



# Catholic Women's League Australia Inc.

WALKING WITH GOD 'WE WALK BY FAITH NOT BY SIGHT' CORINTHIANS 2-5:7

National Newsletter

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## Our Lady of the Southern Cross



*Image courtesy of The Catholic Weekly newspaper*



## From the National President



For the National Executive, our journey of "Walking with God" over the past eleven months has been a most rewarding, uplifting, challenging and spiritual experience.

During the weekend of 22-23 November, we will meet in Dunsborough to spend time in prayer and thanksgiving for all that we have received and achieved during our first year of National and to, perhaps, "catch our breath" in readiness for 2009.

25 November is International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women - "White Ribbon Day". It is also the Feast Day of St Catherine who because she embraced Christianity was murdered by being thrust into a contraption of wheels and blades. On this day, let our prayers to our Blessed Mother Mary and St Catherine be, that women will no longer be abused and that we may have the courage to be the hands and feet of Christ in standing up to these terrible crimes which affect so many in our communities.

I attended the Australian Women's Coalition meeting in Sydney 8-9 November. Dr Anna Howe, PhD, Consultant Gerontologist presented her report on "Preparing for Healthy Ageing and Women's Experience of Post Acute Care" which was gleaned from surveys that she prepared and which were forwarded to all CWLA Member Organisations for the opportunity to participate. I thank all who took the time to be involved in this project funded by the Office of Women.

From 26-31 October my time was spent with 14 CWLA members from Queensland, NSW, Canberra/Goulburn and Victoria (and 2 husbands) in Seoul, South Korea attending the WUCWO Asia Pacific Regional Conference. The theme of the conference was "Women, Peace Makers - United in Faith and Action". The opening Mass was celebrated in Myung Dong Cathedral, and Australia was given the honour of being involved in the "Prayers of the Faithful". The Most Rev. Peter

Kang, Bishop of Cheju gave the Keynote Address on "The Dignity of Women and Challenging for Peace" based on 1. The Dignity of Women, 2. The Women Jesus Met, 3. Apostolic perspective of Women, and 4. Challenge for Peace. I thank and congratulate CWLA Members who acted as facilitators and reporters for the workshops which were held during the Conference - they were very professional and caring in carrying out this responsibility. Thora Regan AM, NIS presented a paper for the Panel Talk "Peace and the Environment" and in part said "Injustices abate when good people do good things. Discrimination can only have negative consequences in the goal that is peace, and peace will be unattainable unless there is justice for individuals and the environment".

My love and thanks go to Maria, Noelle, Barbara, Anne and Margaret and each and every member of Catholic Women's League Australia, for your love and generous spirit to us all and for having been an important part of the journey so far.

May the blessing of our Lord be with you and your family during this Christmas time and may the light of Christ bring peace, love, generosity of spirit and much laughter to your celebrations.

Happy Christmas one and all.

**Karyn Kammann**  
**National President**  
**CWLA (INC)**

## Storms Devastate South-East Queensland

More than 4,000 homes were damaged, 300 of them seriously, as savage storms lashed Brisbane on Sunday, 16 November.

Hundreds of SES volunteers, along with 750 soldiers from nearby Enoggera Barracks worked tirelessly to clear away the damage from the storms which have been described the worst in 25 years. During Sunday's storm 220,000 homes and businesses lost power.

Our thoughts and prayers are with our CWL members and families and all the residents of south-east Queensland as they rebuild their homes and community, and that soon life will return to normal for the thousands of people affected by this disaster.

## NEW SOUTH WALES

### STATE BI-ENNIAL CONFERENCE 2008

*“Create a New Heart with  
Faith, Hope and Love”*

The State Conference was an excellent event for members with a thought provoking and interesting program with lots of humour and a warm and friendly atmosphere. The Opening Mass in the Parramatta Cathedral celebrated by **Bishop Kevin Manning DD** assisted by State Chaplain Father Sean Cullen, Father Chris Sarkis and Father David Hume and surrounded by CWLA members was a prayerful beginning to the Conference. State President Catherine McGrath officially opened the Conference at the Sebel Hotel and the Mayor of Parramatta welcomed us to his city of which he was enthusiastic and proud. **Melinda Tankard Reist** from Women's Forum Australia gave a most enlightening and confronting PowerPoint presentation on the sexualisation of children and the culture practised today by young women, some as young as 10 years of age.

