

**Media Release
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PARENTS: DON'T LEAVE THE SEX TALK TO SCHOOLS

Australia's leading sexual and reproductive healthcare organisation, Marie Stopes International, today issued a reminder to parents of the importance of having "the talk" with their teens before they set off to Schoolies and not to rely on schools to do it for them.

"Many teenagers are about to embark on the end of year 'Schoolies' vacation with their friends, and with the party atmosphere at an all time high, the chances of engaging in sexual activity is greatly increased," said Jill Michelson, National Clinical Adviser of Marie Stopes International.

"Yet currently there is no comprehensive, national sex education program in schools, and today's reports indicate that such a program is still years off, especially when it comes to exactly what schools will teach our youth about contraception.

"Parents therefore simply cannot risk their teen's sexual health and leave it up to schools to have the sex talk with them."

Marie Stopes International's calls came during **Sexual Health Week** and followed research which found that 20% of parents say they have never had a discussion with their teenager about sex and contraception.¹

Other key findings from the research included:

- 22% of parents think that their teen is sexually active, but in reality 31% claim to be. At the same time, 13% of parents admit that they wouldn't know whether their teen was sexually active or not.
- In general more parents think they've had "the talk" about sexual health than teens do (80% vs. 73%).
- The large majority of parents (90%) rate themselves as approachable on the topic of sex, whereas only three-quarters (74%) of teens agree.
- Half of all teenagers (51%) say they either don't talk about personal issues with their parents or don't fully confide in their parents on some personal issues.
- Teenagers who have had "the talk" with their parent on average become sexually active later than those who haven't had the talk (15.3yrs v 14.7yrs).
- Almost one in ten (9%) teens say they have not been taught sex education at school. Of those teens taught sex education at school, 69% rate the quality of that education as 'average' or lower.

To assist with the conversation, Marie Stopes International has produced two handy and informative guides that are available for free from the Sexual Health Week website – www.sexualhealthweek.com.au.

Sexplanations: A guide to talking to your teenager about sex is targeted at parents of 13 – 18 year olds and features information on sex under the influence of alcohol and drugs, teenage pregnancy and homosexuality. **Sexplanations: A guide to talking to your children about sex** is targeted at parents of 3 – 13 year olds and features information on what to say and when to say it.

"The fact is young people are having sex, and they are having unprotected sex - ignoring the problem won't make it go away, but having an open, trusting relationship and educating them on the risks will help contain it," said Ms Michelson.

"And what better week to prompt the chat than Sexual Health Week!"

For more information on Sexual Health Week, visit www.sexualhealthweek.com.au.

About Marie Stopes International: Marie Stopes International is a not-for-profit sexual and reproductive healthcare provider, with centres in the ACT, VIC, NSW, QLD and WA. MSI offers a range of services, including abortion, vasectomy, sexually transmitted infection check-ups, contraception and community-based health promotion and education. The organisation is part of a global international partnership that delivers vital health services to over five million people in 42 countries worldwide. Surplus funds support Marie Stopes International Australia, our charity partner, which works to save lives and improve sexual and reproductive health in Indigenous Australia and throughout the Asia-Pacific region. For more information on the organisations, visit www.mariestopes.com.au and www.mariestopes.org.au (ends)

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¹ **SEX – telling it like it is: a parent and teen insight.** Marie Stopes International/Quantum Market Research. Findings based on surveys completed by 1,000 parents and teens nationally. Available for download from www.mariestopes.com.au