

“Every client has  
a trauma history”

Teaching respectful relationships  
to marginalised youth.

An evaluation of NAPCAN’s Respectful Relationships  
Program Northern Territory 2017–2018

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

On behalf of the researchers, Western Sydney University and NAPCAN we offer great respect to the First Nations peoples on whose land this research was conducted - principally the Larrakia and Arrernte peoples.

We also acknowledge the Darug people, on whose lands the researchers live and work, and have been privileged to receive countless welcomes and sharing of hospitality and knowledge.

The project under evaluation extended further into the central, western and northern parts of the Northern Territory, and met on the lands of the Larrakia, Arrernte, Warrumungu, Alyawar, Warlpiri, Gurindji, and Murrinhpatha peoples.

We offer respect and appreciation to Elders, past present and emerging, and to all First Nations people who have contributed to this research and who will, hopefully, benefit from its findings.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents findings from a research evaluation of a one-year program run by NAPCAN in the Northern Territory which sought to develop a trauma-informed approach to Respectful Relationships Education (RRE). The program was undertaken under contract with Territory Families, and focused on providing training in trauma-informed RRE to staff in the youth services sector who worked with young people experiencing complex challenges. This project ran from July 2017 to June 2018.

Commencing in May 2018, the evaluation gathered a range of data from surveying program participants, conducting interviews and undertaking field observations of training workshops. There was strong support from the participants for the modularised and individualised approach to RRE developed through this project, identifying that it had particular application to vulnerable young people who were not participating in school. Also identified was the value of the professional learning for the staff who participated in the trainings.

The complex challenges faced by the young people involved with the youth services who participated in the study included homelessness, lack of school attendance, safety, trauma, and drug and alcohol abuse. They also had high rates of exposure to trauma, violence and abuse. Commonly, sources of distress and disadvantage were multiple and complex, and the effects of intergenerational trauma were significant among this predominantly Aboriginal cohort. Both RRE and trauma-informed practices were strongly indicated for working with these young people. Accordingly, the trauma-informed training module was welcomed and seen as an essential approach.

Study participants who had undertaken training in NAPCAN's Love Bites program strongly endorsed the value of the content, the activities, and the opportunity it provided for them to develop facilitation skills for working with young people. The knowledge and skills derived from training in Love Bites was highly valued for its professional development benefits, which they chose to apply in different ways. This flexibility of application was a key element of Love Bites' appeal. It does, however, introduce a level of variability in program implementation.

A major outcome of the project was the development of the individualised, trauma-informed RRE modules. These modules, adapted from the school-based Love Bites program and developed in conjunction with some of the experienced practitioner-participants, were constructed for flexible use in informal settings. This pilot has provided a successful proof of concept opportunity. Further development and clarification in light of theoretical concepts and practice guidelines is needed to provide a thorough evidence base and establish the program logic for this approach.

The report provides further specific recommendations to

- Clearly differentiate Love Bites, which is intended for school-based implementation, from the newly developing modularised out-of-school program
- Develop key themes for the new modularised package based on up to date research
- Review learning goals for the trauma-informed module in light of current literature and evidence based practice guidelines for the local context
- Establish collaborative relationships with local Aboriginal community organisations to develop culturally sensitive and respectful resources and implementation processes
- Modularise the training to improve accessibility
- Establish an online hub for materials and support resources.

## **Project background**

Drawing on the findings of the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory (2017), Territory Families' strategic plan 2017-2020 calls for partnerships with non-government organisations in the design of new programs, services and initiatives that focus on safeguarding the wellbeing of children, young people, families and the community. It intends to provide programs and services that are trauma-informed and therapeutic, and to ensure those working in child protection and youth justice services are trained in trauma-informed and therapeutic practices (Territory Families, 2017).

As part of the NT government's reform strategy for the youth sector, the National Association for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (NAPCAN) established a contract with Territory Families to develop and deliver Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence (DFS) prevention training for services, youth and communities in the Northern Territory. This one year project from 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018 had a particular focus on trauma-informed practices to support respectful relationships. NAPCAN staff developed a trauma-informed practice workshop to complement staff training in their Love Bites respectful relationships program.

In response to increased awareness about the impacts of DFS, Respectful Relationships Education (RRE) has been advocated as a key strategy for raising awareness of gendered violence and building relationship skills that can help to prevent and thereby reduce its occurrence (Our Watch, 2015). Accordingly, recent national, state and territory policies have advocated instigating RRE initiatives in a variety of settings (e.g., COAG 2011; Women NSW, 2014; Northern Territory Government, 2017).

RRE teaches young people about healthy relationships and challenges gendered stereotypes that propagate DFS. NAPCAN has developed its highly regarded RRE programs, Love Bites and Love Bites Junior, over a number of years in consultation with service providers, schools, children and young people. Training and delivery of Love Bites focuses on capacity building, using a train-the-trainer model to provide tools and skill development to a wide network of service providers located in various settings. This serves to ensure that the delivery of NAPCAN's RRE programs can be tailored to specific local populations or whole communities (Dobia, 2017).

The addition of a trauma-informed module to its training packages has brought a distinctive emphasis to NAPCAN's work for this project with Territory Families. Quadara and Hunter (2016) noted that while there is enthusiasm for trauma-informed practice in Australia, there is little information and potentially considerable variability in the ways that it is understood and applied. Practice guidelines developed by adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse take an individually focused therapeutic approach (Kezelman & Stavropoulos, 2012). By contrast, Atkinson (2013) emphasises the need to work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in order to address a range of complex factors, including intergenerational trauma accrued from the multiple effects of colonisation, racism and disadvantage.

## Research aims

The overarching aim of this research was to evaluate the NAPCAN project of developing and disseminating a trauma-based approach to RRE in the NT. In order to contribute to the further development of the project the evaluation strategy was designed to focus on

- identifying the specific needs of the Northern Territory youth sector in relation to RRE and trauma-informed practice
- investigating the perceived effectiveness of specific training in trauma-based practice associated with Love Bites for youth service agencies
- reviewing the resources developed for this project in light of current research literature
- investigating the extent to which the training and resources are effective in meeting the particular social and cultural needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations working in the youth sector and
- providing recommendations for the further development of both the resources and the project.

## Research design

The evaluation was designed with particular reference to the key methodological frameworks and objectives of evaluation research (Stockmann & Meyer, 2013). On this basis a mixed-methods approach incorporating surveys, interviews, observations and document analysis was employed. This approach was selected to enable broad consultation with key stakeholders in the sector in relation to the project objectives and implementation, as well as providing the researchers with a detailed understanding of the project aims, materials and processes.

## Procedures

**Ethics approval** for this project was sought from Western Sydney University's Human Research and Ethics Committee (HREC). Ethical principles assessed in this process include research merit and integrity, justice, beneficence and respect. A detailed ethics application was prepared elaborating the conceptual and theoretical basis of the project and its design, and providing detailed specification of ethical procedures relating to recruitment, consent, data gathering, analysis and data management. After reviewing the proposal the ethics committee granted approval to proceed with the project on 22 May 2018.

Following ethics approval the active research phase was initiated, consisting of the following elements.

**Interviews with NAPCAN staff** provided background to the development of the project and information about the rationale, approach taken, and their perceptions of the successes and challenges associated with its implementation. Appendix 1 shows the questions asked in the interviews.

**Surveys** of youth services sought information about their understanding of and experience with RRE, their views on its importance for the population they serve, their perceptions of the need for trauma-informed practices, and of what they would like to have included in trauma-informed training. A section of the survey asked those services that have participated in NAPCAN training to evaluate its usefulness. A full list of survey questions can be found in Appendix 2.

**Interviews with youth service staff** sought more explicit detail regarding the particular needs of their client populations in relation to DFSV prevention, the ways in which they have been able to integrate the NAPCAN training into their service delivery, their evaluations of the delivery model, and their recommendations for how to improve the training and its dissemination. Interview questions for youth service staff are included in Appendix 1. Four interviews in Alice Springs were conducted face to face. The remaining interviews were conducted via zoom videoconferencing and subsequently transcribed for analysis.

**Observations of NAPCAN training sessions** provided data relating to the content and delivery of the sessions, and the way it is received by participants. The researchers paid particular attention to participant engagement in the activities for what this reveals about the extent to which the material is informative, practical, useful, relevant, culturally responsive, and meets the participants' needs and expectations.

**Content review** of the trauma-informed resources was undertaken in light of current literature and sociocultural relevance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

### **Participants**

The three NAPCAN staff with responsibility for the NT project were interviewed in depth at the commencement of the study. These interviews included an initial three-way focus group followed by individual interviews with each staff member. Ongoing consultation was also undertaken throughout the data collection phase, particularly with the NT project leader.

Youth service agencies eligible to participate in the survey were identified from the Northern Territory Council of Social Services directory. Agency listings for Youth, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault were reviewed in order to select those agencies that were providing relevant frontline services to youth. In addition, surveys were sent to agencies who had participated in NAPCAN training during the project period. In total 172 potential participants from youth services agencies in the Northern Territory received the invitation to participate in the online survey.

The survey was open for a period of ten weeks from 15<sup>th</sup> June to 24<sup>th</sup> August 2018. In that time 43 individuals began the survey (response rate of 25%); however, only 25 provided sufficient information to enable inclusion in the analysis (15% useable response rate). No reasons were given (or sought) by those who decided not to continue with the survey. Likely factors are time pressure or feeling that they did not have the expertise to respond. The length of the survey may have also been a factor for busy staff members.

Thirteen interviews were undertaken between 22<sup>nd</sup> June and 21<sup>st</sup> August 2018 with key staff from youth service agencies who had participated in Love Bites training. There was a range of experience amongst these interviewees, both in terms of the recency of training and number of times they had facilitated Love Bites, and in their professional roles. Four interviews were undertaken face to face, eight were undertaken via internet-based voice conferencing, and one was undertaken via email.

Observations were undertaken at two 2.5-day training workshops. The first workshop in Darwin in late May involved 16 participants from a range of community organisations. The Alice Springs workshop observed in late June was attended by 13 participants.

Table 1 and Figure 1 below provide an overview of the geographical spread of those community agency participants who completed the survey or were interviewed for the study. Only 21 of the 25 survey participants chose to include information as to the location of their agency; hence only these 21 could be mapped.

**Table 1: Geographical spread of survey and interview participants**

Location	# 🌟	# 🌠
Darwin	9	4
Humpty Doo	1	
Katherine		1
Wadeye	1	
Tennant Creek	2	2
Alice Springs	7	6
Yuendumu	1	
Unknown*	4	

\* Information as to agency location was not provided by 4 survey respondents and hence these locations could not be mapped.



**Figure 1: Map of participant distribution**

As shown above in Table 1 and Figure 1, the geographical distribution of participants was concentrated in the major cities of Darwin and Alice Springs, with more remote locations in some central and Western parts of the state also represented. It should be noted that a number of participants indicated that their agencies were involved in remote outreach beyond the primary location identified.

Individual participants in both the survey and interviews were involved in front line services in a range of key roles, as shown in Tables 2 and 3 below.

**Table 2: Survey respondents categorised by agency type and work role**

<i>Type of agency</i>	<i>Number*</i>	<i>Role of individual*</i>
General welfare support	<b>6(2)**</b>	Community Education Officer Community Services Worker Young Carer Advisor Volunteer
Health	<b>1</b>	Senior Project Officer
Youth focused	<b>2(1)</b>	Program Manager Operations Manager
Women focused	<b>2</b>	Coordinator/Manager
Legal	<b>1</b>	Counsellor
School	<b>3</b>	Physical Education and Health Teacher Health Promoting School Nurse School Nurse
Counselling	<b>1</b>	Manager Support Services
Refugee support	<b>1</b>	Trauma Counsellor

\* **Note:** n= 17; the remaining 8 respondents chose not to provide this information.

