



## AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

**Media Release  
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### **Catholic Bishops propose abortion alternatives**

The Catholic Bishops of Australia, meeting in Conference today, announce the establishment of a Taskforce to investigate ways of increasing financial and human support for those facing the dilemma of abortion.

The Church already provides pregnancy counselling, adoption services and other supports through its network of Centacare and associated agencies. But we are ready to do more. We call on churches, government and charities to join us in ensuring that all pregnant women have real options. We support the establishment of a national forum to consider practical ways of assisting them and of promoting constructive discussion within the community.

No woman should have to choose between her own well-being and the life of her child. The well-being of a pregnant mother and her child cannot be separated. To harm one is always to harm the other; to care for one always requires caring for both. Yet too often women report being pressured by their circumstances into having an abortion: they feel they have no other option.

Women with unplanned pregnancies need to be offered genuine alternatives to abortion. They need access to good counselling and support, healthcare, welfare and housing. Educational facilities and work places must be more accommodating of the special needs of pregnant women and families.

The current public debate over abortion has unearthed deep unease amongst ordinary Australians, especially about late-term abortions. There is an emerging consensus that the annual abortion toll of up to 100,000 is disturbing. The Bishops welcome continued discussion about ways of reversing the spiral of abortion in our country. The Church stands ready to help in shaping a positive new approach to problem pregnancy.

Catholics join others in opposing all violence to women and children, before or after birth. Abortion also impacts on fathers, wider networks of family and friends, health professionals, and society as a whole.

Every human being deserves our reverence and love, from the beginning to the end of the continuum of life. All human rights ultimately depend upon that recognition. But respect for human dignity also requires practical support for vulnerable people. We need to build a culture that respects the link between life and love, welcomes and esteems children and families, and supports women in every way.

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