

Improving chlamydia and hepatitis C awareness through a sexual and reproductive health education program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Victorian secondary schools

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Background

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (Aboriginal) people aged 15-29 experience a high burden of chlamydia and hepatitis C infection nationally.
- Victorian secondary schools are encouraged to teach the knowledge and life skills to promote the positive sexual and reproductive health of their students.
- Catching on *Later* is the current sexuality education curriculum resource used in Victorian secondary schools. (incorporating sexual and reproductive health)



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- Sexuality education is compulsory within the health and physical education domain of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS).
- It is important to ensure a cross-curriculum approach and integration with health-related activities, such as school nursing and student wellbeing initiatives, thus promoting a whole-school learning approach.
- A whole-school learning approach also involves forming ongoing working partnerships with the local community and parents.



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Sexuality education is a shared responsibility

- In recognition of a shared responsibility for sexuality education, school leaders cultivate strategic partnerships with the local community and parents.
- Typically, the community agencies that are a part of this shared responsibility are already active in sexuality education in some way, such as through community health centres and local council youth programs.
- To be most effective, the shared responsibility partnerships reflect an integration of the different roles and responsibilities of those involved and an establishment of common goals.



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The role of school nurses and community health agencies in Catching on *Later*

- School nurses are a valuable resources within secondary schools providing health information, health promotion, planning and developing resources, referral networks and services for the students.
- They are experts at developing relationships between the classroom and community agencies who in turn provide useful resources and support for the sexual and reproductive health education of secondary students.



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- Schools are encouraged to build relationships with community health agencies to assist with sexual and reproductive health education.
- By introducing these agencies young people become aware of how to access their local and state based community health services and how they may provide an experienced approach to some of the messages covered in their education program.
- Sexual and reproductive health education **should not** be delivered by outside agencies, rather they should be used as a resource to enhance their education program.



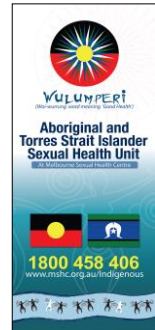
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- Victorian secondary schools with Aboriginal students delivering Catching on Later are therefore encouraged to engage local Aboriginal, community health, sexual health and hepatitis organisations as a resource to enhance the sexual and reproductive health curriculum delivered to Aboriginal students in years 7-12.
- Wulumperi Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sexual Health Unit at Melbourne Sexual Health Centre offers schools with Aboriginal students an opportunity to participate in a structured program that complements and improves their sexual and reproductive health knowledge with an emphasis on chlamydia and hepatitis C.



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- Wulumperi initially funded by Close the Gap. Now refunded for 12 months.
- Brief to develop and deliver targeted sexual and reproductive health programs for Aboriginal young people.
- Increase knowledge about sexual and reproductive health.



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Methods

- It was assumed that all secondary schools with Aboriginal students delivered Catching on Later and students participated.
- Wulumperi developed a culturally and educationally peer reviewed program designed to enhance key messages learnt in Catching on Later that impact on the sexual and reproductive health of Aboriginal secondary students.
- Importantly the program includes, encourages and supports local Aboriginal, community health, sexual health and hepatitis organisations to be involved with the education and to continue delivery of the program in the future.



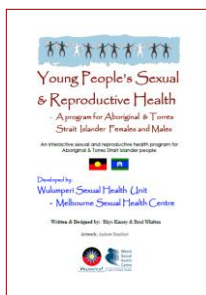
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- Education networks very important for the programs success
- Wannik Unit – Vic DEECD
- KEC-KESO – bridge access to students
- School nurses – bridge access to students
- School health and well being coordinators
- AHS
- AHW
- ACCHO Nurses
- Anyone else that would have us



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- Although a one off it is designed to be delivered multiple times as students move through the secondary school system.
- Program can be delivered by AHS staff (AHW), School Nurse, CHN, SHN, WHN etc.
- Designed to support and encourage a coordinated approach locally.
- Is a complete package teaching resource, PP, support from Wulumperi.



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- An informed well resourced workforce (education and health) is vital for the successful continuation of the program.

The Wulumperi program focuses on three main themes

- Chlamydia and Hepatitis C transmission.
- Health promotion and harm reduction messages about safer sex, injecting, tattooing, and body piercing.
- Accessing information, screening and treatment services provided by local Aboriginal, community health, sexual health and hepatitis organisations.





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- Aboriginal secondary students have access to a range of locally developed cultural resources by Victorian Aboriginal organisations and communities, that educators can use to develop the students sexual and reproductive health knowledge.
- Wulumperi collated and incorporates many of these resources when delivering the program.
- Our program was peer reviewed by Family Planning Victoria School and Community Educators for quality and purpose appropriate to the target audience – secondary students.

