

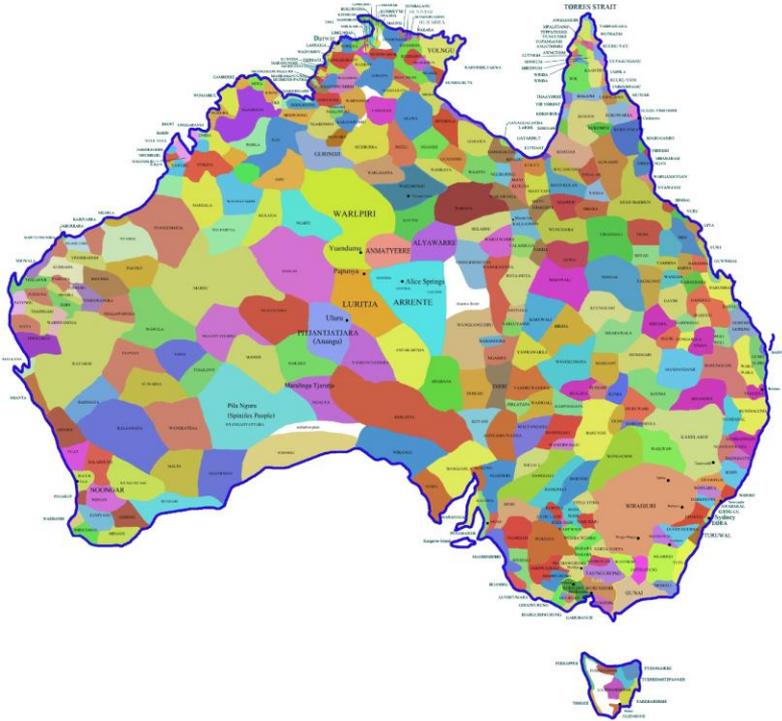
Strong & Deadly Futures:

Psychosocial factors that prevent against e-cigarette use among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teenagers

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Acknowledgment of Country



We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and recognise their continuing connection to land, water and culture.

We pay our respects to those who have cared and continue to care for Country.

Acknowledgements & Disclosures

Research Team

| | |
|------------------|----------------------|
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Aboriginal Reference Group



Waminda 




Ngak Min
HEALTH



Development Partners



GARUWA

CAUSE / AFFECT

Funders

- Australian Government
Department of Health
- National Health & Medical
Research Council

The Matilda Centre, University of Sydney

Participating Schools

Sincere thanks to the students and educators across 4 development and 22 trial schools across WA, QLD and NSW.

Presentation Overview

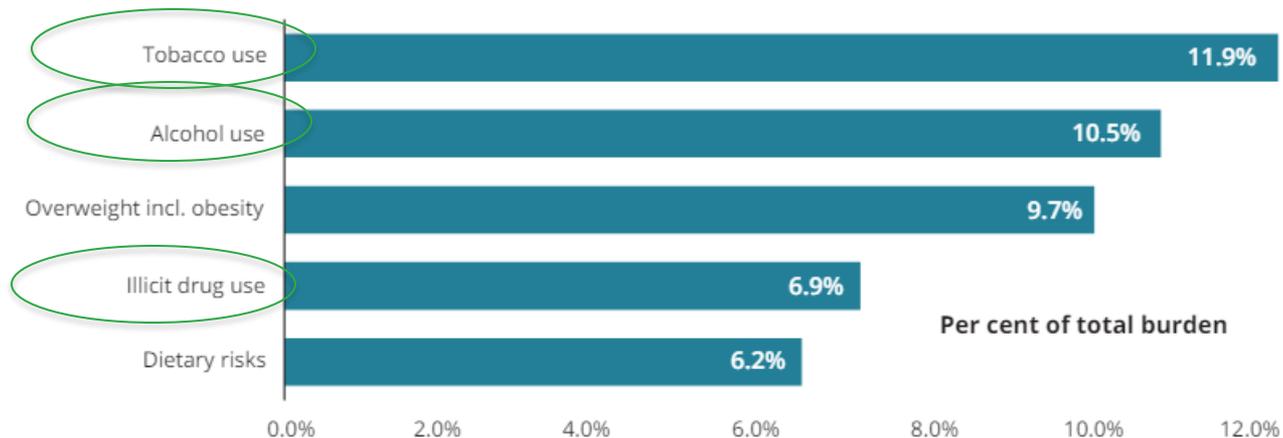
1. Background to the Strong & Deadly Futures program
2. E-cigarette Use, an emerging area of concern
3. Patterns of e-cigarette use, and protective factors among Aboriginal youth



