



Culturally inclusive alcohol and drug prevention for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth.

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SPEAKERS

Dr. Lexine Stapinski, Dr. Smriti Nepal, Dr. Kylie Routledge

Smriti Nepal 00:01

Good morning, everyone, and welcome to the Positive Choices webinar series. My name is Smriti Nepal. I'm the project manager on Positive Choices and I'm going to be chairing this session today.

Smriti Nepal 00:17

We are going to be talking about Strong and Deadly Futures, which is a school-based program that was developed in consultation with students, the schools as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing experts. Before we proceed, just a little bit of housekeeping. So just to let you know you are on listen only mode, which means that we cannot hear you or see you. We will, however, make this webinar available online on the Positive Choices portal. At the end of this session, we will have a question and answer session. So please feel free to add your questions. To add to the Q&A panel you can see. If you're not familiar with Positive Choices, I'll just give you a quick introduction. Positive Choices is an online portal that provides drug and alcohol information. And it was developed by researchers at the Matilda Centre based at the University of Sydney and the National Drug and Research Institute at Curtin University. It was developed in consultation with teachers, parents and students, and it is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health. It is a central access point for evidence based up to date and accurate information and educational resources. We provide a range of learning resources in the form of fact sheets, videos, webinars and games that help engage young people with drug education. For teachers we also provide access to classroom-based drug prevention programs that have shown to be effective in reducing drug related harm. We have for you two speakers today, Dr. Lexine Stapinski and Dr. Kylie Routledge. Dr. Stapinski is a senior research fellow and clinical psychologist based at the Matilda Centre for Research in Mental Health and Substance Use based at the University of Sydney. Dr. Routledge is the project manager on Strong and Deadly Futures. I will now hand it over to Dr. Stapinski for her presentation.

Lexine Stapinski 02:36



Great, thank you so much. Hopefully everyone can see that. Okay. And now, I know that we're all coming together today from different parts of the country. So, I'd like to just begin by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the country throughout Australia and make connections to land, sea and community and also we the team pays our respects to their elders past and present, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people today. And what I'd also like to do is acknowledge any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people joining us for the webinar today, and also those that have contributed to this project. So as members of our research team, our expert advisory group and those who have given their time to consult with us, so I'll just, that just brings me to acknowledging our partners in this project and all the people that have worked with us to make this project possible. So, I'll be telling you a bit more about these partnerships as we go on. But just to acknowledge our partner in these projects, Gilimbaa, who is a Queensland based Indigenous consultation and creative design agency, and we were also guided from the beginning by an expert advisory group. So, experts in Aboriginal health, education and prevention to whom we're very grateful. And finally, we also piloted this work with four schools in New South Wales and Queensland and you'll be hearing more about those schools of those students and teachers as we go on.

Lexine Stapinski 04:10

So, what I'm going to talk to you about today is first of all, looking at the evidence, there is for school-based prevention programs. And we'll also talk specifically about the evidence for prevention among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander use. And next I'm going to talk about some of the ways that we might be able to do better at prevention of our alcohol and other drug harms among Aboriginal youth. And here I'll talk about what we've learned from the research literature as well as consultations that we've done with communities and Aboriginal leaders. And I'll also tell you about how we used this information to develop a new culturally inclusive alcohol and drug prevention program called Strong and Deadly Futures. Then I'm going to hand over to Kylie and she'll tell you about the results of a pilot trial that we ran of the program. And she'll also tell you about an opportunity for your school and your community to get involved.

Lexine Stapinski 05:08

So, what does that tell us? What does the evidence tell us about whether it's worth investing in drug education and prevention programs? What we know is that research consistently shows that adolescence is a period of experimentation with substance use, and substance use tends to peak in adolescence. What we also know is that the harms related to drug and alcohol use are significant both to the individual, their families, and they the communities that are affected by it. And we also know that the younger a young person is when they start to use alcohol and other drugs, the more likely they are to have negative outcomes, such as early school dropout, poor performance at school and increased risks of problems continuing into adulthood, such as substance dependence and mental illness. And so, because of the risks associated with early substance use, the longer we can prevent substances from studying the better. In fact, for every year that we delay the onset of substance use, or alcohol use, we can reduce the risk of alcohol dependence by 10%. So that's a pretty, that's a pretty important thing to remember. And it means that if we can intervene with kids before they start using substances, then we can equip them with information and skills to help them make Positive Choices. It can have a lot of benefits then for both the individual and also for the community.