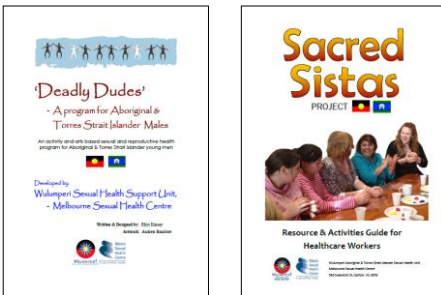


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- Important to acknowledge the program has also been delivered outside of schools to groups of secondary school students and groups of Aboriginal people aged 12 - 30.
- These events often facilitated by AHS, AHW, juvenile justice settings, clontarf academies, youth workers.
- Two other programs (Sacred Sistas and Deadly Dudes) have been developed and delivered by Wulumperi to Aboriginal women and men that build on the knowledge delivered within the secondary school program.
- Not delivered in schools, have been very well received by communities.



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Acknowledge resources developed by:

- VACCHO
- VAHS
- NACCHO
- ASHM
- Hepatitis Victoria
- FPV
- Marie Stopes Australia
- Reservoir High School
- CERSH
- MSHC
- Wulumperi



Improving chlamydia and hepatitis C awareness through a sexual and reproductive health education program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Victorian secondary schools

- VACCHO resources
- VACCHO STI BBV Information
- Provided to participants



Improving chlamydia and hepatitis C awareness through a sexual and reproductive health education program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Victorian secondary schools

- VACCHO resources
- VACCHO Contraception Information
- Provided to participants





Improving chlamydia and hepatitis C awareness through a sexual and reproductive health education program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Victorian secondary schools

- Hepatitis Victoria, VAHS and VACCHO DVDS



Improving chlamydia and hepatitis C awareness through a sexual and reproductive health education program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Victorian secondary schools

- Smart and Deadly (CERSH)



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- Marie Stopes / Snake Condoms
- Well known brand within communities
- Condoms distributed to participants



Improving chlamydia and hepatitis C awareness through a sexual and reproductive health education program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Victorian secondary schools

- MSHC resources
- Brochure about accessing MSHC
- Support for Aboriginal people accessing our service
- Provided to participants



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- MSHC resources
- Check Your Risk
- Online resource to assess risk
- Provided to participants



Improving chlamydia and hepatitis C awareness through a sexual and reproductive health education program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Victorian secondary schools

- MSHC resources
- TESTme
- Online and self collection for Chlamydia
- Assessment about other risks
- Provided to participants





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- MSHC resources
- Let Them Know – assistance for partner notification
- Also promote Better to Know produced by AFAO
- Provided to participants



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- MSHC resources
- Referral Cards (8 regions)
- Referral information for every community within the regions of Victoria
- Listing Aboriginal and mainstream services
- Provided to participants



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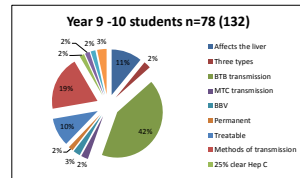
Results

- Surveys of the program participants to date, (348 students at 25 schools) measured their knowledge about the messages delivered.
- Most students identified risks of acquiring chlamydia, hepatitis C infection.
- The importance of using condoms for safe sex and using clean injecting, tattooing, and body piercing equipment.
- Students also identified where to access information and health services in their local area.



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- 78 (year 9-10) students answered this question.
- What did you learn about hepatitis C?



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- Students year (7-8) and (9-10) were able to identify where to seek help and advice about Chlamydia and hepatitis C
- AHS
- GP
- Community Health Service
- Youth health service
- MSHC
- TESTme
- FPV
- School nurse




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Comments from Participants

- "I enjoyed learning about Chlamydia and Hep C" (Y 9-10 student)
- "I enjoyed learning about safe sex" (Y 7-8 student)
- "I learnt things I haven't learnt before" (Y 9-10 student)
- "Great use of Koorie specific resources" (AHW)
- "The program is culturally sensitive for Koorie students" (KESO)





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Conclusion

- Sexual health education programs and health promotion are an important measure in influencing the sexual and reproductive health choices made by Aboriginal secondary students.
- They can influence behaviour, reduce STI's, BBV, and unplanned pregnancies.
- Partnerships between schools, health service providers and Aboriginal communities themselves delivering this effective program increases knowledge and awareness about chlamydia, hepatitis C, harm reduction and access to health services for Aboriginal students in Victorian secondary schools.



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- Continued collaboration with schools, local health service providers and Aboriginal communities will impact on reducing rates of Chlamydia and hepatitis C transmission.
- Our program acknowledges the complexity and diversity of Aboriginal young people attending secondary schools in Victoria. It provides a culturally, relevant and informative approach to improving their sexual and reproductive health.
- Over time the Wulumeri program has achieved a valued approach to sexual and reproductive health community education and health promotion for secondary school students within Aboriginal communities across Victoria.



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None of this would have been possible without the important partnerships and collaboration with others in the Victorian Aboriginal, Sexual Health and BBV sector


- VACCHO
- VAHS
- AHS
- CERSH
- FPV
- Hepatitis Victoria
- Marie Stopes Australia (Snake condoms)
- Victorian Secondary Schools



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Extended thanks to:

- Rhys Kinsey, Fiona Hassall, Arimaya Yates, Bev Greet and Kim Sutton from Wulumeri at MSHC
- Peter Waples Crowe, Andrew Bamblet and Kat Byron from VACCHO
- Sandra Gregson from VAHS
- Every nurse who has ever worked with secondary schools to support the sexual and reproductive health of the students.



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- Disclosure of interest
- N/A



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