

### welcome

Women's Health Grampians (WHG) along with our key partners have been **developing regional partnerships seeking to increase women's access to timely and appropriate family planning services in the Grampians region.** By publishing this quarterly newsletter we **aim to inspire ideas and action to improve rural women's sexual and reproductive health.**

We welcome your feedback, contribution and collaboration to both this newsletter and developing regional partnerships.

### regional update

In April Women's Health Grampians, Grampians Pyrenees Primary Care Partnership and Grampians Community Health commenced work to map the sexual and reproductive health services that are available across the Grampians region.

Reaching out to 60 organisations including hospitals, community health, maternal and child health and youth services we asked about the types of services available, who people refer to, what emerging or unmet needs people have noticed within their communities and also about any professional development areas people are interested in.

Using this information we will develop a Sexual and Reproductive Health Referral Guide which we can share with organisations across the region.

The referral guide will also provide us with an indication of what services are readily available and what services are potentially missing. It will also allow us to prioritise future projects based on the areas of most need.

Our vision for this work is to improve women's access to timely and appropriate sexual and reproductive health services.

Already we can observe common themes across the region including:

- the need for sexual health training updates for professionals,
- challenges with capacity for sexual health education in schools, and
- issues with access to services and knowledge of referral options.

Many thanks to those organisations who have assisted us in gathering this important information. It has been inspiring to speak with so many passionate professionals working to raise awareness and improve sexual health in our communities. We look forward to sharing updates as we develop the referral guide.

If you would like to be involved in this consultation or have any information relating to sexual and reproductive health services within our region we would be very happy to hear from you. Please contact Shannon at WHG on 5322 4100 or email [shannon@whg.org.au](mailto:shannon@whg.org.au)



### Sexual Health Clinic moves to Lucas

visit their new facility at:  
**12 Lilburne Street, Lucas**

The clinic continues to offer their standard services including: IUD insertion, sexually transmitted infection checks and sexual health counselling. The phone number remains unchanged:

**5338 4541**

*Sexual Health Service Mapping reaches out to 60 organisations across our 11 local government areas*

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## new research and publications

We are always scanning for new research and publications on the topic of women's sexual health and wellbeing. This is an opportunity to profile the latest findings.



***'This survey presents a very clear picture of the sexual world of young people. It is a great resource for parents, schools and policy makers'***

Anne Mitchell  
Professor  
La Trobe University

***"Our survey clearly shows the major role social media has in the negotiation and development of sexual relationships"***

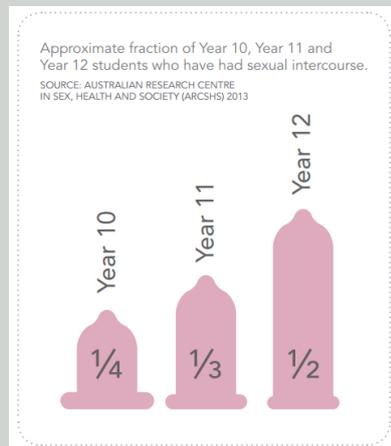
Anne Mitchell  
Professor  
La Trobe University

### 5th National Survey of Australian Secondary Students and Sexual Health 2013

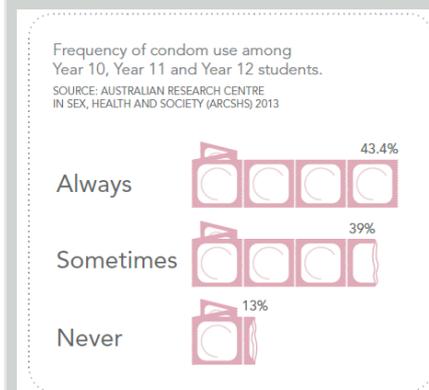
Involving more than 2,000 students in years 10, 11 and 12 at Government, Catholic and Independent schools in all states and territories this survey provides the latest comprehensive view of the sexual behaviour, attitudes and health of Australian teenagers.

Overall findings show:

- **The majority of students (69%) have experienced some form of sexual activity**



- **86% of teenagers said the last time they'd had sex they'd used a condom if one was available**
- **13% said they never used them**



- **25% of sexually active students reported an experience of unwanted sex of some kind:** 49% cited being too drunk as a reason for their unwanted sex, other reasons included being influenced by their partner (53%), and being frightened (28%)
- **School is a major source of sexual health information (43%)** as well as the internet (44%)
- Only 38% felt confident to talk to their parents
- **knowledge of STI's remains poor,** including knowledge of Chlamydia
- **Most sexually active students reported receiving (84%) and sending (72%) sexually explicit text messages**

Professor Anne Mitchell cautioned against alarm over the rates of sexting.

'Technology is here to stay, with smartphones and social media used almost universally among our teenagers.

'We cannot police and control every new avenue of social interaction, so good sexuality education must encourage young people to develop a personal ethic and to treat others with respect.'

'This type of education is our best defence against young people coming to harm,'

Source: <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/news/articles/2014/release/teen-sexual-health-survey-launched>

## new research and publications

Sharing sexual and reproductive health knowledge we hope to inspire local ideas and action across the region.

### Chlamydia prevalence in young attenders of rural and regional primary care services in Australia: a cross-sectional survey

In the latest findings published by the [ACCEPT](#) team they note **73% of infections were diagnosed in patients attending for non-sexual health reasons.**

If only symptomatic patients and those reporting contact with a partner who had an STI were tested, these cases would be missed.

**Over 80% of chlamydia infections are asymptomatic**, and testing rates are less than 10% in young

Australian adults. Notification data therefore greatly underestimates the prevalence.

This emphasises the need to offer testing to all young people.

