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MEDIA RELEASE

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Professional advice from experienced voices

Health Minister Tony Abbott's stated preference for church-based agencies such as Anglicare to provide pregnancy counselling has engendered mixed feedback from the media, health professionals and politicians. The provision of these services by church based agencies is not new as many have been providing these services for many years alongside other health and community services.

Anglicare Australia is a network of 43 such church-based agencies, many of which provide a range of counselling services to people from all walks of life and in various contexts. Counselling and other services are open to all who seek support and the well being of the client is always the focus. All place emphasis on responding to each client's personal situations with respect. All seek to ensure their services are professional and of a high quality. A small number currently provide specialist counselling to pregnant women.

Ms Sue Leppert, Executive Director of Anglicare Australia, emphasised the importance of all counselling to be offered with due regard for the client's individual circumstances and personal values.

"We are confident of the professionalism of the counselling services provided by our member agencies," Ms Leppert said. "The focus is always on the client, and supporting the client's own decision-making".

Where clients seek other specialist counselling, the Anglicare agencies readily provide relevant information and refer the person to the kinds of services that would best support their particular needs. "Mr Abbott's proposal has not been raised with Anglicare Australia or its member agencies other than through the media," Ms Leppert said.