

# SEXUAL COMMUNICATION AND SEXUAL CONSENT NEW CHALLENGES AND DIRECTIONS

A RESEARCH FORUM



**TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 12 2023**



La Trobe University City Campus



360 Collins Street Melbourne VIC 3000



**M-SEX RESEARCH PROGRAM FORUM [WWW.M-SEX.ORG](http://WWW.M-SEX.ORG)**





THE YARRA RIVER AT POUND BEND NEAR THE EASTERN ENTRANCE OF THE TUNNEL, LOOKING NORTH. TAKEN BY NICK CARSON IN OCTOBER 2008.

**RIVER BERRERN, BIRR-ARRUNG, BAY-RAY-RUNG, BIRARANGM, BIRRARUNG, AND WONGETE**

# NAARM

This event is held on the land Naarm, home to the Wurunderji people of the Kulin Nation. We acknowledge all First Peoples of this land and celebrate their enduring connections to Country, knowledge and stories. We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and Ancestors who guide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. We recognise sovereignty was never ceded, Australia always was, and remains, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land.

To learn about the rich history of Naarm and the Wurunderji people,  
please visit:

<https://www.wurundjeri.com.au/>

Other ways to support and honour our Indigenous communities in Victoria,  
Australia:

**Pay the Rent**

<https://paytherent.net.au/>



# SUPPORT

The content of today's forum may result in feeling uncomfortable or distressed due to discussions of sexual violence, consent violations, and sexual practices.

## DURING

### LEAVING AND/OR RETURNING

If at any point you are feeling distressed or uncomfortable, you are more than welcome to leave the space and return later. There are several sitting and relaxation areas on the level. Or, you are welcome to head downstairs where there is a coffee shop and return when you feel ready to do so.

## AFTER

### SUPPORT SERVICES

If you are at any point feeling distressed or uncomfortable after attending this forum, please reach out to one of the below services that are most appropriate for you.

#### *Mental Health & Crisis Support*

- Lifeline: ([lifeline.org.au](http://lifeline.org.au)) – Ph: 13 11 14
- BeyondBlue: ([beyondblue.org.au](http://beyondblue.org.au)) – Ph: 1300 224 636
- Men's Line: ([mensline.org.au](http://mensline.org.au)) – Ph: 1300 78 99 78
- Women's Information and Referral Exchange: ([wire.org.au](http://wire.org.au)) – Ph: 1300 134 130
- Melbourne Sexual Health Clinic: ([mshc.org.au](http://mshc.org.au)) – Ph: 03 9341 6200
- Aboriginal Counselling Services: ([aboriginalcounsellingservices.com.au](http://aboriginalcounsellingservices.com.au)) – Ph 0410 539 905
- Kids Helpline: ([kidshelpline.com.au](http://kidshelpline.com.au)) – Ph: – 1800 55 1800
- QLife: ([qlife.org.au](http://qlife.org.au))-Webchat (LGBTIQ+)
- Suicide Call Back Services: ([suicidecallbackservice.org.au](http://suicidecallbackservice.org.au))

#### *Sexual Violence, Domestic Violence, & Assault*

- Victorian Centres Against Sexual Assault: ([casa.org.au](http://casa.org.au))
- 1800 Respect: ([1800respect.org.au](http://1800respect.org.au)) – Ph: 1800 737 732
- Sexual Assault Crisis Line Victoria: ([sacl.com.au](http://sacl.com.au)) – Ph: 1800 806 292
- Safe Steps: ([safesteps.org.au](http://safesteps.org.au)) – PH 1800 015 188
- Relationships Australia: ([relationships.org.au](http://relationships.org.au)) – PH 1300 364 277
- Domestic Violence Resource Centre: ([dvrcv.org.au](http://dvrcv.org.au)) PH-(03) 8346 5200

