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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **New Catholic Women's Mentoring Program announces BBI-The Australian Institute of Theological Education as inaugural Annual Partner**

The Australian Catholic Women's Mentoring program is delighted to welcome BBI-The Australian Institute of Theological Education (BBI) as its inaugural annual partner for 2017/2018.

Launching in late May 2017, the Australian Catholic Women's Mentoring Program is a national program aiming at building the skills, confidence and networks of Australian Catholic women and encouraging them in their faith. The program aims to empower women to use their gifts and talents to make meaningful and significant contributions to the Australian Church and, in turn, have a positive impact upon Australian society.

The Mentoring Program is the project of the 2015/2016 *Young Catholic Women's Interfaith Fellowship (YCWIF)* cohort and is supported by the ACBC's Office of Participation of Women. An initiative of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, the Fellowship began in 2006. BBI provided the academic program which was designed to enable successful candidates to undertake a formation program to deepen their understanding of interfaith relations and become dynamic and inspirational leaders. Each participant completed a Graduate Certificate in Theology with a Mission and Culture specialisation.

Mentoring Program Coordinator and YCWIF participant Christine Pace says she is delighted that BBI has come on board as the key supporter of this ground-breaking new national initiative for women. "BBI has been part of our journey so it's wonderful to have their support on this initiative that largely grew out of the faith development provided through their program of study", she said.

BBI is a leading Catholic theological institution dedicated to teaching and research, scholarship and publication, and service and community. The Principal and CEO of BBI, Dr Gerard Goldman, says BBI strongly supports this new mentoring program, seeing it as a creative and important initiative aimed at fostering the leadership skills of young Catholic women.

"Through this program, many young women will benefit greatly through not only mentoring in their personal careers, but also through mentoring in their faith formation as well", Dr Goldman explained.

West Australian YCWIF participant Victoria Burrows is excited about the program's potential.



“It is my hope that this women’s mentoring program will link Catholic women together across the nation to support each other to fully live our Baptismal calling, in whatever vocation we are called into. I also hope that the connections may foster ideas and opportunities that will see our Church grow and help promote God’s Kingdom here on earth so that men and women, created in God’s image, will flourish and grow”, Ms Burrows said.

The Acting Director for the National Office for the Participation of Women, Andrea Dean, says it’s been exciting to watch this program unfold.

“I have journeyed with these women, from all over Australia, and watched them wholeheartedly enter into the spirit of the Fellowship. It’s inspiring to see this program as one of the many fruits of the Fellowship”, Ms Dean added.

Australian women are invited to sign up online as a mentor or mentee. Mentors will be matched with a younger woman (mentee), according to their needs, and they will encourage and support them, sharing their faith and life journeys. It is an informal program based on building networks and companionship to build confidence and connections among Australian Catholic women.

The launch will take place on Saturday May 20, 2017 at Mary MacKillop Place in North Sydney with Mass from 5.30pm in the Mary MacKillop Chapel and the launch from 7pm in the Auditorium. The guest speaker is NSW Senator Deborah O’Neill. Women and men over the age of 18 are invited to attend this **free** event.

Please RSVP your attendance at the event to [coordinator.opw@catholic.org.au](mailto:coordinator.opw@catholic.org.au).

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