

MEDIA RELEASE: I Fucked Without Condoms

For immediate release, 2 September 2009

The AIDS Council of South Australia Inc.

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I FUCKED WITHOUT CONDOMS

The 80'S Grim Reaper campaign sent a public shock wave of horror around Australia and acted as a serious wake up call as to the terrifying consequences of contracting HIV. Though it was a world class and effective campaign a regrettable consequence was to demonise gay men, especially HIV positive gay men, and the shared cultural and sexual practices of the time. Since then, Adelaide's gay community has taken a more assertive and proactive role in determining the directions and building of a sustainable safe sex culture based in safety, care and respect.

Since the mid 80s there has been a decrease in behaviours with a high HIV transmission risk and an increase in protective behaviours, particularly condom use among gay men and other populations. The major factor contributing to the sustaining of safe sex practices is the continual promotion of safe sex and condom use campaign messages by a wide range of state and national health organisation/community groups.

The re-enforcement of safe sex and condom use in Australia has created a culture of safer sex wherein gay men generally wear a condom most of the time when fucking. As in many other cultural settings, practices outside the norm/boundaries of the culture are perceived as taboo and generate community disapproval, if not punishment. The creation of a safe sex culture means seeking or speaking about unprotected fucking and/or barebacking is seen in a negative light and rarely discussed (even though unprotected fucking remains a relatively common practice).

Since 1996 there has been a slow but steady increase in unprotected fucking across Australia along with a decline in HIV testing among gay men, both high co-factors in increasing HIV transmission rates.

The Adelaide periodic survey, 2007 indicated that out of the 527 men surveyed nearly 60% had at least one unprotected fuck with a regular partner and nearly 1/3 of men had at least one unprotected fuck with a casual partner in the previous 12 months.



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A “culture of privatised sex’ is the term used by the researchers in the report ‘Considering Australian Gay Communities in HIV Health Promotion’. Adelaide gay communities have a particular way of ‘talking about’ and ‘doing’ sex. According to the report, gay men in Adelaide tend to describe or talk about sex in a way that locates it in the private rather than the public domain. This means that public discussion about the good of public sex (i.e. sex at beats, sauna or meeting from the internet) or open discussion on a range of esoteric sexual practices are and will be notably absent.

The implication of this culture especially for men who’ve had a ‘slip up’ episode or fucked with out a condom with a casual partner may or will potentially be seen as an outcast: making it hard for these men to open up either to their friends or health workers about their experiences. Last but not least, it will make it more difficult especially for gay men in Adelaide to talk about and express the meaning of intimacy in their lives and how it influences their behaviour.

The challenge for the community is to talk about their real sexual behaviours and explore these sexual practices in public spaces in a safe space without judgement. These spaces should be utilised to talk through the process of how someone, whether consciously or subconsciously, chooses to fuck without a condom and how the chances of HIV and STI transmission can be minimised. Hopefully this process will lead us to discussing the role and meaning of intimacy and community in our lives and in which it each shapes our sexual behaviour.

Currently Gay Men’s Health is promoting a campaign called Real Time. The campaign focuses on risk taking by gay men who have adopted ‘serosorting’ as a strategy to reduce the risk of HIV transmission. ‘Serosorting’ is the term used to refer to choosing partners of the same HIV status for the purpose of having unprotected fucking. The risk in serosorting is that despite many people self reporting to be HIV negative we know that 1/3 of all new infections are passed on by people who don’t know that they are HIV positive.

Apart from print ads that you will see in blaze, the campaign also developed a booklet called Real Time. The booklet is designed to assist you in making positive behaviour changes by working through the perceived benefits



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and costs of unsafe sex. The booklet will help you to reflect on past and present actions, and identify and reduce patterns of behaviour that cause anxiety or stress.

The copy of the booklet and poster can be obtained from Darling House, 64 Fullarton Road Norwood or downloaded from our website www.acsa.org.au

If you would like to share your thoughts about unprotected anal sex or have been in a situation where a condom is not used please call Man2Man Information Line on 8334 1617 and we are also available for a private chat in Gaydar or Manhunt .



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