# INFORMATION



**Tram Stop #5 Elizabeth/Collins  
Tram Stop #2, Collins/Elizabeth**



**Eduroam only**



**Flinders St Station**



**All gender and accessible  
toilets located near elevators**



**Bus stop Collins/ Queen**



**Fresh water available in  
kitchen for water bottles**



**Level 2, Rooms 2.15/2.16**



**Morning tea & lunch  
provided**



**Need help? Locate Lily Moor at our registration desk**



# AGENDA

<b>9:00</b>	-	<b>9:20</b>		<b>Registration</b>
<b>9:20</b>	-	<b>9:30</b>		<b>Opening Remarks</b>
<b>9:30</b>	-	<b>10:55</b>		<b>Session 1: Representations, Cultures &amp; Discourses</b>
<b>10:55</b>	-	<b>11:10</b>		<b>Morning Tea</b>
<b>11:10</b>	-	<b>12:45</b>		<b>Session 2: Lived Experiences, Practice &amp; Play</b>
<b>12:45</b>	-	<b>13:30</b>		<b>Lunch</b>
<b>13:30</b>	-	<b>15:05</b>		<b>Session 3: Challenges, Intersections &amp; New Directions</b>
<b>15:05</b>	-	<b>15:15</b>		<b>Coffee Break</b>
<b>15:25</b>	-	<b>15:55</b>		<b>Roundtable Discussion</b>
<b>15:55</b>	-	<b>16:00</b>		<b>Closing Remarks</b>

# SEXUAL COMMUNICATION AND SEXUAL CONSENT

## NEW CHALLENGES AND DIRECTIONS

### ABOUT

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In recent decades, we have witnessed magnificent strides in improving society's understanding of consent, and how people can navigate their experiences with care for self and for others, to support consensual, affirming and pleasurable sexual and romantic relationships. As we implement new learning, we develop a nuanced understanding of what really works and what the barriers are to empowered and informed sexual consent practices.

In this forum researchers present research addressing important questions:

- What does new research tell us about gaps in our thinking on sexual consent and sexual communication?
- How might different groups, practices, or spaces and places challenge us to rethink our current approaches to sexual communication and sexual consent?

This one-day forum is a space for anyone interested in this topic – including those in social care, physical, sexual and mental health, youth and family, justice and legal, sexual and family violence, research and education – to learn about cutting edge research, and to consider implications for practice, advocacy and policy-making.

### AIMS

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- To gain insight into research happening in Australia and internationally regarding various sexual practices, groups, and spaces.
- To consider potential implications of this research for current programs, health promotion, and advocacy work.

### WORKSHOPS



#### **AOIFE DERMODY**

*Rainbow Health Australia Strategic Knowledge Translation Lead*

Following each presentation session we will have workshops that will allow participants to engage with the research content and determine how it may apply or be relevant in their current work. The objectives of these three workshops and the roundtable discussion include:

- opportunities to consider relevance of the presentations to their work, organisation or sector
- opportunities to explore explore the relevance with colleagues in attendance
- opportunities to bring back summaries of the discussions to organisations should they wish, to identify any potential implications for the findings

#### **Purpose**

We want to create a space in which the implications of this research can be discussed and digested. This is a generative space, meaning we are not committing to action, but rather exploring what action might look like. This is 1) to help you digest, think and create meaning with other professionals, and 2) to share any important considerations or learnings - this may go into a post-event summary. Importantly, we note that:

- not all research will have obvious implications or actions for your work
- not all research will have implications or actions for anyone at present - it may still be theoretical.

#### **Facilitation**

The workshops and roundtable discussion will be facilitated by Aoife Dermody. There will be a workshop after each speaking session of approximately 20-30 minutes (followed by a break). The roundtable discussion will happen at the end of the event to bring together themes and ideas.

# SEXUAL COMMUNICATION AND SEXUAL CONSENT

## NEW CHALLENGES AND DIRECTIONS

### WORKSHOP NOTES

#### **Personal Reflections**

During the presentation sessions, it may be useful to take notes to support the workshop process. You may want to think about these questions:

- What stands out to me?
- What has relevance to my work or that of my organisation?
- What questions does it raise for me?

