

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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Introduction:

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 engage local Aboriginal, community, sexual health and hepatitis organisations as a resource to enhance the sexual and reproductive health curriculum delivered to Aboriginal students in years 7-12. The Wulumperi Aboriginal 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 knowledge about chlamydia and hepatitis C.

“I enjoyed learning about Chlamydia and Hep C”. Year 9-10 student

Methods:

Wulumperi developed a culturally and educationally peer reviewed program designed to enhance key messages that impact on the sexual and reproductive health of Aboriginal secondary students. Importantly the program includes, encourages and supports local Aboriginal, community, sexual health and hepatitis organisations to be involved with the education and to continue delivery of the program in the future.

The 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, sexual health and hepatitis organisations.

“Great use of Koorie specific resources”.

Aboriginal Health Worker

Results:

Evaluation of the program measured knowledge about the messages delivered. Most students identified risks of acquiring chlamydia, hepatitis C infection and the importance of using condoms for safer sex and using clean injecting, tattooing, and body piercing equipment. Students also identified where to access information and health services in their local area.

“I enjoyed learning about safe sex”.

Year 7-8 student



\* Aboriginal sexual and reproductive health resources

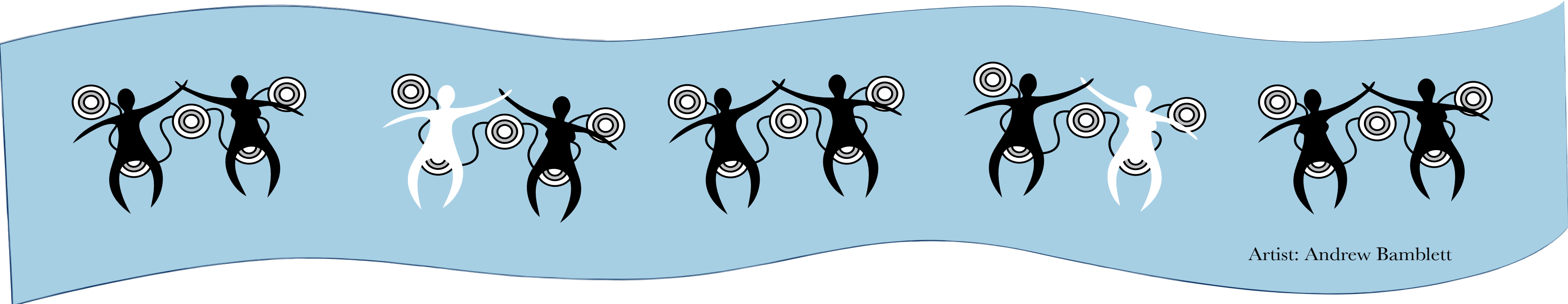
Conclusion:

Partnerships between schools and health service providers delivering this program increases knowledge and awareness about chlamydia, hepatitis C, harm reduction and access to health services for Aboriginal students in Victorian secondary schools. Continued collaboration with schools and local health service providers will impact on reducing the rates of chlamydia and hepatitis C transmission.

“I learnt things I haven’t learnt before”. Year 9-10 student

“The program is culturally sensitive for Koorie students”.

Koorie Education Support Officer



Artist: Andrew Bamblett

