

## Free money for new lives!

Social Issues briefing #080, 31/10/2008.

*I have paid the ultimate price. I have to live with myself. I have to look at myself and know it was my choice – I did it... The worst part of the pain is there's no one to share it with... not a day goes by when I don't think about it. I can't believe I did it, I wish I could change everything and go back... [mother of 4]*

*The lady who met me [at the local family planning service] treated me as rudely as anyone could treat someone, there was no caring or concern in her manner. No options were presented to me. She said I was stupid to get pregnant and as I was eighteen and at university she 'presumed I wanted an abortion'. I remember asking about the difference between a local and general anaesthetic and she said 'have [a] local as then you will know it happened and never make this mistake again.' I asked her at the time about other options, and she said 'Do you want to finish uni?'; I said 'Of course' and she replied 'Well you can't have a child'... I don't remember making the decision, just that this is what I was expected to do... it seemed there would be no support and no future for me if I were to have the child.' [Katarina]*

*The doctor and nurse... didn't prepare me for the horror of termination... I thought my uterus was being sucked out... I could hear them saying it was a healthy nine-week-old foetus and everything was intact. [Melody]*

When the Victorian Bill to decriminalise abortion passed into law, the Parliament applauded.

The Social Issues Executive has written against abortion on several occasions (see links below to briefings #002, #019, #032, & #040; and to the booklet *Abortion: a Christian response*). In a society where abortion is so common and enjoys such extensive legal and political protection, we suggested that Christian resistance might aim to create a child- and woman-friendly culture, where pregnant women under adverse circumstances really can become mothers. We wanted to see churches become 'oases of welcome' for women and their babies.

But we have to admit that our suggestion remained merely theoretical. We did find another organisation, Women's Forum Australia (WFA), also working for practical changes to our culture which would help women avoid unwanted abortion. WFA is an independent women's think tank that conducts research, education and public policy development about a range of issues that affect women. WFA brings together women from diverse backgrounds, and works across the usual political and religious divides, to advocate for life affirming, pro-woman alternatives to abortion which would enhance women's freedom to have their babies. Melinda Tankard Reist, a director of WFA, compiled the stories above in a collection of eighteen personal accounts of Australian women suffering after abortion.

When she shared some of these accounts recently at Sydney's Moore College, a remarkable thing happened. One of the students saw a way forward that is best expressed in his words:

*'It was only when I heard the horror of these women's stories that it hit me: if I claim to be Christian, if I claim to love those created in God's image, my faith can't just sit in my head in an ethics lecture. I can't be merely theoretical. If I am going to take seriously the call from Jesus to love the weak and vulnerable, then when an opportunity arises to do something about this, surely those whose lives have been transformed by Jesus should be the ones to act!*

*'God has provided us with a fantastic opportunity to love and care for women who are thinking about or who have aborted, and for their unborn children. This generous government that our great God put in place has decided to boost the economy. On December 8<sup>th</sup>, those who receive Family Tax Benefit A will be given \$1000 per child. Christians could support a myriad of ministries with this money – but imagine what a unified front could do!*

*'Imagine we gave **just half** of the money the government gives us, and put it towards the unborn. If families at Moore College have, say, three hundred children between them, that's \$150,000. That could make a difference!'*

*- Rowan Hilsden*

Reactions among the college community were immediate:

- ‘I’d been in a conversation with some U.S. friends at church,’ said first-year student Tessa. ‘They asked me what Christian evangelicals were planning to do in light of the growing epidemic of abortions in Australia. I confessed that we expressed our sadness, but did not actually act in any way. They were shocked, and I was ashamed. So when this opportunity arose, I felt compelled to finally take some action.’
- For Katrina, ‘I think it’s so important that we are seen to be making a positive contribution to support these women and babies, and not just heard to be negative and guilt-provoking. What better use of this grant could there be?’
- ‘When I first heard this plan,’ said Ali, ‘my first thought was that *finally* the church is doing something proactive about the abortion issue. It’s an opportunity to tell the world that we will no longer be silent.’
- ‘Abortion is having a deep impact upon our population,’ said Thora. ‘Christians need to be those who welcome babies and care for women in distress, and this opportunity is a tangible way to show love. It’s never too late.’

**A plan is now emerging from the student body, and it is remarkable.** These low-income earning students are choosing generosity over consumption. They hope to achieve three goals:

1. To support and grow Anglicare’s Carramar Early Interventions, a safe-house and support program that cares for young pregnant women in adverse circumstances who want to keep their child.
2. To support Women’s Forum Australia, the pioneering independent organisation that is committed to ‘inspiring a woman-friendly culture.’ WFA has repeatedly challenged the prevailing abortion culture at many levels.
3. To produce a high quality TV-style ad campaign in conjunction with Anglicare, Anglican Media and appropriate partners. It will showcase interviews with women who have had abortions and who want to speak out. Distributed via the internet, it will point pregnant women to a website with links to quality counseling services across Australia, and with evidence-based information on abortion and its alternatives.