The Conference began with our keynote speaker **Dr. Peter Spitzer-aka Dr. Fruit Loop** from the Clown Doctors (The Humour Foundation Charity) of which he was a co-founder. Supported by a PowerPoint presentation he entertained us with stories of the work he and the other “Clowns” performed around Australia. “Laughter is the Best Medicine” is their theme and the large painted 'Smile on a Stick' is their symbol which he used well as he told his hilarious stories. The laughter and "smiles" work well with seriously ill children, and adults as well, and bring fun and love into sad situations.

Our State Chaplain **Father Sean Cullen** spoke to us reminding us to trust in God through whom all things were possible. We are very thankful that Fr. Sean is able to spend time with us as our Chaplain. **Father Chris Riley** told us of his work with the youth – troubled hurt children. He also spoke of his visit to East Timor where he had been invited to teach the young priests how to deal with the many abused children in their care. Father Chris presented President Catherine McGrath with an Award for the interest and contribution made by CWLA members to his “Youth Off the Streets” over many years.



**Father Chris Riley with Christine McGrath receiving the Award**

**Mrs. Olya Kolomyjec** of the Ukrainian Catholic Women's League of Australia (UCWLA) told of the foundation of this group through her interest in our own CWLA and after only two years how it has formed in other states and grown in membership. Olya is currently working on a project called “The Bridge of Hope” helping the orphans and the poor and underprivileged in the Ukraine. **The Hon. Kristina Keneally MP**, Minister for Planning and Minister for Redfern Waterloo, spoke of the role she played in WYD08. She also told of a previous WYD she had attended in Denver and how it had given her a better understanding of the Church and her love of God. She shared with us how she had met her husband, also on the same journey, and it was an interesting and fun story. The Minister also spoke of her background and family in America. **Mrs. Kimberley Davis** from the Office for the Participation of Women acknowledged the significant contribution CWLA members had played as women in the Church. One of the roles of her office is to recommend and implement projects to enhance the participation of women. She was a delegate at the International Congress in Rome “Women and Man the Humanum in its Entirety” in which the participation of women in the Church was elevated to a high priority.

**Megan Morrison** told us how she became a Christian in the Anglican Church at the age of eighteen. She is now with the International Health & Development Services in the A.C.T. In 2006 she participated in the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women as an Australian delegate with the Anglican Consultative Church. Megan believes it is important for faith based organisations to have a voice at U.N. forums –



they must be accountable. **Mrs. Julie Kelly** from Project Rachael told the heartbreaking story of the backyard abortion she had had some 50 years ago at the age of 16 and the terrible effect it had always had on her life. She later met a young Catholic man whose faith inspired her to become a Catholic before they married and later had three children. Some years after she was visiting in Seattle in the US and came across a Project Rachael brochure subtitled "Healing lives touched by abortion" – she had never heard of healing after an abortion and was impressed. She learned of Rachael's Vineyard Healing Retreat and returned to Seattle to attend a session where she found hope, healing, peace and reconciliation with her baby, with her God and with herself and it inspired her to bring the process back to Australia and start up the ministry here to help others who had been so affected. Julie's story has been told many times and Project Rachael has held out a helping hand to many women.



**Karyn Kammann, National President, at the commissioning of the new Presidents 2009**

**Karyn Kammann** our National President had joined us and she spoke about WYD and outlined plans for the National Conference 2009 in Perth. A wonderful **Conference Dinner** was held amidst much fun and laughter and when the DJ started up the music many of our members were up and danced the night away!

Thanks are extended to the **Parramatta Diocese** for hosting the Conference and for all their hard work and congratulations to State President **Catherine McGrath** and her Executive Committee for a prayerful, informative, interesting and happy CWLA-NSW Inc. State Conference 2008.

