



## *Social Responsibility Department* *a part of the Faith and Action Unit*

Welcome to **enews No 1** for 2010.

Dear Friends,

*Welcome to another year of Social Responsibility. Welcome also to those who are new to the role of Diocesan Social Responsibility Coordinators.*

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like to. I hope that you have all received your copy of CODE and have a handbook, although these are to be replaced this year.

Also I hope you have had handed onto you "Straight Talking – the Social Responsibility Toolkit". If you do not have one, please let me know, and I can forward one to you.

Alternatively, it is available on the MU Australia website. The information on the rear of the SR CODE leaflet is a guide for your responsibilities. However, I must stress that it has been my experience, both as the Australian Coordinator and in the diocesan position, that SR works much better if you do it your own way.

In 2010 the theme for MU is "***Journeying Together***", and the SR department is doing this in two ways.

Firstly, we begin our journeying together with the Prayer and Spirituality Department as the Faith and Action Unit. This is very much the beginning and how we do it is a part of the journey. But under-girding the formation of the unit is the understanding that we cannot separate our action from our faith. They go hand in hand. This year we will be demonstrating this in Perth and Bunbury dioceses as Bronwyn Fryar and I lead one day seminars on "Cyber-bullying and the over-sexualization of children."

The second way SR is journeying together is up to us as SR coordinators, whether branch, diocesan or Australian. We are to journey together with our communities, local, state, national and international. This means being aware and involved in what goes on in our surroundings. It means watching, listening and reading various forms of media, including the internet. Each of us has different areas of interest and expertise, so the choices we make as coordinators will largely depend on this. Some examples from my programme this year:

I have been asked to give talks on:

Cyber-bullying and the over-sexualization of children

Why do people find SR so difficult?

How to bury yourself – coming to terms with death in a death-denying society

Social implications of the 4<sup>th</sup> object

Some of these topics are ones I have spoken on before, others will need some research, but in taking on the responsibilities of a coordinator, that is my expectation.

This week I am attending the conference in Sydney on Violence and Sexualisation of Children by the Media organized by the Australian Council on Children and the Media (ACCM, who publish *Small Screen*), so will have more information on these topics than what I have been able to glean from other avenues. I include in this enews 3 press releases from last week issued by ACCM on violence and over-sexualization of children. There were also articles in the past weekend's *Weekend Australian* newspaper.

A new study published today in the March 2010 issue of the *Psychological Bulletin*, an American Psychological Association journal, reports that "exposure to violent video games is a *causal* risk factor for increased aggressive thoughts and behavior, and decreased empathy and prosocial behavior in youths" Lead author of the group of cross-national researchers, Distinguished Prof Craig Anderson of Iowa State University, said "We can now say with utmost confidence that regardless of research method—that is experimental, correlational, or longitudinal—and regardless of the cultures tested in this study [East and West], you get the same effects ... and the effects are that exposure to violent video games increases the likelihood of aggressive behavior in both short-term and long-term contexts. Such exposure also increases aggressive thinking and aggressive affect, and decreases prosocial behavior." Council spokesman Dr Wayne Warburton presented evidence today to the House Committee inquiring into youth violence. He said "Government policy decisions, as well as the decisions of media outlets, parents, and others responsible for the development of our children, should be more based on what we know about media effects, rather than on common misconceptions, loud minority views, or pressure from the industries that produce media." Dr Warburton urged those concerned with prevention of youth violence to take the opportunity to hear Prof. Anderson presenting this new research in Sydney on March 19 at the "Growing up fast and furious conference" [www.childrenandmedia.org.au](http://www.childrenandmedia.org.au)

The ACCM has welcomed the release late last week of the UK Home Office report into the sexualisation of children. ACCM Vice President Professor Elizabeth Handsley said that while the UK appeared to be taking action on the problem, we are still waiting on Australian government to recognise that self regulation is not working, despite the challenges thrown out by the Senate report of two years back. Professor Louise Newman, from Monash University commented on the report: "This is a comprehensive review of the evidence concerning the impact of the increasing exposure of children and young people to sexualised and adultified images, particularly those which sexually objectify women and girls." Dr Cordelia Fine, from Macquarie University, added "The recent UK Home Office report, noted that marketing can influence children in ways that bypass conscious critical capacities. Gender stereotypes, even ones we don't consciously endorse, can have significant influence on our judgment and behaviour." Professor Handsley concluded saying "It is vital for the welfare of children that the Australian government look closely at improving regulation of advertising, and especially of music videos." Professors Newman and