Priority area for Aboriginal health

- Due to ongoing effects of colonisation and intergenerational trauma, there are unacceptable health inequities for Aboriginal compared to non-Aboriginal Australians
- Drug and alcohol is a priority area for improvement

Almost half of the disease burden for Aboriginal peoples is preventable



Strong & Deadly Futures: Strengths-based Alcohol/Drug Prevention for Aboriginal youth



- Empowering, school-based program for Aboriginal youth: focussed on preventing harm from alcohol, cigarette smoking and cannabis
- Co-designed with youth, drawing on the effective “Our Futures” program which has been supported by 8 trials across >180 schools

Curriculum program: 6 lessons + 2 booster lessons:

- 10-minute narrated cartoon
- PLUS classroom activities to reinforce learning & skills practice
- One class activity each lesson focusses on Aboriginal cultural strengths



Strong & Deadly Futures:

Co-designed process: with Aboriginal leadership



Funded by
Australian Government
Department of Health

Aboriginal Leadership

- Conceived through consultations with key stakeholders
- Guided by Aboriginal Reference Group
- Partnerships with Aboriginal medical services & Aboriginal creative agencies

Synthesised the evidence

Increase risk of substance use:



Protect against substance use:

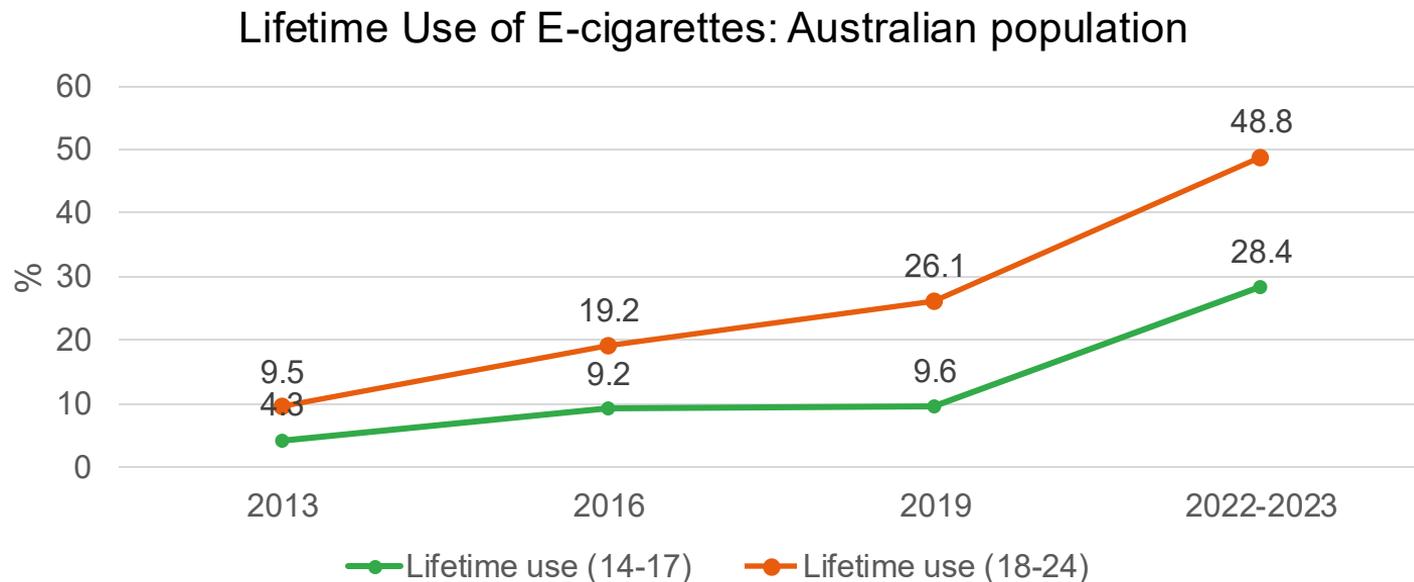


Co-designed with youth



E-cigarette use: An emerging area of concern

- In recent decades, there have been positive trends, with fewer Aboriginal teenagers smoking cigarette smoking (33% in 2002, to 13% in 2018; AIHW)
- However, we see from general population data use of e-cigarettes has dramatically increased



What is know about E-cigarette use among Aboriginal youth?

- ‘Next Generation: Youth Wellbeing Study’, data from Aboriginal youth aged 16 to 24 years (collected 2018-2020): 75% had never vaped (Heris et al, 2025)
- “Footprints in time” study, data from Aboriginal teenagers aged 12 to 15 years (collected 2018): 89.3% had never vaped (Rickard et al, 2025)
- **We need data from >2020** to see how this might have changed now with recent trends towards increased use
- **Importance:** although originally developed as a tobacco cessation tool , there is increasing evidence about the negative impacts of e-cigarettes on lungs, brain, educational and mental health outcomes