**Doreen Ford**  
**Communications Officer - CWLA-NSW Inc.**

## CANBERRA & GOULBURN ARCHDIOCESE

Greetings and good wishes to the CWLA Executive and all Members of the League throughout Australia. As the year draws to a close I wish to extend greetings to you all and may 2009 be a year of health and happiness.

Branches and Regional Diocesan Members within the Archdiocese are preparing to meet before going into recess for the holiday period. Central Region Executive recently hosted a most enjoyable Mid-Term Meeting, and Country Region Executive will be hosting a Christmas Lunch at the Redemptorist Monastery Galong in December.

World Community Day Special Services at the end of October were well attended and the Fellowship of the Least Coin collections were received and dedicated. Sincere thanks to the Branches hosting the Services.

Recently Catholic Women's League Canberra/ Goulburn combined with the Knights of the Southern Cross for two occasions. Firstly for a "Family Day" celebration at St. Benedict's Narrabundah and on 27 November both organisations attended a special Mass in remembrance of deceased Members.

In October four Archdiocesan Members of Catholic Women's League were part of the sixteen member Australian delegation which attended WUCWO Asia Pacific Regional Conference 2008 in Seoul Korea, the theme of which was "United in Faith and Action". It was informative, interesting, enjoyable and there was positive networking throughout. Our Korean hosts had certainly worked hard to make the Conference a success. Two Queensland members and two Canberra/Goulburn Members subsequently enjoyed a tour of South Korea.

The four Catholic Women's League members, who comprise part of the National Executive of Australian Church Women, report that plans are well in hand for the Bi-ennial National Australian Church Women's Conference scheduled to be held in Canberra 21–25 September 2009. Registration forms will shortly be available from the National Secretary Margaret Lawton, PO Box 487 Curtin 2605 and you are advised to book early. A visit to Floriade is included in the agenda. Hopefully Canberra will welcome you with warm sunny days and chilly nights, so do not forget a jacket in your luggage.

Enjoy your summer recess, before facing the many and varied challenges of 2009.

**Jacqueline Hipwell**  
**President – Canberra/Goulburn**

## SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Our State AGM was held on Monday, 20th October in Port Pirie. 57 members were present, representing 18 Branches in the Adelaide Archdiocese and 10 Branches in the Port Pirie Diocese.

Elections were held and our new State Executive is as follows :

**State President:** Pauline Victory

**State Vice-Presidents:** Anne-Marie Clark and Josie Frost

**State Secretary:** Kath Kelly

**State Treasurer:** Joan Young

**Committee:** Jo Dempsey, Pat Walker, Maureen Bevan, Denice Fetherstonhaugh, Helen McPhee, Geraldine Davis

**Public Officer:** Joan Young

**WUCWO:** Margaret Mariner

Our guest speaker at the meeting was Mr Chris Byrne, a wine grower who currently lives and works in Loxton in South Australia's Riverland. He has 23 acres of wine grapes at present, and he represents 1200 growers of the Wine Growers Assoc.

Chris explained how the Riverland became the first food bowl of the nation when, after WWI, ex-soldiers were issued a ration of fruit tree plants and 10 acre lots of land at Renmark, where they established a successful life. After WWII there were more soldier settlers, and then a new group of migrants in the 1960s who came to the area to work in the factories. They were hard working, trusting, open and honest workers.

With careful use of water from the River Murray, the early settlers achieved very high standards of irrigation, and became known for their horticultural achievements. The Riverland today grows about 5 times the volume of the Barossa Valley, and 25% of Australia's wine grapes.

The decline in the Riverland began in the late 2002-03 period when major corporate

organizations moved in and took over the 'big name' wine companies. The trust, openness and honesty was suddenly gone. Not one of the major wine companies or processing plants is now owned by a local company. The Riverland is not retaining enough of the wealth that is generated.

There is still a great community spirit but the people are being worn down. There are some mental health issues as a result of the stressful situation.

There is a large Christian population of various denominations in the Riverland, and a strong ecumenical spirit. Chris has great faith that prayer is the key to holding the Christian community together. He asked the CWL members to pray for the Riverland producers, and for rain. And we will.

