

the natural news

Quarterly newsletter of the Australian Council of Natural Family Planning

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www.ozemail.com.au/~acnfp

Spring 2002

The Rewards of NFP

By Maree Thompson
NFP Rockhampton

As teachers and users of NFP know, there is plenty we would love to say to encourage others to discover the benefits of healthy, NATURAL, family planning. Being asked to come up with a suitable bumper sticker slogan is something else! What a challenge — but what a great way to advertise our GOOD NEWS! So, like all of you out there I dutifully jotted down a few meaningful ideas and sent them away. I was quite surprised to hear that one of my ideas was successful — imagine that!

I'm sure there are many people out there who are searching for what we have to offer. My husband Phil and I were pleased to learn about NFP when we did, and we became diligent users for over 32 years.

When we married we had plans to become pregnant as soon as possible, but somebody 'up there' had other ideas. On medical advice we began temperature taking, and it didn't take us long to work things out. Our first baby finally arrived, then our second and our third, so we began using the Sympto-Thermo method to give us a break. We later planned our fourth and fifth children, and our family was complete.

With Phil's support, and much encouragement from Jane Setter, I became a qual-



Maree Thompson (right) with her mother and daughter, Kathy.

ified NFP teacher, and now have over 21 years experience teaching many wonderful couples about this great gift of fertility.

In recent years [Phil and I have] weathered the menopausal 'storm' and are now delighted to be sailing in much calmer waters! This was made so much easier for me having knowledge of NFP and menopausal changes.

We feel blessed to have had the benefit of all that NFP offered us over the years as we journeyed from one life stage to the next. We're now able to reap the rewards and benefits that it brings... knowledge, understanding, acceptance, good communication, loving and sharing, and a caring that is deep enough to want to respect and appreciate all it has meant to us in our family.

To use NFP means to understand fertility, and fertility is an intimate and intricate part of that ESSENCE OF LIFE that dwells within each of us. It is surely the essence of God's love — His gift to us.

from the president

Susan Berg

Dear Fellow Members,

This is my last letter to you as President of ACNFP after four years in the position. My four years have flown by and even though a lot has been accomplished there is always more to do. My Presidency started with a mission to move forward in a peaceful way with OMR&RCA, and thus the National NFP Board was established. Much politicking, negotiating and compromising went into this process. The NFP Board is working well as a management body on behalf of the Bishops' Conference and I will continue as a Board member till June 2003.



In my two, two year terms as President the ACNFP client materials were written, a Promotions Committee was established, and a new look news letter, *The Natural News*, was created. For the 2002 National Conference (hosted for the first time by the ACNFP Executive), the ACNFP Standards and Policy document Mark II will be launched. The client material addition on 'The Cervix' will also be launched.

I could not have accomplished these and many other tasks without the support of my fellow Executive Members and the members of the standing committees; namely the Teacher Training Committee and the Promotions Committee. Mrs Ann Nicey, my Administrations Officer, has been outstanding in her commitment to me as President, and the Executive of ACNFP and I thank her for this.

I would also like to thank you, the membership, for your support and commit-

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**Things that are easy aren't
always the best.**
Try Natural Family Planning —
forget the rest.
1800 114 010

Congratulations to Maree Thompson, for the winning entry in our Bumper Sticker Competition!

inside

- Baby Has No Official Protection Under ACT Law — 2
- Spreading the Word — 3

- ACNFP Conference Program 2002 — 4/5
- Dealing with Couples in the 21st Century — 6

- The Female Condom — 7
- NFP National contact details — 8
- Call for Volunteers — 8

Baby Has No Official Protection Under ACT Law

By Mary Joseph

President, ACT Right to Life Association

Who are blessed to live in the nation's capital love our beautiful city of Canberra. But just a few weeks ago, tragedy and shame came to our city with the ACT Legislative Assembly voting to legalise abortion, completely repealing the life-preserving laws that had been in place since the foundation of the Territory. In the words of our Archbishop, Francis Carroll, Wednesday, August 21, 2002 will be remembered as a "day of shame" for the ACT.

As well as being a tragedy for each individual mother and child, these losses are devastating from a social and spiritual perspective. Teaching children about respect for human life becomes harder when the very values espoused by the law are so hostile to pregnancy and motherhood.

