

Sexy and Safe



Sexy and Safe - what you need to know

Sexy and Safe: Let's Talk About It was a series of youth forums and activities for young people aged 15-25 who live, work, study or play in the Mallee region.

Youth Affairs Council Victoria in partnership with the Centre for Excellence in Rural Sexual Health and Women's Health Loddon Mallee, stepped up and facilitated a series of youth sexual health consultations in Victoria's Mallee region in May 2019.

We spoke directly with 174 fantastic young people across 8 youth forums we titled 'Sexy and Safe: Let's talk about it'.

The word 'sex' was said 1,841 times across all consultations.

There was an average of 3.5 penis jokes per youth forum, with less than 25% of them actually being funny.

We also connected with a further 55 young people via our online survey who had much to say on the topic of youth sexual health.

What young people reported will help inform and contribute to the development of initiatives that focus on strengthening sexual and reproductive health outcomes for young people.

The Sexy and Safe: Let's Talk About It youth sexual health consultations have resulted in the development of this report. The report captures the voice of the young people and highlights what they think the are issues and solutions for young people in the Mallee region.

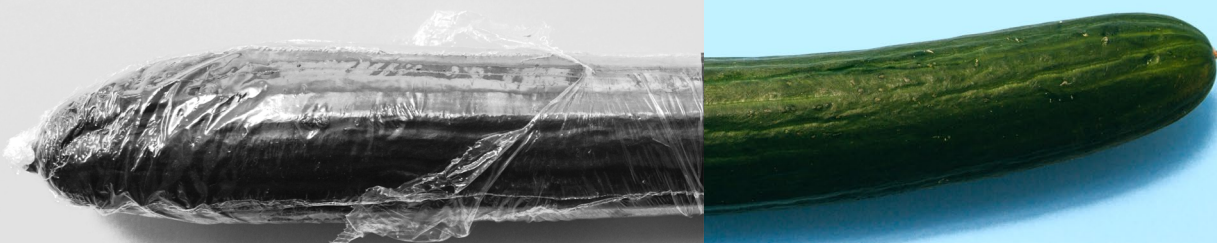
Charlton
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For further information, including the extended version of Sexy and Safe final report, please visit the Safe and Sexy website at www.sexyandsafe.com.au



Sexy and Safe: what young people told us

- There is a lack of quality Sex Ed. Quantity is an issue too.
- Not everyone has access to Sex Ed in school.
- It's not enough to have the puberty talk in grade six and then wait to year nine for the sex talk. Seriously the horse has bolted!
- Some schools only tell you a part of the story when it comes to sex, contraception and STIs... and if you are gender diverse or same sex attracted it is not even discussed.
- Some students are missing out on sex ed all together.
- Stigma is a massive barrier to getting education or support.
- Religion, cultural appropriateness and family values can also be barriers to sex ed and support.
- The last person you want to talk to about sex is your teacher. They have good intentions but it just gets awkward and weird quickly.
- How about we get specialised sexual health professionals to facilitate Sex Ed in schools, not our science teacher. Sex ed needs to be more than just biology!
- Young people are turning to Google for their Sex Ed.
- Over **50%** of survey respondents told us they sometimes or often watch pornography.
- Over **25%** of respondents believe porn is a good way to learn how to have sex
- Less than **20%** of respondents said they use condoms every time they have sex.
- The majority of respondents, almost **50%** said they only use condoms sometimes.
- **40%** of respondents said they would not refuse to have sex with someone who wasn't prepared to use a condom.



Sexy and Safe: action young people need

The majority of actions young people in the Mallee region are asking for, to improve sexual health education, fall under the banner of '**Quality Sex Ed for everyone**'.

Specialist Sex Ed facilitators - This was unanimous. Every young people we spoke to indicated they would much prefer sexual education to be delivered by a sexual health professional rather than a teacher. Pretty much the last person you ever want to talk to you and your peers about sex is your high school teacher. Maths, science, PE ... its just not a comfortable or pleasant experience for anyone. It's like a speciality topic so we need specialists who know everything, not just the boring stuff. *"You know how Project Rokit makes talking about bullying fun, yeah we need that for Sex Ed. People who know their stuff and aren't from this town"*.