Lexine Stapinski 06:42

Now in Australia, we know that colonisation, disempowerment and inequity, continue to have a significant impact on the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. And this is evident from the unacceptable gap that we see of about 10 years in life expectancy, sorry between Aboriginal, Aboriginal and non-Indigenous Australians. And what we also see is that alcohol and drug use are a top contributor to poor health. So, for females, what we see that is that alcohol and tobacco use are among the top three causes of poor health and injury across early/late adolescence and into adulthood. And then for Aboriginal males, we see this is even more pronounced. So, with drug use, also being a top contributor, as well as alcohol and tobacco across the ages from 15 to 34. So, this data really emphasises how important it is to try and prevent these harms from occurring in the first place. If we're to improve the health of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Lexine Stapinski 07:54

Given this priority, we conducted a systematic review to have a look and see what programs there might be that have been established as effective for preventing alcohol and drug harms among Aboriginal youth. And we looked broadly across studies in the US, Canada, in New Zealand and Australia, in their Indigenous populations. And what we identified was 26 programs that had been evaluated. And there were 14 programs that were associated with consistently positive outcomes. So, this means that the program resulted in safer attitudes towards substances and decreased substance use. But what we what we did find is that effective programs were often programs that had been culturally adapted from an evidence-based program for the general population. So, they've taken a mainstream program, and then the community is heavily involved in adapting a program and the programs tend to include information about drug education, skill development, but also information about Indigenous culture as part of that adaptation. And of the 14 programs that we found, only three, unfortunately, were Australian. And all of these programs were quite old programs, and none of them are currently available to be implemented. So, what we see here is a gap between the importance of alcohol and drug prevention for Aboriginal youth, but also a lack of prevention programs that have shown to be effective for Aboriginal youth.

Lexine Stapinski 09:41

And so, this brought us to this project, the aim of which was to address that gap by developing a culturally inclusive school-based drug and alcohol prevention program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth and this program was called Strong and Deadly Futures.

Lexine Stapinski 09:59

So, the reason that this program came about was conversations that we had with teachers and Aboriginal service providers, where we were asked when we were talking about drug prevention, about what options there were for culturally appropriate prevention for Aboriginal youth. And so, then once we received some funding to develop Strong and Deadly Futures, the starting point for the project was then some formative consultations with stakeholders and Aboriginal experts to inform the scope and the methodology for the project.

Lexine Stapinski 10:35



So, I'll just tell you a little bit about that formative consultation process. First of all, we spoke with 26 school staff and 16 other stakeholders which included academics and service providers and Aboriginal organisations. And we asked our consultees about the wellbeing priorities in their community and also is the key messages that should be included in a prevention program. And what they told us was that it was really important to create a program that was, that would let young people know about the negative consequences of alcohol and drug use, but also how to minimise harm and where to get help. And they told us it was really important that the program incorporated cultural identity and was really empowering. They also told us it was important that the program conveyed that alcohol and drug problems don't discriminate. They affect people from all walks of life, whether Aboriginal or non-Indigenous. And this brings us to the next question that we asked. We asked our consultees, whether the program should be specific to Aboriginal youth, or more mixed or mixed program, and really consistently the message that we received was that it was important to design a program for a culturally diverse classroom to avoid potentially stigmatising Aboriginal youth and also to reflect the reality of the classrooms in which most Aboriginal students go to school which are culturally diverse classrooms.

Lexine Stapinski 12:16

So, in addition to the information that was gained from these concept consultations, which was very , informative, we also conducted a systematic review of the research literature and the grey literature to learn what has been done previously and in other countries.

Lexine Stapinski 12:35

And one of the questions we asked was, what are the factors that predict protect, sorry, that protect a young person against drug and alcohol use? And so, we reviewed the literature and found 34 studies addressing this question. And most of the protective factors for Aboriginal youth aligned with those that are identified in mainstream populations so this was things like knowledge of the negative effects of alcohol and drug use, exposure to anti-drug attitudes be being more likely to stay in school, personal skills like problem solving and resilience, and also having positive role models. So, these were all found to be important. And then in addition, we also saw there was an additional factors that were that came up specifically for Aboriginal youth. So, the importance of cultural knowledge enhancement was one and also the importance of understanding or looking at the relationship with psychological wellbeing and considering the detrimental effects of intergenerational trauma. So that came out really important, really strongly in the review as being important factors for preventing alcohol and drug use.