We'll provide some blank paper for this process, and these are just personal notes for yourself, you do not have to share them with anyone, but can choose to if you'd like.

#### **Group Reflections**

During the workshops, you'll be working in groups to think about implications of the research. You'll be provided paper for this task, with one designated note-taker per table. These notes will be collected to support the post-event summary write-up.

#### **Roundtable Discussion**

The purpose of the round-table discussion is to have an overarching discussion about sex and consent in the broad context of policy-making, research, and service provision, and what steps we might need to consider next. This will be three short discussions with feedback being sought from 1 - 2 tables after each one. Questions may include:

- In what settings, or what professionals, could be having these conversations, and in what context?
- What other groups or sectors could benefit from these conversations, and why?
- Why aren't they having them now?
- What are some of the risks? What could go wrong?
- What would be needed to make such conversations safe, helpful and effective?

You will be provided paper for this task, with a designated note-taker. We will collect all notes, some of which may be included in the post-event summary write-up.

# SEXUAL COMMUNICATION AND SEXUAL CONSENT

## NEW CHALLENGES AND DIRECTIONS

### POST-EVENT

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Recordings of presentations will be made available subject to speaker permission. Workshops and roundtable discussions will not be recorded.

A brief anonymised summary of participant discussions on implications of the research. This brief will support participants to consider whether and how this research may be used by their organisation. Participants will receive this brief via email at a later date.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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This event is funded by the Australian Research Council Discovery Early Career Award (DECRA) (DE200101539).

This event is hosted by The Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society (ARCSHS) based at La Trobe University. For more information, please visit [latrobe.edu.au/arcsHS](http://latrobe.edu.au/arcsHS).

Facilitation is supported by Rainbow Health Australia ([rainbowhealthaustralia.org.au](http://rainbowhealthaustralia.org.au)).

This event is catered by Appetite Catering ([appetitecatering.com.au](http://appetitecatering.com.au)).

Thank you to all participants who have come along today.

Thank you to all speakers who have donated their time to talk today about their research and practice.

Thank you to Aoife Dermody for leading the facilitation of our workshops and roundtable discussion.

Thank you also to Lily Moor and Nicole Eckersley for providing logistical and administrative support for this event.



# SEXUAL COMMUNICATION AND SEXUAL CONSENT

## NEW CHALLENGES AND DIRECTIONS

### WELCOME

### *Acknowledgement of Country*



#### **DR ANDREA WALING**

##### *Opening remarks*

An overview of the day that includes the aims of the forum, and general information.

### SESSION 1

### *Representations, Cultures & Discourses*



#### **DR BIANCA FILEBORN**

##### *The limits of affirmative consent legislation*

In recent years, there's been a push for 'affirmative consent' in sexual offense laws and education. This talk explores limitations in addressing sexual harm and promoting ethical conduct. Research shows criminal law may not effectively address the issue, and affirmative consent might not achieve its goals. These efforts prioritise the legal system, excluding marginalised survivors. The conclusion emphasises the need to explore innovative, non-criminal approaches for preventing and addressing sexual harm.



#### **PROFESSOR KATH ALBURY**

##### *Building foundations for practice: digital and data capabilities for sexuality educators and sexual communication professionals*

The relationship between digital sexual content and consent is a focus of both research and public discourse. 'Digital literacy' is now part of the violence prevention conversation. But what does it mean for sexuality education and health promotion practice? This presentation offers interdisciplinary approaches to building digital capabilities in sexual health and social justice work.

# SEXUAL COMMUNICATION AND SEXUAL CONSENT

## NEW CHALLENGES AND DIRECTIONS



### MIRANDA MILLEN

*From sluts to victims: navigating cultural narratives in consent discourse*

Australia has taken crucial steps to legislate affirmative consent, the question remains: does this change truly empower women to confidently voice what they want during sex? This presentation explores the ways competing and contradictory narratives about women as either 'sluts' or 'victims' create barriers to expanding how we think about consent and the pursuit of pleasure.

