



Social Responsibility Department
a part of the Faith and Action Unit
Welcome to **enews No 2** for 2010.

Dear Friends,

The Social Responsibility team is continuing to grow and it is pleasing to see that more dioceses now have SR coordinators. For those of you who are new to the team and I haven't contacted you personally, welcome, and my apologies for not acknowledging you sooner. As you move into your roles I hope you all have had passed onto you a copy of *Straight Talking* – the SR toolkit, and a CD-ROM on child abuse. I hope also that you have received in the last couple of weeks the new MU Handbook and MU Rules & Regulations. Talk to your Diocesan president if you haven't.

It has been quite an eventful couple of months as we have journeyed with Jesus through his passion, resurrection and ascension, seasons that for me are the most profound of all our Christian experiences. I pray that all of you have been able to spend sometime over this period reflecting on what these events mean in our lives as we seek to live out our faith. The reason for forming the Faith and Action Unit is to actively encourage MU members to always be aware of the link that must be kept between our spiritual lives and how we live in community.

In this vein it was a great pleasure to prepare and present seminars in Perth and Bunbury Dioceses a couple of weeks ago with Bronwyn Fryar, the Australian Prayer and Spirituality Coordinator. It was our first outing as a 'double act', and we believe it worked well.

Our topic, chosen by Perth diocese, Cyberbullying and the Oversexualization of Children was certainly very topical. There has been quite a deal about both these issues in the media recently and it was distressing to hear from one person present at one of the seminars that her grandchild had been forced to change schools because of cyberbullying and the reluctance of the school to successfully deal with the issue. If you hear of any other instances and the outcomes, please let me know. It is important that we make representations to our politicians about our concerns. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like further information and/or a list of resources.

In the Autumn 2010 *MiaMia* there was a review of Cordelia Moyse' book "A History of the Mothers' Union". I have now almost finished reading it and I would encourage every MU member to read it. It is a fascinating insight into the way in which MU has been involved in social issues from its very beginnings.

As usual, there is quite a deal of information on various topics that has been forwarded to me from many different sources and I include the following if any are of use to you.

1. New Business Toolkit for Indigenous Women

The Australian Government has released a new Business Toolkit for Indigenous Women, aimed at providing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women across Australia with information and advice on being successful in business. The toolkit contains a number of fact sheets, covering business planning and exporting, and also a range of useful local resources.

The toolkit is informative and easy to use for women wanting to get involved in business and provides further support for those with businesses already up and running, including how to balance family and community obligations, manage the many demands of business life, and when and where to get help.

The toolkit was funded through the Commonwealth, State, Territory and New Zealand Ministers' Conference on the Status of Women, following a recommendation from the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Gathering.

The toolkit is available at

www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/women/pubs/economic/bus_toolkit_indigenous_women/Pages/default.aspx

2. Female genital mutilation

There is currently discussion about female genital mutilation in the papers. The RANZCOG have a clear opinion – it is opposed to ANY form of female genital mutilation. Please see the RANZCOG website for details. Their press release clearly stating the College opinion:

“The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG) has given clear assurance there is no consideration of support for the procedure of ‘ritual nicks’.

‘The College is not considering any support for this procedure on baby girls in Australia, and the assumption that the College is going to change its position on female genital mutilation is wrong. The College remains opposed to all forms of female genital mutilation’, said RANZCOG President, Dr Ted Weaver.

‘While the procedure had been under review by the American Academy of Paediatrics, the matter will only be the subject of general discussion through the College’s Women’s Health Committee, which is the committee responsible for reviewing women’s health issues’, said Dr Weaver.

‘In no way should this be interpreted to mean our College would change its stated opinion on this important women’s health matter’, said Dr Weaver.

The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG) opposes female genital mutilation practices and does not support the procedure of ritual nicks.