Lexine Stapinski 13:53

So, in addition to looking at these protective factors, we also looked at the elements that are part of programs, existing programs, that are most likely to be effective. So, as I told you in the beginning across post for different countries, there were 14 programs that had positive outcomes. And in those programs, what was common was that they had components such as skill development, as well as drug education. Some of the programs include included Indigenous and trained facilitators, some of them promoted health more generally, and often they included interactivities interactive activities as well as booster sessions. The effective programs were also more likely to be culturally adapted from an existing program used in the general population, as I explained before, and the community was, was actively involved in the adaptation process for the programs that were effective. So that seemed to be really important. And that it's taking an existing evidence-based program, but it's acting it with



community involvement. And these programs that were effective also tended to include that information about Indigenous culture and cultural strengths.

Lexine Stapinski 15:18

So, given the evidence that the programs that have been culturally adapted from mainstream programs were most effective for Aboriginal youth, we considered whether the Climate Schools program might be a suitable base for cultural adaptation. Now, for those of you that might not be familiar with this program, it's a mainstream school-based program. It's made up of six online lessons that are aligned with the health and physical education curriculum. And the core components of this program are harm minimisation, skill and skill development to empower young people to cope with social and other pressures to try alcohol and drugs. And when we looked at this program, we saw that these components align quite well with those components that have been that have been identified as effective for Aboriginal use. Now, the Climate Schools Program is also the only Australian school-based program with really strong evidence of effectiveness. So far, there's been six trials that have been conducted of this program involving 157 schools and more than 14,000 students. And the results have shown that after receiving the program, students have woops sorry. Students experience benefits such as increased knowledge of alcohol, cannabis and psycho-stimulants and their effects, decreased use of alcohol, cannabis and MDMA. And the results have even shown a sustained reduction in binge drinking for students who receive the program up to three years after they're finished receiving the program. So, showing some quite long lasting effects from something that's just implemented in six lessons in year eight. Now, the other thing about this program is the key messages are conveyed via an illustrated story. And so, when we talked to our consultees and our expert advisory group, about the possibility of adapting the Climate Schools program for Aboriginal youth, the feedback we received was that that story based nature of the program aligned really well with the traditional cultural practice of sharing knowledge via storytelling.

Lexine Stapinski 17:53

So, based on our consultations and our systematic reviews, we these lead us to a model for program development that would incorporate information about substances and their effects and consequences skill development, a program that would embed cultural knowledge, language and imagery. That would be interactive, and peer led to maximise student engagement that would align with the year seven and eight health curriculum. And that would feature computerised delivery to maximise ease of use for teachers for students, but also facilitate broad reach of the program, including translation into language, and most importantly, that the program would be developed with community involvement. So that was the vision that we came to the roadmap for developing the program.

Lexine Stapinski 18:52

So, to begin with development, we partnered with Gilimbaa an Indigenous creative agency as well as four schools based in Queensland and New South Wales, who worked with us to co-develop the program.

Lexine Stapinski 19:08

So, the students involved in these schools were year seven and eight students, more than half of them were Aboriginal. And they were from two public and two independent schools. And to get some broader



perspectives, we also conducted a national storytelling competition to elicit some stories from students around the country. And in order to get the students perspectives and stories, one of the things we what we asked them to do several things we asked them to participate in focus groups, and role plays, but also to complete a photo voice activity. And what this involves is providing each of the students with a disposable camera and asking them to take photos of positive things in their community that they could then share with the group and use as a starting point for, for telling us their story.

Lexine Stapinski 20:07

So, there were four topics that the students took photos on. The first one was role models. And so, you can see here some of the examples of the role models they identified: footy players, parents, parents were pleased to see that and also teachers and friends.

Lexine Stapinski 20:27

And we also asked them to take photos of things that were positive reasons not to use alcohol and drugs. And we found some really interesting perspectives here that we wouldn't have necessarily expected so such as caring for pets. "If you end up in jail, you can't look after your pets anymore. So, they told us some things we might not have expected about what was important to them. Pets turned out to be really important to these kids. And also, some really kind of insightful perspectives. Surround yourself with happy people and they will rub off on you.

