

## Media Release

### Introduction of RU486 must be decided by qualified professionals

20 January 2006

Leading sexual and reproductive healthcare provider, Marie Stopes International, has called for the decision whether or not to allow RU486 into Australia to be made by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA).

The TGA, which is recognised by the World Health Organisation as Australia's lead drug accreditation agency, has to date overseen the evaluation and approval of over 50,000 therapeutic goods and therapies in Australia, making it the most experienced and qualified entity in the country.

Marie Stopes International Acting Chief Executive Officer, Ms Jill Michelson said, "The TGA is well resourced and positioned to make an evidence-based assessment as to the efficacy of, as well as any risks pertaining to, the use of RU486."

"Australia is well served by the TGA and the integrity and competence of their world's best practice standards," she said.

Marie Stopes International has made a submission to the Senate Estimates Committee which is currently considering the Therapeutic Goods Amendment (Repeal of Ministerial responsibility for approval of RU486) Bill 2005.

Under the proposed Bill, existing Ministerial responsibility for the approval of RU486 would be removed from Minister for Health and Ageing, Tony Abbott and transferred to the TGA.

"Marie Stopes International disagrees that any one person, in this case the Minister for Health and Aging, is better qualified and positioned to assess the suitability of RU486, or any drug for that matter, for clinical use in Australia." Ms Michelson said.

"While we respect the right of Ministers to hold their own personal views on issues such as medical abortion, these views should not impact on independent, professional duties such as those overseen by the TGA. "

The Senate Estimates Committee is due to re-commence hearings on the Bill on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February 2006.

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#### **About Marie Stopes International:**

Marie Stopes International is a not-for-profit sexual and reproductive healthcare provider, with centres in the ACT, 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 Marie Stopes International Partnerships, which delivers sexual and reproductive health services to more than four million people in over 37 countries.

In the United Kingdom and South Africa, where RU486 is an approved drug, Marie Stopes International performs medical abortions up to 9 weeks of gestation.

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