Sex Ed earlier - Sex Ed needs to be delivered before young people begin experimenting with sex! Every young people we asked remembered having the puberty talk/s at school in grades 5 and/or 6. Some also recalled sexual education in year 7, but said this was a repeat of the puberty talk rather than actually talking about the nitty gritty of sex and all the other juicy bits. Young people we talked to reported that students don't receive sexual and reproductive health education until year 9. This is not too late for many, but for some young people they have begun having sex without the important education required to make appropriate decisions around using contraceptives and STI preventative measures, not to mention consent. The solution is simple. Sex Ed earlier.

Sex Ed at every high school year level - Young people made the point that they don't all start having sex at the same time and that often their 'friends' might need to hear information more than once before they pay attention to it. So in addition to starting Sex Ed earlier, young people also spoke about the need for continued sexual education right through high school. Students indicated they wanted more sexual education so they could obtain important sexual health information when it was relevant to them. They also thought that maybe the more you talk about sex the less taboo or weird it might become.

Standardised/minimum requirements for Sex Ed for all schools

- Young people talked about the disparities on the sexual education curriculum being taught or not taught at different schools across the region. Young people thought it was ridiculous that all young people in our region couldn't have access to the same level of sexual education no matter what school they went to. It's not as if young people are only having sex with people from their own school? *"If you want us to be 'safe' you need to give everyone the tools to make good decisions, not all the tools for some people and only half a set for others"*.



Culturally appropriate Sex Ed - Young people who engaged in the Sexy and Safe youth sexual health consultations were representative of our vastly multicultural community existing across the Mallee. They were quick to point out that consideration needs to be given to culturally appropriate health information and delivery of it. A significant gap exists for individuals whom for cultural reasons are not permitted to speak about their sexual health with someone who is not of the same gender. As a result many students miss out. *“We need both male and female in sexual health roles to better support the needs of culturally diverse young people”*.



Gender diverse and same sex attracted Sex Ed - You can't just pretend diversity isn't a part of society. Sex Ed curriculum needs to be inclusive of gender diverse and same sex attracted young people. *“We need Sex Ed to be reflective of all young people. Celebrate the neapolitan, don't just serve up the vanilla”*.

Informal Sex Ed expos & service tours - Young people indicated that they would engage in sexual health expos and tours of local health services if they were made mandatory for their whole school or year level. If they weren't made to go many young people said they wouldn't because of potential shaming, bullying or stigmatisation that may follow.

Access to services, condoms and sanitary products - Accessibility is a major issue for young people and standard practice is for them to not be consulted in the placement of services, contraception or sanitary products. Barriers identified are cost, transport, access, referrals, product integrity, hygiene and inability to access due to geographical location or building being closed. The solution is to talk to young people about what services or vending machines they want and where.

Reduce the stigma of sexual health. It was clear from speaking with young people that sex remains a taboo topic. Young people want to see this stigma smashed. They want to be able to talk about sex without the fear of being judged or shamed. Many of the young people we spoke to on the issue of stigma called for more campaigns to be established to talk stigma in our schools, communities and sporting clubs. *“The more we talk about it, the more we normalise it”*.



Sexy and Safe: Let's Talk About It is an initiative of the Mallee Child Youth Area Youth Partnership with support from the Centre for Excellence in Rural Sexual Health and Women's Health Loddon Mallee, and is presented in partnership by Youth Affairs Council Victoria (YACVic).

Youth Affairs Council Victoria is the leading advocate for young people aged 12-25 in Victoria. As a peak body, we work closely with young Victorians and the sector that supports them to deliver effective advocacy, events, training, resources and support - so that young people can live their best lives.

Our vision is that young Victorians have their rights upheld and are valued as active participants in their communities. As Victoria's youth peak body, we work across the state in the best interests of young people and the youth sector to:

- lead policy responses to issues affecting young people
- represent the youth sector to government
- resource high quality youth work practice
- research and advocate on youth issues.

We value our members and prioritise their needs.

Youth Affairs Council Victoria www.yacvic.org.au | ABN: 39 774 045 170