**Pauline Victory**  
**President – South Australia**

## TASMANIA

Our 56<sup>th</sup> State Conference was held in Launceston from 19-21 September. The theme was "We are Ambassadors for Christ". We were proud and grateful to have with us the National President, Karyn Kammann and Vice-President General of WUCWO and Editor of "Women's Voice", Brenda Finlayson. The presence of both these ladies added greatly to the success of our Conference.

Having made a significant recovery from their dreadful car accident, Bernice McKenna and Kath Pearce (past State President and Secretary) conducted the conference in their usual efficient manner. Members were reassured of their progress when they were able to see them in person

In October we attended a forum on Paid Maternity Leave conducted by the Union Movement. In conjunction with many other women's organizations we signed a Joint Statement in support of paid maternity leave, having first made it clear that we believe strongly that all mothers, whether in the paid workplace or not, should receive paid maternity leave. This was supported by the Union Movement, although the unions recognize that it may not be forthcoming as early as payment to women in the paid workforce.

Our members take seriously their responsibility to support ecumenism and many attended Australian

Church Women's World Community Day services at the end of October. Contributions to Fellowship of the Least Coin which were collected during the year were presented and dedicated.

Tasmania is about to embark on a Diocesan Assembly. Men and women from all parts of Tasmania, including King and Flinders Islands will be attending, as well as Religious and a number who are involved in the Education, Welfare and Administration sectors of the Church. There will also be a strong presence of young pilgrims who participated in World Youth Day 2008. Sadly the League was not invited to participate.

We would encourage members of the League to join the Australian Christian Lobby. It is one of Australia's fastest growing political organisations and has been operating since 1996. It is non-partisan and operates at Federal, State and Local Government levels. Our State Social Issues Committee worked with the Australian Christian Lobby regarding brothel legislation, embryonic stem cell research and Medicare funding for second trimester abortion.



**Brenda Finlayson, WUCWO Board Member Australia, with Agnes Banim**

Our members also support Women's Forum Australia, a fairly recently established organisation, which brings together energetic, knowledgeable women, who share our aims. They have already worked tirelessly on issues such as abortion,

sexual exploitation, sexualisation of children, and exploitation of women through collection of women's eggs for stem cell research. They have already made a difference.

We were very interested to read the information from Margo Nancarrow about "Organ Donation after Death". This is a very complex issue and the more we know about it the better.



**Seen at the CWL Tasmania Conference**

We enjoy the colour photographs in the National Newsletter. It gives one an opportunity to put a face to names. Congratulations!

As the festive season approaches, we would like to wish all members of the League a happy, holy and peaceful Christmas with their families and friends.

**Lillian Deane  
President - Tasmania**

## WESTERN AUSTRALIA

We held a very successful Annual General Meeting/Conference on 17 October. Those who attended enjoyed the fellowship of the day. Auxiliary Bishop Don Sproston was able to attend and celebrated Mass for us. He, together with two representatives – Tammy Nguyen and Silvana Scarfe who had attended World Youth Day, gave us all a wonderful insight into the happenings at this event. We all wished we had been younger and able to experience this wonderful event.

CWLA National President, Karyn Kammann, spoke on what is happening in preparation for Western Australia to host the CWLA National Conference in 2009. Our prayers are with the team for the work ahead of them.

Peter Geers, a Seminarian from St Charles Seminary, shared his life story into the rough road he has travelled while getting to the decision to study for the priesthood. He spoke from the heart and it was wonderful to hear.

Ten members of CWLWA received their "Twenty Years of Service to CWL" certificates.



***Twenty Years Service Certificates received by Bev Macri, Barbara Paterniti, Noelle Guidera, Chris Lewis and Shirley Kelly***

Wonderful reports from Archdiocesan President, Dorothy Beyer, Geraldton Diocese, Pat Miragliotta, and Bunbury Diocese, Gemma Greaves were received on all the work that is being done in their areas.

Gemma has produced a DVD on the works and ideals of Catholic Women's League that can be used to let women know what this organisation is all about.

