

**Creating Controversy: Sex Education and the Christian Right
in South Australia**

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Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief, it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

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Sally Gibson

Date

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List of Abbreviations

AFLA	Adolescent Family Life Act
ANCHARD	Australian National Council on AIDS, Hepatitis and Related Diseases
ASCA	Advocates for Survivors of Child Abuse
DECS	Department of Education and Children’s Services (called SA Education Department)
FOL	Festival of Light
FPO	Family Planning Organisation
FPQ	Family Planning Queensland
GLBTIQ	Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer
GDHR	Growing and Developing Healthy Relationships
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HRE	Human Relationship Education
IPPF	International Planned Parenthood Federation
NSW	New South Wales
NT	Northern Territory
QLD	Queensland
SA	South Australia
SHARE	Sexual Health and Relationships Education
SHine SA	Sexual Health information, networking and education, South Australia
SIECUS	Sex Information and Education Council of the United States
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
US	United States
WA	Western Australia

Thesis summary

In 2003 a panic was created about the introduction of a new model of sex education in South Australia known as the Sexual Health and Relationships Education (SHARE) project. This thesis explores the particular circumstances and conditions that enabled the SHARE project to emerge as a public problem in South Australia in 2003. It does this through analyzing the similarities and differences between the campaign against SHARE and others that have taken place against sex education in Australia and the US since the 1980s in terms of the organisations involved, the strategies used and the fears/moral panics invoked and evoked. I use the controversy created against the SHARE project as a starting point, not only to produce an historical account of a particular event in sex education in Australia but also to contribute to an understanding of the power dynamics that govern sexuality locally and in a broader global context.

The methodological approach used in this thesis includes an analysis of ‘local discursivities’ relating to the SHARE project and the genealogy of those discourses. Following Foucault and queer and feminist applications of his work, the thesis particularly explores how discourses relating to ‘homosexuality’ and ‘child abuse’ were deployed in the campaign against the SHARE project. The thesis then identifies alternative discourses and approaches that can strengthen sex education programs in Australia based on the lessons learnt from the campaign against the SHARE project.

To assist my analysis of the controversy about the SHARE project interviews were conducted with other educators who have produced sex education resources in Australia. These revealed that while there has been some opposition to sex education in Australia over the last 20 years this has not been well organised or sustained. The campaign against the SHARE project therefore represents a unique event in the history of sex education in Australia. The thesis argues that one major contributing factor to this event is the strengthening of the relationship between conservative political parties and evangelical activist groups in Australia and their use of tactics and materials developed by Christian Right groups in the United States. The thesis analyses the implications of this religious activism within the context of current Australian politics and assesses whether the ‘family values’ discourse, which was central to the controversy created about the SHARE project, is positioned any differently as a result of the recent changes in political leadership in Australia and the United States.