\*\* **Bold entries** indicate the number of Aboriginal-led organisations in each category.

As can be seen in Table 2, a range of agencies and professional roles is represented amongst the survey participants. This breadth suggests widespread inter-sectoral interest in the topic of RRE for youth. Of seventeen organisations nominated by survey respondents as their employers, seven were Aboriginal-led.

A purposive sampling strategy that sought to ensure representation from a cross-section of stakeholder agencies was employed for the interviews. As shown in table 3, this approach yielded a diversity of participating agencies and interviewee roles.

**Table 3: Agency types and roles of community agency-based interviewees (n=13)**

<i>Type of agency</i>	<i>Interviewee role</i>
Aboriginal peak organisation	Community Health Educator
Aboriginal peak organisation	Community Health Educator
Aboriginal youth agency	Counsellor
Aboriginal youth centre	Trainer, Operations Manager
Counselling agency	Director
High School	School Counsellor
Legal service	Lawyer
Mental health agency	Youth Worker
NT Govt Community Care	Health-Promoting School Nurse
NT Police	Police Officer, Community Engagement
Regional council	Coordinator, AH Youth Centre
Sexual assault agency	Nurse, Counsellor
Youth agency	Program Officer

## **Data analysis**

Data gathered from the survey component was suited to analysis using descriptive methods. The resulting frequency calculations are variously represented in this report in graphic and tabular formats. In each instance the choice of format was selected to provide an accessible visual means of interpretation.

The total useable surveys numbered 25. However, since not all questions were relevant for all participants, the number of respondents for each question varies. Response numbers for each item are indicated in the presentation of findings. Given the limited number of survey respondents, results have been presented in aggregate with no attempt made to undertake statistical comparisons of regional or sectoral variations.

An emergent coding process was used to undertake content analysis of the qualitative survey data with reference to the key domains of interest. These included perceptions regarding the needs of young people in the NT, views and experience of RRE, Love Bites training, trauma and young people, and recommendations for further development of the initiative.

NVivo software was employed to code the interview content, with coding undertaken to parallel the categories used in the survey analysis. This procedure facilitated elaboration of themes identified in the survey and enabled a comparative analysis of survey and interview data. The rich data collected in the interviews enabled deeper analysis and yielded more detailed recommendations for program delivery and dissemination. Observational data from the workshops was used to augment these recommendations.

Finally, analysis of trauma-informed training materials was undertaken with reference to current research and best practice in the field, and compared with the research findings to inform recommendations for further development of the workshop and associated modules.

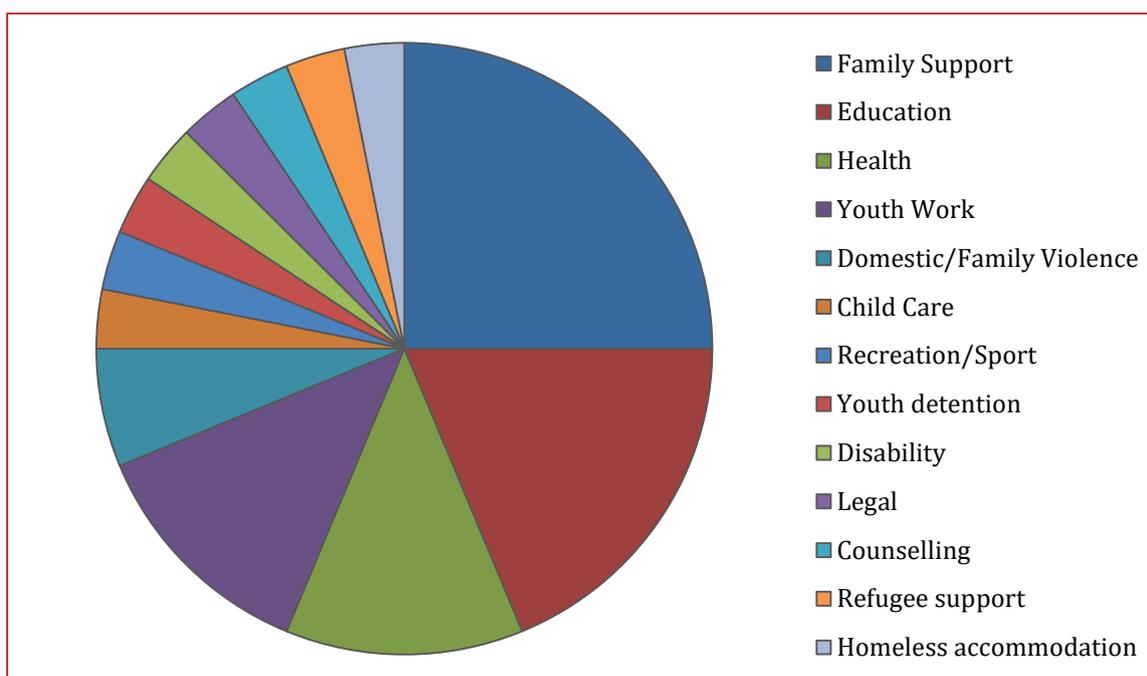
## FINDINGS

Beginning with an overview of demographic data provided by the survey participants regarding the clientele served by their agencies, this section presents survey and interview findings relating to young people’s needs, as well as participants’ perspectives on RRE, Love Bites training, and trauma-informed practice. For each theme, survey findings are presented, with relevant interview findings used to provide supplementary insights and analysis of key issues.

### Demographic overview

The following information profiles the services offered by the agencies of fourteen survey participants who responded to the demographic questions. Client demographics relating to age, gender and cultural/language groups served were also provided and are included below.

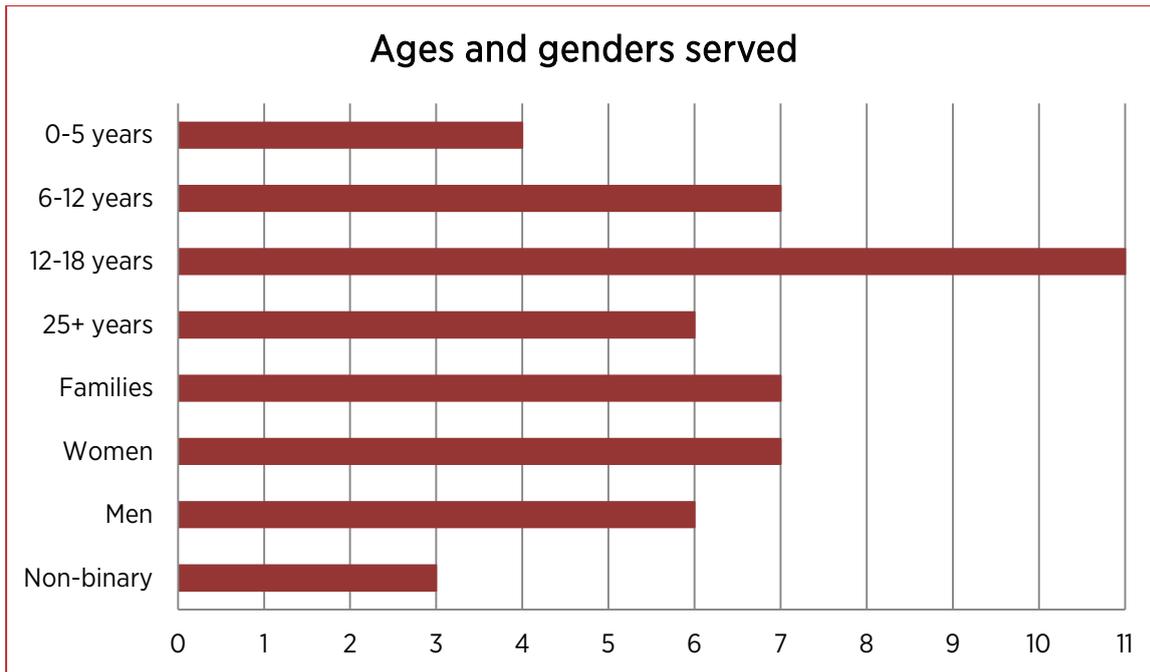
Figure 2 shows the range of client services provided by the fourteen agencies that were represented in the demographic questions posed at the end of the survey.



**Figure 2: Services provided by the agencies surveyed**

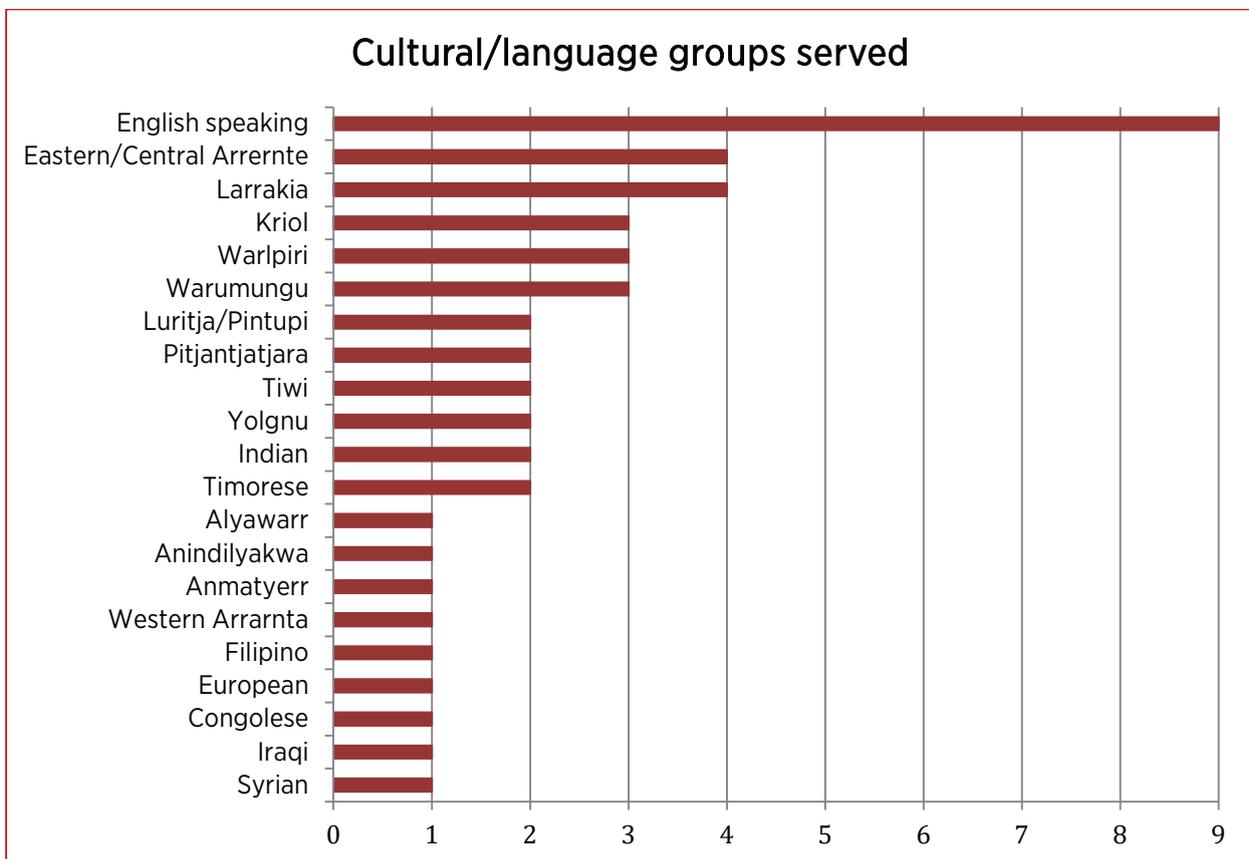
Participants were encouraged to indicate all services provided, with no restriction on the number of categories that could be endorsed. Accordingly the fourteen respondents to this question nominated 34 services. Family Support was most frequently nominated at eight times; Education six times; Health and Youth Work four times each; Domestic and Family Violence twice, with all other identified services nominated once each.

