

ADVOCATING FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Forum tackles sexuality and intellectual disability

An outdated criminal code and a lack of funding for sexuality education is making criminals out of many Queensland men with intellectual disabilities, according to Family Planning Queensland (FPQ).

The rights of people with intellectual disabilities to have a sex life and to receive sexuality education will be discussed at a forum to be held by Family Planning Queensland tomorrow.

The forum has two themes:

- the legal rights of people with intellectual disabilities to consent to sex, and
- the lack of funding for sexuality education for adult men with intellectual disabilities.

Keynote speakers are Julian Porter from Queensland Advocacy Incorporated and FPQ Director of Education Services Anthony Walsh.

‘The Queensland Criminal Code creates numerous obstacles for people with intellectual disability wishing to have sex,’ Mr Porter said.

‘It doesn’t help when the Code definition of ‘Intellectual Impairment’ appears to cover a far larger group than can ever have been intended to be ‘protected’ by these special provisions. These laws are rightly concerned with stopping the exploitation of people with disabilities, but I fear the result goes much further – in effect removing the right to sexual expression for this group.’

Mr Walsh said when people with intellectual disabilities had access to sexuality education, it increased their potential in all aspects of their lives.

‘We are holding this forum because FPQ believes that people with intellectual disabilities have the same rights as anyone to enjoy the healthy expression of their sexuality.’

‘People with intellectual disabilities are more likely to be victims and perpetrators of sexual abuse. This vulnerability is linked to lack of sexuality education. FPQ supports laws protecting the vulnerable, but we need laws supporting adults with a disability to make positive choices about sexual relationships,’ he said.

Mr Walsh said there was particularly inadequate funding and services for sexuality education for adult men with intellectual disabilities and this had serious consequences for society as a whole.

‘Lack of sexuality education for young and adult men with intellectual disabilities increases the occurrence of inappropriate sexual behaviour,’ Mr Walsh said. ‘Men with intellectual disabilities are disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system, often as a result of sexual offences. There are many alleged perpetrators of sexual abuse who are not processed in the criminal justice system as they are not deemed fit to stand trial. These men sometimes continue to re-offend.’

Mr Walsh said prevention was better than cure. ‘Massive amounts of money spent on criminal justice and compensation for victims could be saved by funding programs for sexuality education.’

WHERE: Premier’s Room, Parliamentary Annex, William Street, Brisbane

WHEN: 1:00 – 4:00pm, Wednesday, 9 August 2006

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