

# **Defend Free Speech and Protest Rights!**

## **Stop Melbourne City Council's harassment of abortion clinic defenders**

Since August 2005, Radical Women and the Campaign for Women's Reproductive Rights have organised the monthly defence of the Fertility Control Clinic against the "Helpers of God's Precious Infants," part of a much larger anti-abortion movement. The defence line forces the fanatics to stand on the opposite side of Wellington Parade.

Occasionally the clinic defenders have had to fend off woman-hating thugs, but — since March this year — have also encountered repeated harassment by Melbourne City Council. Initially, a local laws officer threatened to confiscate the sound system, allegedly for breach of amplification bylaws. Calling the council's bluff, the defenders continue to belt out pro-choice messages from behind their banner, "Free abortion on demand Now!" But in October, the officer issued a compliance notice, this time for "erecting an advertising sign or other thing" (the banner), an offence that carries fines of up to \$1,250.

Meanwhile, anti-choice zealots hound women and clinic staff every single day. Every day, for decades, anti-abortionists have harangued and stalked women going into the clinic or just walking past. In 2001 a fanatic walked into a crowded waiting room and killed the security guard, Steve Rogers.

It took *50 years* of tenacious struggle by grassroots pro-choice campaigners to force the removal of abortion from Victoria's *Crimes Act*. The clinic defenders come from these ranks. However in October, the Right to Life launched a campaign to overturn Victoria's abortion laws, which included an offensive against pro-choice candidates in the recent state election. Having fought so hard, pro-choice activists are not going to stand aside as the anti-choice bigots work to recriminalise abortion. And we won't acquiesce to the council's crackdown on the rights of free speech and protest.

## **Make Melbourne a free speech city!**

### **Defend abortion rights!**

**Please sign the statement below:**



**We/I support the pro-choice defenders of the Fertility Control Clinic in East Melbourne. We/I demand that the City of Melbourne adhere to its obligations to uphold the rights of free speech and protest under Victoria's *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities 2008*, to withdraw the compliance notice against the clinic defenders' banner, and to cease its punitive actions.**

Name/Organisation: \_\_\_\_\_

Address (postal or email): \_\_\_\_\_

Contact person: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone/mobile: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please return to Radical Women, PO Box 308, Brunswick Vic 3056 or fax to 03-9388-0062.  
For more information, email [radicalwomen@optusnet.com.au](mailto:radicalwomen@optusnet.com.au).  
[www.RadicalWomen.org](http://www.RadicalWomen.org)**