The close vote to decriminalise abortion — just 9 votes to 8 — was the culmination of a long and intensely fought campaign that began in December last year, when a Labor member, Wayne Berry, announced he would introduce two bills to remove abortion from the *Crimes Act* and to repeal the *Health Regulation (Maternal Health Information) Act*, adopted in 1998. This latter law, introduced by pro-life MLA (and former rugby league player) Paul Osborne, provided valuable protections for women considering an abortion, such as an information booklet produced independently of the abortion clinic, and a 72-hour cooling-off period, to help women who might be under pressure to have an abortion. It also required the Health Department to collect quarterly statistics detailing the practice of abortion in the ACT, and expressly affirmed the right of conscientious objection of anyone who might be asked to participate in an abortion.

All of these laws are now gone, and the implications of this change can only be described as devastating. An unborn child in the ACT may now be legally aborted at any stage of preg-

nancy, up to the point of birth. Late term abortions and abortions of children with disabilities are subject only to the approval (in effect, the rubber-stamping) of internal hospital "ethics committees". There is no accountability for hospital decisions and no law for the community to act upon. There is no protection of unborn children even in criminal assaults on the mother, such as domestic violence. In the eyes of the law, the baby simply does not exist until it is born. Women considering an abortion no longer have the limited but important safeguards that were in place, to give them independent information about the risks of abortion and the availability of pregnancy support and abortion alternatives — information that the abortion clinic does not provide.

As well as being a tragedy for each individual mother and child, these losses are devastating from a social and spiritual perspective. Teaching children about respect for human life becomes harder when the very values espoused by the law are so hostile to pregnancy and motherhood.

After the vote took place, a staffer who was 10 weeks pregnant shared with me how frightened she was to realise that now her baby officially had no protection under the law. It's sad and shocking that those who cast their vote to decriminalise abortion on supposedly "feminist" principles have in reality attacked the special status of pregnant women and deprived them of all legal recognition for the children they bear in their wombs. Instead of nurturing and increasing the respect and protection that the community should accord women, they have trivialised and diminished it with their vote.

In spite of what has happened to our laws, it is important to remember that the law can only do so much. What is really needed is a conversion of heart — the awareness of the beauty and sacredness of human life and the ways our society needs to change to come into harmony with this truth. Sadly, we've seen that hearts have become hardened to the reality of abortion. But there is always hope, through the healing love of Christ and the ministry of the Church.

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ment to ACNFP. I have had the opportunity to meet most of you over the past four years. I encourage you to keep up the good work in our special ministry.

In my final President's letter I ask you to have a close look at the way you as individual work in the ministry of Natural Family Planning. Are you doing promotion the way you have always done it? Are you targeting the same area of your community or have you branched out into new community trends? I feel that if we don't keep up with community trends and the way society is moving, NFP will get lost. We as NFP teachers need to change the way we promote our service, and the language we use needs to be changed to keep in tune with current trends.

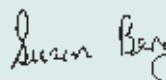
Nationally, the numbers of NFP clients are still on the decline. However in some areas, such as Perth and Broken Bay, the numbers are on the increase. What are these areas doing different to yours? Ask Ann O Donnell (Perth) or myself in Broken Bay.

How is the level of staff in your area structured? Are you a lone worker with very little support? How can you change this? Can you get support from a teacher in another area or a major centre? We need to share ideas and get in touch with other NFP teachers about changes and trends in society. Are you counting client numbers and educational services correctly? Remember the educational service has replaced the SRH client! Is there an OMR&RCA teacher near you? Can you network with her to share ideas so you are not targeting the same groups? This could lead to you covering a larger catchment area between you.

Finally, I have been asked by quite a few members to stay on the Executive and I have been nominated to a position on the Committee that requires less responsibility. However, I will be there to support the new President. In addition I will be focusing my responsibilities in the Broken Bay Diocese, co-ordinating Occupational Health and Safety for the Diocese and Centacare. I will also continue to co-ordinate NFP for Centacare Broken Bay.

Once again, thank you for your support over the last four years; please feel free to contact me at any time. Wishing you all the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Yours sincerely,



Susan Berg
President, 1998-2002

Spreading the Word

By Cheryl Curnow
Manager, NFP Program

Remember when it seemed that a large majority of our clients had surnames like Kelly or O'Rourke, names which gave weight to their Irish ancestry? Or, if they were not of Irish extraction, they were from Central Europe. Remember when promoting NFP meant making sure the parish priest knew the name of the local NFP teacher and advised couples getting married where they could access Catholic family planning? If we were enterprising, perhaps an advertisement was placed in the *Catholic Weekly*. But mostly we 'networked' — talking to other mums after Mass or on canteen roster, sharing experiences and confiding whether we used 'Billings' or 'Temperature'. Then — as now — we relied heavily on 'word of mouth'. Were these NFP promotion strategies effective? Most definitely they were!