Lexine Stapinski 21:03

We also asked them to take photos of things that they love about their community. And they told us about coming together making their own fun, computers very important to them, and also the lake.

Lexine Stapinski 21:20

So, once we've gathered the students perspectives and their stories, these then formed the basis for the characters, illustrations and narrative for the program. And I'll just show you a short video now that summarises that process, so that you can see how the kids brought the story to life.

Video 21:41

in the first session we got cameras so we can take photos of positive things. We had to go take some photos and then we came back and now we're sharing. So, this is my role model. It's really important to have inspiring females and just trying to extract their stories really work out what it's like here in this community, what they do for fun, and what is some, I guess some of the challenges that they might face. To be able to work closely with communities across Australia and engage with youth to find out their perspectives and the way they want to represent their voices in these resources is really quite important. So, once the team had collected all the information feedback from, from all the kids around the around the country, we brought it back to Gilimbaa here in the studio and started developing our characters and really trying to create the individual characteristics for each personality. There really is nothing better than actually sitting with a group of young people, getting them to look at the work that we've been doing that they've helped create for them to show it back to them and get them to inform the final product in terms of exactly what language we should use. Exactly what illustrations it's, it's just such a wonderful program. When I heard about the project, I thought it was a great opportunity for kids to have a voice in something that's supposed to be about their age group, their life and their needs.



That name needs to change... (background voices)... and that sense of ownership on a project, I'm really excited to see the looks on their face when they can identify parts of their stories in the platform. Sort of gives you something to strive towards. It's about making this information accessible and engaging so that our youth can make informed strong and deadly decisions about their future.

Lexine Stapinski 23:58

After all of that process with the students and the designers had taken place, their products that we ended up with was six episodes which are approximately 15 to 20 minutes long, and they examine different issues that people, young people, deal with. So including in the first lesson, psychological distress, facts about alcohol and tobacco, later lessons looking at substance resistance strategies, how to deal with peer pressure, the short and long term consequences of substance use, how to deal with other people's substance use and alternative, alternatives to drug and alcohol use. So, all of the core messages are delivered via this storyline, which is based on the lives of a group of year seven year eight students.

Lexine Stapinski 24:55

And to cater for differing literacy levels as well as providing the capacity for translation into language the entire program was, the entire storyline was audio narrated. And one of the fantastic things that we were able to achieve was have the students themselves narrate the characters for the for the program, which they were really, really excited to be involved with.

Lexine Stapinski 25:24

So, all of the illustrated stories are available via an online platform so that teachers and students can access it easily. And there's also along with the stories, there's student summaries, teacher summaries for each lesson, as well as a selection of optional interactive class activities that reinforce the key messages that are in each lesson. So, students will select maybe one or two activities depending on time, out the selection of 6, that they can complete with their class after the class have completed the online story.

Lexine Stapinski 26:07

So, what I want to just do now is try to show you another quick video and this is just to give you an example of the story of the of the story lines that the kids would be watching through across the six episodes.

Video 26:26

You guys want one? No, I'm good. I've got a sore throat. No Harry smoking's so gross! It makes your hair stink. Not right now gotta talk with my mum. Smoking's really bad for you. Plus, it's so expensive.

Video 26:46

Whatever. Let's go Harry. Trisha, how do you deal with these guys they're always trying to get us to drink and smoke. Yeah, I'm amazed that you're not smoking and drinking Trisha! You've got to find different ways to say no. I mean, what you guys said to Harry and Dazza before is pretty much what I do. Like me saying that my throat hurts. Yeah, exactly. giving an excuse is one way. Or if you're feeling confident, you can say no and explain why. So, I could say I don't want to smoke because it's not good



for playing footy I get out of breath real quick. Or like I think smoking is disgusting and gross. So that's why I said no. Yeah, and I said no, because it's bad for your health and a waste of money. Exactly. And then you can always walk away like Amy did if you don't feel comfortable. But there's also days where I feel pressure to say yes, that's when I avoid hanging out with them and hang out with other mates instead.

