

Media Release

February 14, 2010

Gay teens also deserve a happy Valentine's Day

Saying 'I love you!' out loud is what Valentine's Day is all about. But imagine if your 'secret admirer' was forced to be your 'secret love' through fear of ridicule, abuse or even physical violence?

That's the tragic truth still facing many same sex attracted people in Australia today ... and it's even tougher for gay teens in rural areas.

The good news is that the Gippsland community is taking positive steps to change that.

Community events are occurring in February and March as part of the Gippsland 2010 Sexual Health and Diversity Enterprise (SHADE). They'll raise awareness of sexual health and diversity among Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth, with an emphasis on issues facing young people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (GLBTIQ).

SHADE aims to start conversations and inform communities about the very serious negative consequences of stigma and isolation on young GLBTIQ people. Improving social inclusion and access to services for GLBTIQ youth will not only help reduce the risk of sexually transmissible infections, substance abuse, mental health problems and suicide ... but help make it a happy Valentine's Day for all!

Family Planning Victoria's Senior Medical Officer, Dr Kimberley Ivory, says local event coordinators have recently benefited from SHADE training on working sensitively with sexual minorities run in Wonthaggi, Sale and Bairnsdale.

During the training, they heard first-hand about the lived experience of growing up gay in Gippsland from two local young people, Eleisha Jones and Ben Pokidin.

'Ben and Eleisha's stories are heart wrenching, but the enthusiasm of workshop participants for improving the lives of all local young people is inspiring. The desire to be inclusive of diversity of all kinds in Gippsland is already there. Their SHADE community events will help local communities understand the potentially deadly impact of homophobia ... and the fairly simple ways it can be defeated,' Dr Ivory said.

Why not make your audience part of the conversation too?

SHADE is part of Mind the Gap, a rural and regional community engagement program funded for 2009-12 by the Department of Health.

- ends -

For media enquiries and interviews with any of the above, please contact FPV's Media & Marketing Officer, Christine Harris on 0448 412 409 or at charris@fpv.org.au

SHADE community events include:

All About You, a sexual health evening for young people with an Indigenous focus, on 23 February at the Petit Centre in Warragul organised by West Gippsland Healthcare Group (WGHG)

Distribution of sexual health show bags throughout February to Indigenous young people in Sale, Morwell and Drouin by Ramahyuck District Aboriginal Corporation (RDAC)

Melbourne based theatre group, Phunktional will present the *Love Drunk* road show on 24-25 February at Orbost and Cann River secondary colleges thanks to Gippsland Women's Health Service (GWHS). Following the performance, students can join in discussions on a variety of sexual health issues with local health workers.

Specially targeted resources are being distributed to young people, including those who identify as GLBTIQ, by Kilmany Uniting Care through a variety of Gippsland agencies and events.

Wonthaggi and Korumburra secondary students will be entertained and informed by popular Australian comedian Nelly Thomas with the *Condom Dialogues* on 1 March.


sexual health and diversity enterprise



Media Release

February 2010

Ramahyuck District Aboriginal Corporation and West Gippsland Healthcare Group tackle Indigenous sexual health and diversity

Ramahyuck District Aboriginal Corporation (RDAC) and West Gippsland Healthcare Group (WGHC) will stage community events for Indigenous young people in February as part of the Gippsland 2010 Sexual Health and Diversity Enterprise (SHADE).

SHADE aims to raise awareness of prevention and testing for sexually transmissible infections and blood borne viruses in gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (GLBTIQ) young people from Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities and their social networks, while supporting greater access to sexual health services.

In support of SHADE, WGHC will coordinate *All About You*, a sexual health evening for young people with an Indigenous focus, on 23 February at the Petit Centre in Warragul.

RDAC will further these efforts by distributing sexual health show bags throughout February to Indigenous young people in Sale, Morwell and Drouin.

SHADE's Indigenous patron and convenor of OutBlack, bryan Andy, said these events will provide a much needed space for GLBTIQ young people from Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities alike in the Gippsland region.

'The fact that it's a community based program – targeting local services and schools – means that there's genuine potential to address issues of homophobia, sexuality and sexual health among our communities, in spaces where such issues need to be dealt with.

'Being an Aboriginal gay man that grew up in regional Victoria, I found coming out, expressing my sexuality and having a good sense of self was particularly hard.

'I'm extremely excited that SHADE can offer a range of forums for young people who don't identify as straight to learn about themselves and realise that they're not alone,' bryan said.

SHADE is part of Mind the Gap, a rural and regional community engagement program funded for 2009-12 by the Department of Health.

- ends -

SHADE and Mind the Gap are led by Family Planning Victoria in partnership with Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, Centre for Adolescent Health and Youth Empowerment Against HIV/AIDS.

For media enquiries, contact FPV's Media & Marketing Officer, Christine Harris on 0448 412 409 or at charris@fpv.org.au

shade
sexual health and diversity enterprise



Media Release

February 2010

Gippsland Women's Health Service and Wonthaggi and Korumburra secondary colleges tackle sexual health and diversity

Gippsland Women's Health Service (GWHS) and Wonthaggi and Korumburra secondary colleges will stage community events for upper secondary students in February and March as part of the Gippsland 2010 Sexual Health and Diversity Enterprise (SHADE).

SHADE aims to raise awareness of prevention and testing for sexually transmissible infections and blood borne viruses in gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (GLBTIQ) young people from Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities and their social networks, while supporting greater access to sexual health services.

In support of SHADE, Phunktional and GWHS will stage the *Love Drunk* road show on the 24-25 February at Orbost and Cann River secondary colleges, incorporating group discussions with health workers on a variety of sexual health issues.

Kilmany Uniting Care will further these efforts throughout February by distributing resource kits to young people, including those who identify as GLBTIQ, through Gippsland community groups, agencies and events.

Popular Australian comedian Nelly Thomas will then present the *Condom Dialogues* on 1 March to Wonthaggi and Korumburra secondary students.

SHADE's Indigenous patron and convenor of OutBlack, bryan Andy, said these events will provide a much needed space for GLBTIQ young people from Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities alike in the Gippsland region.

'The fact that it's a community based program – targeting local services and schools – means that there's genuine potential to address issues of homophobia, sexuality and sexual health among our communities, in spaces where such issues need to be dealt with.

'I'm extremely excited that SHADE can offer a range of forums for young people who don't identify as straight to learn about themselves and realise that they're not alone,' bryan said.

SHADE is part of Mind the Gap, a rural and regional community engagement program funded for 2009-12 by the Department of Health.

- ends -

SHADE and Mind the Gap are led by Family Planning Victoria in partnership with Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, Centre for Adolescent Health and Youth Empowerment Against HIV/AIDS.

**For media enquiries, contact FPV's Media & Marketing Officer,
Christine Harris on 0448 412 409 or at charris@fpv.org.au**

