

2015 PLAY YOUR PART AWARDS FOR INSPIRING PREVENTION INITIATIVES AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

To: YWCA Canberra

For: Relationship Things

The *Relationship Things* program empowers young people to develop and maintain safe, respectful and consensual relationships, with a focus on diversity and online respect.

The program delivered by YWCA Canberra aims to prevent sexual assault and gender-based violence. The eight-week program includes sessions on respect, gender equality, diversity, sexual health, consent, and respect in an online environment. *Relationship Things* provides young people with information on where to go to get help if they are experiencing violence, including all national and local support agencies.

Relationship Things is underpinned by two key theories: a gender analysis, which acknowledges that violence against women, is caused by gender inequalities, and primary prevention which aims to prevent violence before it occurs.

The workshop sessions include discussions on how culturally and linguistically diverse people, people living with disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, lesbian, gay, transgender, intersex and queer people experience respect and violence differently.

The focus on sexual diversity ensures that all young people can access the program and find it relevant to their experiences.

In 2013, YWCA Canberra received funding from the ACT Office for Women to update and re-launch *Relationship Things* to remain relevant, such as including information on respect online and increasing sections on sexual and gender diversity.

The website Relationship Things Online launched in August 2015, which features key information from the *Relationship Things* program including respect, communication, gender equality, diversity, safe sex and consent. The website includes a referral centre for young people to access information on where to get help, and how to access support from local and national organisations.

The online resource is freely accessible for young people to use independently. Designed for 14 to 18-year-olds, the site includes interactive activities to get users thinking about their own values, identity, and how to engage in respectful relationships.

YWCA Canberra have also developed a training program for teachers and facilitators for use in schools, aiming to be made available for school implementation in 2016. The program is affordable to prevent barriers to schools in remote or regional communities who want to deliver the program.

A recently released report from Our Watch into youth perception of respectful relationships found that 1 in 3 young people don't think that exerting control over someone else is a form of violence; 1 in 4 young people don't think it's serious if a guy, who's normally gentle, sometimes slaps his girlfriend when he's drunk and they're arguing; and 1 in 4 young people think it's pretty normal for guys to pressure girls into sex.

According to Frances Crimmins, Executive Director, YWCA Canberra, this data clearly demonstrates that primary prevention programs that work with young people before these attitudes become entrenched are vital.

"YWCA Canberra is proud to have produced Relationship Things. It is an evidence-based, best practice primary prevention program, that can have a significant impact in addressing violence against women in the long term," said Mrs Crimmins. This prevention model matches NAPCAN's stance that prevention through education is an effective solution.