

# **Kids CAN Awards 2006 / a NAPCAN NSW initiative Kids CAN – Child Friendly Community Awards.**

**Category: High School – (Rural)**

**PROJECT: ‘LOVE BiTES’ a Year 10 Prevention Program on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault**

**1. Demonstrate that children and young people are involved in researching, planning, implementing and evaluating the project**

‘Love Bites’ is a school based early intervention and prevention program on sexual assault and domestic violence that has been developed by the North Coast Area Health Services Women’s Health Educator, the Department of Community Services Senior Regional Strategies Officer, Violence Prevention, the Hunter/New England Area Health Service Manager of Violence Prevention and Woman’s Services, Local Sexual Assault counsellors and other Domestic Violence services including Kempsey Family Support Services, for High School students on the Mid North Coast. Female and male educators, teachers, police officers and relevant counsellors and youth workers with experience in the areas of sexual assault and family/domestic violence facilitate the program.

‘Love Bites’ is an interactive and innovative workshop that is run either in or out of school for a full day per 50 students. The program is aimed at year 9, 10 & 11 students. The full day program consists of two interactive workshops in the morning on family/domestic violence and sexual assault and then two workshops for the remainder of the day that consolidate the information from the morning workshops by working along side students to write, perform and record a hip hop song, and develop posters/resources around the issues of Domestic Violence and sexual assault. All students participate in the art and hip-hop workshops. The responses and commitment from young people involved in the program are overwhelmingly enthusiastic and embracing.

The most important aspects of the program are that it recognises the skills, talents and knowledge of young people and actually models respectful relationships between male and female students, teachers and workers. The students are treated with the utmost respect and as young adults, and are encouraged to call workers and teachers by their first names. Research suggests that violence against women, such as domestic violence, is greatly influenced by power imbalances in our society. The implementation of the ‘LOVE BiTES’ program depends on the establishment of respectful processes and sharing power in the delivery of the workshops. It is important, therefore, to minimise power imbalances that serve to reinforce a culture of dominance and exclusion in the school environment, especially during the workshops.

The evaluation process is comprehensive in 'LOVE BiTES'. It includes pre and post surveys of students; post written evaluations from students; 6 month post evaluation of a focus group of students; worker/teacher evaluations; the development of resources by students; and the development of art works and songs around sexual assault and family violence to be shared with the students peers.

The students of Toormina High assisted with development of the CD-Rom. They wrote and conducted all interviews with no consultation with workers and developed the images for the covers inside and out of the CD-Rom. The CD-Rom provides examples of our surveys and also provides interviews with students and teachers about the program. Please view the interviews as a measure of our success.

The students from all participating schools wrote and performed all the fantastic songs on the CD that accompanies the CD-Rom.

Students have also developed a selection of posters and stickers to be distributed in NSW schools and communities.

# Look at the CD-Rom provided to view interviews and take note of the posters and stickers.

## **2. Make a positive difference to children and young people, and that difference is sustainable or repeatable over time**

The program aims to target young people, more specifically; ALL year 10 student's male and female in NSW Mid North Coast High schools. The program has been delivered to more than 3000 students on the Mid North Coast of NSW and is running in most state high schools in Port Macquarie, Coffs Harbour, Kempsey and Dorrigo. It aims to assist potential victims of violence and potential perpetrators.

The 'LOVE BiTES' CD-Rom program is target groups are schools, DV and Sexual Assault service providers, youth services and all other interested services. It has been distributed throughout NSW to Schools, Sexual Assault Services, Women's Refuges and Specialist Violence Prevention Services and also to schools and service providers throughout Australia, including Canberra, Melbourne, Regional Victoria, South Australia and Brisbane. The CD-Rom's aim is to provide workers and teachers with an easy to use resource that can help them run much sought after prevention programs. A workshop is being held in London, UK in June of this year to promote the 'LOVE BiTES' CD-Rom with service providers in London.

The major outcomes of the 'Love Bites' program have been:

- the creation of an innovative, flexible, culturally transferable and relevant prevention program for high school students

- The development of a respectful program that recognises and builds on the talents of young people and views young people as the experts in their own issues.
- The development of a successful collaborative approach between schools and support services to family violence and sexual assault.