Handsley, and Dr Fine will all be contributing papers to the *Growing Up Fast and Furious Conference: Reviewing the impacts of violent and sexualised media on children* in Sydney on 19 March 2010. Professionals and policy makers with an interest in the wellbeing of children and families are encouraged to attend. For more information about the conference, including details about how to register, go to the ACCM website [www.childrenandmedia.org.au](http://www.childrenandmedia.org.au)

"Australia's classification system needs a radical overhaul", says Australia's leading media and children advocacy group. Vice President of the Australian Council on Children and the Media (ACCM), Flinders University Law Professor Elizabeth Handsley said today "The system is based on last century notions of what is offensive to the sensibilities, rather than on evidence of what is actually harmful to children's development. We need to use knowledge gained from years of research and apply it with commonsense, so that children's interests are actually taken into account". Professor Handsley, who will be delivering a paper on this and related themes at the "Growing up fast and furious" conference in Sydney on March 19, said that "the ongoing controversy over whether Australia should legalise R18+ level computer games had highlighted some of the difficulties in ensuring that one of the basic principles of the classification system, i.e. "minors should be protected from material likely to harm or disturb them", was addressed as strongly as adult freedom to read, hear and see what they wish. Professor Handsley concluded "Lets scrap the current system", he said "and start again from a child based perspective" She urged those concerned with issues regarding classification of movies and computer games to hear the latest research in Sydney on March 19 at the "Growing up fast and furious conference" [www.childrenandmedia.org.au](http://www.childrenandmedia.org.au)

### **Other information you may be interested in.**

#### ***1 .small screen 261 February 2010***

**Now available from the Young Media Australia website at  
<http://www.youngmedia.org.au/pdf/smallscreen/ss-261-Feb.pdf>**

**Your password is 9u9ABRus**

**Topics this month include:**

- ***Media violence: A trigger for youth violence***
- ***Editorial: 55,000 submissions to R18+ inquiry***
- ***Harvard comes to Australia***
- ***New video game research***

2. For sometime I have been concerned about how environmental issues could be covered within the aims and objects of MU, and this is the first incentive I have seen that really fits.

**1 Million Women**  
[www.1millionwomen.com.au](http://www.1millionwomen.com.au)

### **Taking Action on Climate Change**

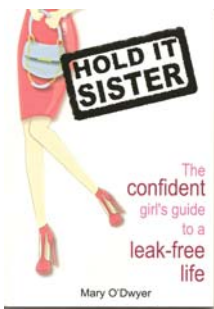
We are a campaign of daughters, mothers, sisters and grandmothers who are committed to protecting our climate, our communities and our future by taking practical action on climate change.

**The goal is to cut carbon pollution by showing women how to reduce carbon emissions in their everyday lives – at home, on transport and when shopping.**

You can join the campaign at [www.1millionwomen.com.au](http://www.1millionwomen.com.au) and commit to start cutting carbon emissions today. It's free to join!

The website features an 'Activity Centre' that guides you through ways to cut 1 tonne of CO2 pollution in a year and to track your progress as you go along. You don't have to be an expert on climate change. We'll guide you every step of the way.

Join the campaign and make a difference at [www.1millionwomen.com.au](http://www.1millionwomen.com.au)



At a conference I attended on behalf of MU late last year I met the author of "Hold it Sister" who was also attending. I was horrified by the statistics she quoted of the number of women with pelvic floor problems, and weak bladders following childbirth and in later years. She also said that ante-natal classes no longer included pelvic floor exercises as a matter of course.

Issues such as this one some dioceses may like to take up. I would be interested if you do.

### **..and finally:**

This has been a long enews, but there is always more information than I could possibly include.

My prayers and best wishes are with you all as we journey together this year.

God bless,

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