



8 February 2006

NEW PUBLICATION DEBUNKS MYTHS ABOUT RU486

Embargoed until Wednesday 8 February

RU486/Mifepristone: A Factual Guide to the Issues in the Australian Debate will be launched today by Professor Terence Hull of the Demography Program, Research School of Social Sciences and Adjunct Professor of the National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health at the Australian National University

The report—a joint initiative of Reproductive Choice Australia (RCA) and the Australian Reproductive Health Alliance, (ARHA)—articulates the arguments for giving regulatory oversight of RU486 to the TGA—documents the scientific and medical community's support for access to the drug in Australia—and debunks the myths about the drug's uses, effects and safety record.

Speaking from Parliament House in Canberra today, Professor Hull said, "The Australian Drug Evaluation Committee (ADEC) of the TGA was set up in 1963 in the wake of the Thalidomide tragedy. ADEC was created specifically to make medical and scientific evaluations – and remove such judgement calls from politicians.

"ADEC is appointed by the Minister for Health and Ageing and is comprised of qualified medical experts. The ADEC brief includes: the quality, risk-benefit, effectiveness and access within a reasonable time of any drug referred to it for evaluation—and, the medical and scientific evaluations of applications for registration of prescription drugs (e.g. new chemical entities, new forms of previously registered drugs and therapeutic variations to registered drugs).

"If the TGA has such a committee already set up and appointed by the Minister, why does the Minister refuse to allow the committee to do its work and evaluate RU486? Minister Abbott is neither trained nor qualified to evaluate the safety and efficacy of drugs. Let the experts from within the TGA get on with the evaluation," Professor Hull added.

Spokesperson for Reproductive Choice Australia, Dr Leslie Cannold, said, "Honesty is the best policy— but unfortunately the small minority of Australians who'd like the ban to continue have not been completely honest when it comes to communicating the facts about this drug. That is why RCA and ARHA have joined forces to produce a factual and transparent guide to the issues.

"Everyone is entitled to their view, of course, but the public is also entitled to access a logical argument and the best scientific evidence on RU486," Dr Cannold added.

The vote on the bill to repeal 1996 amendments to the Therapeutic Goods Act that have effectively prevented Australians from accessing RU486 is planned to begin in the Senate either late Wednesday night or Thursday.

"If concerns being expressed about the drug's safety are truly evidence-based, then those voicing them should welcome evidence-based evaluation by the TGA," Dr Cannold said.

The launch will be at 10.30 in 1 S 3 Parliament House, Canberra

**For more information or interviews with Professor Hull or Dr Cannold please contact:
Christina Richards, CEO ARHA, 0427 884 479**

The report will be available on the ARHA and RCA websites on Wednesday 8 February:

www.arha.org.au

www.reproductivechoiceaustralia.org.au

Reproductive Choice Australia is a coalition of over 20 organisations including Sexual Health & Family Planning Australia, Children by Choice, the Public Health Association of Australia, the Australian Women's Health Network, the Women's Electoral Lobby, and all state based pro-choice coalitions.