The feedback from the students indicated:

- an increased awareness and understanding of family violence and sexual assault
- a real enjoyment of and enthusiasm for the learning process
- the need for more workshops in areas such as mental health, drug and alcohol and bullying

The major attitudinal changes occurred around sexual assault. There was a 52% increase in awareness that sexual assault with someone who is drunk or drugged is a sexual assault; 17% increase in awareness that you don't have to be physically hurt to be sexually assaulted; 17% increase in awareness that alcohol & other drugs are used in sexual assault. The written survey highlighted an increased knowledge on exactly what Sexual Assault is and that young men can be sexually assaulted also.

The major attitudinal changes that occurred around family violence included - 17% increase in awareness how difficult it is for DV victims to leave; 22% increase in awareness that alcohol is not the major cause of DV. The written survey highlighted an increased knowledge on the different kinds of Domestic Violence and that violence is a choice and violent individuals do not necessarily come from violent homes.

A high percentage of young people also indicated that they had not been aware how much support was available for them in the community and that they now knew whom to contact.

### **Sustainability over time**

The 6 month post workshop focus group indicated that 57% of the students felt that the program had challenged and changed their opinions on DV and sexual assault; 71% felt that it had changed the attitudes in their year, this included boys respecting girls more; 100% indicated an increased awareness in support services and 100% felt the program should be run as an integral part of the PDHPE program in all high schools.

# for more feedback from students please view the interviews with students on the CD-Rom.

Workers and teachers feedback indicated:

- 'Love Bites' as an excellent and effective model for Interagency collaboration
- A wide support for the 'Love Bites' program being made available to other years and high schools
- How impressed they were with the enthusiasm of the students and the students retention of information

- A strong desire to be part of more 'Love Bites' programs  
# for more feedback from students please view the interviews with teachers and workers on the CD-Rom.

### **Unanticipated Outcomes:**

- Young people sharing referral pathways with parents. Kempsey Sexual Assault Service reported clients hearing about the service through their children after 'LOVE BiTES'.
- The Young people of Toormina High taking on the development of the CD-Rom. They wrote and conducted all interviews with no consultation with workers and developed the images for the covers inside and out of the CD-Rom.
- The enthusiasm for a Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault program shown by all students who participate in it. In Toormina High students who had not attended school for full days all term stayed for the duration of the program.
- The program actually creates a buzz or vibe in schools as we run it only on Tuesdays over a month period. Teachers report young people sharing their enjoyment of the program with their peers in class and the playground.

### **3. Benefit all children and young people in the school/community, not a subgroup – unless a good rationale can be given for targeting a particular group.**

The LOVE BiTES program benefits all young people in year 10 across the mid north coast. The development of the 'LOVE BiTES' CD-Rom in partnership with the students from Toormina High School has facilitated the rolling out of the program throughout the state. The CD-Rom is a 'how to' resource that shows schools and domestic violence and sexual assault services how the program can be run in their area. Included in the CD-Rom are: the 'LOVE BiTES' program, resources for the program, teacher training manuals, evaluation forms, interviews with students and teachers, posters developed as part of the program and a CD of the songs written and produced by students. It has been distributed throughout NSW to Schools, Sexual Assault Services, Women's Refuges and Specialist Violence Prevention Services and also to schools and service providers throughout Australia, including Canberra, Melbourne, Regional Victoria, South Australia and Brisbane.

The program is running throughout NSW and other parts of Australia. 'LOVE BiTES' is a program that travels very well and we are receiving verbal feedback that it is proving to be successful in indigenous communities in NSW.

'LOVE BiTES' is a very flexible program that can be adapted and run anywhere. It can be run in any location where there are sexual assault/domestic violence workers/community workers or youth workers. Workers can read through the CD-Rom and gain an understanding of the program and organise the program

themselves. Workers throughout NSW and Australia are taking on the program and using parts of it or the whole program. Where funding is limited we have found workers are using collage or other cheaper art materials, and are using drama if they cannot access Hip Hop musicians. We have found that most schools are great centres for creativity and most are willing to allow use of their resources for a prevention program.

