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Photo Opportunity and Further Interview with Peer Educators can be arranged

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GIRLS STAYING SAFE

Young women across the Liverpool area are learning about safe and healthy relationships in an exciting project run by Liverpool Women's Health Centre.

A five session program is being run with Year 9 girls which covers topics including abuse and respect, the law, healthy equal relationships, what services can help if you have problems.

Young women trained and employed as peer educators are conducting the workshops.

The WEEO WISER project (which stands for Women Educating Each Other -Women in Safe and Equal Relationships) has had the involvement of young women right from the start including naming the project, developing the project logo, participating in focus groups, participating in workshops pilots and a 9 day training program and now running the workshops.

"This structured model of peer education aimed at preventing domestic violence is the first of its kind in NSW" said Sonia Hoffmann the project coordinator. "The program could be run right across NSW."

"Research is showing that quality education programs conducted by well trained and supported peers have the potential to make substantial inroads into reducing the impact of abusive relationships."

"We want young women to identify abusive relationships earlier and take steps to stay away from them and encourage their friends and relatives to do so too" said Sonia.

The project has had the support of a range of organisations including Fairfield Liverpool Youth Health Team, Dept of Education and Training, University of Sydney and many local community services.

Funded through Dept of Community Services, the project is due to end in November.

A 2005 survey by the Australian Bureau of Statistics showed that 5.8% of women experienced violence in the previous 12 months. The survey showed younger women aged 18 – 24 were at greater risk.

"Liverpool Women's Health Centre over many years has supported hundreds of women in domestic violence situations to rebuild their lives. With this project we wanted to make a meaningful contribution to preventing the problem." said Sonia.