Figure 3 shows the age and gender groups served by these same fourteen agencies. As can be seen, 12-18 year olds were the predominant target group, nominated by 11 of 14 respondents. Of the remaining three respondents, two served Aboriginal communities and nominated families as their primary focus, while the remaining agency was focused on providing sexual assault services for women, men and non-binary clients.



**Figure 3: Age and gender groups served by frequency of nomination**

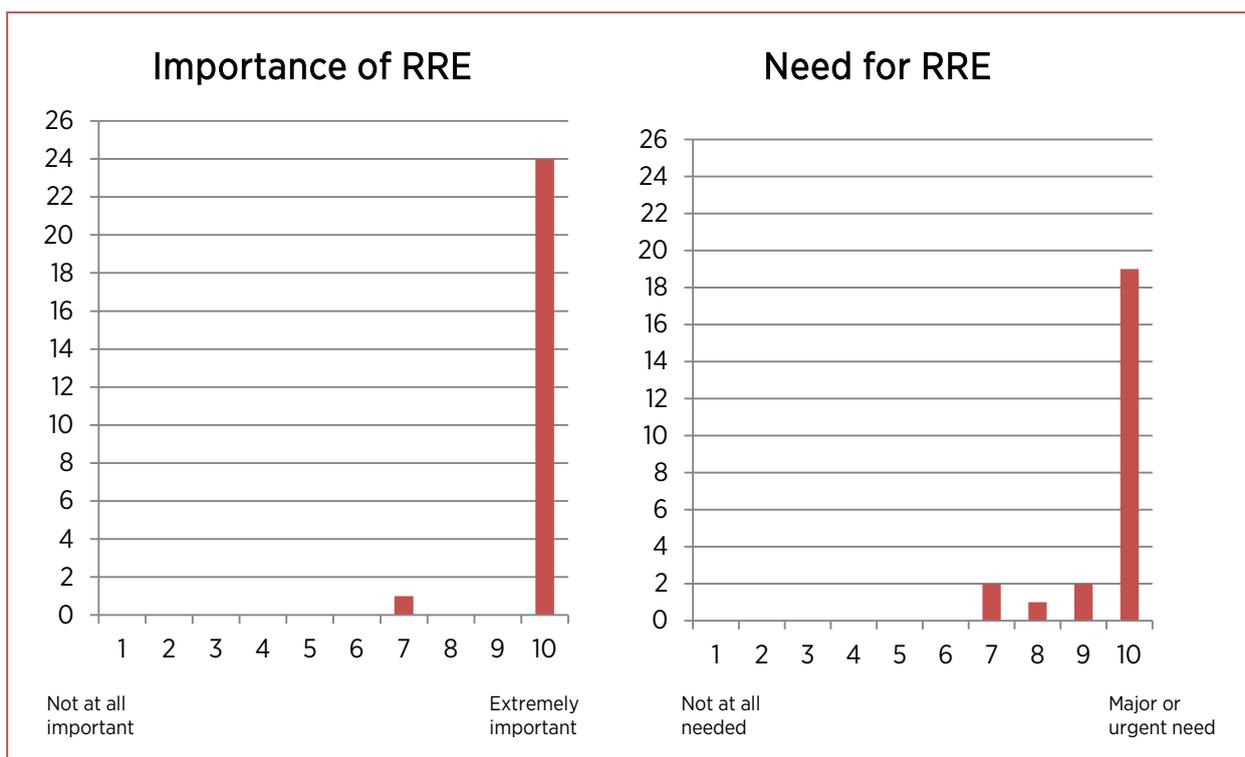
Figure 4 presents data on the range of cultural/language groups served, as indicated by fourteen survey respondents.



**Figure 4: Cultural/language groups served by frequency of nomination**

Although the most commonly endorsed group served was English speaking, all but three respondents provided services to at least one First Nations cultural or language group. The range of groups identified in Figure 4 shows a preponderance of Aboriginal clientele from both urban and remote areas of the NT. These were spread across a





**Figure 6: Importance of RRE for young people in general and need for RRE in groups served.**

Complementing these survey findings, all interview participants viewed RRE as being essential for the young people they worked with. Several related the need for RRE to a lack of respectful relationships within communities where chronic violence was common.

*It's like a continuing cycle, I suppose. You know, traumatised, domestic violence, just all that relationships; it's a continuing cycle and it just keeps going back to the next - well say, suppose educating the kids now could help them in the long run.*

*It's vital. The violence here in this town and Alice Springs, the gender violence is daily. Every other day you drive through the town you see a man beating a woman. You see young boys beating girls. It's huge, it's huge.*

A number of interview participants elaborated on the importance of challenging views that normalise abuse and violence and of clearly demonstrating how respectful relationships can be achieved.

*A lot of our young people they can't really define what a respectful relationship looks like... It's really helpful for them to address in general what a healthy relationship is and what a respectful relationship looks like because a lot of the young people that we work with unfortunately have not had much experience of good and healthy relationships.*

*It's just an expectation of this is how things should be and you think if people had had some of that knowledge and different way of thinking about things, respectful ...It's about helping reframe people's thinking.*

### Respectful Relationships Education

To further gauge perspectives on RRE the survey asked participants for their views on the kind of content that should be included. Responses to the open question “What should be the main components of Respectful Relationships Education for young people?” were provided by 25 participants. Coding of these responses revealed seven key themes. Table 4 presents these themes in order of strength of saturation, along with indicative examples.

**Table 4: Participant identified components for Respectful Relationships Education**

<p><b>Identifying violence and abuse</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Red flags to look for</li> <li>- Ensuring young people are able to identify what exactly is unhealthy behaviour in a relationship e.g., violence, sexual assault, coercion, bullying within a relationship</li> <li>- The warning signs in a Domestic Violence relationship</li> <li>- What constitutes DFV in terms of all the less recognised and reported forms, i.e., controlling behaviour, isolation from support networks, financial dependence</li> <li>- Types of abuse</li> </ul>
<p><b>Understanding what constitutes a respectful relationship</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What is respectful and not respectful behaviour</li> <li>- What different cultures believe as acceptable</li> <li>- What is a healthy relationship vs unhealthy relationships</li> <li>- Appropriate sexualised behaviour</li> <li>- Trust/honesty in relationships</li> </ul>
<p><b>Understanding emotions and communicating effectively</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Decision making, self-esteem, understanding their emotions</li> <li>- The role of jealousy in unhealthy relationships</li> <li>- Need to help perpetrators understand what they are doing to somebody they love and the emotional scarring that affects the victims for the rest of their lives.</li> <li>- Respectful communication and conflict resolution</li> <li>- Communicating your own needs</li> </ul>
<p><b>Consent and boundaries</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Education around sexual consent</li> <li>- Consent. Understanding what is meant by both giving and being given consent.</li> <li>- That it is okay to say no.</li> <li>- How to say 'No' in different ways, what saying no looks like.</li> <li>- Boundaries, sex education, peer pressure, cyber/sexting etc.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Challenging gender and cultural stereotypes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Challenge condoning of gender-based violence</li> <li>- Promote women's independence and decision making</li> <li>- Gender roles and the impact they have on people in our society</li> <li>- Ensuring young people are able to identify the value of another person's gender and culture</li> <li>- What it means to be out of the closet and why is still a danger to come out</li> </ul>
<p><b>Helping and getting help</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Don't be a bystander</li> <li>- Ensuring young people know who/what organization they can contact to help with safety</li> <li>- What to do when needing help</li> </ul>
<p><b>Legal perspectives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Law ( Federal, state and Territory)</li> <li>- Mandatory reporting- consequences</li> </ul>

The findings reported in Table 4 convey a generally well informed view that aligns closely with the content provided in NAPCAN's Love Bites program. There was substantial congruence amongst the responses to this question, despite the diverse roles and locations of the respondents. This suggests that key messages relating to RRE are being taken up by those working in the field. It should, however, be noted that the survey is likely to have attracted those with a prior interest and commitment to RRE, hence cautious interpretation is in order due to the limited sample size. Only one survey respondent commented that they had not previously heard of RRE.

A number of survey responses highlighted the importance of catering specifically to the needs of the young people to be involved. In this context the survey participants echoed the needs identified by the interview participants (see Figure 5). They nominated issues of homelessness, trauma and sexual abuse, alcohol and drug use and its impact on relationships, as well as expectations regarding family violence associated with its pervasiveness in some communities.

In addition to identifying the components of RRE, a number of participants recommended ways of delivering it to the populations they served. These recommendations emphasised the need to build relationships and find common ground with young people through conversation and learning. One advocated working closely with their families and another working in conjunction with students, teachers and visiting adults to the benefit of all. An important consideration related to the need to present the material cumulatively through “a good amount of face to face time and multiple workshops”. The use of materials that are culturally appropriate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth was also emphasised as particularly effective.

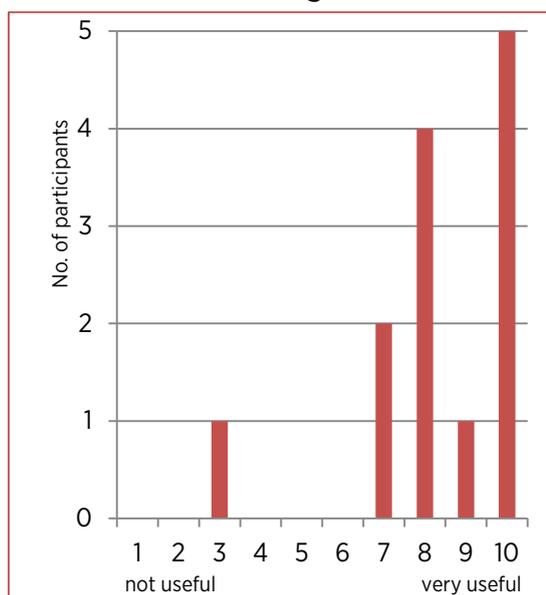
*RRE programs offered*

Sixteen out of 25 participants (64%) indicated that their organisation was providing RRE. When asked which programs were being implemented, 11 responses were recorded. Of these, Love Bites was the most commonly cited program at 5/11, or 45%, of responses. The No More Violence in Sport campaign was cited twice. Others mentioned once each were Deadly Choices, White Ribbon, Our Watch, the Victorian Respectful Relationships program and The Line.

**Love Bites training**

Sixteen of 22 survey respondents indicated that staff at their organisation had participated in Love Bites training. The usefulness of Love Bites training was rated at 7-10/10 by 12 of 13 (92%) respondents to this question. This level of high ratings concurs with the reported satisfaction of those who attended the workshops observed.

One survey participant rated the training at 3/10. The reasons associated with this low rating of usefulness were that the agency environment did not lend itself to providing a structured program, and that it was not helpful to be told that sex education should not be undertaken with young people under sixteen years of age. In this case there appears to have been conflation with information about the legal age of consent, as Love Bites Junior is recommended for young people from age 11.



**Figure 7: Usefulness of Love Bites training, n=13**

Overall, the survey responses indicated strong endorsement of Love Bites and of the training provided by NAPCAN, as highlighted in the following examples.

*The Love Bites training was excellent, I found running the program was such an amazing experience. It gave these young people an opportunity to think about and discuss important topics that will benefit them for their whole lives.*

*This is the program that should be run across all year levels, each year in all schools to begin to change the statistics in violence that is occurring currently.*

Asked to list the three most important things learned from Love Bites training, ten survey participants provided detailed reflections on what they got out of the training they received. Analysis of these responses yielded three categories: content, activities and skills for facilitation. Table 5 presents the findings for this coding scheme.