We knew what service (or product) we had to offer — the means to avoid, space or prevent pregnancy. We could identify our potential clients (or market) — Catholic couples wanting to avoid, space or prevent pregnancy in accordance with the teachings of the Catholic Church. And clients knew how to access NFP centres — they found us!

But times have changed. Our range of services has expanded, our clients are no longer just newly married Catholics, and we now have to attract our clients. Clearly, old promotion strategies are no longer the answer. It is time for a rethink.

Identifying our unique place in the competitive health sector is the first step. At first glance, this seems easy — we help couples plan families! But so does Family Planning Australia, and so do many other like-minded organisations. FPA offers a quick and effective service involving a choice of techniques for intercepting fertility. From a consumer's point of view, it is a simple solution. The health professional writes a script or inserts a

device, and presto, the health professional has solved the 'problem' of unplanned conception.

So, how is our service delivery definably different? NFP centres offer a distinctive 'client-centred' approach to sexual and reproductive health, providing a continuum of care throughout the reproductive lifespan via a range of client and education services from adolescence to the peri-menopause. Through a process of knowledge and understanding, couples are empowered to meet their own family planning needs. Clients can begin with any service — for instance having used chemical contraception it may be that sometime later a knowledge of NFP can help a couple to conceive that precious bundle. Or they may come and go as they choose, perhaps receiving an education service at school then electing to use NFP while breast-feeding a new infant. We do not offer a selection of family planning methods — only one — a natural and non-interventionist method. Funding by the Commonwealth Government endorses this specialist skill.

Ensuring services are 'saleable' and have consumer appeal necessitates ongoing critical evaluation. There is no point having a great service that no one wants. Having something to sell is one thing. Having enough consumers (or buyers) to purchase it is something else. Increasing the public demand for NFP services requires:

- ensuring our traditional 'avoiding pregnancy' service is 'value-added' and is distinguishable from similar services; and/or
- increasing our market share, or finding new markets in those services where inroads have already been made (Pre-Marriage Education, LAM and achieving pregnancy); and/or
- introducing new services, or marketing current services differently.

A case in point is the service in fertility awareness. There is scope to think outside the square here. This is a service which is about empowering

women to be informed about their bodies and has the potential to be marketed as a basic health tool, akin to a Pap Smear. If this service could be seen as a '*pre*' family planning service — *pre* the use of **any** family planning method — it becomes relevant to **all** women in their reproductive years. Uncharted waters maybe, but educating women about their bodies is certainly one niche arguably not adequately catered for.

For the first time in Australia, a well-resourced national promotion is getting underway to promote natural fertility management; and this year there is a customer focus. (It is also possible to approach this from a health professional perspective.) Picking up on established client motives for using Natural Family Planning such as 'healthy' and 'natural', magazines have been chosen which would appeal to the contemporary discerning couple — *Good Medicine*, *Wellbeing* and *Pregnancy & Birth* for advertisement placements. Because reinforcement is critical in any successful campaign, placements will appear in multiple editions of each publication, and centres will be asked to augment the national strategy with 'flow-on' promotional activities at the local level.

One single voice with one clear message that provides a real alternative in family planning!

As important as advertising is in raising the profile of natural fertility management, clearly advertisements in the print or electronic media is not enough. Nothing can take the place of strong links with key personnel and allied organisations. Yes, this is hard work. But there is no short cut if natural fertility management is to become part of the mainstream sexual and reproductive agenda.

Let us not sell ourselves short here. We can meet this challenge by harnessing the huge potential we already have. It is about new ways of communicating traditional concepts. Can we effectively spread the good news about NFP today? I am quietly confident that we can.