Lexine Stapinski 27:55

Okay, so once we developed the program, what we did then was we took it back to the students. As you saw a little bit in the video, we took the program the draft program back to the students, and to get their feedback. So, to get their feedback about what they liked, what they didn't like, and what really needed to be changed. That was the students that gave feedback, but also the teachers as well. And we also, again for an expert advisory group to give us some expert opinions on the program and what needed to be changed.

Lexine Stapinski 28:27

And we received some really positive feedback from the students on the backgrounds and the scenarios. They told us that the storylines were realistic and that they could relate to them. The language was genuinely well received although we did have to make some changes as I think you saw in the video. They're saying, No, you can't say that that's just wrong. In which case, they're like okay, good call we'll change it. And then there were some other suggestions around you know, shortening some parts of the scenario being a bit more concise but in general, particularly the teachers also commented that their format was really practical and would suit their needs. So, you can see here just a quote from a teacher saying, as a teacher, having something where you don't have to do a lot of practice yourself is always good. The kids can log on to the lessons at their own pace.

Lexine Stapinski 29:18

So that was our initial feedback. But what we did next was actually conducted a pilot trial of the program to look at the benefits in the four schools that we developed it with. So, I'm going to pass over to Kylie. Now he's going to tell you about the results of that pilot trial.

Kylie Routledge 29:53

Thanks Lexine. I'd also like to acknowledge the traditional owners of country throughout Australia and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. And I'd like to pay my respects to elder's past, present and emerging and any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people here today. So, as Lexine mentioned, I'm going to take you through the pilot trial, which was run in term three in 2019 with four schools. So, there were two public schools in regional New South Wales, and two independent schools in Metro Queensland. Year seven and eight students completed the lessons over a period of about six weeks in their classes, and they did surveys about alcohol, tobacco, cannabis and wellbeing before and after the program.

Kylie Routledge 30:43

So, with this pilot, there are a few different things that we were trying to test, and I'll talk about a bit more about each of these things on the following slides. But to give you an overview, the first thing we want to know about the program of course, is does it work? That is does it improve student's knowledge



about alcohol and drugs and prevent alcohol and drug use. The second thing we want to know is whether it changes wellbeing. So, something Lexine mentioned was that psychological distress was something that came up as important in the course of developing Strong and Deadly Futures. So, we built in lessons relating to dealing with stress and decision making. So apart from the alcohol and drug changes that we're hoping for, we're also hoping for improvements in wellbeing. The final thing that we wanted to find out from the pilot was how to staff and students feel about it. Did they like it? Did they find it easy to implement? And is it a program that could run in other schools?

Kylie Routledge 31:41

So, let's look at those things a little more closely. The first thing I mentioned was the alcohol and drug results and there are a few things that we need to understand about these before looking at the findings. We asked questions about a few different things. So, the first is alcohol, tobacco and cannabis knowledge. These are questions testing factual knowledge about ways to stay safe. So, things like how many standard drinks are in a bottle of wine or beer, what the law recommends, guidelines for young people, whether smoking in the same room as someone else affects them, things like that. There are also questions about whether they've tried alcohol or smoking before, how much and how frequently. So, for the pilot, we only actually expect to see changes in knowledge. The reason is that it's a prevention program. So, it's deliberately aimed at students young enough that the majority of them won't have tried alcohol or smoking yet. And that was backed up by the results, so only about 10% said that they'd had a full standard drink before. Only about 5% had ever tried a cigarette and about 2% had tried cannabis. So, we would expect to see the impact of the program on preventing use of these substances in one to two years time. Around that year 9/10 period when we start to see an increase in experimentation. So, the changes we're hoping to see now are just in, just in changes in knowledge. But hopefully this will equip them over the longer term to stay safe when they're offered substances in future.

Kylie Routledge 33:17

So that was exactly what we did see, for alcohol. There are 11 knowledge questions, so they can get a total of 11 if they get them all right. On average, kids got just around 3.8 out of 11 questions right before the program and that increased to 5.4. After the program. For cigarettes, there are only four questions. So, there was just a small increase there 2.3 to 2.7. And for cannabis, there were eight questions and we saw an increase from 4.1 to 5.1.

Kylie Routledge 33:49

Another area that I said that we were interested in was well being so the way we measured this was using a scale called the K5 scale, and that asks five questions about whether they've been feeling jumpy, nervous, without hope or so sad that they couldn't cheer up, and they rate each one out of five. So, zero means they don't feel that way at all. And five means they feel that way all the time. So, for this one, higher scores are worse, that means they're feeling worse and the maximum score they can get is 25.

