

KEEPING IT A SAFE SUMMER: LESSONS LEARNED FROM 20 YEARS OF RESPONDING TO THE SEXUAL HEALTH NEEDS OF WESTERN AUSTRALIAN SCHOOL LEAVERS



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Background

- 'Keep It Safe Summer' (KISS) is funded by the Western Australian WA Police Force, and delivered as part of the WA Leavers Strategy. WA school leavers congregate in Dunsborough (in WA's South West) each year to celebrate the end of secondary schooling.
- This is often a time of increased sexual health risk behaviours amongst young people.
- Since 1999, the WA AIDS Council has provided outreach at Leavers, providing education and harm minimisation information.



THE KISS PROGRAM ENCOMPASSES THREE KEY PRINCIPLES

Peer Education

- Peer education makes use of peer influence in a positive way to impart information, change attitudes and influence behavioural intentions
- KISS volunteers are peers, mostly tertiary students aged 18-25 years.
- Volunteers are trained to deliver informal education on topics such as STIs, BBVs and HIV; contraception; gender and sexual diversity; and respectful relationships.

Working in Partnership

- Service delivery occurs in partnership with
- The WA Police Force,
 - Baptist churches (Leavers Green Team),
 - Hope Community Services,
 - Red Frogs Australia and
 - The Royal Life Saving Society of Western Australia.

Continuous Improvement

- Lessons learned in previous years shape on-going project delivery
- Data collected during project implementation in previous years is analysed in planning stages, and qualitative feedback from young people, volunteers, and other stakeholders.

OUR IMPACT IN THE PAST FIVE YEARS

69 volunteer peer educators have been trained as part of the KISS project
56,798 safer sex packs have been distributed to leavers at official leavers week celebrations

Volunteers have had 3,717 conversations with leavers:

- 2,392 about safer sex,
- 846 about alcohol, and
- 479 about other substances.



WHAT WE'VE LEARNT

The value of having peer educators who are trained to deliver holistic sexual health and harm reduction information.

Not only are leavers more comfortable in approaching a friendly and non-judgemental peer volunteer, they are also incredibly appreciative of the time they spend on the project and of the diverse knowledge of these educators. Volunteers are trained to respond to risky situations, such as unconsciousness or collapse and disclosure of sexual assault, as well as to provide sexual health and harm reduction advice.

"Thank you so much for spending your time here and looking after us! We really appreciate it. You make us feel safe!" (School Leaver, 2018)

"It's so handy to know stuff like this, like what a standard drink is; we didn't learn this in school." (School Leaver, 2016)

"What I enjoyed the most was being able to connect with leavers on topics like consent and sexual health. Sometimes you formed really good connections and it felt like the topics discussed could make the difference between a good night and a bad one." (KISS Volunteer, 2018)

Young people are motivated when it comes to looking after their mates. A significant theme that has emerged from the analysis of qualitative feedback from leavers is that they are invested in the wellbeing of their friends. Leavers have consistently shown that they are receptive to the "look out for your mates messages", sharing with volunteers that they are mindful of how much their friends drink and of their access to safer sex hardware.
"I don't need these [condoms] because I'm gay, but I'm going to take some anyway for my friends." (Female School Leaver, 2018)

Leavers are motivated by incentives and prizes that are symbolic of their leavers' week experience. When engaging leavers in activities, we have found that the incentives and prizes that are most valuable are those that may serve as a sentimental token of the leaver's week experience. In line with the "Keep It Safe Summer" branding, the WA AIDS Council have distributed floral leis (together with condoms and an "I got Lei dat Leavers" message). These have proven to be incredibly popular, and have significantly boosted engagement with leavers in the past few years.

