

‘PLAY SAFE UNLEASHED’: BUILDING THE CAPACITY OF A SCHOOLIES TRAVEL PROVIDER TO DELIVER SEXUAL HEALTH PROMOTION TO NSW STUDENTS OVERSEAS.

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Background/Approach: Young people are a priority population in the NSW Sexually Transmissible Infections (STI) Strategy. The HIV and Related Programs (HARP) Unit and Unleashed, Australia’s largest overseas schoolies operator, co-designed a comprehensive, multifaceted sexual health promotion campaign for school leavers travelling from NSW to Fiji. Consistent with priorities in the STI Strategy the project aimed to increase knowledge, improve access to condoms and encourage STI screening. It aligned to NSW Health’s Play Safe website.

Analysis/Argument: Schoolies is a recognised time of risk taking, experimentation with alcohol, drugs and sex. Barriers to condom use for young people include impulsivity, under-estimating risks, alcohol, and reduced access to condoms, in addition to embarrassment, low self-efficacy and assumptions about STI status based on limited knowledge.

Strategies implemented:

- Sexual health training of peer chaperones and Unleashed employees
- Social media campaign utilising Unleashed’s channels encouraged conversations about safe sex, promoted condoms and encouraged STI screening pre, during, post travel
- Resource and condom distribution to 2,700 16-18 year olds
- Integrated sexual health activities overseas including games, trivia, DJ credit lines

Outcomes/Results:

- Post training surveys and qualitative data highlight increased peer chaperone knowledge and confidence having sexual health conversations and responding to advice-seeking by travellers.
- Reduced stigma and taboo with sexual health conversations normalised.
- Digital data demonstrating successful social media campaign with good engagement and reach to thousands of young people.
- Intention to practice safe sex indicated by uptake of 8000 condoms.

Conclusion/Applications:

- Project successfully and innovatively partnered with a private company building their capacity to deliver sexual health promotion overseas
- Project used pertinent opportunities to normalise condom use and STI screening, and increased access to condoms
- Alignment with Unleashed’s corporate social responsibility with opportunities to expand the campaign
- Project is replicable with other agencies targeting young people, not just travel providers

- Co-design ensured acceptable methods were developed around potentially sensitive issues.

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