Dr Weaver said it was important that the community understood the College’s position and can refer to the current position statement on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting:

www.ranzcog.edu.au/publications/statements/C-gyn1.pdf

3. Toddlers and TV: Early Exposure Has Negative and Long-Term Impact

ScienceDaily (May 8, 2010) — Want kids who are smarter and thinner? Keep them away from the television set as toddlers. A shocking study from child experts at the Université de Montréal, the Sainte-Justine University Hospital Research Center and the University of Michigan, published in the *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*, has found that television exposure at age two forecasts negative consequences for kids, ranging from poor school adjustment to unhealthy habits.

"We found every additional hour of TV exposure among toddlers corresponded to a future decrease in classroom engagement and success at math, increased victimization by classmates, have a more sedentary lifestyle, higher consumption of junk food and, ultimately, higher body mass index," says lead author Dr. Linda S. Pagani, a psychosocial professor at the Université de Montréal and researcher at the Sainte-Justine University Hospital Research Center.

Google for more information

4. Small screen: 263 April 2010

Now available from the Young Media Australia website at <http://www.youngmedia.org.au/pdf/smallscreen/ss-263-Apr.pdf>

Your password is KAC58heD

Topics this month include:

- ***Freedom of speech vs child protection***
- ***Adelaide seminar: Bratz, Britney & Bralettes***
- ***Children, commercialism and the environment***
- ***The end of "happy meals"?***

As an alternative, click on the link <http://www.youngmedia.org.au>

1 From the menu select 'YMA publications'

2 Select '*small screen*'

3 Select '*Online small screen*' and *small screen* No. 263 April 2010. You will be asked for a password.

4 Type in the password above and the document will open and be available for printing.

Some programs download the PDF first and you will be asked for the password when opening the document.

5. Human Rights and Cultural Diversity - UN Experts' Statement

The following statement has been issued by a group of UN human rights experts to mark World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development, 21 May 2010

GENEVA 20 May 2010 – "Cultural diversity can only thrive in an environment that safeguards fundamental freedoms and human rights," said a group* of UN independent experts on the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development. They stressed that defending diversity goes hand in hand with the respect for the dignity of the individual.

"Cultural diversity," the group said in a joint statement**, "can be protected and promoted only if human rights and fundamental freedoms, such as the freedom of expression, information and communication, the freedom from discrimination of any kind, as well as the ability of individuals to choose cultural expressions, and their right to participate or not to participate in the cultural life of given communities are guaranteed."

At the same time, the experts noted that an environment conducive to cultural diversity will contribute in a significant manner to the full respect of human rights. "However, no one may invoke cultural diversity as an excuse to infringe on human rights or limit their scope," they said, stressing that cultural diversity should not be used "to support segregation and harmful traditional practices which, in the name of culture, seek to sanctify differences that run counter to the universality, indivisibility and interdependence of human rights."

"Universal values of human rights should serve as a bridge among all cultures and should not be subservient to social, cultural or religious norms," the human rights experts said on the World Day for Cultural Diversity, noting that "cultural rights include the right to question the existing parameters of 'culture,' to opt in or out of particular cultural entities, and to continuously create new culture."

The group also reminded States of their responsibility under international law to create an environment conducive to cultural diversity and the enjoyment of cultural rights, in which "all persons, including national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities and those based on other attributes, as well as indigenous peoples, have the right to express themselves and to create and disseminate their work in the language of their choice, and particularly in their mother tongue; receive quality education and training that fully respect their cultural identity; and to participate in the cultural life of their choice and conduct their own cultural practices, subject to respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms."

(**): See the full statement on World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development: http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/cultural_rights/docs/statements/Statement_cultural_diversity_21052010.doc

6. The Henry Tax Review.

If you would like to read the Anglicare Australia submission to this review click on [Living without shame](#) , it covers topics such as adequacy of income, barriers to social and economic participation, rental housing supply and affordability, as well as aged care, transport and the environment.

Once again, there is far too much information for me to include in this enews, and I had hoped to include a petition concerning the opening of Australian markets to imported meat. It is of great concern to many on the land, particularly rural women. An article on the subject can be found at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/02/24/2828458.htm> .

Thank you for all the work you do, God bless,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lillian'.