

THE LODDON CONSORTIUM

— FOR GENDER EQUALITY + VIOLENCE PREVENTION —

April 21, 2021

The Loddon Gender Equality and Violence Prevention Consortium is calling for a new national campaign aimed at educating young people about consent to be pulled in its entirety until all content is reviewed by sector experts – and teenagers themselves.

The Consortium also wants the content to align with the [Our Watch Change the Story](#) framework and the [National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Children](#), both of which draw on a globally endorsed evidence base.

The Federal Government's Good Society – Respect Matters Education Resource, launched this week, contains content that is condescending to young people, fails to name the issue it is seeking to address, does not reflect the internationally accepted evidence base around the drivers of sexual and other forms of violence, and largely ignores the fact this is a gendered issue.

The resources do not appear to be informed by those working in the sector to educate the community about the drivers of sexual and other abuse against women.

They also do not appear to have been informed by young people, who are intelligent, have agency and are already engaging in conversations well beyond the content featured on the new campaign website.

The Consortium had serious concerns about several of the initial campaign videos, and while we welcome news two of those featured in the resource kit have been withdrawn, we do not believe this move goes far enough.

Centre for Non-Violence chief executive officer Margaret Augerinos says questions need to be asked about who advised the government in relation to the new resource kit.

“This just misses the mark. We’ve got the Our Watch Change the Story framework around the known drivers of violence against women.

“This new resource was intended to try to address the impact and prevalence of gendered violence in our society – it’s a gendered phenomenon – and we have a world-leading and globally endorsed analysis of the drivers of violence against women, yet we come up with a very, very bizarre campaign that doesn’t seem to address any of the evidence base.

“This campaign doesn’t bear any resemblance to the national plan, what the indicators are, what the drivers are, what the solutions are ... how does this stack up on challenging those beliefs and values in the community that drive violence and inequality?”

Annie North Women’s Refuge chief executive officer Julie Oberin says the new videos and educational materials “are embarrassing and so inappropriate they are a disgrace”.

“There are so many things wrong, it is hard to list them,” she said. “This whole campaign trivialises the importance of genuine consent and makes light of the impact of sexual assault and rape.

“Any campaign should meet the existing national standards and these clearly do not. It makes you wonder who was consulted and ask how extensive were the focus group tests?”

“The imagery is loaded with power imbalance but does not mention sex or rape.

“The analogy that a taco should give consent to being eaten is a farce and extremely patronising. Watching the videos feels like I am watching something made in the 1950’s.”

Centre Against Sexual Assault Central Victoria chief executive officer Kate Wright says the targeted age group is too late to have these conversations.

“We need early engagement in consent education and discussion, and it needs to be ongoing,” she said.

“This campaign fails to acknowledge gender and inequity, nor the impact of pornography on this age group.

“Not only do we need to invest in competent people to deliver information about consent, but we need to acknowledge young people’s capacity to engage and contribute to the discussion.”

The Loddon Gender Equality and Violence Prevention consists of: Centre for Non-Violence (lead agency), Annie North Women’s Refuge and Domestic Violence Service, Centre Against Sexual Assault Central Victoria, Women’s Health Loddon Mallee and Sunbury Cobaw Community Health.

Each agency has a history and expertise in working in family violence/sexual violence/women’s and community health services throughout regional and rural Victoria, spanning on average 30 years.

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Margaret Augerinos, CEO Centre for Non-Violence

Kate Wright, CEO Centre Against Sexual Assault Central Victoria

Tricia Currie, CEO Women’s Health Loddon Mallee

Julie Oberin, CEO Annie North Inc

Phillip Ripper, CEO Sunbury Cobaw Community Health