**Table 5: The most important things learned from Love Bites training**

<p><b>Content</b></p> <p>Content able to be discussed in a manner that suits different cultures</p> <p>Types of relationship violence</p> <p>Facts and statistics are the best levellers</p> <p>How prevalent abuse is amongst the young people</p> <p>The replies/reactions of young people about respect and violence</p> <p>Visual media works well</p> <p>Resources provided</p> <p>Other resources available</p> <p>Cultural themes able to be added to the content to ensure clear understanding of respect within a relationship</p>
<p><b>Activities</b></p> <p>Great activities to use to facilitate discussion</p> <p>Activities suitable for children</p> <p>Team work activities</p> <p>The different activities to help have conversation</p> <p>Multitude and variety of activities for different settings, groups etc.</p> <p>Strategies for centering the workshops and activities in an age appropriate mindset</p>
<p><b>Facilitation</b></p> <p>Talking</p> <p>Understanding</p> <p>Respecting</p> <p>Flexibility</p> <p>Honesty</p> <p>The importance of talking about it</p> <p>How to facilitate discussion rather than teach</p> <p>How to best approach discussions with young people</p> <p>Allowing debate and discussion, taking into account all contexts and 'no wrong answer'</p> <p>How to keep young people interested</p> <p>Scaffolding is important</p> <p>To have transparent communication with young people</p> <p>How to deal with challenging statements from participants</p> <p>Not being afraid to answer tough questions</p> <p>Training enables facilitators to encourage students to discuss and identify issues surrounding the content of respectful relationships programme - allow the student to really think about a subject and have that "lightbulb moment" regarding how to be respectful</p>

As can be seen from Table 5, content refers both to the topics covered in the Love Bites package and to the materials provided to support this coverage, including frameworks for understanding relationship issues related to DFSV as well as statistics, resources, and access to video-based content relevant for conducting RRE with young people. Activities refers to the specific structured learning activities provided by NAPCAN to enable young people to develop a critical understanding of the issues, values and responsibilities associated with DFSV and respectful relationships. The survey responses particularly highlighted participants' appreciation of NAPCAN's training emphasis on supporting and demonstrating the skills needed for effective facilitation of RRE with young people. Comments made at the workshops observed, and in interviews, also reflected these response categories of content, activities and facilitation.

Interviewees' feedback about the content of the Love Bites package was generally positive, as illustrated in the following response.

*[Love Bites is] very apt and they've moved with the times. They've introduced more about cyber bullying and sexting and that sort of thing, which is really out of control. So that's been really pretty helpful. So I think there are a lot of things there - that session on healthy relationships compared with unhealthy relationships, you know what does that look like, and that sort of thing. Really helpful.*

Several interviewees made specific mention of the video content in the *Angela Barker story* as well as the Aboriginal video narrative *Jack and the Bird*.

Interviewees valued the activity-based focus of Love Bites for its range of strategies to engage young people and facilitate conversations. Particular reference was made to the series of line activities, as well as the exploration of healthy vs unhealthy relationships, creative activities, and the ways that the impacts of social media are unpacked in Love Bites Junior. These benefits are evident in the following interview excerpts.

*Activity based tools have been useful to engage group work within student cohorts. Visual clips have produced thought provoking and powerful group discussion. Knowing their input will culminate with providing a campaign they can share on a community-based platform has provided students with a valuable confidence building experience that has fostered respect for each member participating with and contributing to the programme.*

*We've got young males who love doing rap and hip hop and stuff like that, as well as we've got other young people that love being creative in either painting and stuff like that. So that's where I find with the Love Bites that's useful, and that's how you capture your audience and what - like expressing themselves and stuff, yeah, because not necessarily with any young person that they'd like to speak up; they won't speak up...*

The combined training emphasis on content and facilitation skills was described by interviewees as beneficial for building confidence to discuss respectful relationships, both as part of Love Bites and in incidental conversations.

*It's given us tools so that all of our staff can be involved in working with the young people in this space, where before we just had the more experienced and savvy staff managing those conversations.*

*Being able to engage students within the conversation and actually having them present within that and having them just sit and listen. I think that, for me, is one of the more beneficial things that I've taken away from the packages.*

*Some of our younger staff wouldn't dare bring up a relationships conversation... but you show them the Love Bites package and all of a sudden they're busting to give it a go because they feel safe within it.*

Similarly, a school-based interviewee explained how teachers' practices had been positively influenced by the training they attended through encouraging them to engage in conversations with their students.

*What's already happening is that teachers are having conversations with students about respectful relationships ... This is the one strategy on how we can mesh with resources, how we can facilitate conversation.*

The survey asked respondents what RRE training content they considered relevant for staff in their organisations. Figure 8 shows the frequency of responses to each of 9 options provided. The final two options were nominated under the 'other' category and mentioned once each.



**Figure 8: Relevant training content for staff in participants' organisations, n=15**

As shown in Figure 8, survey respondents felt that understanding the issues surrounding DFSV and learning ways to facilitate young people's awareness were the most relevant topics. Interestingly, training in specific programs/curriculum, such as Love Bites, was seen as less relevant. Most interviewees similarly identified that the content informed their knowledge and practice and added value to the resources they already had available.

The need for training that builds knowledge and skills to relate effectively to young people was highlighted by one interviewee who relayed the challenge of relatively inexperienced staff providing support services to young people with complex needs.

*I would hope that we would then be better skilled just in our daily interactions with them. But there's an awful lot of guesswork and suck it and see that happens in what we do because people haven't been given the training that they need.*

The Tennant Creek training event was valued not only for the content delivered, but especially also for the opportunity it provided to build relationships amongst community services who were collectively planning a strategy for delivering RRE.

While expressing their appreciation of the Love Bites training, both survey and interview respondents indicated the importance of the training being available at no cost.

*We often see brilliant trainings come into Alice from the east coast and they're cost prohibitive; we simply can't afford to send our staff to them ... So the fact that NAPCAN were able to offer this training twice in Alice Springs quite close together and it was absolutely free, for something that was of such high quality and that's so important, was almost unbelievable, it's never heard of.*

The issue of cost, both for training and ongoing support, will present a challenge if funding is not available to enable continuing benefits from this project.

### Love Bites implementation

The Love Bites package has been developed for use in schools, either as a one or two-day workshop or as a series of regular classroom sessions. While school-based

implementation was undertaken by some experienced facilitators, there were also examples of implementation in out of school settings and of adaptations for working with young people attending support services for youth at high risk. This latter setting was a particular focus for NAPCAN staff's work to develop 'stand-alone modules'.

Accordingly, post-training implementation of Love Bites was found to be quite variable. While the responses from the survey, workshops and interviews indicated that the training and resources were considered to be very worthwhile and valuable, many of those trained have not delivered the full Love Bites package. Some interviewees indicated that they felt uncertain about their capacity to deliver Love Bites, based on resourcing and skill level. For those who had undertaken school-based implementation some challenges in getting schools on board were reported.

*The two-day program is really difficult to get schools to commit to. Finding trained staff and negotiating times to bring it into the schools is always challenging. Convincing teachers that respectful relationship curriculum IS important. Pre-planning with teachers is also challenging due to the demands and requirements of literacy and numeracy from the curriculum. The topic of relationships is usually squeezed in, if there is any left over time.*

In line with comments reported above, some participants indicated that they used the ideas and activities in informal ways as they saw fit. This view was also apparent in the responses of the workshop participants, a number of whom were keen to incorporate some of the content and practices into their work though they did not see themselves facilitating Love Bites in schools or other formal settings. In these instances implementation was evidently considered separate from the training, as one experienced Love Bites facilitator pointed out.

*I would say the majority would be going along because they think it's – or somebody thinks it's useful, which is quite accurate, for them to have knowledge of, not because they think they can then use that knowledge and be a facilitator for it in schools; but ... because it's a great program.*

Those who did intend to run the Love Bites program, including experienced facilitators working in schools, considered adaptation for the context essential – a practice that was encouraged by NAPCAN trainers. One highly experienced facilitator described the need to adapt the program to meet a broad gamut of behaviour and engagement at different schools. He also reflected on the challenges of presenting Love Bites at a juvenile detention centre where activities had to be carefully chosen and modified for participants who had significant personal and behavioural issues and appeared disengaged - though they later expressed a need to talk further about their circumstances.

An experienced sexual health educator working in an Aboriginal setting described how she selected elements of the Love Bites package to supplement the program she delivered.

*It's just so to have that additional resource because, like I said, is we only cover the basic information and we don't go into full depth around safe relationships and stuff; healthy relationships. We only cover parts. So that's where adding in those additional resources...*

A youth educator saw the availability of implementation support as both an advantage and a necessity.

*I also really like that there's quite a lot of support, if you do need support in going back to your organisation and delivering it, if you're not feeling confident.*

She further explained how she has worked with NAPCAN staff to tailor material to suit

her context.

*I don't have the capacity and I don't have the time unfortunately and the resources to deliver the full two day workshop that I was educated on. However, I worked quite closely with [NAPCAN staff] and we did some stand-alone modules.*

Notably, although the 'stand-alone modules' were intended as an adaptation targeted for young people who had experienced significant trauma, they seem to have had wider application as a method of supporting community-based staff to incorporate those aspects of RRE they felt were relevant to the populations they served.

### **Implementation challenges and impacts**

Flexibility in implementation was one of the features that made Love Bites attractive to those who undertook training for the NT. The variability this introduces into its dissemination precludes rigorous evaluation of program outcomes. Instead, in order to provide a broad sense of implementation effectiveness, participants were asked about challenges they encountered in delivering Love Bites and what solutions they recommended.

Fifteen survey respondents provided feedback on the challenges associated with implementing RRE in their settings. Analysis of the key challenges nominated yielded the following five categories.

- *Ensuring cultural relevance* – This applies to content, activities and facilitation. Understanding the cultural context and language background of young people, using culturally informed materials, and facilitating activities in ways that are engaging and relevant for young people from Aboriginal and culturally diverse backgrounds were recommended.
- *Accessibility and adaptability of materials for needs* – This particularly applies to working with young people in out of school contexts. Outreach and targeted programs were recommended, with an emphasis on developing the stand-alone modules for flexible use.
- *Staff understanding and competence to deliver the program* – The main challenges here were access to training and ensuring that staff involved in RRE have both the knowledge and personal values to be effective.
- *Perceived relevance and motivation of young people* – Managing young people's interest and engagement was identified by some respondents as challenging, especially when working with youth who may be already socially disengaged. Suggestions included maintaining variety in delivery and offering open courses across agencies that would enable small numbers of young people who want to participate to join others who are also interested.
- *Time and resources* – Funding and scheduling were identified as key challenges, both for facilitator training and running the program. More support and training were suggested solutions.

Further details and examples of the challenges and solutions identified by survey respondents are provided in Appendix 3. It was noteworthy that practical and relevant solutions were proposed for most reported challenges.