We finished our conference with a "Sundowner" instead of the usual dinner at night. This proved to be highly successful with lots of interaction between those who attended. A big thank you to all who helped in any way to make this a success.

We have a prayer chain being said for the outcome of our "Downey House building". Hopefully we will be able to sell and build a new building to take its place in the not too distant future. We wish all CWLA members Christmas Blessings, a very happy & holy Christmas wherever they may be. May this time be rewarding and prayerful.

**Bev Macri**  
**State Secretary – Western Australia**

## VICTORIA / WAGGA WAGGA

During the year, CWL members from the Health Awareness Committee of the Melbourne Archdiocesan Committee hold functions to raise funds for research into Ovarian & Prostate Cancer at the Annual Race Day at Flemington and a morning tea for Pink Ribbon Day.

This month they held a morning tea and concert to raise funds for the Choir of Hard Knocks. With over three hundred people in attendance, we were treated to the most wonderful concert by the Choir. These forgotten people are no longer forgotten. They are an amazing group of people, their singing is fantastic and their rendition of Alleluia reduced many to tears.

The event was held at the RACV Club in Melbourne. The RACV was most generous in donating prizes for the raffle. They have been a great support to the Health Awareness Committee.

Our members have been working very hard to prevent many of the laws presented by our current government. Unfortunately, we along with so many other groups whom we work with have been unsuccessful due to the part played by members of Emily's List. Archbishop Hart has taken the fight to the politicians and while we may have lost the current battle, the war is still raging.

May 2009 brings forth a "World Made New" - a world where the 'Culture of Life' reigns supreme and where Christians and the members of other faiths are free to practice and live out their faith beliefs.

**Madge Fahy**  
**President - Victoria/Wagga Wagga**



### *Let Us Keep Christmas*

***Whatever else be lost among the years,  
Let us keep Christmas still a shining thing;  
Whatever doubts assail us, or what fears,  
Let us hold close one day, remembering  
It's poignant meaning for the hearts of men.  
Let us get back our childlike faith again.***

**Grace Noll Crowell**



## National International Secretary Report



WUCWO Asia Pacific Regional Conference

The following Statement was released at the conclusion of the Conference held in Seoul, South Korea October 26-31, 2008.

Fourteen women from Australia attended the Conference. We were blessed to have Father Pat McMullen, a Columban priest working in South Korea, celebrate the Mass prepared by CWLA on Day 2, and also as a concelebrating priest at the Opening and Closing Masses. We were pleased to have Mrs Joan McMullen, mother of Father Pat, who was CWL New Zealand representative join our group.

**Thora Regan AM**  
**CWLA NIS**

### THEME: WOMEN, PEACEMAKERS: UNITED IN FAITH AND ACTION

“LIVE IN HARMONY AND PEACE, AND THE GOD OF LOVE AND PEACE WILL BE WITH YOU”

(2 CORINTHIANS 13:11)

WE, THE WOMEN OF WUCWO ASIA PACIFIC REGION, DULY ASSEMBLED, DO HEREBY –

UNDERSTAND, THAT THE ASIA PACIFIC REGION IS AN AREA WHERE, DESPITE THE DIVERSITY OF RACE, CULTURE AND RELIGION, PEOPLE DO CO-EXIST;

RECOGNIZE, THAT TO OVERCOME THE DIFFERENCES OF RACE, NATIONALITY, SOCIAL STATUS AND RELIGION, WE MUST WORK FOR PEACE;

ACKNOWLEDGE, THAT AUTHENTIC PEACE IS ATTAINABLE BASED ON THE RESPECT FOR DIGNITY AND WORTH OF WOMEN BY PROMOTING DIALOGUES AND LISTENING; FORGIVING AND LOVING, AND ACCEPTING THAT THE SOURCE OF PEACE IS ONLY GOD HIMSELF;

