

## Media Release

19 June 2008



### GOVERNMENT URGED TO PUT THE SPOTLIGHT ON CONTRACEPTION

Australia's leading sexual and reproductive healthcare organisation today urged the Commonwealth Government to invest in improving contraceptive options, efficacy and education for Australian women.

Marie Stopes International's calls came following repeated research showing the majority of women were using contraception at the time of their unplanned pregnancy.

The research, conducted by Flinders University and published last week in the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, looked at the experiences of 3,434 women who presented at a southern Adelaide clinic for abortions over the past decade. Between July 1996 and June 2006, nearly 70 per cent of those women were using contraception.

"These statistics are further proof that women do go to great lengths to avoid an unplanned pregnancy, yet for some it is a reality that is difficult to avoid," said Jill Michelson, Operations Manager of Marie Stopes International.

"In 2007, Marie Stopes International conducted similar research into women's reproductive options, and found that of the 2,041 women who commenced the study, over half confirmed having experienced an unplanned pregnancy, and 60% of those were using at least one form of contraception at the time.

"To add to this, the World Health Organisation states that even if couples use contraception correctly 100% of the time, there would be close to 6 million unplanned pregnancies each year.

"All of these studies point to the need to increase the range of contraceptive options in Australia, invest in research to improve contraceptive efficacy and implement a dedicated contraceptive user education campaign."

Other key findings in Marie Stopes International's report - *Real Choices: Women, Contraception & Unplanned Pregnancy* – include:

- at the time of their unplanned pregnancy, the largest group of women using contraception were on the pill (43%), while 22% were using a condom.
- 21% of the women using contraception at the time of their unplanned pregnancy were using more than one method.
- nearly three quarters of women (74%) want governments to expand women's reproductive options by improving their access to a range of contraception, with 70% supporting guaranteed paid maternity leave.

"When unplanned pregnancy does occur it is vital that women have access to the support necessary for them to make a real choice - everything from paid maternity leave to safe and legal abortion services," Ms Michelson said.

"Unplanned pregnancy is a key health issue for Australian women and this research again drums home the hard reality of reproductive choice – a reality that the Rudd Government needs to address urgently."

**Real Choices: Women, Contraception & Unplanned Pregnancy** was commissioned by Marie Stopes International and conducted by WebSurvey, enlisting the database of Pureprofile to select the sample. Invitations were extended so as to obtain weighted samples with regard to age and residency by state as ascertained by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. A copy of the research key findings can be downloaded from <http://www.mariestopes.com.au/research>.

**About Marie Stopes International:** Marie Stopes International is a not-for-profit sexual and reproductive healthcare provider, with centres in the ACT, Victoria, Queensland, New South Wales and Western Australia. The organisation offers a range of services, including abortion, vasectomy, sexually transmitted infection check-ups and contraception. Surplus proceeds from Australian activities support the work of the Marie Stopes International Partnership, which delivers sexual and reproductive health services to over four million people in 38 countries worldwide.

**For media enquiries contact:** Samantha Smith, Public Relations - 0421 097 150