

# women's forum AUSTRALIA

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## Great Ocean Road Walk Challenge

Friday, March 26 - Sunday, March 28, 2010

Australian women are working more now than ever, and over recent decades fertility rates have also increased. At the same time, women are the main providers of informal care to the disabled and frail aged and a majority of women do the bulk of domestic work.

Since 2008, Women's Forum Australia has undertaken extensive research about the conflict between women's work and other life goals, and solutions for achieving better work life balance. The results will be published soon in *Reality Check*.

This research shows that for a majority of women, taking regular time out for exercise and leisure reduces work life stress. Talking to other women about their work life expectations also helps.

Dear Members and Supporters,

It hardly seems possible that February is upon us. At Women's Forum Australia, we are very excited about launching our *Reality Check: Work Life Balance* report, as well as releasing the updated *Women and Abortion* research report.

Another exciting development is the imminent launch of our Faking It Schools Ambassador Program - a youth empowerment initiative that helps girls develop the skills to discern the messages of media and popular culture and make healthy life choices.

As part of our launch activities for *Reality Check*, we're walking the Great Ocean Road. Why don't you and some friends join us? It's a fantastic opportunity to challenge yourself, network with other women, and experience the stunning scenery of arguably Australia's most impressive coastline. Hope to see you there!

**Katrina George**  
Chair

## In the Media

### Women's Forum Australia supports Opposition Leader's call for fewer abortions.

Independent women's think tank Women's Forum Australia welcomed Opposition Leader Tony Abbott's comments on abortion in the controversial Australian Women's Weekly Interview.

"I would like to see fewer abortions," Mr Abbott said in the interview...

Women's Forum Australia Chairperson Katrina George said: "An estimated 1 in 4 pregnancies ends in abortion. Tony Abbott's view about abortion is in line with most of the Australian community. Research shows that between 64 %-73% of Australians believe that the rate of abortion is too high. Tony Abbott is simply stating publicly what most Australians believe privately."

Ms George welcomed renewed public debate about abortion: "Research shows that for many women abortion is not about choice...Australian women need better information and support to freely make decisions about their pregnancies..."

[Read the full press release here](#)

## Spinning Around

Jane Cadzow, *Good Weekend*, December 12, 2009



So join us as we take the [Great Ocean Road Challenge](#) ! You'll help raise awareness about work life balance, get some exercise, and have a lot of fun.

Walk 55km in three days to raise money to support Women's Forum to create life-affirming change for women's well-being and freedom.

**Dates: Friday, March 26 - Sunday, March 28, 2010**

Itinerary: Day 1 - Pick up in Melbourne - Apollo Bay/Walk Blanket Bay to Cape Otway, 13 km  
Day 2 - Walk Cape Otway to Johanna, 22 km  
Day 3 - Walk Milanesia to Moonlight Head/Walk 12 Apostles, Return to Melbourne, 20 km

Cost: \$1500 is the fundraising target. This amount covers all trip costs (excluding transportation to/from Melbourne) and a donation to Women's Forum Australia. It also includes the up-front registration fee of \$300.

If you are unable to book at this time, but are interested in coming along, then please let us know as soon as possible so we can finalise our group numbers. We are happy to help you with your fundraising, so don't hesitate to contact us for ideas.

If you are unable to participate in the walk itself, would you be interested in [sponsoring a trekker?](#)

**All monies raised go toward Women's Forum Australia's Charitable Foundation and will be tax deductible.**

Questions/Booking: Contact Sara at [sara.hodgson@womensforaustralia.org](mailto:sara.hodgson@womensforaustralia.org) or on 0448 597 114

**Mags' flawed obsession with body perfect**

...Whether it's art or a flimsy excuse for scantily clad women to writhe around phallic symbols, pole dancing is a booming business. Five years ago, fewer than 10 dance studios around the country offered pole classes. Now the number is reported to be closer to 100...

