

OpenVoiceNews Australia

Transparent. Unbiased. Yours.

Australian Bishops Urge Full Ban on Surrogacy to Protect Women and Children

July 16, 2025

– Categories: General News



The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC) has called for a complete ban on all forms of surrogacy, warning that the practice inflicts lasting emotional and ethical harm on women and children. In a letter to the Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC), the bishops argue that surrogacy, whether commercial or so-called “altruistic,” undermines human dignity and turns the act of motherhood into a transactional agreement.

Submitted on July 9 by Bishop Tony Percy, Auxiliary Bishop of Sydney and ACBC’s delegate for life issues, the nine-page letter argues that surrogacy disregards the emotional, physical,

and spiritual well-being of both the women involved and the children born from these arrangements. It criticizes the current legal framework, which permits altruistic surrogacy, where a woman receives reimbursement for pregnancy-related expenses but no profit, while banning commercial surrogacy.

The bishops assert that even altruistic surrogacy reduces a woman's role to a service provider, separating her from the natural bond of motherhood. "A woman is not a machine for reproduction," the letter states. "She is a person made in the image of God... Surrogacy attempts to divide a woman's body from her identity, as though she could be a vessel without being a mother."

While recognizing the deep pain associated with infertility, the ACBC stresses that "not all responses to suffering are just," pointing out that surrogacy introduces fresh trauma instead of offering healing. They argue that children born through these arrangements are treated as commodities, not human beings with intrinsic rights and dignity.

The letter references the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), emphasizing that surrogacy compromises essential protections, including a child's right to identity, parentage, and freedom from commodification. "Children deserve to be received in love, not produced under contract," the bishops write.

Although commercial surrogacy remains illegal across Australia, the bishops express alarm that enforcement is weak, particularly regarding overseas arrangements. Some states, such as New South Wales (NSW), have introduced legal pathways that recognize parentage in cases involving international or commercial surrogacy, even if it means acknowledging conduct that would otherwise be considered illegal under Australian law.

"This is deeply concerning," the bishops argue. "Australians are continuing to commission children through overseas commercial surrogacy with little scrutiny or consequence, undermining the very laws meant to protect them."

The letter also includes first-hand accounts from former surrogates, whose testimonies reinforce the bishops' position. One woman, identified as Cathy, described ongoing emotional devastation: "The pain never goes away. I am still an emotional basket case and struggle every day... The pain and emptiness I feel have been unbearable." Another, named Sherrie, recalled: "It was as if I had a child die. I couldn't help but love this child like my own... Watching them drive away, I felt like the dust left behind."

The ACBC warns that the ALRC's review appears to lean toward expanding surrogacy access, rather than protecting those most vulnerable. "We reject the idea that expanding surrogacy serves the best interests of children or respects human dignity," the letter concludes.

The bishops urge the government to uphold existing bans and extend legal protections, not erode them. In their view, any reform must place the well-being of women and children ahead of adult desires. "This is not about denying compassion," they stress, "but ensuring that compassion does not lead to injustice."