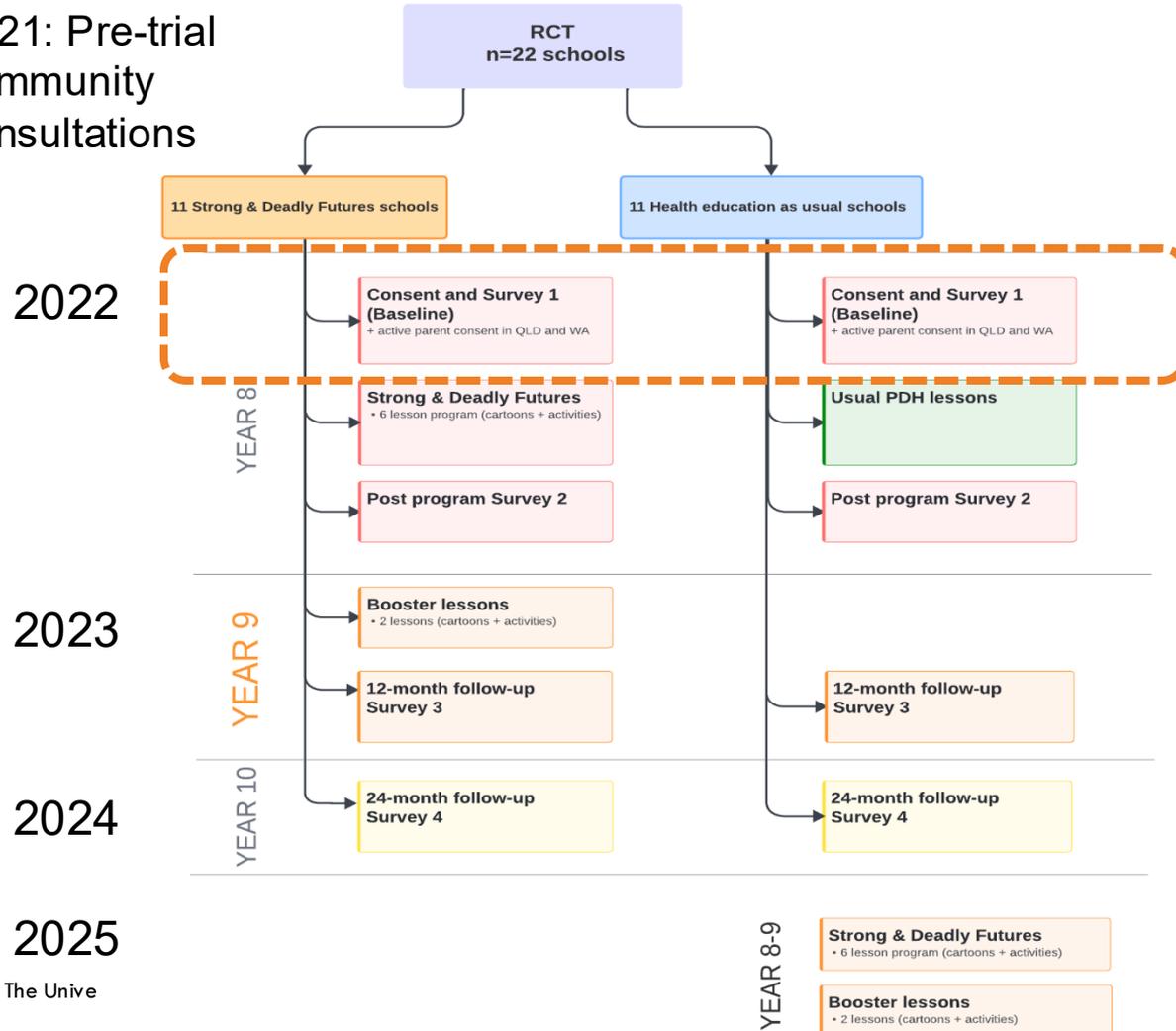


Current Study: Aims

Aims: To examine the prevalence and patterns of e-cigarettes use among Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander teenagers and identify protective factors.

Cross-sectional Analysis: Baseline (2022) data from the Strong & Deadly Futures trial

2021: Pre-trial
community
consultations



Strong & Deadly Futures Trial (2021-2025)

- 22 schools across QLD, WA and NSW
- 18 government schools, 4 independent
- N=1,297 Yr 7/8 students, 30% Aboriginal

Current Analysis:
Focuses on baseline
(Yr 8) data collected
from n=368 Aboriginal
students

Participant profile: Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander students

| Variable | N (%) (N = 368*) |
|--|---------------------|
| Identify as | |
| - Aboriginal | 294 (79.9%) |
| - Torres Strait Islander | 29 (7.9%) |
| - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander | 45 (12.2%) |
| Age | |
| | M = 13.3 (sd = 0.6) |
| | Range = 11 to 15 |
| | 96% 13 or 14 |
| Gender | |
| - Boy | 191 (53.7%) |
| - Girl | 151 (42.4%) |
| - Non-Binary/Gender Fluid/Different identity | 14 (3.9%) |
| State | |
| - NSW | 236 (64.1%) |
| - QLD | 88 (23.9%) |
| - WA | 44 (12.0%) |
| School location | |
| - Major cities | 135 (36.7%) |
| - Inner regional | 150 (40.8%) |
| - Outer regional/Remote | 83 (22.6%) |

*Some missing data for individual measures among n=368)

Conclusions & Next Steps

- More Aboriginal teenagers had tried e-cigarettes (39%) compared to 2018 study (11%) Rickard et al, 2025
- Personal Wellbeing, self efficacy to resist peer pressure, safe attitudes and lower perceived peer vaping were strong protective factors
- Strengths -focused and culturally relevant prevention strategies that promote these factors are needed to prevent harm from teenage vaping

- 2025 to 2026:
With funding from Department of Health:
we are co-developing with youth and piloting a 4-lesson
Strong & Deadly Futures module focussed on vaping
prevention

CAUSE / AFFECT





**STRONG
& DEADLY
FUTURES**
strongdeadly.org.au

Strong & Deadly Futures is the first online, school-based wellbeing program that is culturally inclusive for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal students.

Questions?

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