#### **4. Promotes health and wellbeing**

The LOVE BiTES program promotes health and well being amongst young people through:

- Raising awareness about and linking young people in with support, health and counselling services including community health, Youth Refuges, and youth health services to address a range of health and wellbeing issues.
- Raising awareness about safe partying and the effects of alcohol and other drugs on young people
- Raising awareness about drink spiking.
- Empowering young people with choices around their own behaviours.

#### **5. Promotes positive relationships**

'LOVE BiTES' shows that young people are leading the way in their communities by developing resources that promote respectful relationships and challenging the attitudes and myths that surround Domestic and Sexual Violence. Their resources are thought provoking and inspiring and they make adults stop and think about their own attitudes on DV and sexual assault.

LOVE BiTES aims are to:

- To raise awareness about family and sexual violence specifically defining and clarifying what family and sexual violence actually are.
- To challenge gender stereotypes.
- To promote and model respectful relationships for young people
- To promote that there are services available for young people who have been sexually assaulted or are in violent relationships.
- To promote that violent behaviour is a choice and that young people can seek support to change their behaviour patterns.
- To encourage students to support their friends if they are in violent relationships.
- To educate young people through a relevant and creative process.
- To respect and build on young people's existing knowledge base
- To introduce young people to local service providers in an informal environment

## **6. Are environmentally friendly**

Our project is an environmentally friendly program. We will strive to promote not only respect in relationships but respect for the environment in which we live. All aspects of our project will be environmentally friendly.

## **7. If for a completed project or project that is underway: It had some predefined outcome, result or product and it was achieved**

As stated previously 'Love Bites' is a school based early intervention and prevention program on sexual assault and domestic violence that has been developed for High School students on the Mid North Coast. Female and male educators, teachers, police officers and relevant counsellors and youth workers with experience in the areas of sexual assault and family/domestic violence facilitate the program.

'Love Bites' is an interactive and innovative workshop that is run either in or out of school for a full day per 50 students. The program is aimed at year 9, 10 & 11 students. The full day program consists of two interactive workshops in the morning on family/domestic violence and sexual assault and then two workshops for the remainder of the day that consolidate the information from the morning workshops by working along side students to write, perform and record a hip hop song, and develop posters/resources around the issues of Domestic Violence and sexual assault. All students participate in the art and hip-hop workshops. The responses and commitment from young people involved in the program are overwhelmingly enthusiastic and embracing.

The program aims to target young people, more specifically; ALL year 10 student's male and female in NSW Mid North Coast High schools. The program has been delivered to more than 3000 students on the Mid North Coast of NSW and is running in most state high schools in Port Macquarie, Coffs Harbour, Kempsey and Dorrigo. It aims to assist potential victims of violence and potential perpetrators.

The 'LOVE BiTES' CD-Rom's target groups are schools, DV and Sexual Assault service providers, youth services and all other interested services. It has been distributed throughout NSW to Schools, Sexual Assault Services, Women's Refuges and Specialist Violence Prevention Services and also to schools and service providers throughout Australia, including Canberra, Melbourne, Regional Victoria, South Australia and Brisbane. The CD-Rom's aim is to provide workers and teachers with an easy to use resource that can help them run much sought after prevention programs. A workshop is being held in London, UK in June of this year to promote the 'LOVE BiTES' CD-Rom with service providers in London.

The 'LOVE BiTES' program reduces and prevents sexual assault and domestic violence through a creative awareness raising education process. It defines and clarifies for young people exactly what sexual assault and Domestic Violence are and highlights that they are crimes. 'LOVE BiTES' is held in schools because

research tells us between 60 – 70% of young people trust the information provided to them in the education system. By the end of each year we run 'LOVE BiTES' all students in Year 10 will have an increased awareness of DV and sexual assault. This information has been provided in mixed genders classes so both genders are aware that the FACTS around DV and sexual assault are out there.

As stated previously the retention rate from the program is excellent. The 6 month post workshop focus group indicated that 57% of the students felt that the program had challenged and changed their opinions on DV and sexual assault; 71% felt that it had changed the attitudes in their year, this included boys respecting girls more; 100% indicated an increased awareness in support services and 100% felt the program should be run as an integral part of the PDHPE program in all high schools.