Money will be collected by Anglicare, and in consultation with a student oversight group, will be divided between these three causes. **The purpose of this briefing is to invite you to contribute with these students, and to invite other Christians to follow:**

**To make your contribution**  
phone Anglicare on 132622 & quote ‘Free money for new lives’  
or go to [www.freemoneyfornewlives.com.au](http://www.freemoneyfornewlives.com.au)

But isn’t this money given to be spent upon ourselves? Isn’t it to ‘boost the economy’? What if we have already ‘emotionally spent’ it? Of course, even to **give half away still leaves us with half-more**. There will be plenty left to spend; and the half given will also boost the economy. (Indeed charitable organisations will need a ‘boost’ most of all, since this sector is extremely sensitive to economic downturn.)

But more important personal issues are at stake. When Archbishop Jensen observed that ‘we are experiencing a significant economic downturn’, he went on to ask: ‘What sort of people will we be now?’ At around the same time, Jensen admitted on Sydney radio that his first impulse at the economic news was to worry. But then he remembered that his Lord commanded generosity, even in hard times. As he continued before the recent Synod in Sydney:

[I]t would have been better to invest in the great biblical virtues, faith, hope and love. In abundance or in want, these are better for human beings to aspire to. I hope that we

have not forgotten them, for we are going to need them. Faith that God is in control; confidence in his future as being that which fulfils human existence; love from him, that makes us generous to others. These are the qualities we are now going to need more than ever as a community, as a nation. If Australia does better than others in the crisis, we will bear an even greater responsibility for the poor of the earth.

It seems that God has begun blessing Australia by giving his love to a bunch of students. On December 8<sup>th</sup>, they will give half of Prime Minister Rudd's economic rescue money for a different kind of rescue.

At Sydney's recent Synod, a strong motion concerning abortion (see appendix below) called for 'social changes' to 'reduce the number of abortions'. The students' collection will be our Christian community's first serious practical expression of this call.

If you receive this free money, we invite you to join with them (and even if you don't receive it, you are most welcome to make a contribution). Let us become those who meet economic crisis with generosity for the poor of the earth—in this case, the unborn and their mothers.

*Andrew Cameron & Rowan Hilsden  
for the Social Issues Executive, Diocese of Sydney*

### **Sources/Further Reading:**

'Free money for new lives': [www.freemoneyfornewlives.com.au](http://www.freemoneyfornewlives.com.au)

Anglicare Carramar Early Interventions:

<http://www.anglicare.org.au/our-services/child-youth-and-family-services/carramar-early-interventions>

Women's Forum Australia: <http://www.womensforaustralia.org>

Dr. Peter F. Jensen, 2008 Synod Presidential Address, Wesley Centre October 13<sup>th</sup> 2008; online:

[http://www.sydneyanglicans.net/mission/missionthinking/the\\_2008\\_presidential\\_address](http://www.sydneyanglicans.net/mission/missionthinking/the_2008_presidential_address)

Social Issues: <http://sie.moore.edu.au>

Click 'Briefings' for briefings #002, #019, #032, #040

Click 'Reports' for the booklet *Abortion: a Christian response*

(Printed versions of this booklet can be purchased through <http://www.moorebooks.com.au>)

Melinda Tankard Reist, *Giving Sorrow Words: Women's Stories of Grief After Abortion*. Sydney: Duffy & Snellgrove, 2000. (Quotations from pp 13, 27-28 & 35. Names changed by the author. Can be purchased through <http://www.womensforaustralia.org>, click on 'shop'.)

'Vic abortion bill passes lower house,' SMH September 12 2008; online:

<http://news.smh.com.au/national/vic-abortion-bill-passes-lower-house-20080912-4eux.html>

'Here's what you get with Kevin Rudd's rescue package,' *Daily Telegraph* October 15, 2008; online:

<http://www.news.com.au/dailytelegraph/story/0,22049,24498946-5015795,00.html>

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*Note: This paper is intended to assist discussion and may be corrected or revised in future. Short responses to [social.issues@moore.edu.au](mailto:social.issues@moore.edu.au) are very welcome, but the SIE cannot guarantee a reply. To access this free regular briefing, visit <http://www.sydneyanglicans.net/socialissues> and to receive it by email, follow the link 'Sign up for our free weekly briefing!' Visit <http://sie.moore.edu.au>, our second website, for other material.*

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## **Appendix:**

### **48<sup>th</sup> Synod of the Anglican Diocese of Sydney**

### **Extract from Synod Proceedings for 21 October 2008**

#### **Motions: 34/08: Abortion**

Noting recent renewed debate about abortion around Australia, this Synod –

- a) affirms pregnancy and childbirth are part of God's good plan for humankind,
- b) affirms pregnancy is the privilege and responsibility of both the mother and the father of the unborn person,
- c) affirms the sanctity of life, even of the unborn child,
- d) supports legislative and social changes which would reduce the number of abortions in Australia, and
- e) encourages and applauds health professionals who, for reasons of conscience, do not promote, aid or assist in ending the life of the unborn, except where the mother's life is gravely at risk,
- f) recognises the need of those who have knowingly participated in ending the life of the unborn, especially women who have had abortions, to hear the wonderful news of forgiveness in the death and resurrection of Christ,
- g) encourages all Christians equally to make known Jesus' love for all unborn human life and judgement of those who end it, and his offer of forgiveness for those who have done so.

Synod requests that the content of this motion be forwarded to the following persons – the Prime Minister, the Federal Opposition Leader, Senator Guy Barnett of Tasmania, the NSW Premier and Leader of the Opposition and the bishops of each of the Anglican dioceses of Australia.

(Canon Sandy Grant 21/10/2008)