



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

**Media Release
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Bishops' Taskforce on Abortion launches consultation with women.

The Australian Catholic Bishops' Taskforce on Pastoral Responses to Abortion has launched a consultation with women in a bid to hear directly from them some of the experiences surrounding a difficult pregnancy or abortion.

The taskforce was announced after the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference Plenary meeting in November 2004.

It is investigating ways in which the Church can improve its support for women, their partners and families so that the choice to continue with an unexpected or difficult pregnancy becomes a realistic option.

In an open letter to women who have experienced a difficult pregnancy or abortion, the Taskforce is inviting women to share, under strict confidentiality, their response to a series of questions about what support was helpful and what support was lacking during this time.

"The Church is fully aware that women do not always receive the support they need during a difficult pregnancy," the letter says.

"As we listen to women who have had abortions, we are learning that many women feel they were not given a genuine alternative to abortion or that external pressures or coercion were strong."

The letter points out that although the taskforce is made up of representatives from various organisations and sectors within the Church, "...we believe that those who have the potential to help the most with this initiative are Australian women who have themselves experienced a difficult or unsupported pregnancy".

"Please help us. We want to listen and learn how to better support women whenever they face an unexpected or difficult pregnancy."

Further information about the Taskforce and this consultation can be found at www.taskforcepra.org. The consultation will continue until 16 September, 2005.

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