AND THUS HEREBY RESOLVE –

- TO BE INVOLVED IN THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESSES THAT PROMOTE THE “CULTURE OF LIFE”, URGE THE GOVERNMENT TO WORK FOR BILATERAL AGREEMENTS WITH COUNTRIES FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF MIGRANT WORKERS;
- TO PROMOTE AWARENESS ON THE RIGHTS AND DIGNITY OF WOMEN, WORK FOR A POSITIVE CHANGE OF ATTITUDES OF MEN TOWARDS WOMEN, AND ENABLE WOMEN THRU VARIOUS POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMS WITH THE END IN VIEW OF IMPROVING THEIR QUALITY OF LIFE;
- TO HELP SUSTAIN WOMEN’S EFFORTS IN PEACE NEGOTIATIONS AND POST-CONFLICT PROCESSES BY ENDORSING WOMEN TO BE A MEMBER OF THE PEACE TALK PANEL;
- TO EMBRACE AN ECOLOGICAL CONVERSATION ON A PERSONAL AND COMMUNITY LEVEL;
- TO MAKE A CONSCIOUS EFFORT TO EXPAND OUR CIRCLES OF COMPASSION, FROM OUR FAMILY TO OUR NEIGHBOUR AND SOCIETY, INCLUDING MIGRANTS AND DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILIES.

SO HELP US GOD.



## Social Issues Convenor Report



**FILTERING THE WEB.** On New Years Day 2008 the Federal Government in the person of Stephen Conroy, Communication Minister, announced their determination to filter Pornography at Service Provider level. The Minister received blanket criticism for the next 8 days. We don't know how many people congratulated the Minister but CWLA was among the first to do so.

Since being appraised of the Ministers "determination" to accomplish the task we have heard little about its progress. The daily press report many seizures, arrests and prosecutions of 'kiddie' porn producers and pedlars that clearly demonstrate a lively market for the product. The appetite for this degrading material is undoubtedly fed and kept alive on the Internet.

To quote Minister Stephen Conroy in January "Labour is committed to introducing mandatory ISP filtering and everything possible must be done to shield children from violent and pornographic online material". Senator Conroy said the Australian communications and Media Authority would prepare a blacklist of unsuitable sites and "clean feed" would prevent users accessing prohibited content. Despite unparalleled opposition Senator Conroy went on to say "if the people equate freedom of speech with watching child pornography, then the Rudd Labour government is going to disagree".

Why then has Minister Conroy been so slow to act upon his self-proclaimed intention? Maybe he hasn't been slow and is making progress against fierce opposition but we are not being informed.

According to Bernadette McMenemy, the chief executive of anti child abuse group Child Wise, more than 100,000 commercial websites offer child pornography and more than 20,000 images of Child pornography are posted on the internet every week. There could be as many as 30 million

sites globally. The U.S. is by far the largest source of illegal and offensive material (53%) followed by Russia (11%). It is frightening to learn that there are millions of pornographic websites available to children. Australian newspapers (8<sup>th</sup> Nov.) report that an Australian man has been sexually abusing his six year old daughter and six month old granddaughter and selling the material to an agent in America. The material was traced and a raid by FBI special agent Nick Savage netted the largest collection of pornography involving "infants and babies I have ever seen". We never hear what becomes of the victims.

As introductory trials of mandatory ISP filtering in 2009 continue, the industry proclaims the plan "stupid and hopefully doomed to failure".

The industry gives five reasons for objecting to the clean feed campaign – that will require Internet Service Provider's to provide a NET connection, free of a list of material deemed undesirable for children. Adults will then be obliged to 'opt-in' if they want largely unfettered access to this type of material.

The 4<sup>th</sup> November issue of APC (Australian Personal Computer Magazine) has given five reasons why the plan is stupid and added a 'bonus' 6<sup>th</sup> point.

