



To Whom It May Concern:

RE: Baby Think It over Program

I am writing to express my support for the Virtual Baby Program managed by Christina Self and Red Ginger Services.

I have been employed as a Home Economics teacher at Ashdale Secondary College for the last seven years, delivering senior school classes for "Children, Family and the Community" and "Certificate II Community Services" for the past four years. We have accessed the virtual baby program annually for the last four years. Our classes comprise of predominantly female students aged 15-17 years of age, in school years 10-12.

I have come to know Christina through her role as coordinator of the "Baby Think It Over" program, which was originally run through the Northern Suburbs GP network. This program is a well-known and highly regarded educative experience amongst the Home Economics community. The program is popular with students entering senior school who believe that caring for a baby will be problem free, and even fun. Without exception, all attitudes towards motherhood change dramatically after caring for the babies and the girls realise the implications of falling pregnant and becoming a teenage mother. The follow up lesson conducted by Christina, upon the students returning the babies, targets sexual health in a relaxed and honest manner, something that classroom teachers are not trained effectively to do. Christina addresses teenage sexual health topics without moralising about student choices, making the lesson engaging and very relevant. Together, the virtual baby and the follow up sexual health session have been instrumental in shaping young women's attitudes and behaviour about teenage sexuality and pregnancy.

The program being run by Christina is so well received by our students that I have had students choose one course over another purely because they had the opportunity to participate in the program and did not want to miss out. So strong is the interest in the babies that most students are willing to pay for the hire of them themselves if needed. The virtual baby program fits well into the curriculum of two different senior school courses run at our school but is also well suited to more generic life skills opportunities that schools could present. I would highly recommend the program as an activity for young men and women and our school will commit to book the program for the 2016 school year.

I wish Christina every success for her program and look forward to seeing her in our school again next year.

Regards,

Ms Colleen Piano

Teacher Home Economics

26 August 2015