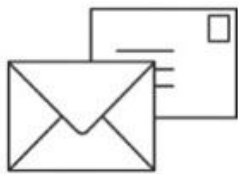


You can write a letter to us.

Please make sure your letter is typed or written neatly.

Please use black ink on white A4 paper.

Please also sign your name.



Please send your letter to:

Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs

PO Box 6100

Parliament House

Canberra ACT 2600

Australia

3. Telephone us



(02) 6277 3515



The TTY number is (02) 6277 7799.

About your ideas



We will read the ideas that you send us.



We might put your ideas on our website.



We might also put your ideas in a document, such as a report.



When we do this, other people will be able to read your ideas.



You need to tell us if you don't want other people to read your ideas.

Use the word '**confidential**', clearly and in big letters at the top of the page, so that we know not to share your ideas with anyone else.

Or, if you want to, we can share your ideas without sharing your name. You will need to tell us if you don't want us to share your name.



The people who are running the inquiry may want to talk to you about your ideas.

If the committee wants to talk to you, they will contact you and ask if you are happy to do this.

Word list



Contraception

Things you can use so that you can have sex without having a baby. There is more information about this on page 5.



Inquiry

When a group of people look into an important issue.



Law

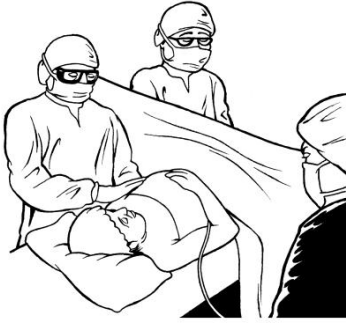
The law is the set of rules we all must follow.



Periods

Periods are when blood comes out of a woman's vagina. Women need to wear pads or tampons when this happens.

You can find out more about this on page 8.



Sterilisation / sterilised

An operation that means you cannot have a baby. Sterilisation is permanent. It lasts forever.

When someone has had this type of operation, we say that they have been sterilised.



United Nations

A group of countries from all around the world who work together on important issues.

Contact us



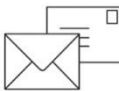
(02) 6277 3515



The TTY number is (02) 6277 7799.



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