

18 July 2006

FOR SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

UK sexuality education expert visits Queensland

A leading figure in the development of sexuality education in the UK is running three days of workshops and public discussion in Queensland.

Assistant Director of Children's Development at the UK Children's Bureau, Simon Blake, has written several books on sexuality education and has been involved in major initiatives involving personal, social and health education.

In partnership with Family Planning Queensland (FPQ), Mr Blake will give workshops on sexuality education to child and youth workers, school-based nurses and staff from Queensland Health and Education Queensland on **19, 20 & 21 July 2006**.

Mr Blake's workshops will focus on:

- **the links between sex, drugs and alcohol for young people**
- **sexuality education for boys and young men.**

Mr Blake said UK research showed that a large proportion of unwanted sex reported by young people was linked to binge drinking. He said education and support programs needed to be strengthened to help young people understand the links between sex, alcohol and other drugs and develop the skills to identify, assess and minimise risk.

Mr Blake's workshop on young men and sexuality will help youth workers respond to the mental, emotional and sexual health needs of young men in Australia.

"We teach boys from a very early age that they need to be non-emotional and know everything about sex. This creates a situation where boys are stuck in a 'real man trap', are unable to ask for help and discuss sex seriously. This makes it hard for them to handle sexual and emotional relationships well," he said.

"We need to create new models and provide alternative ways of 'being a man' to help boys and young men manage their personal relationships in emotionally literate ways."

Holly Brennan, FPQ's Manager of Research and Program Development supported Mr Blake's call for integrated programs to help young people build healthy sexual relationships.

"A recent study in Victoria found that one in four young people were drunk or high during their last sexual encounter," Ms Brennan said.

"Research with young people reflects that they want to talk about sexuality and healthy relationships, in the home as well as at school," she said.

Ms Brennan said that current public debates on sexual behaviour in Australia often focused on sensationalised stories about sexual behaviour, such as on *Big Brother* and during Schoolies Week, instead of exploring models of healthy and safe sexuality.

"Family Planning Queensland is hosting this visit from one of the leading international advocates of positive sexuality education because we believe that this conversation is one Australia cannot afford not to have."

MORE

KEY STATISTICS

- 28 per cent of young women and 23 per cent of young men have experienced unwanted sex
- the most common reason for unwanted sex was being too drunk (16 per cent) or pressure from a sexual partner (13 per cent)
- 85 per cent of Year 10 students and 94 per cent of Year 12 students drank alcohol in large amounts (3 or more drinks on any one occasion for young women and 5 or more for young men)
- 59 per cent of young women reported binge drinking
- students reported low levels of confidence about discussing sexuality or contraception with their parents
- young men in Year 10 have poor knowledge about STIs, high rates of partner changes, high rates of sex with people they have just met

SOURCE: 'Secondary Students and Sexual Health 2002', **The Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society**, La Trobe University, Melbourne Vic.

**To arrange an interview with Simon Blake or Holly Brennan call
FPQ Communications Officer Vivienne Wynter 07 3250 0222 or 0419 029 728**