Katrina George, chair of Women's Forum Australia, [said]: "The definition of empowered sexuality represented by pole dancing is a sexuality that imitates red-light entertainment. This is a caricature of female empowerment." From her point of view, "the popularity of pole dancing is just one example of the mainstreaming of porn..."

"Pole dancing is essentially different to athletics or acrobatics. When an audience is watching an athlete or an acrobat, they are primarily focused on the skill and athleticism, not the sexual value of the sportsperson. But that is the whole point of pole dancing."...

[Read the full article here](#)

## Abortion should not be a secret in society

Clare van Ryn, *The Examiner*, December 7, 2009

I HAVE been researching abortion rates in Tasmania recently. From the outset there was an itty-bitty problem...

There is no such thing.

That's right, there is no data collected by State or Federal governments to indicate just how many abortions are happening in Tasmania each year. Most other states have the information to hand. It seems there is a mindset that the termination of a pregnancy is just another medical procedure...

Like having your tonsils out. Or breaking your leg.

Regardless of your opinion on the topic, such information is crucial to aid transparency and to build a true profile of modern society...

Women's Forum Australia co director Selena Ewing says that following through with a pregnancy can have better outcomes for teenage girls. "Becoming a mother can be an occasion for young women and also young men to give up destructive behaviours and become more mature and responsible," she says.

"However, there is substantial pressure, both implicit and explicit, for teenagers to have an abortion — it seems to be society's preferred choice."

[Read the full article here](#)

## Women don't need to risk their health with egg donation

Katrina George, *The Age*, November 18, 2009

Three years after embryonic stem cell cloning was legalised in Australia, advocates are finally facing up to the critical issue: where will all the eggs come from? Cloning or somatic cell nuclear transfer (SCNT) is impossible without a continuous – and large – supply of women's ova. In South Korea, the now discredited Dr Hwang used 2061 eggs taken from 169 women and failed to produce a single cloned embryo.

Loane Skene from the Melbourne Law School at Melbourne University has suggested we should open debate on whether women should be paid for their eggs. This is somewhat surprising given that she was the deputy chairwoman of the 2005 Lockhart committee review into stem cell research

## Melinda Tankard Reist

*The Australian*, January 5, 2010

SHOCK horror: nude supermodel has dimple on thigh. In a move labelled daring and revolutionary, this month's edition of Marie Claire features nude photos of Australian model Jennifer Hawkins airbrush-free. The shoot reveals "brave" Jen with all her flaws.

And what exactly are these impediments? A tiny crease in Hawkins's waist, a slightly dimpled thigh and "uneven skin tones".

Quelle horreur. As if this isn't enough, Hawkins notes an additional flaw: her hips. She has them. Miss Universe 2004 is really the Elephant Woman...

Labelling hips, a little dimpling on the thigh, a small waist crease (which looks like what happens when any woman sits down) and supposedly uneven skin tone as flaws is already problematic. Who decided these were flaws and not part of being a woman? And if these are flaws, then how are other women supposed to feel?

And what about all the other flaws Hawkins, 26, will accrue if she has kids and when she ages?

The problem is the emphasis on physical attributes over any other qualities a woman might possess. And a freak-of-nature body that gets 24-hour-a-day attention and the best of care to earn its owner an income. Most women will never have a body like this...

[Read the full article here](#)



Visit Melinda's new website and keep updated with her blog at:  
[melindatankardreist.com.au](http://melindatankardreist.com.au)

that advised against payment for eggs. The committee argued that "the

## Faking It: Schools Ambassador Program

We're excited to announce our School Ambassador Program – based on *Faking It*:

*the female image in young women's magazines.* The program aims to engage high school girls in year 10-12 to be positive agents of change in their schools by leading their own peers through a positive and engaging program.

Through undertaking training and education about the impact of media and its messaging on young girls and women today, ambassadors will be equipped with new skills to teach their peers about the negative messages and disempowering attitudes that exist in society today. The program will also challenge school aged children to create their own grassroots strategies to combat some of the greatest challenges facing young people today.