Interviewees were asked what changes they had observed in young people who had participated in Love Bites. Most described changes in attitudes and anticipated positive behavioural impacts from challenging assumptions and exposing young people to more healthy ways of relating. Love Bites' culminating student-led creative campaign project was highlighted for its benefits, not only in crystallising changes for those young people

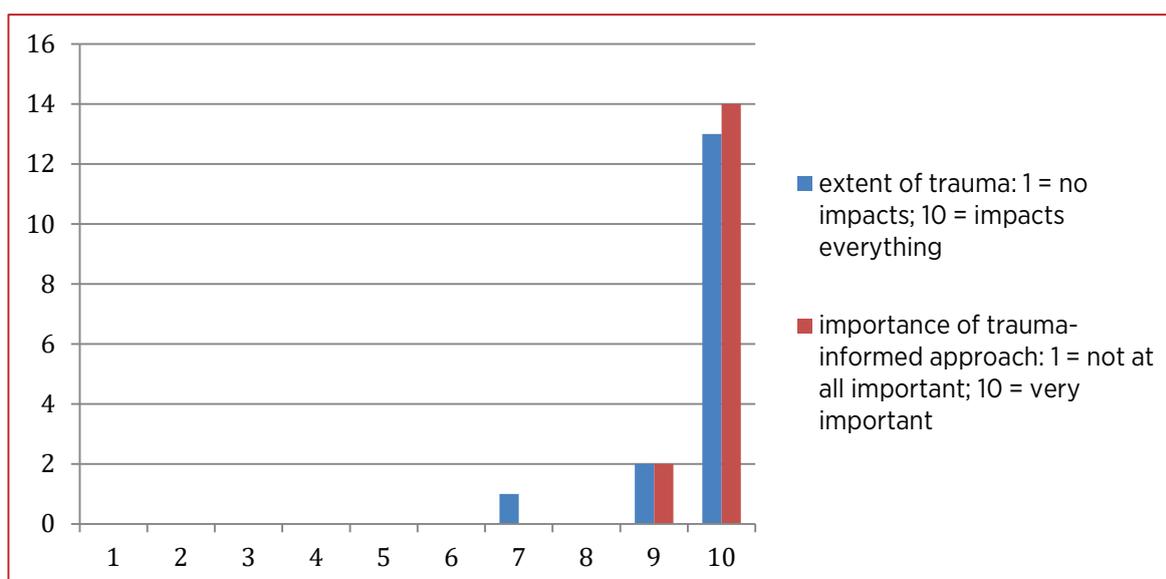
participating in the program, but also equipping them to create change within their communities.

Those who had ongoing relationships with young people described examples of specific changes they attributed directly to Love Bites. One interviewee provided an example of two young men who, after participating in a Love Bites session, reflected on the disrespectful way they had treated their girlfriends and approached the worker for further advice and assistance regarding behavioural change. Another interviewee recounted how Love Bites sessions had helped her to initiate changes in the behaviour of a young man who had patterns of bullying and intimidation toward his peers.

These examples highlight the combined importance of relevant and appropriate content, along with effective facilitation and counselling skills, and an ongoing and meaningful helping relationship, in order to provide sufficient intensity and intervention dosage to support prevention effectiveness with young people at increased risk of perpetrating DFSV. They also provide encouraging examples of what can be achieved through these means.

### Trauma and young people

In order to assess participants' perspectives on trauma and trauma-informed practice in RRE, both the survey and interviews sought respondents' views on the extent and kinds of trauma they encountered in the young people they worked with. Survey respondents were asked to rate a) the extent to which young people are impacted by trauma, and b) the importance of taking a trauma-informed approach. High ratings for both items were reported by a total of sixteen respondents. These results are presented in Figure 9.



**Figure 9: The extent to which participants felt trauma was experienced by the young people they work with, and the importance of taking a trauma-informed approach, n=16**

The high ratings shown in Figure 9 disclose an emphatically high incidence of trauma in the young people served, and a commensurate strong level of awareness of the need for trauma-informed practice. Similar findings were evident in the interviews, as shown in this comment from a youth counsellor:

*We're conscious and cognisant of the fact that we're dealing first and foremost with a lot of trauma with the young people. It's almost defining their whole character, just the poverty they're born into, the violence that's around them all the time.*



## Trauma-informed training

The focus in NAPCAN's project on trauma-informed practice for RRE in the NT was prompted by a previous Love Bites training session provided for staff at the Don Dale detention centre. It became *"quite obvious in the training sessions that a lot of people who are working with these young people don't have an understanding of trauma and the impact that it has on learning. ... So when we did that proposal and lobbied the government, we said that there needed to be a trauma lens."*

Given the context of trauma for young people in the NT, the aims of the NAPCAN project staff were to provide an opportunity for facilitators to

- *Understand or have a greater understanding of what trauma means and the impact of trauma on children, young people and systems in relation to providing Love Bites.*
- *[Develop] strategies in relation to implementing Love Bites with an understanding of the impact of trauma on the child/young person.*

Initially a day-long trauma-informed training was constructed for implementation in youth detention centres, to be undertaken alongside the two-day Love Bites training. The content included defining trauma, effects of trauma on children and brain development, as well as practices and strategies for implementing Love Bites with a trauma informed lens. Due to ongoing issues and delays in the operations and engagement of the youth detention centres, the implementation strategy was broadened to include community settings, particularly for those young people who were at high risk of DFSV and were not in a position to access or benefit from school-based RRE.

In the training workshops observed for this evaluation the trauma-based component was condensed into a half-day session and was followed by two-day Love Bites training in which the trauma-informed perspective was repeatedly referenced. The trauma-informed workshops were thus tied to the existing Love Bites program, with workshop participants encouraged to make small adjustments for their contexts, as described by one of the NAPCAN NT project staff.

*Yes, so there [were] adaptations ... Just I wouldn't say adaptations because the program's essentially stayed the same. It was just like little things such as, we might take a little bit longer we might introduce, take a bit longer introducing an activity or ad little things into ... Just because I guess we may be a little bit more trauma aware.*

For the research evaluation both survey respondents and interviewees were asked about their experience of NAPCAN's trauma-informed training. A notable diversity in experience and recency of training was represented amongst those who responded. Only five survey respondents had attended the NAPCAN training on trauma-informed practice. (This compared with sixteen who had undertaken Love Bites training.) Six of the thirteen interviewees had completed the current trauma-informed training, while all had trained in Love Bites.

Asked to nominate the most important things they learned from the trauma-informed training, the survey respondents indicated that their understanding of trauma and its impacts had improved. They noted the pervasive effects of trauma and the importance of emotional safety. Also noted were the need for adults to take more responsibility to avoid causing harm to children, and a requirement for more trauma training to be undertaken by all staff working in the area.

The value of incorporating a trauma-informed approach into RRE was underlined in the following statement.

*It was really important to have this understanding prior to Love Bites training to understand the importance of what we are teaching.*

This point was affirmed in an interview with a highly accomplished long-term Love Bites facilitator who had been instrumental in instigating the concept of a trauma-informed approach.

*So I've done three lots of NAPCAN training, but certainly the trauma-informed approach was my idea. ... The trauma-informed focus ... just built on already what I think is a fantastic program. ... [It is] particularly good for people that aren't, that aren't immersed in that [e.g., detention centre staff].*

Most interviewees acknowledged the importance of taking a trauma-informed approach in their work, and consequently valued the trauma-informed Love Bites training.

*I thought it was good to be mindful of the trauma-informed practice throughout either package [i.e., Love Bites and Love Bites Junior].*

One experienced facilitator of Love Bites in schools reflected on the emphasis brought out in the trauma-informed training.

*The trauma-informed language is new to me and I'm just sort of grasping what that means. But what I can understand is that it's understanding that young people have been through a traumatic situation and, when you present or deliver this information, being aware that some of the words or the language that we use might trigger type of emotions and they might react in a way that is not necessarily expected. Being able to manage that in a respectful way, in a group dynamic, and following that up afterwards to make sure that that young person's okay. I guess that's sort of my understanding of trauma-informed.*

She went on to question whether teachers were equipped to take on a trauma-informed approach and the implications for their involvement in classroom-based RRE.

*Actually, I don't think that we're very good at it. ... I know there are people here using that language. But ... I don't think it's being done very well at the moment, actually. I don't think people understand it well enough to be able to respond appropriately in those situations. I think teachers have quite a specific focus and when they're adding this type of information into their classrooms I don't think that they necessarily understand that it's going to cause these reactions. Then the reactions it causes I don't think they know how to manage very well either.*

On one occasion when RRE was being offered

*The kids who needed it skipped it and went down the beach because I think it was just too much for them. ... They're the kids who needed that discussion but they missed it.*

This underlines the complexities and limitations of schools' capacities to work with the most vulnerable young people, and hence the rationale for taking a broader community-based approach to RRE. Commenting that "Not all teachers want to deliver it ... that's not their skill set," a NAPCAN staff member highlighted the benefits of enabling young people to engage directly with trauma-informed community-based practitioners who can provide support to those most at risk.

While the trauma-informed training was substantially appreciated, some participants would have liked to see it go further. One felt there needed to place more emphasis on practical applications of a trauma-informed approach in facilitating Love Bites.

*What I find across the board with trauma-informed training is that it's really good at telling you what's going on in people's brains, and that's useful to understand, but then in terms of actually providing answers about what you do with that...how do you mend your*

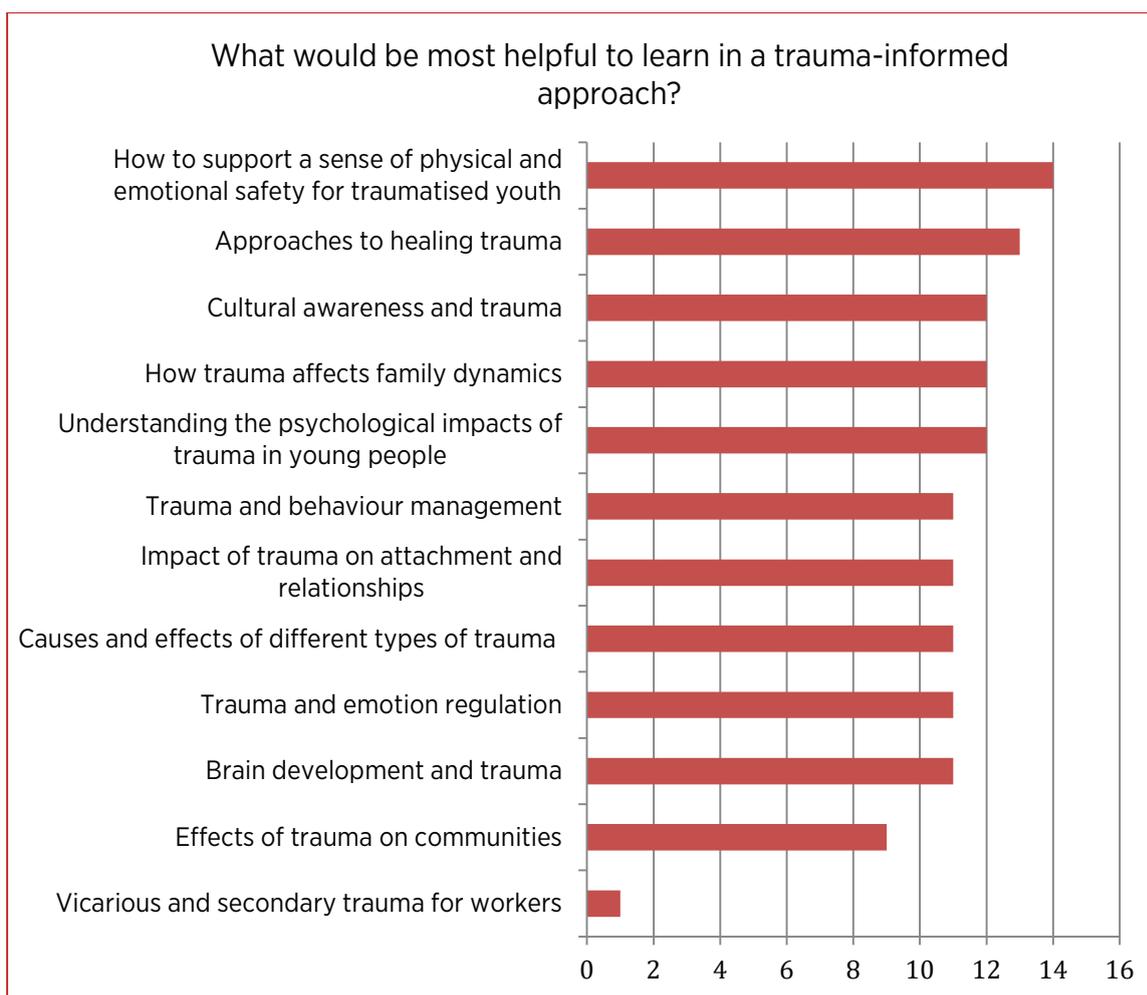
*practice ... It's not clear and I imagine that's because there isn't a clear answer. So, I guess that was something I felt was still lacking a little bit in terms of that training. ... How are young people going to look if they're feeling traumatised or re-traumatised? Or how do you set up the room or how am I to do that consultation, or whatever.*

Another participant discussed the need to incorporate a more detailed and contextual understanding of trauma and its impacts in Aboriginal communities.

