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MINISTER URGES NEW ZEALANDERS TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR SEXUAL HEALTH

Jenny Shipley

State Services

On International Women's Day, the Minister of State Services, the Hon Jenny Shipley, is urging New Zealand families to turn off the television and talk to each other about sexual health and contraception.

From next week the government's drug-buying agency, PHARMAC, will be fully subsidising two brands of oral contraceptive, meaning women will only have to pay the three dollar prescription charge.

This development is part of the Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy launched by Mrs Shipley last May in her former role as Minister of Health.

"Through the implementation of that strategy, the government is doing what it can to reduce the rates of unwanted pregnancy and abortions.

"It's now up to the community to take responsibility for making a difference to those statistics.

"Parents and the wider community have a part to play in educating our daughters and sons to help them develop a responsible and healthy attitude to personal relationships and their sexual health.

"I know that for the Pacific Islands and Maori communities there are serious taboos about some of these issues. But this is a matter these communities must deal with and I'm encouraged to see some beginning to take up that challenge."

"I want every child to be a chosen child".

Mrs Shipley says making the contraceptive pill more freely available is part of a big jigsaw.

"This is only a start, and I note that Pharmac is hoping to be able to add other brands of oral and injectable contraceptives to the fully subsidised list later in the year."

Further progress can be expected in a number of other areas announced as part of the strategy last year, which include:

Free consultations for contraceptive advice for women in groups experiencing high abortion rates.
Developing pilot programmes to improve the reproductive and sexual health of Pacific Islands people.
Research into developing better sexual and reproductive health programmes for all young New Zealanders.



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