



'Life Happens'

'A Resource To Explore Relationships & Sexuality With Young People'

UNIVERSITY
OF WOLLONGONG
AUSTRALIA

Kate Senior BA. M. Litt (PhD), Laura Grozdanovski BPubHlth (Hons)

'Translating the results of sexual health research with young people into an educational resource'

Background:

The 'Our Lives' research project was developed with the main aim of working with young people in the Northern Territory, Western Australia and South Australia, in order to capture their understanding of sexual health, relationships and sexual risk (1,2,3,4). An innovative research method of scenario based body mapping was developed to engage with young people in a fun, interactive and nonthreatening manner. The research findings from the 'Our Lives' project along with the scenario based body mapping technique were utilised to develop the 'Life Happens' educational resource. The 'Life Happens' resource is aimed at young people aged between 15-25 years, from all ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. The 'Life Happens' resource provides young people with an interactive way to break down the barriers that are often associated with sexual health.

Data and Methods:

The 'Life Happens' resource was developed by researchers from the University of Wollongong through in-depth consultation and collaboration with young people, the South Eastern Sydney Local Health District, the Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District HIV/AIDS and Related Programs Unit as well as third year graphic design students from the University of Wollongong.

Testing:

The developmental process of 'Life Happens' allowed for each aspect of the resource to be tested on multiple occasions, both with young people in community settings and young people in youth group settings. Each aspect of the 'Life Happens' resource was refined in response to the comments and recommendations young people provided at each setting.

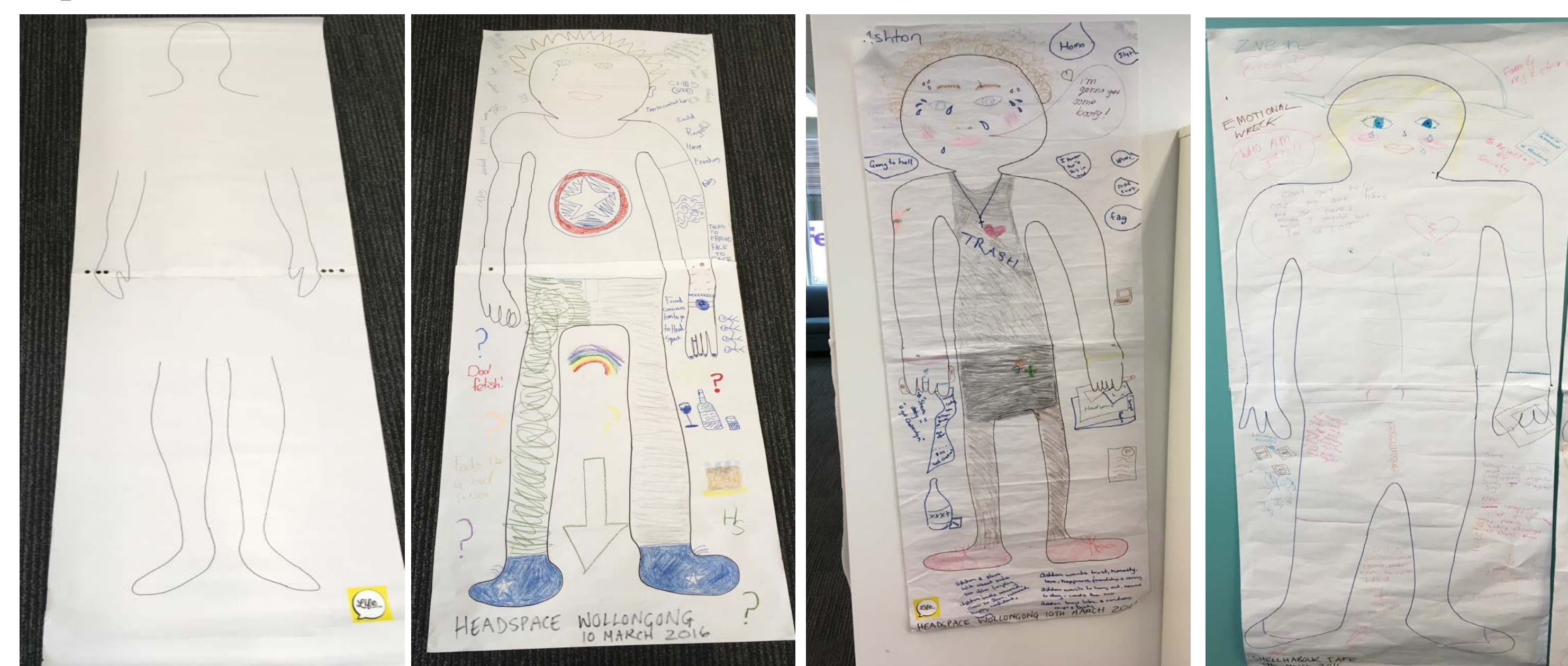


Design:

Young people were involved in both the design and formatting process of the 'Life Happens' resource. The University of Wollongong researchers drew on the artistic strengths of University of Wollongong third year graphic design students who worked on creating the look and feel of the 'Life Happens' resource as part of their coursework. The final 'Life Happens' design that was chosen combines bright colours and a quirky style which is sure to appeal to young people.

Results:

The 'Life Happens' resource is a fun and engaging way to discuss sensitive and often hard to talk about issues which surround sexual health, relationships and sexual risk with young people. The completed body maps become a visual resource which act as a reference point for further discussion that might arise in this area. In this way the sex education component of the 'Life Happens' resource is not compartmentalised to a particular time and space, but can become part of learning, discussion and critiquing components of education when required.



Conclusion:

The effective translation of research into a collaborative and coherent resource which is valued by the research population remains quite rare. The 'Life Happens' resource demonstrates an effective process whereby it engaged with young people at every stage of development; from its research process through to its development, design, production and dissemination process. The 'Life Happens' resource provides young people with an engaging, interactive, fun and safe way to navigate through life's ups and downs.



Acknowledgements:

University of Wollongong – Centre of Health Initiatives

Gavin Dixon – University of Wollongong Commercialisation Manager

Jennifer Farinella, Scott Lockhart and Smriti Jaiswal – Illawarra and Shoalhaven Local Health District HIV/AIDS and Related Programs Unit

Katherine Turner, Lauren Jarvis, Carissa Rose and Curtis Bassingthwaighte – University of Wollongong Third Year Graphic Design Students

Reference List:

1. Chenhall, R, Davidson, B, Fritz, J, Pearse, J & Senior, K 2013, 'Engaging youth in sexual health research: refining a youth friendly method in the Northern Territory of Australia', *Visual Anthropology Review*, 29 (2): 123-132.
2. Helmer, J, Senior, K, Davison, B and Vodic, A 2015, Improving sexual health for young people: making sexuality education a priority, *Sex Education*, 15 (2): 158-171.
3. Senior, K, Chenhall, R and Helmer, J 2016, 'As long as he's coming home to me': vulnerability, jealousy and violence in young people's relationships in remote, rural and regional Australia, accepted for *Health Sociology Review*.
4. Senior, K, Helmer, J, Chenhall, R and Burbank, V 2014, "Young, clean and safe?" young people's perception of risk from sexually transmitted infection in regional, rural and remote Australia, *Culture Health and Sexuality*, 16 (4): 453-466.

