



Learn to relax, chaps: Donna Sheppard-Wright with prospective dads Peter Sharry, Michael McClelland and Patty Bourke. Picture: ANDREW HENSHAW

Dads-to-be line up for their beer and bubs

Cheryl Critchley

BLOKES finally have a good excuse to head to the pub when their partner is pregnant.

One-night Beer and Bubs ante-natal classes for men will start in Melbourne next month.

The concept, which took off in Sydney five years ago, sees men discuss pain relief, birth etiquette and caesareans over a meal, beer or soft drink.

The 2½ hour midweek sessions are aimed at busy blokes who can't make ante-natal classes or find it

'They're sitting with other blokes, sometimes having a beer, sometimes having a soft drink'

— Childbirth educator DONNA SHEPPARD-WRIGHT

hard to speak up in a more clinical environment.

Childbirth educator and mum-of-two Donna Sheppard-Wright, who will run the class, said the classes were popular.

"Everyone's said it's really positive," she said. "Lots of groups in the community have embraced the idea of men doing ante-natal education."

The classes cover practical aspects of birth such as how to offer support and what not to do or say.

Ms Sheppard-Wright yesterday said some men, for example, texted during the labour, a big no-no.

"She needs to know that her support people are focused," she said. "Mobile phones being off is really important."

Beer and Bubs uses props like dolls to explain the physical aspects of birth, and discusses issues like massage, using heat packs and what to expect during a caesarean.

Ms Sheppard-Wright said guys loved the relaxed atmosphere and felt more able to ask questions.

"Often men, if they're in a clinical environment with a lot of people sitting in a big circle with bright light, it can be a bit confronting," she said.

"They feel comfortable in an environment which is more relaxed and not clinical. They're sitting with other blokes, sometimes having a beer, sometimes having a soft drink."

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Is a pub an appropriate place for ante-natal classes?

Melbourne dad Dan Nunan, 30, who saw Ms Sheppard-Wright with his partner before his first daughter Orla was born six weeks ago, said he loved the idea.

Melbourne's first monthly sessions will be at the Limerick Arms Hotel in South Melbourne and The Hawthorn Hotel in Hawthorn.

Boy band tragedy

BOYZONE star Stephen Gately has died suddenly while on holiday in Majorca.

The 33-year-old died in his sleep after a night out.

The four remaining band members were flying to the island yesterday.

Band leader Ronan Keating was "completely devastated".

A message on the band's website confirmed the death.

"Stephen tragically died whilst on holiday in Majorca yesterday.

"He was there with his partner Andrew. At present we don't have too many details."

When Gately came out 10 years ago it was a sensation. He married Andrew Cowles in 2006.



Anger as boy mauled by dog

CHILD welfare groups called for a crackdown on dog licensing laws after a young boy was mauled yesterday.

The five-year-old suffered head injuries when he was attacked in the backyard of his Broadford home about 3pm.

The boy was taken to Kilmore Hospital before being

transferred to the Royal Children's Hospital.

The dog is believed to be a rottweiler or a rottweiler cross.

A police spokeswoman said the boy was attacked as his father mowed the lawn.

Kidsafe Victoria president Dr Mark Stokes called for the introduction of mandatory

obedience and social training for all dogs.

"No training, no licence, no dog," Dr Stokes said.

He said council statistics show about 60 dog attacks around the state every week.

A Royal Children's spokeswoman said the boy went home last night.

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