*I think I would have liked a more – I'm not quite sure how to phrase it – but more of a political economy sort of structure. A deeper understanding of dispossession of land, a deeper understanding of because of that, the loss of culture for Indigenous people, and as a result of that loss of culture, that leads to substance abuse, or that leads to ..., for want of a better phrase, antisocial behaviour. That antisocial behaviour leads to interface with the police. That interface with the police leads to jail, and that leads to cumulative trauma. Then the father is locked up, or the mother is locked up, and that puts greater pressure. One of the things that I find is that I've got cumulative harm caused by cumulative disadvantage.*

This need to approach trauma in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities with an understanding of its social and cultural dimensions was raised by several interviewees as a critical consideration for the adaptation and implementation of RRE in the NT.

Preferred content for the trauma-informed training component was further gauged in the survey. All survey respondents were asked to indicate the content they felt would be most helpful to learn in a trauma-informed approach based on a list of key relevant topics that had been derived from recent literature in the field. Figure 11 shows the frequency of endorsement of each of the eleven listed topics provided by fifteen respondents to this question. The final twelfth topic was added by one respondent in an open category listed as 'other'.



**Figure 11: Content identified as most helpful to learn in a trauma-informed approach, n=15**

Figure 11 shows high overall levels of endorsement of the listed topics. Practical knowledge concerned with supporting physical and emotional safety for young people and healing trauma was endorsed by the most participants, thus aligning with the interviewee request for a stronger focus on what to do differently to cater for young people with experience of trauma.

### Stand-alone modules

The ‘stand-alone’ or ‘singular modules’ were instigated specifically for this project after it became apparent that, due to ongoing disruption and reform in the sector, a planned trial of trauma-informed RRE in the youth detention centres in Darwin and Alice Springs would not be able to go ahead. As the research participants attested, the case for RRE to be made available to vulnerable young people in the community was persuasively identified, including for those who may already be involved in the justice sector.

From a prevention perspective, working outside the detention system with young people in the community offered better opportunities for them to engage voluntarily with RRE, to be supported in their learning, and to have opportunities to make real changes in their relationships as a result. The development of the ‘stand-alone modules’ was at the same time a response to community service workers who told NAPCAN staff *“We love your program and we really want to use it but ... neither of your [current] Love Bites*

options are [feasible] for us.” The rationale for the stand-alone modules was advanced by interviewees in the research evaluation, who pointed to the need for a different approach to working with high risk young people in out of school settings.

*The initial Love Bites I think was designed for high schools, a very contemporary model high school, where kids have got long attention spans, there's a highly structured environment. That's not [agency] at all. We work in 20-minute sound bites.*

*I think there's a lot of us who are looking for ways that we can help young people that are not in the format that turns them away. As soon as you make it seem like a classroom or something like school, they are automatically turned off.*

Providing RRE in community settings to young people experiencing multiple life issues required adaptation of both the content and its mode of delivery. Accordingly, the development of the stand-alone modules was undertaken by NAPCAN staff in collaboration with key staff members from community agencies who trialled the modules with young people they worked with. The aims of the stand-alone modules were described as follows.

- *To provide a platform for youth who wouldn't otherwise have appropriate conversations about relationships*
- *To increase access to respectful relationships sessions*
- *To give young people access to information at times when they need it*
- *To enable adults to be confident and equipped in engaging youth in learning moments*
- *To provide a safe, trauma informed environment to discuss relationships*
- *To introduce young people to local service providers and support*
- *To provide activities more suitable for 1-1 and small group settings*

The content drew from the Love Bites materials and developed adaptations for the needs and contexts of the participating agencies and the young people they served. Topics chosen for the stand-alone modules were: healthy and unhealthy relationships, social media, jealousy, bystanders, sexting, consent, victim blaming and gender. Implementation was flexible, allowing agency staff to identify and work with the content they felt suited their setting.

*[NAPCAN project officer] gave me seven modules that we could work from, so I picked out three of the main modules that I felt like particularly young people would benefit from the most. Relationships would be one, social media was the other one and where's the line was the third one. ... We just condensed them down and that's how I made it work.*

Both co-development and co-facilitation were used effectively by highly experienced staff who participated.

*I'd pick what things I thought would work for the young people because ... they were our cohort here. Then we'd meet briefly before and go, I've decided to do these, what do you reckon? ... We actually worked really well together. ... We were both on the same page ... Both of us, I suppose, are trauma-informed practitioners.*

The following observations by the same practitioner demonstrate the value of breaking the material down and facilitating discussion in a nuanced and non-judgmental way. This allowed the needs and interests of the young people to emerge and material to be presented responsively so as to maximise engagement and learning.

*We ended up with six - a core group of six from 11 to 16. But the 11 year olds ... knew what Porn hub was. Eleven year olds actually said Porn hub when we were talking about the internet ... So I think the two sessions I did - the first one was just what is a respectful relationship. ... Then the next week we did respectful language, Jack and the Bird, talking*

*about things like - they ended up discussing slut shaming and then how they used their internet. So we then did internet safety. We did Facebook settings. But then what surprised me was how much they knew from 11 - from our mainly 11 year olds. The three 11 year olds were really switched on. How much they knew about internet pornography. It's like - so this cohort - I don't know. I haven't done any of the background research or background literature. But I do know that out bush pornography's pretty much - there's a fairly high level of saturation.*

In addition to highlighting the need for adaptability of the material, as well as flexibility and skill of facilitators, this account demonstrates the exposure of young people to the negative influence of pornography and the extent to which it exacerbates risks, particularly, it seems, in remote communities. This finding underlines the need to effectively target RRE efforts towards vulnerable young people in out of school contexts.

### **Participant suggestions for further development**

Participants in both the survey and interviews were asked for their suggestions to further develop the training in Love Bites and/or trauma-informed practice. Their responses clustered around three main themes: accessibility of training and support; format and facilitation of the program; and cultural fit of content and processes.

#### *Training and support*

A strong need was expressed for training to be made available at times and in shorter sessions to improve its accessibility, particularly for staff in remote locations.

*We'd just like it at all. It's fairly really in need of in this community, and in terms of inclusion, it needs to be presented at a time that's accessible. Like doing it in the school holidays is nearly impossible for me.*

Attending whole day training events over 2-3 days was extremely difficult for workers in small agencies where there were limited staff to cover professional development leave and little funding to pay for it. Further opportunities for support and training were seen as necessary to help assimilate the extensive information, resources and implementation practices provided in the training workshops.

*I think it's quite a lot, yeah, there's a lot going on because there's so many activities I think. To actually to get your head around when you come back into your organisation how you're going to deliver it, it's quite a lot of information I think to take on in the two days.*

Providing more information about the program and the training in advance was also advocated as a way to get the most from the training.

*I went to do the training and I'd read a small sort of paragraph on what it was about but ... even going to the training I wasn't really educated enough to be able to know what it was fully about.*

In addition to accessing the support of NAPCAN staff, new trainees agreed that short videos of Love Bites implementation and tips from experienced facilitators would be helpful for developing their facilitation skills. A further suggestion from one interviewee was to provide training to whole staff groups as a means of establishing implementation support. This suggestion was aimed at facilitating organisation-wide adoption of both RRE and trauma-informed practices.

#### *Program format and facilitation*

Several participants suggested developing the program for a broader range of age groups (both younger children and adults) so as to better suit the needs of remote

communities. There was wide support for the provision of alternative, more flexible, formats. Modularisation of the material and development of resources to facilitate individual and small group learning was strongly encouraged.

*It needs to be able to be delivered to individuals and small groups.*

*The stand-alone module has really, really worked for me. ... So I would say if it is to continue maybe have two options, like two full day workshops or a full day workshop and then also the option of doing the standalone modules ... Tailoring and letting me choose the topics, yeah, really worked well and I would say if they can keep doing that then I would really support that.*

*Something that could be added to the training ... is how do you have conversations with young people, like more structured sessions around if you've got a young person for four or five minutes and they raise this or they disclose this or you see an opportunity. Incidental LOVE BITES I suppose ... sort of bite-sized programs and I think there's a lot of scope for that to be useful.*

Also suggested was more guidance in facilitating flexibly and with subtlety in order to meet the needs of highly vulnerable youth.

*In terms of facilitation I think what we talked about earlier - training around the subtleties of facilitating to this particular group. There's always that danger though that people run with recipes and protocols.*

Taking a strengths-based approach by adjusting the material to build on what young people already know was seen as essential for working with those at high risk.

*So if you had the modules around topics and then have it so that if you think they know a lot about a particular topic - do what they know because ... it's recognising their strengths, working from a strengths perspective rather than what they don't know.*

An emphasis on engagement and interactivity was also recommended for teaching and enabling young people generally.

*[When] presenting to young people, making sure that the experience in itself is interactive and enjoyable ... to be able to discuss these things and really send the points home, but also engaging them in a relatively fun way. ... just really looking at the interactive component and seeing how ... students can be a little bit more involved.*

#### *Cultural fit of resources and processes*

Several experienced practitioners suggested enhancing the cultural dimensions of Love Bites implementation and tailoring the resources to ensure they are appropriate for local NT settings. A strong recommendation to extend the content so that program resources cater effectively for diverse groups came from one highly experienced practitioner who had facilitated Love Bites in multiple settings.

*Identify and provide more culturally and linguistically diverse subject matter and more visual / interactive materials within the programme resources. Speak to specific groups (Indigenous, migrant and refugee groups and teachers working with persons with intellectual disabilities/special needs) to identify what resources would be appropriate and how they could be utilised more effectively.*

Participants in both training workshops observed were introduced to a number of digital and print resources relating to DFSV and its prevention that had been recently developed for and by Indigenous communities. While these were generally well received, it was noted that resources developed for one community may not transfer well to another, and hence the need for cultural awareness and responsiveness was emphasised.

Prior consultation with community leaders and Elders to enable review of program materials was strongly advocated.

*It will depend on each community themselves; they'd have to actually go through the information and I guess work out whether or not it's adaptable to their community because every community is different, yeah, like some things will work with one particular community and not entirely the rest. Yeah, so it's always going to be up to the community itself.*

Having Aboriginal people involved in the delivery of the program was also recommended as important for promoting collaboration and cultural safety. This could entail having Aboriginal co-facilitators or/and having senior community people participate in program delivery to engage with young people and provide relevant cultural perspectives. It was noted that there would need to be appropriate remuneration to support community leaders to attend in this capacity.

Several participants suggested adapting resources to reflect local languages and stories as a means of affirming cultural strengths.

*It would be good for the program and, this is going to be resource rich, but building on those cultural strengths, there's that kind of stuff as well.*

The importance of identifying and promoting cultural strengths was further highlighted in the following account.

*I've had a few discussions with young men here where they've gone the culture stuff [as an excuse for disrespectful or violent behaviour]. I just will not have it. I'll just say, do you know I've worked with a lot of your Elders and I've worked with your grandparents and I've worked with your uncles and your aunties and they tell me it is not part of your culture. ... I think that stuff around what do we need to talk about from a cultural perspective would be good. That's what's missing. Too white.*

To adequately address these cultural issues participants advocated working in close partnership with Aboriginal community organisations and respected community Elders.