1. "It will slow everything down" – what matter if we protect people from the evil of pornography that perverts our second strongest instinct by inflaming unhealthy sexual appetites.
2. "Offensive is in the eye of the beholder" – this stuff perverts sexual appetites, and is "the first addiction that leaves indelible images on the viewers brain" according to Dr. Mary Anne Layden PhD, Co-Director, Sexual Trauma and Psychopathology Program and Director of Education at the Centre for Cognitive Therapy, Dept. of Psychiatry, University of Pennsylvania who works with sex offenders.
3. "It presumes families care about this stuff" – families hope and pray and do care.
4. "It makes Australia look stupid on a global scale" – we are not the only nation concerned about the porn epidemic, instead of wringing our hands we are attempting to do something about it.
5. "The people supporting it don't like mounting rational arguments" – this is false. Communications Day recently quoted Jim Wallace, managing director of the Australian

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## ABOUT BIOETHICS



### Research

Have you ever been asked to take part in a health related research project or the testing of a new drug? Do you know of anyone else who has participated in such activities? Could there be any harm to participants? Are there any safeguards in place for participants? How can we be sure that the research or drug testing procedures are ethical?

In his address to the Jubilee of Scientists in 2000, John Paul II indicated that, "The Church has a great esteem for scientific and technological research... It can be said, in fact, that research, by exploring the greatest and the smallest, contributes to the glory of God which is reflected in every part of the universe". He went on to say that men and women of learning have a great responsibility and are asked to work in a way that serves the good of individuals and of all humanity, while always being attentive to the dignity of every human being and to respect for creation. "Every scientific approach needs an ethical base and a wise openness to a culture that respects the needs of the person".

From the Pontifical Academy for Life in 2003 comes the statement, "... a particularly important role falls to scientists in the area of biomedicine, who are called to work for the well-being and health of human beings, the ultimate aim of every research activity in this field must be the integral good of man. The means it uses, must fully respect every person's inalienable dignity as a person, his right to life and his substantial physical integrity."

In the document from the Holy See 'On Human Cloning' we read, "The Holy See is convinced of the need to support and promote scientific research for the benefit of humanity. Thus, the Holy See earnestly encourages investigations that are being carried out in the fields of medicine and biology, with the goal of curing diseases and

of improving the quality of life of all, provided that they are respectful of the dignity of the human being. This respect demands that any research that is inconsistent with the dignity of the human being is morally excluded."

The Catechism of the Catholic Church, '*Respect for the person and scientific research*' says, "Scientific, medical, or psychological experiments on human individuals or groups can contribute to healing the sick and the advancement of public health." (2292) The next item states that, "Science and technology by their very nature require unconditional respect for fundamental moral criteria." And further, "Experimentation on human beings is not morally legitimate if it exposes the subject's life or physical and psychological integrity to disproportionate or avoidable risks. Experimentation on human beings does not conform to the dignity of the person if it takes place without the informed consent of the subject or those who legitimately speak for him."

This information tells us that the Church supports research on humans but with strict guidelines regarding such issues as consent, risk of harm, respect for and dignity of life. The question posed earlier is, 'How can we be sure that the research or drug testing procedures are ethical?'

In Australia, we have the **National Health and Medical Research Council, (NHMRC)**. NHMRC is Australia's peak body for health and medical research; for health advice; and for ethics in health care and in health and medical research. The *National Health and Medical Research Council Act 1992* (NHMRC Act) establishes the NHMRC as a statutory body and sets out its functions, powers and obligations.

The NHMRC brings together within a single national organisation the functions of research funding and development of advice. One of its strengths is that it draws upon the resources of all components of the health system, including governments, medical practitioners, nurses and allied health professionals, researchers, teaching and research institutions, public and private program managers, service administrators, community health organisations, social health researchers and consumers.

**The Australian Health Ethics Committee (AHEC)** advises the NHMRC on ethical issues relating to health and the development of guidelines for the conduct of medical research involving humans.

**The National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research**, was developed jointly by National Health and Medical Research Council, Australian Research Council and the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee in 2007.

You may remember that on your behalf I submitted comments on the draft document in 2006.

The purpose of this National Statement is to promote ethically good human research. Fulfilment of this purpose requires that participants be accorded the respect and protection that is due to them.