Modules are based on Women's Forum's evidence-based research and include topics such as:

- Body Image
- Media Literacy
- Healthy Attitudes regarding Eating and Exercise
- Resisting Sexualisation and Objectification

For more information or to register your interest, please contact us [enquiries@womensforumaustralia.org](mailto:enquiries@womensforumaustralia.org) or call us on (02) 6260 5670

### **VIC Event - Our girls, Our bodies, Ourselves** Wednesday 24 February

"It's about girls, it's about women; it's about bodies. Popular culture, sexualisation, social pressures and negative messages. It's about worth, true value, action and rites of passage. It's about listening, spirited discussion and maybe a laugh or two..."

Speakers: Melinda Tankard Reist, Julie Gale, Jane Hardwicke Collings.

Venue: Eltham Community and Reception Centre, 801 Main Rd, Eltham  
Time: 7pm for 7:30 start  
Cost: \$15 p.p/\$10 conc

#### **RSVP essential**

[charlotte@barefootmagazine.com.au](mailto:charlotte@barefootmagazine.com.au) or  
ph 0417 509 756

healthiest eggs would be those from young women . . . the potential exists for coercion of young women to donate eggs", pointing to social disadvantage, family or workplace pressures...

Institutional ethics committees who Skene suggests "would scan the recruitment procedures and the information and consent forms" seems an easy answer to these concerns. But it's not that simple. There is an unavoidable tension between the needs of researchers and the interests of women. In a 2005 report to Britain's Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority, Professor Adam Balen, professor of reproductive medicine at Leeds General Hospital, pointed out that "women undergoing oocyte donation should be less than 35 years of age and may be even younger.."

But it is these women who are at even greater risk of [ovarian hyper stimulation syndrome] and infertility, and less likely to have completed their families. If women's health is the overriding concern, recruitment procedures should screen out young women from egg supply programs. But those are the eggs researchers want...

[Read the full article here](#)

## **National Strategy on Body Image doesn't go far enough**

Misty de Vries, *The Age*, October 29, 2009

We didn't need Karl Lagerfeld's recent "nobody wants to see curvy women" clanger to highlight the urgent need for action on body image dissatisfaction.... The proposed National Strategy on Body Image... is a welcome step forward. But it doesn't go nearly far enough.

At the heart of the proposed strategy is an Industry Voluntary Code of Conduct with guidance on the responsible portrayal of body image. The code articulates some worthy principles: broadening our cultural ideals of beauty to include models of different ethnicities and sizes; communicating the holistic value of people; and the importance of being healthy above body shape.

{But} the problem with a voluntary code is that it's, well, voluntary. Body angst is good for business...

[Read the full article here](#)



## **News in Brief**

### **Sexualised images stir parliamentary debate**

Browyn Herbert, *ABC News*, February 9, 2010

Moves to cut down the sexualisation of girls in the media has won support from both sides of politics, but media commentators say the Federal Government should take a cautious approach to regulation.

Labor MP Amanda Rishworth ... hopes to moderate the proliferation of sexualisation in video clips, magazines, toys, clothes and the internet.

## NSW Event - Growing Up Fast and Furious

Friday 19 March

This is an important and timely conference reviewing issues with great significance for Australian children's health and wellbeing. Our young people are experiencing a media environment that is increasingly violent, commercialised, and sexualised.

Don't miss this rare opportunity to listen to three of the most highly respected international researchers reviewing the evidence on media violence: Prof. L. Rowell Huesmann (long term impacts of violent media), Prof. Ed Donnerstein (Internet violence and cyber-bullying), and Distinguished Research Prof. Craig Anderson (violent video games).

### Registration Essential

Venue: NSW Teachers Federation Conference Centre  
Time: 9am - 5pm  
Cost: \$235 (adult) / \$120 (student)

For more information contact:  
[admin@youngmedia.org.au](mailto:admin@youngmedia.org.au) or  
(08) 8736 2111

"... whether it is the Bratz dolls that are targeted to young girls, who are wearing fishnets, heavy makeup and boob tubes; or the music video clips that depict women gyrating around fully clothed male singers, that play alongside the Saturday morning cartoons," she said.

