

12 July 2007

Learning to say yes – when is rape not rape?

What would happen if we stopped assuming that sex was either completely consensual or rape?
What would happen if we started to acknowledge that sometimes people get things wrong?

These questions, by Peta Cox of Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT (SHFPA), are two of many that will be posed at *Let's Talk About Sex*, a gathering of more than 100 young women in Sydney on 13-14 July to explore current sexual and reproductive health issues.

A report from the proceedings will be submitted to the Australian All-Party Parliamentary Group on Population and Development. Other speakers will include:

- **Sophie Harvey**, coordinator of the Safe Summer Survival project, who will talk about peer education and **sex in Bondi**;
- **Samantha Smith** of a family planning organisation, Marie Stopes International (MSI), will give the results of a survey showing that at any given time amongst a sample of women of reproductive age, **51 per cent have experienced an unplanned pregnancy**;
- **Bernie Sarpong** of Family Planning NSW will talk about taboos in sexual and reproductive health in cultures **different to those of one's parents** – a panel of young women from the Philippines, Iran, Sierra Leone and Korea will explore sexual discourse and multiculturalism and Australia;
- **Liz Gill**, of MSI, will outline cultural barriers to **condom use in Indigenous communities** and the development of "snake" condoms, with marketing appeal to Indigenous youth;
- **Vicki Alipasinpoulos** will shed light on what it's like adding a disability to the normal difficulties of adolescence. When every date is a threesome, even if the extra is your Guide Dog, it make the **whole process more challenging**.

The Young Women's Gathering will be opened by the Shadow Minister for Women and Youth, Tanya Plibersek, with a keynote address by Senator Kerry Nettle. Senator Nettle will describe how women need to work together in the Senate to achieve successes such as the drug RU-486.

ACT broadcaster Virginia Haussegger will discuss marketing pressures on girls and young women to use their sexuality. She will critique the "reduction of young women to the sum of their sexiness", and lament the morphing from Girl Power to "raunch culture" and "female chauvinist pigs obsessed with chasing our inner slut – where is the sexual empowerment in that?"

Courier-Mail columnist, academic and author Dr Karen Brooks will examine the changing nature of advertising and how it targets children. She will discuss the sexualisation of kinderculture and the materialist culture that has been cultivated by corporations.

'Let's Talk About Sex' will be at The Centre, 14 Frances Street, Randwick, Fri-Sat, 13-14 July, from 9.30am. Program available at www.arha.org.au/ywg

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