Kylie Routledge 34:21

So, the results for this were pretty exciting. The scores dropped from 12.8 to 11.4. Which means they had less psychological distress at the end of the program. And that might not sound like much, but it's a



significant finding. And it's the difference between feeling bad some of the time to feeling bad only a little at the time. So, these findings are really going in the right direction.

Kylie Routledge 34:44

The final thing we're interested in for the trial was the student and staff feedback.

Kylie Routledge 34:50

So, this feedback from the students was really positive. Overall, three quarters of the students said they thought it was good or very good. We asked how much they liked the lessons, activities, and feedback and the average for all of those questions was for about 62% for students saying they liked it. We also asked about how helpful they thought the information would be for dealing with peer pressure, stress and drugs and alcohol. And for all of those, about 80% of students thought it would be helpful or very helpful. So, these are some of the comments that we got from the students.

Kylie Routledge 35:29

Teachers were asked a range of questions as well about how they found the program. And again, this was pretty positive. They reported that students were engaged, they found it easy to use. And they liked the cultural content. They also had some constructive suggestions which we're incorporating into the next version of the program.

Kylie Routledge 36:03

So, the next thing that's happening is that we're going to be trialling Strong and Deadly Futures across Australia over the next few years. The co-development process that you heard about earlier is still a really critical component of the program. So, the first thing we'll do is get interest from schools and Aboriginal communities. And we'll work with the community to adapt the program to the local area. Then we'll trial Strong and Deadly Futures in either 2021 or 2023 in high schools to see whether it's effective in achieving those longer-term outcomes. So, if you're interested or you know, anyone that you think might be interested, please get in touch with us. I'll pass back to Lexine now and we can take any questions.

Lexine Stapinski 36:50

Okay, great. Thanks, Kylie. And I think Smriti's probably coming online and gonna ask us some questions.

Smriti Nepal 37:03

That was a very informative session, you guys really give us an insight into the Strong and Deadly Futures program, including the thought process that went inside the development and the evidence that informed the program. So, thank you very much. At this point, I would like to encourage our audience to please add any questions to the Q&A panel at the bottom of your screen. While we wait for questions to come through, I will ask a question that popped into my head. So, could you please tell us if any school can participate in the program?

Kylie Routledge 37:50



Yes, yes, that's right. Any high school can participate in it. It's free to participate as well and we'll be providing resources to support schools in participating. So, we mentioned the Aboriginal facilitators, they'll be hired part time for each area for the duration of the trial, which is about five years. Their job will be to conduct the consultations with the local community members to get feedback on the program, which we'll use to adapt it to the local areas. They'll also support the teachers and support the schools in implementing the program, which will mean helping out with collecting data and helping students collect surveys, complete surveys, but also helping out with program elements relating to Aboriginal culture. Other support we'll provide includes access to technology, if that's an issue for schools, so we can provide tablets and headphones so kids can access the program. So, there's no real barrier. We're going for schools across Australia. So, it's not you know, restricted regionally or by access to technology or resources.

Smriti Nepal 39:05

Thank you, Kylie. Um, another question that has come through is when would the trial start if a school is interested?

Kylie Routledge 39:17

That's a good question. Because if it's going over five years, if the school wants to participate, the first stage involves, well getting in contact with us so we can organise it. But then we would work with the school to identify a local Aboriginal facilitator. And we'll start on the community consultations. So, what that involves is running sessions with Aboriginal members in the community, both young people and adults, and then we'll collate that feedback and use it to adapt the program. So, we had anticipated that that would happen this year. But because of COVID-19, we've pushed that back a bit. Obviously, it's not safe for us to travel at the moment, it's not safe to do anything within like community sessions at the moment. So, we're anticipating that that would probably take place between November and April next year. But, you know, we're sort of adapting it as we go at the moment. So then, after the community consultation sessions, after we have adapted the program, the schools then implement the program. The way that the trial is set up to run, it's called a randomised control trial. And what that means is that schools, half the schools will be randomly allocated to implement it mid 2021. And half the schools will be randomly allocated to implement it in 2023. There would be no difference in terms of the support that we would offer. You know, every school will have the community consultation sessions, every school will have the facilitator. Every school will have the program adapted to their local area. It's just when they would actually implement it. So, the short answer is anywhere between 2021 and 2023 is when they will implement it.