It has been suggested that young people, particularly those in rural areas, do not wish to discuss sexual health issues with GPs because of privacy concerns and will not seek testing. ACCEPT findings however, show **young people were generally amenable to testing when asked, suggesting that testing offered by GPs would reach most young adults.**

In rural and regional areas 87% of study participants were attending a local GP, indicating young adults in these areas are likely to agree to testing at their local clinic if asked.

*The full article and survey results are available [online](#).*

**'Testing only those with genital symptoms or a partner with an STI would have missed three-quarters of cases.'**

*Anna H Yeung  
Melbourne School of Population and Global Health  
The University of Melbourne*

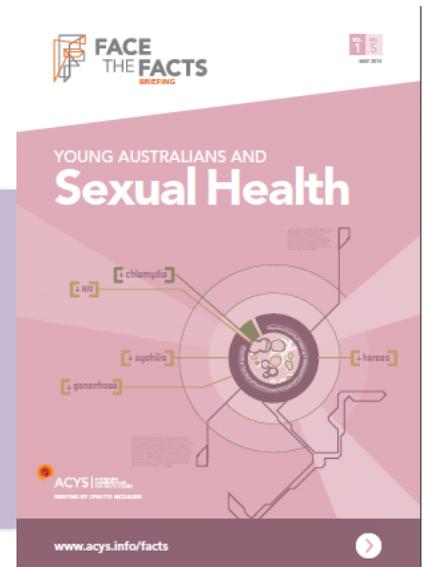
## links to research or resources

### Young Australians and Sexual Health Face the Facts Briefing May 2014

This newly released briefing offers an overview of current knowledge about STIs among young Australians and outlines the role of education and social marketing in reducing the prevalence of STIs.

The Australian Clearinghouse for Youth Studies have collated all the most recent data and evidence covering STI's, sexual activity, barriers to safe sexual practice, education and how to make a difference.

Source: [http://www.acys.info/facts/sexual\\_health](http://www.acys.info/facts/sexual_health)



## professional development

### IMPLANON TRAINING for GP's

Wednesday 16th July 5:30-7:00PM  
Grampians Medicare Local  
105 Webster Street Ballarat

No charge.

Please call Renee Abrahamson on 0414 795 178 to book your place.



### PREGNANCY DECISIONS COURSE for nurses, psychologists, social workers and general practitioners

15-16th September

This interactive workshop gives health professionals a broader understanding of unplanned pregnancy, the options available to clients and the possible issues clients may face when making a decision.

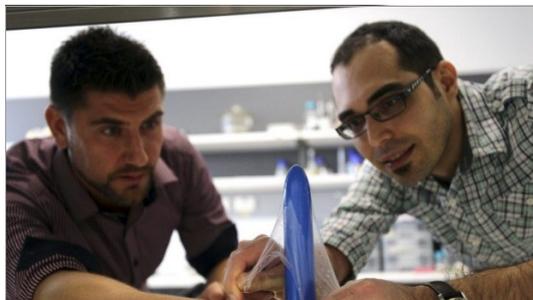
Cost \$561. For more information contact 9257 0129 or email [ceu@fpv.org.au](mailto:ceu@fpv.org.au)



**Location:**  
Family Planning Victoria  
901 Whitehorse Road  
Box Hill 3128

in the media

The Sydney Morning Herald  
Technology



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## Next-generation condom that feels like skin comes closer

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation awarded the University of Wollongong \$100,000 as part of an initiative to encourage bold ideas for global health problems.

Biomedical engineer Dr Gorkin and his team will test different formulations of hydrogels to redesign condoms with the right amount of elasticity but the correct mechanical properties to prevent breakage. They will also need to confirm the new materials are safe, that they prevent pregnancy and stop the transmission of sexually transmitted diseases.

Dr Gorkin said the reasons people avoided condoms differed among cultures. Changing people's perceptions would require talking to users about their needs and wants to try to incorporate those things into the design. He hopes the new design condoms will give couples another option to control conception and reduce the spread of STI's.

Read the full article here: <http://www.smh.com.au/technology/sci-tech/nextgeneration-condom-that-feels-like-skin-comes-closer-20140604-zrws9.html>

## Why the withdrawal method has made a comeback

The truth is that when it comes to sex, humans are deeply fallible. We prioritise the pleasure of the present moment over potential future pain. We presume that if we love someone they cannot carry a harmful virus, as if viruses discriminate based on virtue or lovability. We hope and assume that whatever the worst might be, it won't happen to us.

Effective sexual health campaigns need to not just teach us about the risks and how to avoid them, but to combat our fallibility, to ensure that even if we don't always make the best choices, we at least make the least worst ones.

For Dr Annie Dude that means talking to young people about contraception options other than condoms or the pill. For Rachel Jones of the Guttmacher institute, it means doctors initiating conversations about withdrawal with their patients in a non-judgemental way; making them aware of the risks and "talking about the pros and cons." Read the full article [here](#)

Please contact Women's Health Grampians if you would like to contribute ideas or feedback to this newsletter

## Grampians Region: partnerships improving rural women's sexual and reproductive health

Women's Health Grampians along with our key partners have been holding discussions about how to support regional services to improve women's sexual and reproductive health across the Grampians region.

Our focus is on family planning services including contraception, pregnancy counselling, abortion and the professional development needs of service providers.

We readily acknowledge that many organisations across the region have a long history of working hard to address these issues. With this in mind the aim is to build on existing relationships, and develop new connections, to enhance current work, add capacity, and where relevant, provide a new range of initiatives.

We welcome opportunities to consider the sexual and reproductive health issues for women in our region.



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Acknowledging Key Partners:  
**The Royal Women's Hospital**  
**Family Planning Victoria**  
**Grampians Medicare Local**  
**Ballarat Community Health**