

# TAKING CARE OF ME

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## Background:

The policy for all Victorian government schools requires sexuality education to be included in the curriculum and taught from Prep to Year 10. Despite this a 2008 study involving almost 3,000 Australian students in Years 10 and 12 found that STI knowledge is relatively poor (Smith, Agius, Mitchell, Barrett & Pitts, 2009).

The 2008 study found that 70 per cent of Year 10 students reported having already experienced some form of sexual activity (Smith et al, 2009).

In 2010 a local Shepparton, inter-agency partnership, developed a sexual health promotion strategy 'Taking Care of Me' which was designed to raise sexual health awareness and knowledge in local secondary school students.

The target group is Year 9 students as it complements the curriculum at this level with the opportunity for such information to be reinforced in the classroom.

It was funded in the short term by the Sexual Health and Diversity Enterprise (SHADE) community grants program through Family Planning Victoria.

## Topics covered include:

- Sexually Transmissible Infections (STIs) and Blood Borne Viruses (BBVs)
- Pornography
- Contraception
- Condom use
- Respectful relationships
- Sex and the Law

The program structure involves having 6 interactive and educational 'stations' set up and facilitated by a health or community professional, with small groups of students rotating between these stations every 10 minutes.

On the completion of the rotations all students are then invited to respond to 2 evaluation questions:

- One thing you learned today ...
- Something you would like to know more about ...

This program has now been delivered for 4 years and evaluation via student feedback has been positive.

All state secondary schools in the Shepparton and Mooropna area participate, which includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) students and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD).

## Discussion points for Relationships continuum

True - False or Not Sure

You are responsible for your own body.

In a relationship love is more important than respect.

It would be OK to have sex if your boyfriend/girlfriend said that they would breakup with you if you didn't.

In a partner good looks are more important than being nice.

Girls look easy if they carry condoms, but boys look cool.

## 2010 Initial Program Evaluation:

It was found that 95.3% of respondents believed 'Taking Care of Me' had provided them with a greater understanding of topics associated with sexual health.

The initial post-program survey revealed 89.5% of respondents felt the program should continue.

## 2014 Program Evaluation:

It was found that 100% of respondents believed 'Taking Care of Me' had provided them with a greater understanding of topics associated with sexual health.

The post-program survey revealed that the participating students felt the program should continue and would like further sessions and information particularly covering STIs and Sex and the Law.

Over the last 2 years delivery of the program has expanded to include secondary schools in neighbouring towns.

## Conclusion:

The 'Taking Care of Me' program is successful in engaging the target group and provides an effective model for the acquisition of sexual health skills knowledge.

Coordination of the program by an Adolescent Health Nurse has kept the content responsive to social mores.

Sustainability has been achieved through partnerships between community agencies and schools.

Community values, ongoing commitment and cost free engagement provide a platform for the successful delivery of a sexual health and healthy relationship awareness program in these Victorian regional secondary schools.

## References:

Rush D & Spiller R 2012, *Taking Care of Me Program Evaluation Report*. Primary Care Connect, Shepparton.  
Smith A, Agius P, Mitchell A, Barrett C & Pitts M 2009, *Secondary students and sexual health 2008: Results of the 4<sup>th</sup> national survey of Australian secondary students, HIV/AIDS and sexual health*, Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health & Society, La Trobe University, Melbourne  
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