### **Schools Criteria**

#### **High School project**

##### **Harmonious and supportive relationships among students**

- The LOVE BiTES program encourages young people to look out for their friends and share their knowledge around DV and sexual assault with their peers
- The program provides young people with options around relationships. It empowers young women to stand up for their rights and educates young men to make choices about their behaviour, linking them all in with support services to assist with change
- It encourages them to support each other if they are having issues in their relationships and refer their friends to support services
- The program models respectful relationships between male and female students, teachers and workers. The students are treated with the utmost respect and as young adults, and are encouraged to call workers and teachers by their first names.

##### **Cooperative relationships among staff, students and the wider community**

##### **Names of all partners involved in the project:**

'LOVE BiTES' is a wonderful model of interagency collaboration between schools, government and non-government services. The services that have been involved with the program on the Mid North Coast are:

Women's Health Service Port Macquarie/Kempsey; DoCS Senior Regional Strategies Officer, Violence Prevention, Communities Division; Sexual Assault Services – Port Macquarie, Kempsey and Coffs Harbour; Port Macquarie Drug and Alcohol Service - NCAHS, Port Macquarie and Kempsey Police Force – Detectives, Youth Liaison and Domestic Violence Liaison Officers; Child and Family Counselling Teams Port Macquarie and Kempsey; Hastings Women and Children's Refuge; Centacare Christo House Youth Services; JPET – Port Macquarie; Kickstart Youth Service; Warrina Women and Children Refuge; Coffs

Harbour DoCS Child Protection Team; PANOC Child Protection Service Coffs Harbour; Bunker Youth Services Coffs Harbour; Port Macquarie/Hastings Council; Kempsey Shire Council; Kempsey Women & Children's Refuge; Kempsey High School; Port Macquarie High School; Camden Haven High School; Wauchope High School; West Port High School; Coffs Harbour High Schools; Dorrigo High School; Toormina High Schools; Kempsey Family Support Services.

The 'LOVE BiTES' program has also been funded from a variety of sources that vary from area to area. In Kempsey and Coffs Harbour schools have paid for all resources including paints, the Hip-Hop musician and the catering for the students. In Port Macquarie funding has been obtained from Port Macquarie/Hastings Council to pay for the Hip-Hop musician. North Coast Area Health Services pays for all the art resources in Port Macquarie and the schools contribute additional teachers and catering. All services that participate contribute in kind by making available workers for 4 days per month during school term to assist with the facilitation of the program. The North Coast Area health service also pays for all photocopying of resources for the program.

This program is very much a perfect model of community and service partnership and contribution. We have found that schools and services alike will share costs and find the funding to make the program happen. The program has gained considerable respect from local service providers and councils. It is in its 3<sup>rd</sup> year now and services are consistently providing workers and in kind funding.

The 'LOVE BiTES' program has also raised community awareness on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault in a number of ways:

- Young people return home and share their experiences with their parents and family members; teachers and parents have fed this back to us.
- Young people from the program share their posters and songs with their school at assembly thus becoming peer educators on the issues of domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. Posters are displayed permanently at schools.
- At the launch of the CD-Rom students and workers were interviewed by both Prime and NBN TV television stations raising the profile of the issues of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. Local newspapers also interviewed them.
- Students develop posters as part of the program. 12 of these posters have been printed and distributed throughout services and schools in NSW and Australia. These are youth friendly posters that make a real impact on young people. Local communities also relate to resources that are from their communities. These posters are also used on STOP DV days and Reclaim the Night Exhibitions in shopping centres.
- Billboards have also been painted this year by Year 11 students on a local construction site. The billboards highlight sexual assault statistics, that sexual assault is a crime, 'no means no' silence means no', drink spiking awareness,

not to tolerate abuse and that help is at hand. These billboards are the most read billboards exhibited at the cultural centre site.

- A community exhibition was held last year for the week leading up to 'Reclaim the Night' at the historic Court House in Port Macquarie. The posters and artwork were shared with the general community again with great media coverage.