*Another potential area of development, and also for funding, is to be working even more closely with Aboriginal communities in developing the content with them.*

*I think it would be good to have a little reference group or a group of strong Indigenous law people that would say, well, okay, how would we write this? How would we talk about this? I think even a module that talked about our culture and violence in our culture.*

This level of engagement and community leadership is increasingly recognised as essential to achieving positive outcomes in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

## DISCUSSION

NAPCAN's 12-month contract with Territory Families focused on providing trauma-informed training in RRE as a prevention initiative for agency staff working with young people experiencing complex challenges. Prevention is often understood to be at the opposite end of a service spectrum to therapeutic approaches, which are the primary focus of most trauma-informed care. Correspondingly, much of the national focus on prevention of DFSV through RRE is focused on schools, and little emphasis is given to prevention efforts in out of school settings that cater to young people with complex difficulties.

A more nuanced public health approach conceptualises prevention in an integrated

way, identifying multiple levels of prevention – primary, secondary and tertiary – that intersect with various forms of intervention (Quadara, Nagy, Higgins & Siegel, 2015). Adding prevention to a trauma-informed therapeutic approach establishes a focus on learning how to have healthy relationships and on developing the attitudes and skills needed to achieve them.

Research showing that young people who perpetrate sexual violence have commonly themselves been victims of abuse (Seto & Lalumière, 2010; Aebi et al., 2015) demonstrates the importance of employing methods that focus simultaneously on healing and prevention. In Australian research individuals who had been sexually abused as children were found to be at significantly increased risk of offending, particularly through behaviours involving sexual coercion and violence, and were also more likely to be victims of such crimes (Ogloff, Cutajar, Mann & Mullen, 2012). The current study found that trauma-informed RRE provided practitioners with valuable tools for intervening in the cycle of trauma, abuse and offending that leaves the vulnerable young people they work with at high risk of further harm.

Young people's support needs, as identified by the research participants, were consistent with very high levels of adversity, disruption and disadvantage. This was evident in the responses of both community agency workers and school-based participants. The finding of high levels of adversity affecting young people was matched by strong recognition of the importance that those working with them should take a trauma-informed approach.

Endorsement of the need for RRE was consistently high, as was validation of the quality and benefits of the Love Bites program. Survey participants identified the topics covered as highly appropriate for teaching RRE to young people. Those who had participated in the Love Bites training strongly appreciated the content and activities, as well as the focus on how to facilitate the material with young people. While those who were already experienced in facilitation were eager to run Love Bites sessions, a number of newly trained participants expressed a desire for further training and support in order to develop confidence as Love Bites facilitators. Others valued what they learned from the training for their own work but did not expect to facilitate the program.

These findings clearly show the appeal and value of the Love Bites materials for practitioners working with vulnerable young people across a range of service agencies. They further reveal that the school-based Love Bites package is being adapted flexibly for varying contexts. While this level of adaptability is clearly an important part of its appeal, and was actively encouraged by NAPCAN project staff, it does raise questions that warrant further investigation.

Firstly, if the aim of at least some of those who trained in Love Bites was not to undertake the school-based implementation it was designed for, what were they getting from the training? Feedback provided by participants in this research suggests that the program yielded new insights into DFSV, along with useful educational perspectives for RRE and ideas for talking to young people about DFSV prevention. It provided conceptual frameworks and resources to enable community-based practitioners to engage with young people more effectively in discussion of the issues. This opportunity to learn and improve practice evidently accounts for the high value attributed to the training and its contribution to the professional development of those who participated.

What happens with respect to program implementation is a more difficult question. While some of the more highly qualified and experienced interview participants were

clearly very skilled at adapting the Love Bites materials for differing contexts, the variability in expertise and confidence of those who undertook the training raises concerns about inconsistencies in the quality of any ensuing implementation. NAPCAN staff's commitment to providing adaptations of Love Bites materials to suit different contexts was generally appreciated; however, placing the focus of the training on adapting the school-based Love Bites program leaves wide latitude for interpretation, and thereby precludes the prospect of rigorous outcome evaluation. Additionally, the volume and complexity of materials provided for the Love Bites and Love Bites Junior programs were found by a number of participants to be overwhelming and left many wondering where they should start. Reducing the level of complexity of the training available in any one session should therefore be a key goal for further development of the specialised trauma-informed approach.

NAPCAN staff sought to bridge issues of adaptation and implementation by providing follow-up and working with individuals and small groups on the development of the stand-alone modules. This was very helpful for establishing the needs of the practitioners and co-developing modified resources, but more work is needed upfront to refine the package specifically for high risk young people in out of school settings. A very clear finding from this research is that classroom-based activities are not appropriate for this cohort, for whom short, individualised activities and conversational approaches to facilitation are required. This more individualised approach is not part of Love Bites currently, nor is it appropriate for classroom settings.

In order to maximise program effectiveness and enable robust evaluation, each approach, whether for school students or young people at high risk, needs to be designed with its own program logic and tailored for the particular needs of its target group. Differentiation of the two approaches and their logic models should incorporate a clear articulation of a multi-tiered model of prevention that distinguishes whole class primary prevention (i.e., Love Bites) from the targeted prevention being developed in the individualised modules.

With specific reference to the trauma-informed aspect of the training, the findings showed that it was broadly appreciated; however, several aspects need further development. Bearing in mind that the workshops attended for the evaluation had been reduced from a full day to a half day, the workshop content around trauma was largely focused on its impacts for brain development. Although this content met with interest in the workshops, the survey and interviews revealed that more practical application and contextual understanding would have been especially relevant and useful.

This coheres with the literature on trauma-informed care, which identifies that a trauma-informed approach needs to implement specific responses that can alleviate the effects of trauma and promote empowerment and resilience (Atkinson, 2013; Kezelman & Stavropoulos, 2012; Wall, Higgins & Hunter, 2016). Caring and supportive environments and genuine involvement of young people in planning are integral to working positively with young people who have experienced trauma (West, Day, Somers & Baroni, 2014; Crosby, Howell & Thomas, 2018). A range of evidence-informed approaches are discussed in the literature including, for example, the need to provide for safety and reliability to help address difficulties with trust and attachment, and scaffolding strategies to help develop emotional and cognitive self-regulation (Australian Childhood Foundation, 2010; Crosby et al., 2018). Greater in-depth reference to the current research in these areas would help to develop a sound conceptual framework and applied strategies for trauma-informed prevention through RRE.

For Aboriginal communities in the NT the impacts of trauma are exceptionally severe, with 89% of DFSV in the Northern Territory borne by Aboriginal people, and Aboriginal women and girls accounting for 91% of females who have experienced DFSV.

Participants in the evaluation identified many of the adverse life events that expose Aboriginal youth to such high risk. These include the ongoing impacts of disadvantage, racism and intergenerational trauma (Atkinson, 2013; Atkinson et al., 2014; Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory, 2017). Several participants pointed out the importance of contextualising the social and cultural dimensions of trauma in Aboriginal communities. They emphasised the need to engage with Aboriginal leaders in meaningful partnerships in order to co-develop resources and implementation processes informed by their cultural and community knowledge and tailored to their particular needs.

These recommendations are consistent with emerging recognition of the need to adopt a decolonising approach that empowers communities to decide how they can best tackle DFSV, and the complex intergenerational trauma that drives it, based on identifying and reinforcing cultural knowledge and strengths (Cripps & Adams, 2014; Closing the Gap Clearinghouse, 2016; Olsen & Lovett, 2016; Healing Foundation et al., 2017; Blagg et al., 2018). A recent (2017) policy paper by the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC), the National Family Violence Prevention Legal Services Forum (NFVPLS) and National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (NATSILS) states as its first principle that “cultural healing – driven by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations, built on trauma-informed practice” is essential. The recent Warawarni-gu Guma Statement maintains that First Nations people **must** lead new approaches to addressing family violence in their communities, ensuring recognition of the impact of intergenerational trauma and validation of cultural knowledge in determining solutions. On this basis the parameters of any programs or partnerships with non-Indigenous people or organisations should be set by First Nations people (Douglas et al., 2018).

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

NAPCAN’s project to develop and disseminate a trauma-informed approach to RRE for the youth service sector in the NT was designed to meet a gap in the field of prevention education. Young people with complex challenges are at high risk of abuse and yet have least access to educational experiences that can teach them to navigate relationships more effectively. Consequently they have limited means of reducing the relationship factors that place them at risk of either perpetrating abuse, being abused or both. The gap in access to RRE is paralleled by a gap in research evidence. Hence, the evaluation and report have sought to provide detailed coverage of the findings and the issues highlighted therein.

As stated at the outset, the research evaluation was designed to

- identify the specific needs of the Northern Territory youth sector in relation to RRE and trauma-informed practice
- investigate the perceived effectiveness of specific training in trauma-based practice associated with Love Bites for youth service agencies
- review the resources developed for this project in light of current research literature

- investigate the extent to which the training and resources are effective in meeting the particular social and cultural needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations working in the youth sector, and
- provide recommendations for the further development of both the resources and the project.

In this section we revisit these aims to draw final conclusions and make recommendations for further development of the initiative.

### **Identification of needs**

- The research evidence based on the views of practitioners in the youth services sector offers a persuasive argument as to the extent of need for RRE amongst the target population of young people experiencing complex challenges.
- The enthusiasm expressed for the Love Bites training and materials was found to be independent of the intention to facilitate the Love Bites program as designed. This reflects an important unmet need for professional development in educational perspectives and practices associated with DFSV and RRE.
- Participants also identified a need for training to be more accessible. This relates to timing, location and costs. Participation in the training for a number of participants was only possible due to government sponsorship. There is clearly scope to extend the project to meet the needs established.
- Despite a very short period for setup and implementation, and some confusion for NAPCAN staff as a result of changes to the contract focus, there was ample evidence to establish proof of concept for the new initiative. A promising foundation has thus been laid from which to further develop and refine the approach.

### **Effectiveness of trauma-based training for youth service agencies**

- The content of the Love Bites program was very strongly appreciated, with evidence of high need and high relevance to staff across the community youth services sector.
- The trauma-informed module was generally seen as valuable, but its coverage was limited. Specific contextual and practical implications for implementation need to be developed to extend effectiveness.
- The provision of additional support helped to bridge a need for more guidance with implementation and adaptation.

### **Review of resources in light of current research literature**

- A practice-focused design process has been employed to develop the trauma-informed module, drawing on the collective wisdom of NAPCAN staff presenters and sourcing relevant online media. Despite the project staff's attempts to adjust the content for the NT context, there is a skew towards North American and UK materials on brain development. Clear and accurate definitions and applications of concepts relating to attachment and self-regulation are needed adjustments.
- The trauma-informed module needs greater focus on transactional issues in understanding, recognising and responding to trauma symptoms.
- The concept and development of the 'stand-alone' modules is a valuable and promising initiative. Further development and clarification in light of theoretical concepts and practice guidelines is needed to provide a thorough evidence base and establish the program logic for this approach.

## Meeting social and cultural needs of Aboriginal community organisations working in the youth sector

- Modularisation of the materials and flexibility of resources was appreciated by First Nations practitioners and those working in Aboriginal settings.
- Aboriginal staff preferred to incorporate elements of Love Bites into their own programs to ensure appropriateness of content and activities.
- The cultural and social contexts of trauma development and recovery need more emphasis. More detailed and explicit grounding in the expert literature coming from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers, policy makers and communities is needed to ensure that the initiative is sufficiently culturally responsive. Partnerships with Aboriginal community organisations should be pursued not only at the delivery stage of the intervention, but in the development of processes and content.

