



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

November 25, 2005

Australian Catholic Bishops' statement on RU486

Recent controversy over the abortion drug RU486 has reopened the public debate over abortion. That the question of abortion keeps surfacing in Australia reflects deep unease in our community about the fact that one in four pregnancies ends in abortion – somewhere around 90,000 a year. Research shows that nearly three quarters of Australians think that this rate is far too high.

Yet rather than focusing attention upon positive strategies to help women continue with their pregnancies, we are now hearing calls for the introduction of yet another method of abortion. This chemical solution to a major social and personal problem is no solution at all.

The introduction of chemical abortion will do nothing to reduce the incidence of abortion in Australia: indeed it may very well increase the numbers. Access to yet another method of abortion will further erode respect for the value of human life. Research suggests that more women will be damaged physically, psychologically and spiritually.

RU 486 is a powerful drug designed to do nothing except end the life of a human being soon after it has begun. There are also serious safety concerns for the women who will expect to miscarry at home. This is particularly worrying for women who, because of geographical or personal isolation, may be unable to access emergency medical services. Given the mixed reports about the dangers of this drug, our community needs the time for the fullest consideration of all the evidence and should not be rushed into legislative change.

Multiplying the methods of abortion will only multiply the grief. The time has come for all the community to become “radically pro-woman” (Pope John Paul II). We need to address the circumstances which give rise to this dilemma for women. The Catholic Bishops of Australia call upon the Australian government to continue the ban on the importation and prescription of RU 486. We also call on government and community to join us in providing women confronted with the sadness of abortion with real choices *other* than abortion, rather than simply providing more choices *of* abortion.

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