Lexine Stapinski 41:09

And just to add to that, Kylie, we really want schools to benefit from the program. That's why that's what this project was about. And that's why we developed it. So, so that we can get really good evidence and see the benefits, we need to have this design that Kylie talked about. But after the trial, those schools will have continued access to the program. So, there'll be a way to keep implementing it into the future. And we really hope that schools do that, do implement it into the future as well.

Smriti Nepal 41:43



Thank you both. We seem to have a lot of interested candidates here. There are quite a few questions. And the other question is, do the resources have application for higher year levels so the person who's asked a question says they are a school for year 10 to 12 Aboriginal students.

Lexine Stapinski 42:07

Yeah, so what we've so when we're talking about prevention, one of the things we know is that it's really good to get in before young people experience that peak. So, I talked a little bit about there's a peak, and it tends to be around year 9/10, although obviously, it varies from place to place in school to school. So, the idea of going in year seven, year eight, is that you equip the kids with knowledge and skills before they're in that situation where they're exposed. So that's really the focus of our program is that kind of prevention end. There's other programs though, that go in later. And the Climate Schools Program has some programs that go in go in later so in that kind of old age group, but they have a slightly different focus. So currently, our program would be more of a young cohort, but you know, maybe this is being ambitious, you know, but looking to the future, I think it would be a really good thing to be developing something for those old age groups as well. Can I say quickly as well, I just saw a question asking about can you see trialed in WA and we would love schools in WA because we have a number of schools in WA interested. And obviously it makes sense for us to travel to schools within the one area to do the consultation. So yeah, schools in WA would be fantastic, wouldn't they Kylie.

Kylie Routledge 43:33

They really would. And another thing, in addition to that, is that we're quite flexible with the local Aboriginal facilitators. So, I was talking to a school WA yesterday, and they said, you know, there's another school in our area, and then potentially we can have one facilitator that that works with both schools. So that's also a benefit if they're in the same area.

Smriti Nepal 44:03

Thank you, Lexine and Kylie. The other question is, can the program be trialed with year seven/eight students at an alternative education program run at the youth centre these students are sent there from the local high school.

Lexine Stapinski 44:24

Yeah, I think we obviously want to involve as many schools and organisations that are interested to be involved. In this case, I would say come and talk to us, or email us to set up a time to talk with us since it sort of depends on you know, the number of students, their relationship with the school so it'd be good for us to have a chat and see what might be possible. If nothing else, you might your organisation might be able to facilitate the links with the local school, so perhaps acting as that local Aboriginal facilitator role. So yes, I can't give a clear-cut answer. Without knowing more, but just to just anyone who's interested to have a chat with us.

Smriti Nepal 45:09

Is there any scope for this program to be adapted in such a way that other drugs can be included in the program?

Lexine Stapinski 45:18



Yes, so. Currently included, was sorry, alcohol, tobacco, a really strong focus knowing that those are the most commonly used substances in Aboriginal youth in this age group. Cannabis is also there a little bit but it's mostly talking about, because of the age of the group it's about an older sibling and kind of understanding their consequences and how they can help that older sibling so those are the substances that are currently covered, some of the skills will be kind of applicable. So, say the drug refusal skills, for example, are applicable across substances. So, if you're learning them for tobacco, they sort of apply across. But we do acknowledge that maybe in the local adaptation program or process, some of the communities might say to us in this community, there's this other substance that's you haven't currently covered. But that is really important for us. And we would absolutely take that, that feedback on board and that consideration. So, the adaptation will be a, an adaptation to the community. It could be, you know, the illustrations, the stories will change, somewhat depending on the community's needs. So, yes, that would be a possibility that we would talk about if that that came up for a community.

Lexine Stapinski 46:40

Do you want to add anything to that, Kylie?

Kylie Routledge 46:43

No, no, I think that's really, yeah, that's good.

Smriti Nepal 46:50

These the next two questions, they're very similar. So, I'm going to ask you one question. How Are you going to? Or is there a possibility for the program to reach out to kids who are not engaged with schools?