ACNFP Conference Program 2002

Friday 25th October

- 6.00pm** **Registration**
- 7.00pm** **Opening**
Welcome by President
- 7.30pm** **NFP Board**
Panel
Cheryl Curnow
Tom O'Donnell
Susan Berg
- 9.00pm** **Client Material Launch and Policy Document**
- 9.30pm** **Housekeeping Rules**
- Supper

Saturday 26th October

- 8.45am** **Morning Prayer**
- 9.00am** **Workshops**
LAM Update
Terry Bennett and Helen Barry
Promotion
Marita Franklin
- 10.30am** **Morning Tea**
- 11.00am** **Endometriosis**
Dr Geoff Reid
- 12.30pm** **Lunch**
- 1.30pm** **Workshops**
Pre-Marriage
Carol Maber and Carole Price
FLE — Schools
Krina McGlaughlin and Ann O'Donnell
- 3.00pm** **Afternoon Tea**
- 3.30pm** **AGM**
- 5.00pm** **Free Time**
- 6.00pm** **Conference Mass**
- 7.00pm** **Conference Dinner**
Entertainment: Cameron Semmens
- ## Sunday 27th October
- 8.45am** **Morning Prayer**
- 9.00am** **IVF**
Simon Walton
- 10.45am** **Morning Tea**
- 11.15am** **'A Catholic Response to Fertility'**
Fr Gerald Gleeson
- 1.00pm** **Closing**
Presentation of new Executive
- 1.30pm** **Lunch**

Things to see and do in Sydney

AUSTRALIA'S largest city is a city that never shuts down; it is a constant hive of activity. During your stay in Sydney, why not take the opportunity to explore the city's famous landmarks, beaches, the Harbour, parks, and shopping.

Sydney Opera House

- Where:** Bennelong Point, Sydney. Alight at Circular Quay Station.
- Contact:** 02-9250-7250
- Open:** Daily tours 8.30am-5pm daily. Box Office 9am-8.30pm Mon-Fri and 2.5 hrs prior to the start of Sunday performances.



BridgeClimb

What better way to view the Harbour City than to climb one of its greatest icons? Each tour includes a complimentary group photo and a Climber Certificate. The total experience takes 3 hours from check-in.

- Cost:** Midweek: \$130 per adult Weekend: \$160 per adult
(Nightclimb Weekday: \$160 per adult Weekend: \$180 per adult)
- Departures:** Regular scheduled departures daily. Bookings essential.
- Bookings:** Ticket hotline open 7am-7pm, 7 days. Phone 02-8274-7777



Museum of Sydney

— on the site of the first Government House

The Museum of Sydney is an imaginative museum offering the visitor a journey of discovery and wonder through Sydney 1788 and beyond. Fascinating exhibitions, films and state of the art technology spin stories of colonial life, Aboriginal culture, environment, trade, authority/law and everyday dramas and dreams.

The Museum of Sydney is built on the site of the earliest foundations of British colonisation in Australia. Here, in 1788, Governor Arthur Phillip built the first Government

House — the home, offices and seat of authority for the first nine Governors of New South Wales.

Open: 9.30am-5pm daily
Where: Cnr Phillip and Bridge Sts, Sydney
Contact: 02-9251-5988
Admission: Adult \$7, Concession \$3, Family \$17

Government House

Government House was constructed between 1837-1845. It is the most sophisticated example of a Gothic Revival building in New South Wales.

The ground floor State rooms include the dining room, drawing room and ballroom. These contain an outstanding collection of 19th and 20th century furnishings and decoration that reflect changing styles and the differing tastes of the Governors and their wives. The first floor includes State apartments that were used by the Governor, visiting members of the Royal family and other heads of State.

Open: 10am-3pm Fri-Sun by guided tour. Tours leave every half hour. Grounds open daily 10am-4pm.
Where: Macquarie St, Sydney
Contact: 02-9931-5222
Admission: Free

The Royal Botanic Gardens

The oldest scientific institution in Australia and site of the first farm in Australia, where 7500 trees now spread across 30 hectares of succulent gardens.

Open: 7am-sunset
Where: Mrs Macquarie's Rd, Sydney
Contact: 02-9231-8111
Admission: Free

The Rocks

The historic site of Sydney's first European settlement, The Rocks contains many beautifully restored buildings from Sydney's early days as a colonial town. Explore the maze of original cobblestone lanes that lead to a range of shops, cafes and restaurants. The shopping ranges from Australian design in fashion, art, craft and jewellery to unique collectables and souvenirs.

