



Media Release – November 26

Empowering women to embrace motherhood the key to new educational strategy

A series of “radically pro-woman” symposiums aimed at empowering women to embrace pregnancy and motherhood, and supporting them when facing difficult circumstances, is the first step in a comprehensive new strategy aimed at reducing Australia’s high rate of abortion.

The educational symposiums, to be rolled out in every capital city, will seek to educate people to help women who are facing an unexpected pregnancy regain control over their lives. They are the first phase of a major new initiative from the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference to support women in motherhood, whatever their particular circumstances.

Symposium project officer Angela Lecomber said the first symposium would be held in Melbourne on December 1; Sydney, February 2; Perth, February 16; Brisbane, April 5; Adelaide, April 26; Darwin May 17; and Canberra, May 24.

Ms Lecomber said that one in four pregnancies in Australia ends in abortion and evidence suggests that one of the key reasons behind this figure is the fact that women frequently find they have conflicting desires and emotions in relation to motherhood.

“This is a time where a woman feels uncertain about many aspects of her life – her relationship, finances, housing, study, employment, her own mental resilience and her beliefs,” she said.

“So, when a woman finds herself pregnant in complex circumstances, she needs a listening ear, affirmation that she is capable of being a competent mother and non-judgmental advice. If she perceives that she is abandoned and unsupported, abortion may present itself as an attractive option.”

Ms Lecomber said that external pressures can take many forms.

“At one end of the scale there can be the young single woman without an established relationship and at the other end of the scale is the mature woman in a relationship with a ‘completed’ family but without the support she requires.

“Research shows that women always have particular reasons for undergoing abortion; it is not the sole fact that she is pregnant, but the circumstances in which she is pregnant that present her with a dilemma.”

Chairman of the Bishops’ Commission for Pastoral Life, Bishop Eugene Hurley, said the *Walking with Love* educational symposiums were a key initiative in the pastoral responses to abortion recommended by a Taskforce set up by the Bishops.

“The title of the Symposiums – *Walking with Love* – really explains what we’re trying to do,” Bishop Hurley said. “We are wanting to be faithful to Pope John Paul II’s call to the Church to become ‘radically pro-woman’.

“Motherhood is a profoundly beautiful and significant moment in anybody’s life and no-one should be left alone in that moment. The mother shouldn’t be left alone, and nor should the father, or indeed, the baby. The Church is wanting to be close to women, to provide them with every possible support, both practical and spiritual, in carrying their baby to full term.”

For more information, visit www.walkingwithlove.org.au or contact: Debra Vermeer at the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference on 0414 880 475.