

# Abortion caution

SERVICE: SOLID INFORMATION NECESSARY IF DRUG MADE CHEAPLY AVAILABLE

By Estelle Griepink

A pregnancy support service is urging Goulburn Valley women to seek "good, solid information" before making a decision on using a controversial abortion drug.

The comments were made as the nation debates whether the abortion drug RU486 should be added to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.

Goulburn Valley Pregnancy and Family Support Service chairperson Pat Moran said her concern was pregnant women not getting adequate information and support before deciding to use the drug.

"Our organisation is of the opinion that women should be entitled to good, solid information about the choices and decisions they make," Mrs Moran said.

"If RU486 comes onto the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, there is a concern that

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it could be used quickly, without much thought."

Last week, the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee said the drugs Mifepristone (RU486) and Misoprostol, which must be taken together, should be covered by the scheme.

The decision would make the drugs available for \$11.80 for concession card holders and \$72.20 for general patients, drastically lowering the cost of pregnancy termination.

RU486 is already on the World Health Organisation's list of "essential drugs".

Federal Member for Murray Sharnan Stone said if added to the scheme, the drug would

give more choices to women with unplanned pregnancies.

"Australia has long had contraception, the morning after pill and the option of surgical terminations," Dr Stone said.

"The addition of RU486 to the PBS provides another alternative for medical professionals to consider what is in the best interests of their patients."

However, Mrs Moran said consideration must also be given to a patient's physical and psychological health.

"A young person could buy the drug, go away, take it at home and not have any surgical help or the attention they need if they got sick afterwards," she

said. "There could be psychological outcomes, too."

"Having this drug on the market might make terminating a pregnancy easier, but no less stressful in the long run."

Dr Stone questioned why it had taken so long for Australian medical professionals to be able to provide RU486 for their patients, when it had been available in most developed countries for decades.

Political leaders nationwide have been strong in their opinions about RU486.

Greens senator Lee Rhiannon said Australia needed to "catch up" with countries where medical abortions were already widely available.

But the Australian Christian Lobby disagreed, with chief of staff Lyle Shelton saying the group is against any drug that aided abortion.

"We are against abortion and the destruction of human life at all its stages," Mr Shelton said.



No takers: The auction of the Broomfield St, Shepparton, building on Saturday.

Picture: Julie Mercer

## Auctioneer's gavel stays silent

By Darren Linton

Goulburn Valley Community Care and Emergency Relief has a little more time to consider its future after the Broomfield St house it operates from failed to sell at auction on Saturday.

The Shepparton property

was passed in after a single vendor's bid.

The organisation, which distributed welfare relief to more than 6000 clients last year, is a tenant in the building.

Manager Diane Broom said the organisation was still hopeful someone would buy

it as an investment property and continue to rent it out.

The property has a store for dispersal of emergency food supplies, a community garden and meeting rooms.

The organisation had been advised before the auction it would be given three months to vacate even if the property

did not sell, but no formal notice has been given as yet.

"It does give us a bit more time," Ms Broom said yesterday.

"We have lobbied to see if we can get the funding to buy it ourselves or the extra money needed to relocate."

## Police are seeking shotgun case owner

By Kaitlin Thals

Shepparton detectives are calling on the owner of a missing shotgun to come forward.

Crime Investigation Unit Detective Senior Constable Shane Kervin said a Fabarm brand shotgun case was found in suspicious circumstances in a garage at a Shepparton address on April 12.

Det Sen Const Kervin said police were executing a search warrant at the property when they discovered the case.

He said the occupants of the house said they did not own the gun or the case and could not explain how it arrived there.

"We hope the owner recognises the case on the image and comes forward to provide



Item of interest: The shotgun case found by police.

the link between the property and any potential crime," Det Sen Const Kervin said.

● **Anyone with information**

**should phone Detective Senior Constable Shane Kervin at Shepparton Police Station on 5820 5005.**

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