Lexine Stapinski 47:09

Yeah. That's a really tough one. And I guess one thing to say is that our program, I mean, I talked before about school engagement being an important protective factor for young people. Now, our program, it's out of scope for our program to be a school retention program. There's a number of programs particularly, you know, some states are really struggling in this, I think, NT, particularly strong having a lot of programs that are really focused on school retention, and that's not what this program is. Having said that, what we know from the Climate Schools results, so the program that we're adapting culturally adapting, or using as a basis for cultural adaptation. That program actually helped to increase sorry to reduce truancy among students. So, whilst we, it's out of scope to use the program, I guess to pull students in who aren't currently attending school, one of the outcomes that we hope for is that it helps to retain students that are going to school. But yes, I acknowledge that that, that school retention and engaging students that aren't engaged in school is also another really important priority and not one that we're addressing with this program.

Smriti Nepal 48:30

We just have time for a couple of more questions. So, the next question is: do the facilitators need to have a special skill set for to run this program?

Lexine Stapinski 48:43



Want to take that one Kylie?

Kylie Routledge 48:45

Yeah, sure. No, no, there's no special skill set required for the Aboriginal facilitators, if that's what you're referring to. We'll be training them and offering ongoing support in how to conduct the community sessions, where we will do workshops with the school and facilitators before the trial, before the program is implemented in schools just to make sure it will run smoothly. The actual program itself is very simple to use. Like there are, I think like Lexine mentioned the students summaries the teachers summaries and activity options. So, for the teachers as well, it's very easy to implement. So no, there's no required skill set.

Lexine Stapinski 49:34

Just to add that, of course, all our facilitators will have to go, undergo a working with children check. So yeah, that's, I guess that's the only skill set just to make sure that they're safe to work with children but yeah.

Smriti Nepal 49:49

And how much time should be allocated for students to complete the program?

Lexine Stapinski 49:56

I wonder if that's per lesson, Kylie.

Kylie Routledge 49:59

Well Yeah, the lessons are about 45 to 50 minutes long. But they're quite flexible because all the activities are optional. So, you can choose which activities suit your class best what you have time for. There are six different lessons. And we recommend doing one a week. So, for the whole program to run, it takes six, let's just say roughly six one-hour lessons across six weeks. But within that there's a fair bit of flexibility.

Lexine Stapinski 50:35

And then cartoons themselves. As Kylie said, you've got flexibility on the optional exercises that the cartoons themselves take about 10 to 20 minutes, probably 20 minutes is generous, but that's allowing some kids to maybe go through a bit slower. And the program is definitely able to be used with non-Indigenous students, I'm just sneakily trying to enter as many questions as possible Smriti. So, as we said, we developed it, we would our consultations really gave us the information that we should develop it for a mixed classroom. And so, all of the testing so far has been in a mixed classroom. So, the feedback that Kylie presented was from non-Indigenous and Aboriginal students, a mix, and the non-Indigenous students. Some of the qualitative feedback actually that we got indicated that they really appreciated learning about Aboriginal cultural strengths. They didn't find that odd that that was in the program, that was they found it actually benefits to have that in the program.

Smriti Nepal 51:45

Right. And would you like to answer the question about whether it's only for public schools?



Lexine Stapinski 51:51

No, definitely not independent schools also welcome.

Kylie Routledge 51:56

Catholic as well.

Smriti Nepal 51:58

And finally, is there any costs associated with the program?

Kylie Routledge 52:04

No, there are no costs. So, it's free to participate. And as I said, we'll provide the resources. So, we will pay the Aboriginal facilitators to support the implementation, we will pay for the technology if you need that to access the program, so no cost at all. So, I guess you get access to the program ongoing after participating so that's free as well.

Smriti Nepal 52:36

Okay, so we are now close to the one-hour mark. So, I think I will end the question and answer session there. If you do have any further questions or feedback, please send us an email at info@positivechoices.org.au. Or alternatively, you can contact the Strong and Deadly Futures team directly at info@srongdeadly.org.au. I would like to thank Lexine and Kylie once again for your presentation. And I'd also like to thank our audience for being so engaging and for all your great questions that you've asked today. Please don't forget to visit Positive Choices at positivechoices.org.au to find out all the different resources we provide. And yes, like I said, please don't forget to contact us about any feedback or any suggestions for resources or information you would like to see on the Positive Choices portal. So, thank you once again, and we will see you at the next webinar session. Thank you.