



## **Taking Action Project**

### **Parent and Carer Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **What is the Taking Action project?**

Taking Action is an affirmative consent pilot project being delivered in partnership by Women's Health In the North (WHIN) and Banksia Gardens Community Services (BGCS). Taking Action is a peer-led education program focusing on affirmative consent, respectful relationships and sexual violence prevention using a rights-based and sex-positive approach.

Taking Action aims to empower and educate young people in the Hume region so that they know what it means to be treated with respect; understand their right to safe, consensual, respectful and pleasurable sexual experiences; and understand affirmative consent and the new laws.

#### **Why is the Taking Action project happening?**

The Victorian government has brought in reforms that provide key changes to consent laws under the Justice Legislation Amendment (Sexual Offences and Other Matters) Act 2022. The reforms shift to an affirmative consent model and come into effect on 30 July 2023. More information about the Victorian affirmative consent laws is available on the Sexual Assault Services Victoria website – [www.sasvic.org.au/consent](http://www.sasvic.org.au/consent)

The Taking Action project is supported by the Victorian Government as part of the *Supporting Young People To Understand Affirmative Consent Program* (the Program). As part of the Program, Taking Action and other projects across Victoria, are supporting the new affirmative consent legislative reform by engaging and educating young people and their key influencers on affirmative consent and different forms and common misconceptions of sexual violence.

#### **Who is the Taking Action project aimed at?**

The project is aimed at young people aged 15-25 years who live, work, study, play, volunteer or have another connection to the Hume area.

#### **What is the difference between the Taking Action project and what young people learn in school?**

Taking Action and the other projects supported as part of the *Supporting Young People To Understand Affirmative Consent Program* are testing and trailing different ways to engage young people in consent education. The Taking Action project will complement and reinforce what many young people are learning in school through the Respectful Relationships initiative. The Respectful Relationships initiative supports the mandatory teaching of consent education in an age-appropriate way from Foundation to Year 12 in all Victorian government schools.

The Taking Action project works with young people outside of schools in community-based settings.

## Why is consent education important?

Sexual violence continues to be widespread in our community and there is a lack of community understanding about consent and sexual violence generally. The most recent [Australian Bureau of Statistics' Personal Safety Survey](#) found 14% of Australian's (2.8 million) have experienced sexual violence since the age of 15. 1 in 5 women and 1 in 6 men have experienced sexual violence since the age of 15.

Age-appropriate consent education aims to support young people with the knowledge, understanding and skills to have healthy, respectful, and consensual relationships. Consent education aims to contribute to the prevention of sexual violence. Consent education contributes to changing attitudes and addressing misconceptions about sexual violence and supporting people who have experienced sexual violence to seek help.

It is also important to educate the community about the new affirmative consent legislative reforms in Victoria. It is important to strengthen young people's understanding of the social and legal expectations of affirmative consent.

## Why is the Taking Action project aimed at young people?

Adolescence is a period of significant growth and development. During this time, young people are forming their values, developing their identity and sense of self, and their ideas around sex and sexuality. Some young people may also begin engaging in intimate relationships.

Consent and broader sex education is particularly important for young people because those aged 18-34 years experience significantly [higher rates of sexual violence](#) than people in older age groups.

It is important that all young people receive accurate, age-appropriate resources and information that support them to develop the understanding and skills necessary to participate in respectful and consensual relationships throughout their lives.

## Won't talking to young people about sex and consent encourage them to have sex?

No. Numerous studies over decades have shown that sexuality and consent education do not increase sexual activity or result in young people engaging in sex at an earlier age. In fact, research has consistently shown that educating young people about sexuality, relationships and consent can contribute to the prevention of sexual and intimate partner violence, the development of healthy relationships, the prevention of child sex abuse, improved social and emotional learning, and delayed onset of sexual behaviour.

## I read that the Taking Action project uses a rights-based and sex-positive approach – what does this mean?

Our rights-based, sex-positive approach means the project content is based on the [World Health Organization](#) definition of sexual health and sexual rights. It means the project strives to achieve ideal experiences, rather than solely working to prevent negative experiences. It means that the project does not reinforce gender inequality or fear, shame or taboo of young people's sexuality. Our rights-based and sex-positive approach is informed by evidence (research) and best practice.