Where: 1km north of the CBD. Bus from Central Station or by train alight at Circular Quay.
Must Sees: Cadman's Cottage, Colonial House Museum, Susannah Place, Sydney Observatory, The Rocks Market (open Sat and Sun), Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney Harbour Ervin Gallery, Customs House, Ken Done Gallery, Wharf Theatre, BridgeClimb, SHB Museum and Pylon, Lookout, The Rocks Walking Tour.

Chinatown, Paddy's Market

Located adjacent to Darling Harbour, Sydney's Chinatown is filled with restaurants, food halls and noodle bars specialising in genuine Chinese cuisine. At weekends it's crowded with locals and visitors for Yum Cha. Paddy's Market adjoins Chinatown and is Sydney's biggest and best traditional market offering just about everything a keen bargain hunter could want. Clothes, shoes, souvenirs and fresh food are just some of the items on offer at these markets. Shop at Market City for bargains in clothing and gifts.

The Haymarket area has many entertainment facilities and theatres, such as The Capitol or the Sydney

Entertainment Centre. The Spanish Quarter, close to George Street also holds a great deal of opportunity for nighttime entertainment and food — Spanish style!

Sydney's Famous Beaches

Bondi Beach: 5.5km east of the CBD. Alight train at Bondi Junction, take bus to beach.
Bondi-Coogee Coastal Walk: The 6km long trail takes 2 hours to complete. The walk heads south from the promenade of Bondi beach, and features breathtaking views of the ocean.
Manly: Take Manly Ferry from Circular Quay, or bus from Wynyard Station.



The ACNFP Conference features some of Australia's foremost experts on Natural Family Planning and related issues. Below are brief backgrounds of four of those experts.

Fr Gerald Gleeson — Fr Gerald Gleeson teaches Philosophy and Christian Ethics at the Catholic Institute of Sydney. He was educated at the Catholic Institute of Sydney, the University of Cambridge and the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium. He is a research associate at the Plunkett Centre for Ethics in Health Care, and is currently President of the Catholic Moral Theology Association of Australia and New Zealand.

Dr Terry Bennett — Terry is husband of Carolyn, father of seven mostly grown up children, and in his spare time is a general practitioner in suburban Brisbane. He has an active interest in Natural Family Planning, which began in Central Queensland in 1972 and has continued, through his role as Director of Natural Family Planning Clinic at the Mater Mothers Hospital Brisbane, since 1975. Terry has served on the Executive of the ACNFP and its committees in several capacities. As well as his belief in the role NFP has to play in primary health care, he is concerned with the pastoral application of family planning and responsible parenthood.

Helen Barry — Helen has been happily married to Peter for 26 years. They have three living children (now adults). Helen developed a special awareness of the needs of subfertile clients through her experience of the intrauterine foetal death of their third baby. A registered midwife, she has been a Natural Family Planning teacher since 1979 and since 1987 has worked as a NFP teacher, and Co-ordinator of the Brisbane Mater NFP Clinic. Her special interests are LAM, subfertility and pastoral care.

Ann O'Donnell — Ann was the founder member of NFP Services Perth, in 1968. She became a member of ACNFP in 1974, Co-ordinator of NFP Services Perth in 1978, and has been Director of NFP Services Perth since 1983, and the ACNFP Trainer for Western Australia since 1999. She has been involved with Training Programs since the start, Marriage Education, and various research programs and publications.

Photos credit: www.4feetphoto.com
Text credit: Tourism NSW

Dealing with Couples in the 21st Century

By Ian McGuinness

Manager, Centacare Broken Bay



First came into contact with the men and women of NFP over thirteen years ago. The Diocese of Broken Bay was about to start its own Pre-Marriage Education Course and one of those invited to explain what was already available was Anne McGowan. Anne was to remain with us for the next decade. So were others including Dr John Gallagher, Evelyn Brien and Carol Maher. Carol is still with us and Broken Bay now has its own NFP unit headed by Susan Berg. To all the NFP teachers who have added greatly to the success of our course, the Diocese of Broken Bay and Centacare thank you.

Standing in front of a class of modern, engaged couples is not easy. Over 80% of them are co-habiting, about 50% entering a mixed faith marriage, a large percentage, though baptised, are unchurched. In thirteen years of facilitating around 150 pre-marriage courses only once has a couple publicly professed the virtue of virginity! Of course, this is not to say that other couples do not privately profess this belief — they do. But overwhelmingly, the majority of couples are sexually active and taking means to prevent conception. What can one say to couples such as these?

