

**media release**

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**Promoting positive sexual relationships between young people: we need your help Wagga Wagga**

A team of researchers are heading to Wagga Wagga to talk to young people about how they negotiate intimacy in a bid to develop more effective non-violence education programs.

The University of Western Sydney in partnership with the NSW Rape Crisis Centre is carrying out a three-year project which aims to promote non-violent relationships between young people.

Chief researcher, Associate Professor Moira Carmody from the University of Western Sydney and Karen Willis, from the NSW Rape Crisis Centre are keen to hear from young men and women of diverse sexualities and cultural backgrounds aged 16-25 years who would be interested in talking about their experiences of sexual intimacy. The researchers will visit **Wagga Wagga** from 10-12 May to conduct confidential interviews.

Associate Professor Moira Carmody, has spent the past 20 years working on the issue of sexual assault prevention and says that despite ongoing education programs, sexual violence remains a very real problem among men and women aged 16-25 years.

"Sex can be fun but sometimes it is hard for young people to work out if and when they want to have it and who with. Working out how to enjoy sexual intimacy and being safe is really important. We know young people have lots of ideas about these issues, but are rarely asked," says Associate Professor Carmody.

"We want to include young people's experiences in our new non-violence education program, because we know that information about negotiating sex is often missing. The information young people tell us will have a direct impact on our program."

The study will focus on young men and women aged 16-25 years – the key age group in which most sexual assault occurs.

"Young women aged 16 to 25 are most at risk of sexual assault and if men commit sexual violence they are most likely to do it between 16 and 25 years of age. This project will focus on young people in that age group," she says.

"We are really keen to talk to young people about how they negotiate sex and dating and what knowledge and skills *they* think would help them avoid sexual assault," she says.

Associate Professor Carmody argues that the kind of knowledge and the skills needed to learn negotiation in intimate relationships is absent from most Australian rape prevention education programs.

“Current programs too often reinforce traditional ideas about male and female behaviour and focus almost exclusively on the unethical behaviour of men. They also completely avoid how same sex attracted young people work out these issues,” she says.

“Most programs are based on a punitive education model. They tell people ‘rape is bad’, and expect people will change their behaviour. Many programs focus on women and at risk groups, yet ignore men.”

“Our goal is to educate young women and men about how to prevent sexual violence and promote their ability to enjoy safe and pleasurable sexual intimacy, live healthy, productive and fulfilling lives.”

The information gathered from this part of the study will be used to develop a prevention education program that will be used across NSW. The researchers are conducting interviews with young people from 3 rural and 3 metropolitan sites in NSW.

The second stage of the study will involve interviewing participants before and after they participate in the program and then six months later to determine what impact the program has had on how they think and behave in relationships.

Young people living in Wagga Wagga who are interested in taking part in a confidential interview or learning more about the project should email [sexualethics@uws.edu.au](mailto:sexualethics@uws.edu.au) or phone 02 4736 0175, or 0418 693 253 (the researchers can call you right back). They can also visit: <http://www.sexualethics.org.au> for more information. The interviews will be held in downtown Wagga Wagga from 10-12 May.

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