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## Sex talk in schools a must

Discussing explicit sex acts in high school is essential to educate students about what is 'normal' in the internet age, Family Planning Victoria (FPV) educators said today.

They were responding to criticism of the State Government's *Catching On* sexuality education program, which includes a work sheet with various sexual acts for Year 9 and 10 students to discuss.

Conservative lobby groups say such discussion is uncalled for and irresponsible. But FPV believes it is essential to prevent young people from making bad decisions about sex.

FPV community educator Mandy Stevens says due to the proliferation of internet porn, many young people have an unrealistic view of sexuality and sex acts. As most would not discuss these with their parents, the school's role is important.

'Because of internet porn, kids sometimes have a skewed view of what's normal sex,' Mandy says. 'In the internet age many young people feel pressured to engage in acts they otherwise would not. Now more than ever we need to discuss these acts with them and explain that some of what they see online is not necessarily common.'

Research shows sexuality education does not lead to students engaging in sex younger or more often. Government schools must teach it under the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS), and *Catching On* is a wide-ranging program which also covers puberty, relationships, safer sex and respecting diversity.

FPV works with many teachers to help them deliver a comprehensive sexuality education program. Community educator Athi Kokonis says it is important to educate students, who may be confused about what sex is. For example many think oral sex is not 'real' sex.

Athi says raising such questions also allows teachers and students to talk about the students' values. This helps students to make informed decisions about what they do or don't want to do.

'Discussing all types of sex is a must if our young people are to become sexually literate, and to arm them with the knowledge they need to protect themselves,' Athi says. 'Schools are well placed to support parents in educating their children about sexuality.'

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*FPV is the leading Victorian provider of youth sexuality education and clinical services.*

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