## OUR RESEARCH PROGRAMS

The below research programs are focused on sex, sexuality, and sexual health. They are based at The Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society (ARCSHS, pronounced Arches) which conducts world-class research and education on the social dimensions of sexuality, gender, health and human relationships.

### Sexual Health Promotion and Education

**Research (SHPER)** is a program of research focusing on the sexual health and wellbeing of young people residing in Australia.

[shper.org](http://shper.org)

Commonwealth Department of Health

**M-SEX** is a 3-year program of research that focuses on cisgender, heterosexual men's experiences of their bodies, desires, sexuality and sexual practices, and their health and well-being.

[m-sex.org](http://m-sex.org)

Australian Research Council DECRA

**TechSex** is a multi-study project that aims to enhance knowledge and explore important implications of new digital, mechanical and medical technologies that are transforming the sexual lives of many Australians.

[tech-sex.com](http://tech-sex.com)

Australian Research Council Discovery

**SESSION 2**

*Lived Experiences, Practice & Play*



**DR HILARY CALDWELL**

*What can women who buy sexual services teach us about consent?*

Heterosexual consent operates within strict gendered rules and power differentials. Sex workers said they were consent experts who taught women clients how to ask for their desires within a negotiated service. Women said they felt sexual services were therapeutic including learning consent negotiation skills which empowered them, reducing possibilities of sexual violations and other violence.



**DR ANDREA WALING**

*In theory and in practice: men and women's navigations of sexual communication and sexual consent during intimate moments*

This presentation explores findings from the M-SEX research project seeking to understand how men and women in Australia are navigating sexual communication and sexual consent. Findings will illustrate that despite a high degree of awareness and knowledge of good practice, this is not often applied in everyday sexual experiences. This presentation looks at why this is the case.



**READER CHRIS HAYWOOD**

*Swinger clubs and consensual spaces*

In a recent survey of swingers, consent was named as one of the most pressing issues faced by the community. This presentation explores the ways that space shapes consensual practices. The presentation aims to outline some of these moments for further discussion about what support and interventions can be offered to the community.

# SEXUAL COMMUNICATION AND SEXUAL CONSENT

## NEW CHALLENGES AND DIRECTIONS

### SESSION 3

### *Challenges, Intersections & New Directions*



#### **CHIEDZA MALUNGA**

*Sexual communication and consent conversations with culturally and linguistic diverse communities*

This talk will explore a practitioner's perspective on the intersectionality of lived experience of migration and settlement, and adapting while learning new ways of negotiating intimate relationships in a new culture.



#### **SOPHIE HINDES**

*From consent to possibilities: queer insights on negotiating sex*

This presentation examines sexual negotiation among bi+ focus group and interview participants. I will explore how gender norms and sexual scripts both limit and enable possibilities for sexual negotiation. I argue that these insights broaden our understanding of sexual communication beyond dominant heteronormative and cisnormative consent frameworks.

### ROUND TABLE

### *Group Discussion*



#### **AOIFE DERMODY**

*Coming back together*

Broad-ranging conversation regarding matters of sex and consent within the extensive backdrop of policy creation, research undertakings, and service provisioning.



# SEXUAL COMMUNICATION AND SEXUAL CONSENT

## NEW CHALLENGES AND DIRECTIONS

CLOSE

End of day



### ANDREA WALING

*Closing remarks*

Wrap up of the day, and thank you for attending!