One could use the argument that contraception is against God's law. However, the couples will surely ask you where that law is in the Bible. Simply quoting the statement from *Humanae Vitae* that the two meanings of the sexual act, the unitive meaning and the procreative meaning, cannot be broken will not hold water; they will need more. Or perhaps one could say that it is a law that Catholics must believe in because the Pope has said so. Then many will ask you with varying degrees of politeness when is the Church going to drag itself into the twenty-first century where the other mainstream Christian churches are to be found. Another option would be to use the historical method and tell the couples that until the Lambeth Conference of 1930 when the Anglican Church became the first Christian church to condone contraception, all churches, as well as many leg-

islatures, taught that contraception was wrong. Because this argument, like the other two, is an argument from the top down it will not work either. So the question is: "What will work?"

With an audience such as described above, it is imperative that what is said to them be couched in terms that they will respond to. After all, about one quarter of the couples do not believe that Catholic moral teaching on contraception applies to them because they are not Catholics; another quarter because they have little to do with the Church into which they were baptised; a large percentage of the rest because they feel they have to justify decisions already taken. To reach these people, input must be factual, complete, devoid of obvious bias and preferably sourced from areas other than the Church. And this is exactly what is done at Broken Bay's courses by NFP educators.

After all, about one quarter of the couples do not believe that Catholic moral teaching on contraception applies to them because they are not Catholics; another quarter because they have little to do with the Church into which they were baptised; a large percentage of the rest because they feel they have to justify decisions already taken.

In the Diocese of Broken Bay the method used is to divide the participants into groups of two or three couples, each group having a different form of contraceptive. Each group reports to the others, answers any questions from the floor and is supported and gently corrected by the NFP educator. The result has been extraordinary. This unit is often favourably commented upon in the evaluation sheets and couples gather around the educator during lunch time to ask questions. According to reports from NFP clinics a high percentage of their clients come from the Broken Bay course.

As a teacher of some forty years experience could I state that this practice of actually showing a couple an IUD or a diaphragm leads more immediately to their rejection than would hours of talking about them. Besides, couples have already been exposed to such methods of contraception as part of a science programme in schools and regularly without a Catholic

value system underpinning the teaching. Never have I seen this happen with NFP educators. Moreover, asking the right questions is of the essence when dealing with methods you want couples to reject. This NFP educators do. "How does the method work?", "What are the disadvantages?", "Are there any health hazards?", "Are there any health hazards?", are some of the questions asked, and all questions are aimed at allowing couples to reach their own conclusion that only NFP is efficient, safe and conforms to Church teaching. In short, the method used by educators from the NFP unit is sound pedagogically and the way the method is presented is sound morally. It would be rare for couples to leave one of our courses, despite having been exposed to all methods of birth control, believing that the Church condones any method other than NFP.

Four years ago we celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of Pope Paul VI's *Humanae Vitae*, a document that stated contraception to be morally wrong. Just as important as the morality of the document were some of the prophecies contained within it. Among a number of these Pope Paul VI stated that:

- the widespread use of contraception would lead to "conjugal infidelity and the general lowering of morality."
- contraception would mislead human beings into thinking they had unlimited domain over their own bodies, relentlessly turning the human person into the object of his or her own intrusive power.

With the divorce rate in Australia around 50%; with 50,000 children experiencing divorce each year; with ex-nuptial births at 25% of total births; the first of the Pope's prophecies has already come true. When we look at some of the concepts that have become part of everyday thinking — stem-cell research, cloning, designer children, choosing the child's gender — then it is obvious that Paul VI's second prophecy is soon to be realised.

The partnership between NFP and Broken Bay's pre-marriage courses is a sign of contradiction to these beliefs and trends. In being this sign of contradiction, both are following in the steps of Christ. For this reason having the NFP educators as a constituent part of our work was never, and never will be, in question.

The Female Condom

By Helen Ransom

Until the 1960's, which saw the rapid development of numerous abortifacants, the definition of contraception from the Latin (contra = opposed to, and conceptio = conceive) was generally accepted by medical practitioners.

Most people and medical practitioners now lump contraceptives and abortifacants together; blurring the distinction between contraception (preventing the union of sperm and egg) and abortifacants (ending the life of a new human being once sperm and egg have united).

Among the various barrier methods of contraception used today is the **female condom**, which has been available in the United States for almost a decade but only introduced to Australia in recent years.

