

Media Release

15 June 2007 – immediate release

MEDICAL ABORTION AN OPTION FOR VICTORIAN WOMEN FOLLOWING LAUNCH OF NEW SEXUAL HEALTH CENTRE

Australia's leading sexual and reproductive healthcare organisation, Marie Stopes International, today announced the opening of its first Victorian centre, located in **East St Kilda**.

Following the acquisition of the former Melbourne Family Planning Clinic, the new centre is set to open on **18 June 2007** and will provide Victorian women with a range of sexual and reproductive health care services, including the option of medical abortion using a methotrexate-misoprostol regimen.

"Our aim is to bring a quality of care, accessibility and consistency in providing sexual health and pregnancy choices to all Australians - and by opening our doors in Victoria we are another step closer to meeting this aim," said Jill Michelson, Operations Manager of Marie Stopes International.

"Working with the existing Melbourne Family Planning Clinic team, the Marie Stopes International East St Kilda Centre will provide a range of services including surgical and medical abortion, vasectomy, contraceptive insertion, sexually transmitted infection check ups and sexual health advice.

"Access and choice are constant issues women face with all sexual and reproductive healthcare services and our service offering will increase the choices available to Victorian women faced with an unplanned pregnancy."

The offering of medical abortion using a methotrexate-misoprostol regimen follows the results of a pilot program conducted last year at Marie Stopes International centres in NSW. The results of the clients involved in the pilot program who chose a medical abortion were consistent with similar methotrexate-misoprostol regime clinical studies conducted in other countries.

No adverse effects were reported following the administration of methotrexate. The most common side effect following misoprostol was diarrhoea (36%), followed by nausea (25%) and vomiting (18%). The majority of women abort in the first few hours up to 48 hours from taking the misoprostol tablets. Only 1 client required a surgical termination for a continuing pregnancy.

"While surgical abortion is a very safe procedure in Australia, medical methods of abortion have a number of advantages," Ms Michelson said.

"Medical abortion allows women to terminate an unplanned and unwanted pregnancy at an earlier gestational stage than surgical abortion and requires no anaesthesia.

"RU486 is the ideal method of medical abortion and once RU486 is available via mainstream distribution and purchase from a pharmaceutical company in Australia, Marie Stopes International will be able to offer this option to clients."

Marie Stopes International was established as a registered charity in London in 1976. Founded on giving women and men the freedom to control their own fertility, it grew out of the organisation originally set up by Dr Marie Stopes - the family planning pioneer who opened London's first family planning centre in 1921.

Marie Stopes International has centres established in New South Wales (Fairfield, Homebush, Westmead), Queensland (Caboolture, Salisbury), Western Australia (Midland) and the ACT (Canberra City).

Any surplus proceeds from its Australian activities are contributed to support the work of the Marie Stopes International Partnership, which delivers sexual and reproductive health services to over four million people in 37 countries worldwide.

The Marie Stopes International: East St Kilda Centre is located 338 Dandenong Road, East St Kilda (Mel Ref: 58 H9) at the former Melbourne Family Planning Clinic.

To find out more information on the East St Kilda Centre and its services, call Marie Stopes International – Toll Free: 1800 003 707, or visit www.mariestopes.com.au

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