

# 'SIT DOWN GIRLIE'

## Girlie's opening growls for 2010



### Grrrrrr

Petra Wright in the letters column of *The Age* (22 January 2010) is fed up with the media's use of the term 'girl power'. The term is often used when the media are featuring situations where women 'are powerful or doing impressive work'. Petra points out that 'boy power' is never used to describe men's achievements. She notes the expression girl power was used when surgeons in Melbourne separated conjoined twins, when talks were planned between Hillary Clinton and Julia Gillard and in the story about women earning more than men. Go Petra — perhaps the headline writers might get the hint and exercise a bit of imagination.

### Balls ups

Some women in New Zealand were not amused by an Air New Zealand advertisement which featured middle-aged women as cougars prowling bars in search of sex. The David Attenborough-like voiceover described the cougar starving herself of meat during the day and then hunting large slabs of meat at night by stalking a young man at a bar. He tries to give her the brush off but she drags the prey to a city apartment. New Zealand's Rape Prevention agency described the ads as disgusting and distressing to women who have been raped. Not so long ago New Zealand's Cancer Council featured John Hopoate's 'finger up the bum' incident during a Rugby League match which was supposed to encourage men to have prostate cancer testing. That was a real bummer too. But some people never learn. An advertisement for a 'midget' or a 'large-chested woman' to act as a 'beer bitch' for a group of men attending a Rugby Seven series in New Zealand was also pulled when complaints were received.

### The wrong message

An Australian website originating from Los Angeles is flogging T-shirts promoting rape. A company, Blood is the New Black sells T-shirts with slogans 'It's not rape if you yell surprise', 'Rape, Murder, Arson — I like rape', and 'I want rape'. Another, Chaser LA, has shirts with two semi-naked women with strips across their eyes. Melinda Tankard, co-founder of anti-exploitation group Collective Shout, wants the T-shirts outlawed. She says they mock the seriousness of rape and she is concerned about how the messages will affect victims of sexual assault. (*The Age*, 24 January 2010).

### Save it for a rainy day

Tony Abbott's unsolicited advice to young women to regard their virginity as a gift and 'save themselves for marriage' has raised a few hackles. Many have called him a hypocrite and Kerry Dobson (Letter, *The Age*, 27 January 2010) wants to know what his advice to young men is. Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard says the Leader of the Opposition should butt out as, 'Australian women want to make their own choices, and they don't want to be lectured by Tony Abbott.' Comedian Fiona Scott-Norman was less polite describing Tony Abbott as, 'Yet another self-acknowledged one time drug-taking "Vatican Roulette" playing shagabout, white middle-aged male telling young women not to do what he did when he was their age.'

### Bonk Holiday

Meanwhile in South Korea the Government has ordered some employees to go home early once a month so they can make babies. Seoul officials have announced the lights will be turned off in the health ministry every third Wednesday to compel staff to go home. South Korea has one of the lowest birth rates in the world and cash gifts are also being used to encourage more than two babies per couple. Is this really the best way to achieve the Government's objectives? How about better education, family friendly workplace policies, better childcare? And how helpful, Girlie wonders, are Korean dads?

### Anything you can do...

In the United States, the proportion of wives better educated and earning more than their husbands has risen five-fold since 1970. D'Vera Cohn, co-author of the Pew Research Institute study in Washington says, 'The larger earner is increasingly likely to be the wife; the better educated partner is likely to be the wife. Marriage has been a way for men to raise their economic standing in recent decades when traditionally marriage has been a way for women to increase their economic standing.' Still women have a long way to go before reaching true equality with only 22 per cent of wives earning more than their husbands in 2007. Compare this, however with only four per cent in 1970.

While women are paid less than men and face discrimination there are some jobs which they find easier to get into than do men. The Australian National University study by Alison Booth and Andrew Leigh found substantial discrimination against men in 'data entry jobs and in hospitality as waiters in hotels and cafes'. (*The Age*, 25 January 2010) The authors concede that this would cut the other way for a female bricklayer or engineer.

LEE GALLITY and RIA FENDER are feminist lawyers.