

Experts ask: where is QLD's sex ed?

At a forum to be held today, experts will be calling for leadership to support the provision of comprehensive sexuality education to all Queensland children at school.

Speaking at the forum will be visiting world-renowned sexuality educator, Simon Blake, Assistant Commissioner for the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian, Barry Salmon, YMCA Queensland Youth Parliament representative, Joe Ogilvie, and Family Planning Queensland (FPQ).

The call for universal sexuality education follows recent research published in the Journal of Adolescent Health, which found a clear link between the sexual behaviour of teenagers and whether they have had formal sexuality education.

The research found that of teenagers who had received sex education in school, boys were 71 per cent less likely to engage in sexual intercourse before 15, while girls were 59 per cent less likely.^[1]

Despite sexuality education being in the Queensland school curriculum, there are currently no checks in place to guarantee it is being taught.

FPQ Manager for Research and Development, Holly Brennan, estimates "less than five per cent of Queensland children are receiving adequate sexuality education."

Simon Blake, Chief Executive of Brook, the UK's leading sector provider of sexual health services for young people, says "Queensland is only behind the Northern Territory when it comes to the highest child sex abuse and teenage pregnancy rates in Australia."

"This enormous problem facing Queenslanders is being made worse by lack of leadership on this issue," he said.

Joe Ogilvie, YMCA Queensland Youth Parliament representative, confirms young people want leadership on this issue.

"A motion has already been passed in our youth parliament calling on compulsory sexuality education in schools - when are people going to listen to us? This is what we want and we know it is what we need," he said.

Assistant Commissioner, Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian, Barry Salmon, suggests it is important to listen to the views of young people on the issue.

"The research is very clear both here and overseas that sexuality education programs are most effective when given before young people become sexually active. Time and again the research shows that these programs help young people be more informed and adopt more responsible safer sexual practices," Mr Salmon said.

Simon Blake will give a series of talks and workshops in partnership with FPQ in Brisbane about the importance of youth access to sexuality education and sexual health services.

They will be held from the 25 to 27 February, 2008.

Follows...

Key Australian Statistics

- 1 in 4 Year 10 students and 1 in 2 Year 12 students have had sex [2]
- 1 in 4 students report unwanted sex [2]
- 1 in 10 sexually active young Australians do not use contraception [3]
- 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 7 boys experience some form of sexual abuse [4]

- ENDS -

About FPQ (www.fpq.com.au)

FPQ has provided sexual and reproductive health services to the population of Queensland since 1972. FPQ offers clinical, education, information and training services from metropolitan and regional locations throughout the state.

For further information or to arrange an interview, please contact:

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REFERENCES

- 1 Mueller, T., Gavin, L., & Kulkarni, A. (2008). The association between sex education and youth's engagement in sexual intercourse, age at first intercourse, and birth control use at first sex. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 42*, 89-96
- 2 Smith, A., Agius, P. Dyson, S., Mitchell, A. & Pitts, M. (2003). *Secondary students and sexual health 2002: Results of the 3rd national survey of Australian secondary students, HIV/AIDS and sexual health*. Melbourne: Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health & Society, La Trobe University
- 3 Results from the Australian Study of Health and Relationships indicate that in 2002, around 1 in 10 sexually active young people in Years 10 and 12 did not use any contraception at the last sexual encounter (9% for males and 10% for females).
- 4 Australian Institute of Criminology (2004)