The female condom 'Reality' became available in the US in 1994. (It was not the first female contraceptive on the market; in 1983 the contraceptive sponge was introduced in the US and quickly became one of the most popular over-the-counter barrier methods.)

The female condom is a 15cm long sheath made of soft, pliable



Male condom (left) and female condom (right).

Source: Family Planning Queensland: Contraception Choices brochure
polyurethane and pre-lubricated with a silicone-based material called dimethicone. The plastic tube has flexible rings at either end and is closed at one end. The inner ring is inserted into the vagina before intercourse and holds the condom in place, while the outer ring covers the

labia during sexual intercourse. The condom retains seminal fluids.

It is advised that the female condom is used to prevent pregnancy and the spread of STDs. Pregnancy rates for the female condom range from 5-21 percent per year.

Like other barrier methods of contraception, female condoms can be purchased over the counter. They are relatively expensive — \$2-3 each — and while re-use is not recommended there are reports of women using them again due to the high cost.

The International Planned Pregnancy Federation suggests that the female condom is a form of “empowerment” for women. Its literature states that while some men don't find sex as enjoyable with a condom, women are concerned with the consequences of “unprotected sex” and are “driven by a desire to take their sexual health into their own hands”.

The listed disadvantages of the female condom include: it is prone to breakages, squeaky to use, can be difficult to insert, can slip during intercourse, can cause irritations, is subject to human error, and users have to plan ahead and have the product on hand when they have sex. It is also listed as not being as ‘effective’ as the male condom.

As with the male condom, the use of the female condom is not in line with Catholic Church teaching. The Church teaches that marriage is the most perfect reflection of Christ's love for the Church and the Church's love for Christ: permanent, faithful and life-giving. The condom allows man and woman, through artificial means, to frustrate the natural end of their marital relations: the transmission of life.

With Natural Family Planning, however, a couple with good reasons abstains from marital relations during the fertile period and give themselves completely during the infertile period. Additionally, it is safe, natural, inexpensive, highly effective and a shared responsibility. (Just ask any NFP teacher!)

What the Church Really Teaches on Contraception

Useful Web Pages

Contraception: why not?

www.catholiceducation.org/articles/sexuality/se0002.html

Janet Smith provides convincing reasons and clear evidence to support the Church's position that ‘contraception is one of the worst inventions of our time’.

Human Life International www.hli.org

The world's largest Catholic pro-life, pro-family organisation.

Catholic Pages <http://www.catholic-pages.com/dir/contraception.asp>

Many Catholics have misconceptions about the Church's teaching on contraception. These articles, web-links and multimedia presentations affirm Church teachings.

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**Design by Catholic Communications,
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ACNFP acknowledges the financial support given by the Federal Department of Health and Aged Care to the Australian Catholic Bishops, through the Natural Family Planning Services Board of Management, Canberra, for the production of this newsletter.

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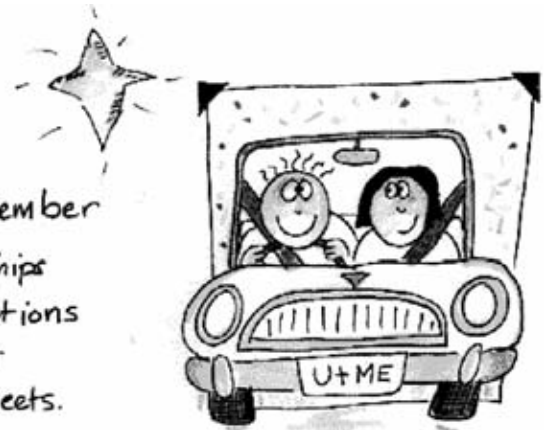
ACNFP

PO Box 529

FORESTVILLE NSW 2087

DEAR God
Help me to remember
that relationships
are the intersections
and not just
the one-way streets.

Amen



Source: www.prayertoons.com

Volunteers

The ACNFP Promotions Committee is calling for new members.

The Committee positions are voluntary.

Please contact the Administrations Officer, (02) 9452-5244,
for further information.



The members of the ACNFP Executive, who have served during the past two years, sharing a meal after an Executive meeting held in Rockhampton (in conjunction with the Qld State In-service). As we say goodbye to the outgoing Executive, we look forward to profiling the new one in the next edition of *The Natural News*.