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### ARCSHS Seminar Series

Reader Chris Haywood, Newcastle University (UK)

*Exploring Swinger Clubs in the UK: Upside Down Pineapples, Erotic Hierarchies and the Pleasuring of Desire*

September 14th 2023

4:00pm

Online (Zoom Webinar) and In Person

La Trobe Collins Street Campus

360 Collins Street, Melbourne

Register here:

<https://www.latrobe.edu.au/events/all/exploring-swinger-clubs-in-the-uk-upside-down-pineapples-erotic-hierarchies-and-the-pleasuring-of-desire2>

### Book Launch & Celebration

*Exploring the Cultural Phenomenon of the Dick Pic*

September 22 2023

6:30pm

Bad Decisions Bar

46 Johnston Street, Fitzroy

Register here:

<https://booklaunchdickpic.eventbrite.com.au>



# BIOGRAPHIES

## **Dr Andrea Waling**

Dr Andrea Waling is a Senior ARC DECRA Research Fellow at the Australian Research in Sex, Health, and Society at La Trobe University, Australia. She undertakes several qualitative and mixed-methods research projects focused on explorations of men, sexuality, and bodies; young people and sexual literacy, technologies, sex, and sexual intimacy, and LGBTIQ+ health and well-being. She recently published her second book, *Exploring the Cultural Phenomenon of the Dick Pic* with Routledge Press.

## **Aoife Dermody**

Aoife Dermody is the Strategic Knowledge Translation Lead in the Australian Research Centre for Sex, Health and Society in La Trobe University. Aoife supports researchers to design and deliver high-impact research that drives meaningful change in policymaking and service delivery, and supports the development of impactful knowledge translation outputs underpinned by cutting edge research and best practice.

## **Professor Kath Albury**

Kath is Professor of Media and Communication, an Australian Research Council (ARC) Future Fellow, and an Associate Investigator in the ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision-Making and Society at Swinburne University of Technology. Her past projects have investigated young people's practices of digital self-representation, and the role of user-generated media (including social networking platforms and dating apps) in young adult's formal and informal sexual learning, safety and wellbeing practices.

## **Dr Bianca Fileborn**

Dr Bianca Fileborn (she/they) is a Senior Lecturer in Criminology at the University of Melbourne. Their research examines sexual violence across a range of spatial, cultural and social contexts, with recent work focusing on victim-centred justice responses to street harassment, LGBTQ+ people's experiences of sexual violence, and safety and violence in live music spaces. Bianca has undertaken several collaborative projects on sexual violence law reform and victim-centred justice processes.

## **Miranda Millen**

Miranda Millen is a PhD candidate at Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society (ARCSHS), La Trobe University. Her work explores how gendered narratives of victim-blaming and slut-shaming impact women's experiences navigating sexual consent, pleasure and well-being.

### **Dr Hilary Caldwell**

Dr Hilary Caldwell is a sexologist and writer living and working on Ngunnawal Country (ACT). Her academic research focuses on women clients of sex workers. Hilary is passionate about gender equality particularly around sex positivity.

### **Reader Chris Haywood**

Chris Haywood is a Reader in Critical Masculinity Studies in the Department of Media, Culture and Heritage at Newcastle University, UK. He is currently joint editor of the *Journal of Bodies, Sexualities and Masculinities* and the *Journal of Boyhood Studies*. His book, *“Sex Club: Recreational Sex, Fantasies and Cultures of Desire”* (2022, Palgrave), explores sex club cultures through themes such as power, desire and erotic hierarchies. He is currently developing a project on sexual health, risk and swinger communities in the UK.

### **Chiedzda Malunga**

Chiedzda Malunga is a public health professional with experience in refugee health and sexual and reproductive health promotion and research in multicultural communities. Chiedzda has worked in statewide programs across Victoria, ranging from individual and community-based programs through to policy and advocacy initiatives. She is passionate about building the capacity of individuals, communities and systems to respond effectively to the needs of the most vulnerable groups. In her current work in Australian healthcare, she is strongly guided by principles of equity and social justice to influence and inclusive healthcare. Chiedzda is also a Director on the Board of WaterAid Australia and is a Consumer representative of SPHERE- Centre of Research Excellence.

