

## **1987.4. Health Issues**

Secretary, POLICIES Submitted 30 November 1987 to the Minister for Health, Victoria.  
Published: Victorian Humanist, April 1988: 8.

### Report SUBMISSIONS SUBCOMMITTEE

In November last year we made a submission to the Minister for Health, David White, on a number of issues raised by him at public meetings. Our concern was with the prevention of mental and physical disability. We argued that the following measures

- Research into
- Publicise the availability
- Allow research on pre-implantable embryos as to the causes of prematurity and genetic and congenital foetal damage.
- Implement compulsory rubella (measles) vaccination of infants of both sexes with a booster in teenage years.
- Publicise the importance of early ante-natal screening tests for maternal infections including toxoplasmosis.
- and were causes of urgently gross use of genetic needed: prematurity. counselling. encourage the
- Educate the community on the risks of foetal damage associated with alcohol intake during pregnancy.
- Encourage therapeutic abortions when foetal damage is confirmed.
- Implement the recommendations of the Inquiry into Options for Dying with Dignity, i.e. respect the wishes of patients with terminal illness to refuse medical treatment.

We pointed out that the rigid application of the principle of sanctity of life without regard to sentience, or to the degree of suffering, or to conditions that cause unbearable indignities, is both irrational and inhumane. Self-inflicted or life-style ill-health We urged as a preventive measure the introduction of health education at all levels of schooling as an obligatory subject. It should instruct on the consequences of the use of tobacco, the overuse of alcohol and other drugs, the health risks associated with obesity, the benefits of good nutrition, hygiene and physical activity. It should inculcate the responsibility for one's health. In a manner appropriate to the age of the pupil, information about the many sexually transmissible diseases should be supplied.

### ***Minister's Reply***

We received a most comprehensive reply from the Minister, listing the Government's policy, allocation of funds, provision of services and the legal position on each issue raised. His letter is a valuable source of information on some health strategies and could serve as a reference in future submissions. Of particular benefit is the description of new educative programmes developed by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Board designed to promote primary prevention of ill-health. Subjects deal with drugs, smoking, nutrition, sexually transmitted diseases, challenges of personal growth and societal changes. The aim is to maximise the physical, mental, emotional, and social wellbeing. Methods include: workshops for teachers on such subjects as drug education, publications, theatre productions, consultancies, ongoing updating of resource materials.