### **Child friendly democracy and leadership**

LOVE BiTES recognises the skills, talents and knowledge of young people and actually models respectful relationships between male and female students, teachers and workers. The students are treated with the utmost respect and as young adults, and are encouraged to call workers and teachers by their first names

Respecting young people as young adults throughout the program is also a very special and innovative approach. Workers and teachers model respectful discussions and interactions throughout the day, and there are limited power imbalances between students and adults as long as the environment remains respectful. As stated previously students call all workers and teachers by their first names and all opinions are heard through out the day and conflicts are managed respectfully.

'LOVE BiTES' shows that young people are leading the way in their communities by developing resources that promote respectful relationships and challenging the attitudes and myths that surround Domestic and Sexual Violence. Their resources are thought provoking and inspiring and they make adults stop and think about their own attitudes on DV and sexual assault.

The students become peer educators at their school and inform other students who have not participated in the program, through art and poster displays, music demonstrations etc, about the issues of sexual assault and domestic violence. In some schools where the program is running for a second year students present their artwork and music at assembly prior to the start of the program to promote the 'Love Bites' program.

### **Involvement in support for a Pleasant, well maintained and safe environment**

Safety is of paramount importance in the 'LOVE BiTES' program. No student is made to participate or speak in ways that do not feel safe or comfortable for them. Information about where and how students can access support, whether during or after the workshops, is provided throughout the program. In all sessions, clear agreements on appropriate behaviour are established, and students are reminded of these if necessary.

'LOVE BiTES' recognises that participants in the program have a variety of life experiences and it is very likely there will be students, teachers and co-workers who may have personal and current issues of abuse happening in their lives.

This is kept in mind when implementing the program. Promoting a culture of tolerance in the workshops is important, with respect for different cultural beliefs and an acceptance of differing ideas and behaviours (as long as they are not abusive). Welcome to or acknowledgment of country is encouraged when running the program.

A consistent approach to the issue of violence against women and children is important during the program from both male and female workers and male and female teachers. The subject of violence against women and children often brings out challenging emotions and varied opinions. Facilitators running the program have a cohesive response to these issues, and are able to deliver a consistent message to students during the training program.

### **Flexible class room layout and setup**

All of our high schools have been extremely flexible with running the LOVE BiTES program. It can be run in or out of school. The preference is for an out of school venue but art and music class rooms can be used when students cannot leave school. Students also come to the program 'out of school uniform' to make the day more special for students. Schools also put on a special lunch for students e.g. BBQ

The 'LOVE BiTES' program is very innovative, it offers the opportunity for creative exploration of ideas, using both left and right brain activities, and exploring challenging issues in an empowering and safe way. Young people express themselves for the duration of the program in language and ways that are relevant to them; this creates a freedom in expression and greater depth of understanding for young people.

Respecting young people as young adults throughout the program is also a very special and innovative approach. Workers and teachers model respectful discussions and interactions throughout the day, and there are limited power imbalances between students and adults as long as the environment remains respectful. As stated previously students call all workers and teachers by their first names and all opinions are heard through out the day and conflicts are managed respectfully.

Flexibility is vital in program delivery. Facilitators are ready and responsive to the training environment. Activities are rearranged or changed according to the group's needs and facilitators' skills and abilities. The program is also continually evolving through the student evaluation process to ensure its relevance to young people and to ensure that young people are receiving accurate information and appropriate messages about Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault.

### **The development of a wide range of child friendly recreational activities**

The 'LOVE BiTES' program is very innovative, it offers the opportunity for creative exploration of ideas, using both left and right brain activities, and exploring challenging issues in an empowering and safe way. Young people express themselves for the duration of the program in language and ways that are relevant to them; this creates a freedom in expression and greater depth of

understanding for young people. We utilise youth friendly hip-hop and art to consolidate learning for young people.

**Contact person for the project (including phone and fax):** Angela Walsh (02) 6588 2615 (m) 0413907536 (fax) 02 6588 2800.  
Kids CAN – Awards Criteria

**Referees:**

- a. Liz Donnan, Principle -Toormina High School, Coffs Harbour, NSW (02) 66533077
- b. Gemma Roberson, Coordinator- Hastings Women and Children's Refuge, Port Macquarie, NSW 2444 (02) 65832155.
- c. Tim Bailey Port Macquarie Detectives (02) 65830143 / Wendy Hudson Youth Liaison Officer Port Macquarie Police, Hay Street Port Macquarie, (02) 65830175.