Ms Rishworth says one illustration of the sexualisation of young girls on the internet is through the My Minx website..."This online persona, or Minx, is then required to be dressed and [you] can buy lingerie [and] designer clothes from outlets using fake pink pounds from an account which needs to be topped up with mobile phone credit...Having dressed their persona, users can then take their minx to clubs, earn money by working as a strippers, or increase their minx's happiness rating by getting plastic surgery."

The bill has also drawn support from the Opposition, including West Australian Liberal Luke Simkins and New South Wales Liberal MP Sussan Ley, who says rising forms of sexualisation is damaging children.

"What this is about is the corporate exploitation of children's sexuality," Ms Ley said.

"It is not the sexuality itself, but the sickening falsification and then the mass marketing of children as sexual beings that hurts us all."

[Read the full article here](#)

## Employers must offer work-life balance or pay the price

Fran Metcalf, *Courier Mail*, January 16, 2010

EMPLOYERS and their businesses run the risk of being "named and shamed" on social and media sites if they fail to manage new workplace flexibility laws properly, a Brisbane workplace lawyer has warned.

Brad Petley, workplace relations and safety partner at Holman Webb, says employers who have not prepared for r2r – the right of the workers to request flexible work practices – could suffer business brand and bottom line damage.

The r2r provisions came into effect on January 1 as part of the National Employment Standard under the Fair Work Act 2009.

While workers have always been able to request more flexible working hours or arrangements, what's new about this law is that it makes it much harder for employers to refuse.

Employers face fines of up to \$6600 for non-compliance and claims of discrimination or adverse treatment.

It's an evolutionary step in employer-employee relationships, allowing millions of workers a genuine chance to capture that ever-elusive work-life balance...

Petley says employers need to communicate to employees what their rights actually entail to prevent them relying on potentially inaccurate information from other sources.

[Read the full article here](#)

## Happy 1st Birthday Australian Girl!

We're well aware of the Bratz dolls hypersexualised appearance and the effect this insidious message has on young girls. One Australian grandmother has put her best foot forward with a solution.

## Quotable Quotes

**"When you empower a woman you empower an entire family.**

**When women get together, miracles happen."**

- Deborah Lindholm - Foundation for Women.

## Did You Know? Sex Trafficking

Recently, an Australian-based charity, The Grey Man organisation, rescued a 10-year-old girl and a 14-year-old girl being held in an illegal brothel. This begs the question: why does sex trafficking occur?

Victims of sex trafficking can be women or men, girls or boys, but the majority are women and girls.

Sex traffickers frequently subject their victims to debt-bondage, an illegal practice in which

the traffickers tell their victims that they owe money (often relating to the victims' living expenses and transport into the country) and that they must pledge their personal services to repay the debt.

Trafficking in persons is the fastest growing criminal industry in the world. Across the globe, traffickers supply millions of human beings for use in forced labour or in the commercial sex industry.

UNICEF estimates that as many as 1.2 million children may be trafficked for sex each year.

Victims of trafficking are forced into various forms of commercial sexual exploitation including prostitution, pornography, stripping, live-sex shows, mail-order brides, military prostitution and sex tourism.

Victims trafficked into prostitution and pornography are usually involved in the most exploitive forms of commercial sex operations. Sex trafficking operations can be found in highly-visible venues such as street prostitution, as well as more underground systems such as closed brothels that operate out of residential homes.

Sex trafficking also takes place in a variety of public and private locations such as massage parlours, spas, strip clubs and other fronts for prostitution. Victims may start off dancing or stripping in clubs and then be coerced into situations of prostitution and pornography.

The Swedish Government does not differentiate between sex trafficking and prostitution but understands that the latter is a precursor for such trafficking. The Swedish government said, "International trafficking in human beings could not flourish but for the existence of local prostitution markets where men are willing and able to buy and sell women and children for sexual exploitation."