### **Sophie Hinds**

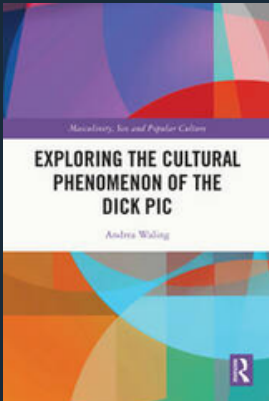
Sophie Hinds (they/them) is a PhD Candidate and Teaching Associate at the University of Melbourne in Criminology. Sophie’s research investigates sexual, domestic, and gendered violence from queer and feminist theoretical perspectives. They have published research on sexual consent, the #MeToo movement, sexual assault reporting, street harassment, and technology-facilitated violence.

### **Lily Moor**

Lily Moor (she/her) is a PhD candidate and research assistant at The Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health, and Society (ARCSHS) at La Trobe University. Lily’s research explores how Australian adults are engaging with technology to facilitate sex and intimacy, and the potential benefits and risks afforded by these practices.

# FEATURED OUTPUTS

Interested in the work some of our speakers do?  
Check out some of their outputs below!



## Dr Andrea Waling

Check out this book exploring the dick pic in popular culture. Drawing from a range of disciplines, cultural analyses, lived experiences and theoretical approaches, this book explores the polysemous nature of dick pics.

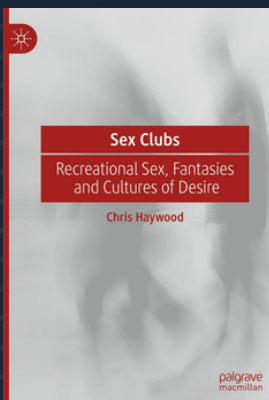
**Access it here!:** [bit.ly/3Eh9kZP](https://bit.ly/3Eh9kZP)



## Professor Kath Albury

Check out this webinar which introduces new models for digital and data capabilities in sexual health policy and practice, and launches the Stage One Report for the interdisciplinary Australian Research Council Future Fellowship project of the same name.

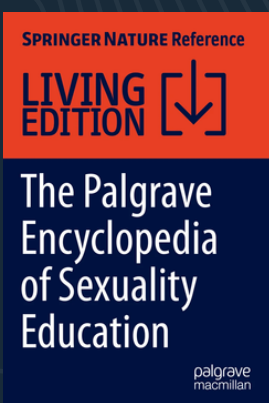
**Access the Launch & Report here!:** [bit.ly/3QYEqx9](https://bit.ly/3QYEqx9)



## Reader Chris Haywood

Check out this book exploring the hidden world of sex clubs. These are not strip clubs, lap dancing clubs, or brothels; these are clubs that men and women visit to have no strings attached sex. Each year sex clubs, traditionally called swingers clubs, are visited by over one million people in the UK.

**Access it here!:** [bit.ly/45LsJOu](https://bit.ly/45LsJOu)



## Sophie Hindes

Check out this reference entry that challenges current thinking in how sexual consent is addressed and understood.

**Access it here!:** [bit.ly/3PiRjRr](https://bit.ly/3PiRjRr)





**Dr Hilary Caldwell**

Check out this recent podcast interview! Listen in to learn about all things sex including shame, condoms and hiring for pleasure.

**Access it here!** [bit.ly/3Z1dX40](https://bit.ly/3Z1dX40)

Keep your eye out for Hilary's new book which is about reclaiming and empowering women's sexuality. Published by University of Queensland Press and due for release in May 2024, this timely and important work is a celebration of sex, and also investigates sexual shaming, stigma, consent and power!



[rainbowhealthaustralia.org.au](https://rainbowhealthaustralia.org.au)

**Rainbow Health Australia is a program that supports lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) health and wellbeing through research and knowledge translation, training, resources, policy advice and service accreditation through the Rainbow Tick.**

**We're located within the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society (ARCSHS) at La Trobe University and are funded by the Victorian government.**

**Check out our training programs!**

**How2**  
**Rainbow Tick Accreditation Program**

**True Colours**  
**Introduction to LGBTIQ-Inclusive Practice**

**Rainbows Don't Fade with Age**  
**LGBTI Ageing & Aged Care Training**