‘SIT DOWN GIRLIE’
Girlie pulls no punches

Punching pollies
Verbal insults between women are currently a popular page 1 item in some of our newspapers. First, Margaret Whitlam took a swipe at Janette Howard for holding her husband’s hand in public (Janette’s husband that is) and then the Federal President of the Liberal Party, Chris McDiven, countered by taking a jab at the Labor Party sisterhood which she sees as an ex-wives club (The Australian, 12 October 2006). Describing herself as a ‘backroom girl’ McDiven says Liberal women represent a wide range of careers and a diversity of backgrounds whereas Labor women got where they are because of their family backgrounds. She said, ‘… they’re “wives of”, “ex wives of”, “daughters of”, “sisters of”’. This is an interesting jibe from a true blue blooder, and don’t Liberal women have families? Aren’t they also wives, daughters, sisters etc? McDiven expressed ‘sympathy’ for NSW Labor MP Linda Burney who will become ALP President because of affirmative action. Naughty Linda. She should have stayed at home instead of taking advantage of policies that support women’s advancement.

Mates don’t matter
An AC Nielsen/Age poll has found Australians rate freedom of speech and tolerance of different religions and cultures as much higher values than ‘mateship’ or ‘a fair go’ (The Age, 10 October 2006). The respondents were given a list of five values to rate: 27 per cent chose freedom of speech as the most important value, while 25 per cent chose tolerance. Despite John Howard frequently stressing the importance of mateship, it came in last with only 8 per cent nominating it as most important.

Baby doll
A report released in October 2006 by the Australia Institute titled Corporate Paedophilia notes that children are being targeted by advertisers selling products such as ‘wet shine’ lipstick and padded bras. The cosmetic and clothing companies are increasingly sexualising kids in a bid to increase their share of the market. Even padded bralettes are being sold for very young girls. It is mainly girls who are being targeted, but boys are also seen as a source of income as recipients of sexy wear. Co-author Emma Rush has warned that the trend could lead to paedophiles seeing children as sex objects, and lead to eating disorders. Some retailers have reacted angrily to the report threatening legal action and claiming to be ‘family friendly’.

Purity Balls
The Economist (18 November 2006) reports on the rising popularity of Purity Balls in the US. These involve fathers bringing their daughters (aged 10 upwards and dressed in ‘glittery gowns and heels’) to ceremonies where the pastor intones the virtues of chastity. When the pastor finishes, fathers and daughters sign pledges to keep the girl chaste until she is married. The daughters agree to ‘remain sexually pure until the day I give myself as a wedding gift to my husband’. Dad places a ring on the girl’s finger to be worn by her until it is replaced by a wedding ring. Hugs and kisses follow as dads and daughters take to the dance floor to ‘Have I Told You Lately that I Love You’. The Purity Balls may help to reduce teenage pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases but The Economist warns that unless boys are also indoctrinated ‘the chaste will constantly be chased’.

Balls up
In Heanor, Derbyshire a 56-year-old woman was arrested after a neighbour claimed she refused to return a football accidentally kicked over her fence. She was taken to a police station and DNA was taken from her despite her protestations that she knew nothing about the footy — which has never been found. Her husband told the Daily Telegraph, ‘to see her led away like that was devastating. We know nothing about any football. Neither I or my wife have seen it.’ Surely Plod has better things to do?

Morning after
Chile, a predominately Catholic country, is usually considered to be socially conservative. However, changes are afoot now that the country’s first woman President, Michelle Bachelet, has taken office. She has introduced a new birth control service for women from age 14 which includes access to the morning-after pill. Previously the pill was only available for women who had been raped (Australian Doctor, 20 October 2006).

Bottoms down
Norway has been embroiled in a terrible kafuffle about the ways boys can and can’t pee. Primary school headmistress Anne Lise Gjul tried to ban boys from standing up to piddle because of complaints from the school’s cleaners about poor aiming skills and subsequent slops and spills. The issue was raised at the highest levels with the head of Norway’s Justice and Order Party intoning, ‘If boys are not allowed to pee in the natural way that they have done for generations, then it amounts to an assault on God’s creations’. The media was intensely interested in the matter with one issuing the dire warning, ‘Boys are being forced to become feminine’ (The Age, 16 October 2006).

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