The US State Department clearly states that where prostitution is legalised or tolerated, there is greater demand for human trafficking victims and nearly always an increase in the number of women and children trafficked into commercial sex slavery.

In November 2008, Helen Schofield released a range of girl dolls that promote respect, dignity and self worth. The dolls have been willingly embraced by the retail market and young girls alike.

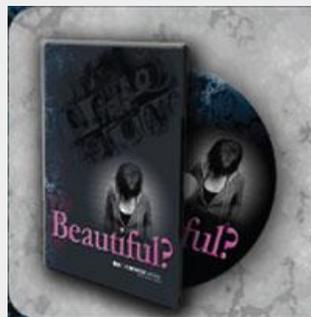


Helen tried to purchase dolls for her own granddaughters and could only find over sexualised dolls, baby or 'rag' play dolls. She was forced to import suitable play dolls from the United States, and decided it was time for a doll that represented Australian girls. Amy, Emily, Belle and Jasmine were born and on their first birthday they welcome Matilda as a new friend.

For more information visit [www.australiangirldoll.com.au](http://www.australiangirldoll.com.au)

## Recommended Resource

### *Beautiful?*



Many young women are facing extraordinary pressures. Powerful media driven messages about body image, relationships, intimacy and sexual decision-making are leaving many girls confused, isolated and at risk. We have never seen worse outcomes for girls across a range of indicators from mental and physical health to sexual assault and self-harm.

*Beautiful?* is a powerful and innovative DVD experience involving expert input from professionals working directly with young women. It is ideally suited for use in schools, youth programs or any initiative that seeks to help teenage girls build a better tomorrow.

Visit Choicez Media for more information [www.choicez.com.au](http://www.choicez.com.au)

Hmm...

## What is Roger David really saying?

The recent furore over Roger David's appalling choice of T shirts for young men is a perfect example of corporate social irresponsibility in Australia.

In an open letter to the company, we've asked them to seriously consider the following...

On their website, Roger David claims to be the 'market leader in young men's fashion and accessories'. So we think that it's fair to suggest that they show leadership in the messages they promote to the broader community.

At the base of the controversy are these two T shirt images (below).



(Image: Gagged Woman) (Image: Roxy Music Cover)

By promoting a t-shirt that displays a gagged woman, Roger David seemingly condones violence against women. They are profiting from sending the message to young men and women that violence towards women is acceptable.

Globally, and nationally, governments view violence against women as unacceptable. Staggeringly, around one-in-three Australian women experience physical violence and almost one-in-five women experience sexual violence over their lifetime. Yet Roger David ignores this and defiantly refuses to withdraw the image.

The sexualised posturing and lack of attire of the girls on the second T shirt, the Roxy Music cover, seems to promote the idea that women are purely sexual objects. The effects of sexualising and objectifying women are well known, and cause deep psychological harm to women. Again, Roger David has decided to ignore this and continues to stock this shirt.

Women's Forum Australia believes Roger David needs to re-evaluate the message, guidance and inspiration they are providing young men with, through promotion and selling of this attire.

At the time of this newsletter, no response has been received from Roger David.

## Top Model Judge Rejects Plus-size Aspiring Models

Emily O'Keefe, *ninemsn*, January 20, 2010

Australia's Next Top Model judge Charlotte Dawson has slammed Australia's plus-size modelling industry, labelling it "non-existent" and declaring no curvy model wannabes will win the reality show on her watch...

"There is no market for plus-size models in Australia...it would be tokenism to put a plus-size girl through just for the sake of it," Dawson told *ninemsn*.

Dawson said despite the recent shift in media towards positive coverage of plus-size models the fashion industry in Australia had not caught up. "I would like someone to name a plus-size model in Australia because I can't," she said.

... Dawson said it would be a mistake to select a plus-size model for one of the final contestants.

Please visit our website at [www.womensforaustralia.org](http://www.womensforaustralia.org)  
Please consider making an [online donation](#)