The document sets out guidelines related to areas such as,

- Values and principles of ethical conduct; risk and benefit, consent
- Interventions and therapies, including clinical and non-clinical trials
- Human tissue samples; Human genetics and Human stem cells
- Women who are pregnant and the human foetus, and children and young people
- People highly dependent on medical care who may be unable to give consent such as people with a cognitive impairment, an intellectual disability, or a mental illness

Respect for human beings is the common thread through all the discussions of ethical values. The design, review and conduct of research must reflect each of these values.

Research often generates ethical dilemmas in which it may be impossible to find agreement. In such circumstances, it is important that all those involved in research and its review bring a heightened ethical awareness to their thinking and decision-making.

This National Statement does not exhaust the ethical discussion of human research. Where other guidelines and codes of practice in particular research fields are consistent with the National Statement, researchers and members of ethical review bodies should draw on them when necessary to clarify researchers' ethical obligations in particular contexts.

**Catholic Health, Australia** has devoted a section in their *'Code of Ethical Standards'* to research (6.1, through 6.22). The topics include, consent issues; vulnerable and incompetent participants;

research designs; donation of body for research and teaching; research involving embryos and fetuses; genetic research; animal research and research ethics committees.

### **Research and Embryonic Stem Cells**

On 9 April 2002 Cardinal Pell announced that a \$50,000 grant was to be made available to a research team at Griffith University led by Professor Alan Mackay-Sim, whose team was conducting research into the development of therapies to utilize stem cells extracted from patients' nasal lining to replace those lost to disease. In July 2005, the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney announced a grant of \$100,000 to support and foster research on the therapeutic potential of adult stem cells. Cardinal Pell said when announcing the 2005 grant, "The breakthroughs in adult stem cell research are exciting and impressive. The achievements to date in this area far surpass anything that has been attained in the area of embryonic stem cell research. The Catholic Church always supports good science working from a good ethical foundation, and the Archdiocese of Sydney is delighted to be able to collaborate with researchers making inroads in this vitally important area."

**In December 2007**, Cardinal Pell announced the recipients of that grant as an Adelaide-based team, to research the viability of adult stem cells, derived from human dental pulp tissue, to be differentiated into healthy brain cells that could be used to treat victims of stroke. He said, "This is exactly the sort of ethical, innovative and life-enhancing research that the grant was established to promote".

In 2006, Fr. Tadeusz Pacholczyk, one of the foremost bioethicists of the Catholic Church, repeated that the Church is an enthusiastic supporter, not an enemy of stem-cell research.

During his presentation, highly qualified Fr. Pacholczyk (USA) explained that it is the source of stem cells that is at the heart of ethics in stem-cell research, not the research itself. The extraction of stem cells from human embryos is always morally evil on account of the method necessarily destroying the life of the embryo. Fr. Pacholczyk explained that the Catholic Church only applauds that research which uses stem-cells procured from methods that do not violate human life. He noted that unlike embryonic stem cells, stem cells derived from adult tissues and pregnancy matter have shown impressive results without carrying

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Christian Lobby, on why mandatory filtering is desirable. "The need to prevent access to illegal hard-core material and child pornography must be placed above the industries desire for unfettered access". I could give them a great deal of rational argument and many examples of sexual sickness from our daily papers.

6. "It's the thin edge of the wedge" – this is the old censorship argument. We are obsessed with healthy eating but apparently it's OK to put anything into our minds.

Whatever else you are involved in be sure that you support the Government's determination to curtail this multi million dollar industry that is destroying our nation. Support this Federal government initiative by writing to: Minister Stephen Conroy, c/o Parliament House, Canberra, 2600

**Betty Roberts OAM**  
**Social Issues Convenor**

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any ethical dilemma or risk of tumours and death to patients.

Do not be afraid to be part of a health research project, but make sure that you are very well informed about the project, ask questions and get independent advice before you give consent. The documents I have mentioned are available on the internet and the **National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research can be downloaded.** ([www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications](http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications)).

The reference list for this article is available. Please let me know if you would like a copy.

Thank you to all for the help and support that you have given me throughout the year, particularly all the prayers for my husband who is well at the moment. I wish each and every one of you all the blessings for the Christmas season and the coming New Year.

**Margo Nancarrow**  
**Bioethics Convenor**

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