

DOES SEX ED ACTUALLY WORK?

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Does sex ed actually work? (The Sunday Age, 18/01) While much of the available evidence is 'observational', one clear observation is that what we are doing now does not work. The alarming rise of STIs in Australia, the so-called lucky country, manifests the urgent need for far greater commitment to the provision of meaningful information. Daily our city clinic supports clients who became sexually active around the time they dropped out of school – neither home nor school had provided safe sex information. The free STI testing our agency provides often results in treatment as the opportunity for prevention has already passed. Ignorance is not bliss – this is made all too obvious by the ineffective, dogmatic abstinence programs the Bush Government spent over \$1 billion on. The religious lobby need to open their eyes to reality, not dream about fireside chats with Mum and Dad. Research shows 66% of teens and 75% of parents support mandatory sex education in school; only 11% support an abstinence-only approach. Whilst comprehensive sex education may not be a 'magic bullet', it will give young people the facts allowing them to make informed and safe decisions. It's time the Federal Government protect young people by making sex education a mandatory part of the national curriculum.

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