## Recommendations for further development

- The ‘stand-alone’ modules are clearly an important innovation for working with highly vulnerable young people. In order to preserve the integrity of the school-based Love Bites and ensure that the trauma-informed approach is appropriately developed to meet the needs of this particular cohort, the two approaches should be clearly delineated as separate but complementary packages with separate training sessions.
- The content of the ‘stand-alone’ modules needs to be developed around key themes and be well informed by up to date research.
- Learning goals for the trauma-informed module should be reviewed in light of significant and current research literature and evidence based practice guidelines for the local context.
- Collaboration with local Aboriginal community organisations is needed to develop resources and implementation processes that are culturally sensitive and respectful. This is considered essential for working with vulnerable young people involved in the justice sector.
- Modularisation of the training is recommended to improve accessibility. This would see the training offered in smaller chunks over several defined sessions, allowing for a staged development of content understanding and skills. This approach is particularly well suited to the ‘stand-alone modules’ but could also be adapted to Love Bites – e.g., through offering shorter sessions including an introductory overview module, a facilitation skills module, a trauma-informed module.
- Investigate establishment of an online hub where materials and support resources for particular groups can be identified and regularly updated. Opportunities for online delivery of some training components could also be investigated. This recommendation intends to improve accessibility of training and training materials and also to provide a basis for facilitating and monitoring quality assurance.

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## Appendix 1 – Interview questions

### Interview questions for NAPCAN staff

1. What is/has been your role in developing the NT RRE project?
2. What are the main aims and goals for the current project (i.e., up to end of June)? How were these established?
3. How did you go about developing the new materials and workshops for the NT project? Have you been adapting them as you go? (What has that entailed?) (Or is the aim to trial the package first and then evaluate?)
4. What have been the project's milestones and achievements to date?
5. Tell us about the challenges and how you have responded to them? What have you learned so far?
6. Going forward, how do you think the project could best be developed to meet its goals?
7. Are there any particular things you are hoping to get out of the evaluation process?

### Youth service staff interviews

1. Please tell me about the agency you work for and what your role in it involves. What is its particular vision and focus?
2. What do you see as the main support needs of the young people you work with?
3. In your view how important is it to take a trauma-informed approach? What does this look like in practice in your work?
4. Have you participated in NAPCAN's workshop on trauma-informed practice? Which aspects of that training did you find most useful for your work and your community?
5. Are there any changes or additions to the training in trauma-informed practice that you would like to have included?
6. How do you see Respectful Relationships Education making a difference for young people and for your work with them?
7. Have you and/or staff at your agency trained with NAPCAN in the Love Bites program? If so when?
8. Which features of the Love Bites training have been most helpful for your work?
9. Have you provided Love Bites sessions for young people? Can you describe how you have gone about running the sessions? (e.g., format used, length of sessions, topic focus, timing)
10. Which features of Love Bites have connected well with your young people?
11. What kinds of changes, if any, have you seen in young people who have participated in Love Bites?
12. Do you have any recommendations for making Love Bites more relevant and useful for the young people and communities you work with?
13. Do you have any suggestions for improving Love Bites training to make it more relevant for your work with young people and with your community?
14. Are there any strategies you would recommend to NAPCAN for connecting with and supporting more communities and youth services to take up Respectful Relationships Education and trauma-informed practices?

## Appendix 2 - Survey

### NAPCAN- NT evaluation survey

#### Respectful Relationships Education for young people in your community

If you are involved or interested in providing Respectful Relationships Education to young people in the Northern Territory, you are invited to complete this survey. We are seeking the views of services working with young people in the NT to help identify areas of need and effective practice in this area. *Your input will be greatly appreciated!* The survey is part of a study being conducted on behalf of the National Association for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (NAPCAN) by Dr Brenda Dobia from Western Sydney University. It will take up to approximately 15 minutes to complete. Further information about the study and the ethics process is available in the [participant information](#) sheet. Please click on the link to review the information sheet and determine whether you wish to proceed with the survey.

If you are ready to proceed simply click to the next page and commence the survey. If you do not wish to participate simply close the page on your browser to exit.

#### The first section of the survey asks for your thoughts on respectful relationships education.

Q1 Respectful Relationships Education is advocated as a key strategy for changing attitudes towards relationship violence and promoting positive relationship skills among young people.

What do you feel should be the main components of respectful relationships education for young people?

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Q2 How do you rate the importance of Respectful Relationships Education for young people in general?

	Not at all important 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Extremely important 10
Rating	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q3 How do you rate the need for Respectful Relationships Education for the particular groups your organisation serves?

	Not at all needed 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Major or urgent need 10
Rating	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q4 Is your organisation currently providing Respectful Relationships Education to young people?

- Yes
- No

Q4a If so, please describe the program being offered.

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Q5 Have staff at your organisation participated in NAPCAN Love Bites training?

- Yes
- No

Q6 How useful was the NAPCAN Love Bites training received?

	Not at all useful 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Extremely useful 10
Rating	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q7 Please list the three most important things you learned from NAPCAN Love Bites

training.

- 1 \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 \_\_\_\_\_

Q8 What training content do you consider relevant for the staff in your organisation?  
*Please tick all that apply.*

- Understanding domestic and family violence
  - Understanding and preventing sexual assault
  - Evidence for respectful relationships education
  - Developing a positive ethos for prevention across the organisation
  - Training in specific programs/curriculum
  - Responding to disclosures
  - Gender equity
  - Youth-led respectful relationships campaigns
  - Facilitation skills
  - Other (please specify)
- 

Q9 What do you consider the main challenges (if any) in providing Respectful Relationships Education with the young people you work with?

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Q10 What do you think would help to overcome these challenges?

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The following section asks your views on trauma-informed practice with the young

**people you serve.**

Q11 To what extent do you think the experience of trauma impacts the young people you work with?

	Not at all 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Impacts everything 10
Rating	<input type="radio"/>									

Q12 How important do you think it is for staff in your organisation to learn to use a trauma-informed approach?

	Not at all important 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Very important 10
Rating	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q13 What kinds of trauma are experienced by the young people you work with?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Q14 Have you attended the NAPCAN training on trauma-informed practice?

- Yes
- No

Q15 What were the 3 most important things you learned?

- 1 \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 \_\_\_\_\_

Q16 What do you feel would be most helpful to learn in a trauma-informed approach? (please tick all that apply)

- Understanding the psychological impacts of trauma in young people
- Brain development and trauma

- Trauma and emotion regulation
- Causes and effects of different types of trauma (e.g., complex, developmental, inter-generational)
- Impact of trauma on attachment and relationships
- How trauma affects family dynamics
- Effects of trauma on communities
- Cultural awareness and trauma
- How to support a sense of physical and emotional safety for traumatised youth
- Trauma and behaviour management
- Approaches to healing trauma
- Other (please describe)

Q17 Do you have any further comments or suggestions about NAPCAN training in Love Bites or trauma-informed practice (as part of Love Bites training)?

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**The final section of the survey asks about the work that you and your organisation do. Your answers to these questions will give us an overview of the work currently being done in the field and the communities being served.**

Q18 Please provide the name of your organisation

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Q19 Town or community where your office is located

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Q20 What is your current role in this organisation?

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**The following questions relate to the services provided at the location you have specified.**

Q21 What are the main services provided by your organisation?

- Education
  - Health
  - Family Support
  - Recreation/Sport
  - Child Care
  - Youth Work
  - Domestic/Family Violence services
  - Sexual Assault services
  - Police
  - Youth detention
  - Adult detention
  - Disability services
  - Legal Services
  - Other (please specify)
- 

Q22 How many staff are employed at your location?  
*If exact numbers not known please provide your best estimate.*

\_\_\_\_\_ Click to write

**Q23 Which of the following groups does your organisation serve? (Please click all that apply.)**

- 0-5 years
- 6-12 years
- 12-18 years
- 25+ years
- Families
- Women
- Men
- Non-binary

**Q24 Please indicate below which are the main cultural/language groups your organisation serves.**

- Alyawarr
- Anindilyakwa
- Anmatyerr
- Eastern/Central Arrernte
- English speaking
- Filipino
- Greek
- Gurindji
- Indian
- Kriol
- Larrakia
- Luritja/Pintupi

- Murrinh Patha
  - Pitjantjatjara
  - Timorese
  - Tiwi
  - Warlpiri
  - Warumungu
  - Western Arrarnta
  - Wumpurrarni
  - Yolgnu
  - Other (please state)
- 

**Q25a Does your organisation currently play a role in domestic and family violence prevention?**

- Yes
- No

**Q25bb Please provide brief details of the role played and programs offered by your organisation in domestic and family violence prevention - if any.**

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Q25c Who is the main target group for these activities?

- Young people
  - Couples
  - Families
  - Men
  - Women
  - Whole community
  - LGBTQI community
  - Other (please explain)
- 

Q26a Does your organisation currently play a role in sexual violence prevention?

- Yes
- No

Q26b Please provide brief details of the role played and programs offered by your organisation in sexual assault prevention - if any.

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Q26c Who is the main target group for these activities?

- Young people
- Couples
- Families
- Men
- Women
- Whole community
- LGBTQI community

Other (please explain)

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Q27 Has your organisation undertaken initiatives or training with providers who specialise in domestic and family violence prevention *and/or* sexual assault prevention?

Yes

No

Q27b Please briefly describe the activities and when they were undertaken.

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Thank you for providing this valuable information to support effective planning and implementation of respectful relationships education in the Northern Territory. In addition to this survey NAPCAN will be conducting a number of consultations relating to this project, with the aim of gathering further input and advice from those who are involved in working with young people. If your organisation would like to be involved in the consultations please contact [D.Jones3@westernsydney.edu.au](mailto:D.Jones3@westernsydney.edu.au) to indicate your interest.

Please feel free to use this space to provide any final reflections relevant to this survey.

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## Appendix 3 – RRE challenges and solutions

### Challenges for implementing RRE with young people you work with

<i>Challenges</i>	<i>Solutions</i>
<p><b>Ensuring cultural relevance</b> Ensuring the take home message using the content of a program is able to be clearly identified and understood within a cultural context</p> <p>To make them culturally appropriate in a remote setting.</p> <p>Getting them to not be 'shame' to take part</p> <p>Engaging with students who often speak English as a third or fourth language, making sure it is appropriate in community and ensuring not to re-traumatise the students</p> <p>We work with refugees so cultural sensitivity is important. Some young people may feel more comfortable talking in gender groups. They also require a gentle approach when starting to talk about the topic.</p>	<p>Ensuring program content addresses respectful relationship ideology that can be clearly understood by all cultures residing within Australia. Visual imagery and activity based program content really works well.</p> <p>Having people they are comfortable with doing the training.</p> <p>We find using games in single sessions can be engaging for the girls.</p> <p>I think some alternate materials that are aimed at CALD groups would be beneficial as well as including discussion about the difference in how these topics are seen in other countries and Australia and how to manage these differences.</p>
<p><b>Accessibility and adaptability of materials for needs (esp. out of school contexts)</b> Most young people I work with are under 16. We do not operate in a structured, sit down and listen, environment. We are aware of young people, as young as 11, engaging in sexual activity keep being told we are not allowed to discuss sexual education with them until they are 16.</p> <p>Facilitation of multiple sessions in a non- school based setting</p> <p>We are a late night youth drop in. Stand-alone modules are the best way as young people don't consistently come.</p> <p>Infrequency of delivery of the program, and access to young people outside of a school environment</p> <p>We have worked with [youth development agency], who directly employed counsellors and youth workers. They do a number of programs, but I'm not aware of Respectful Relationships Education being offered in Yuendumu. The police provide a 1 day course for men on release from jail after FDV and another course for women. I am not familiar with course content. We have a strong relationship with Alice Springs Women's Shelter Remote Outreach team, who work in Yuendumu and in Alice Springs providing support when women and children are away from Yuendumu. I think the need for respectful relationships is enormous and should be available for young children at school. Every so often I hear of behaviour of children at school where the lack of respectful relationships has created a situation that</p>	<p>People who are making the decisions for us coming and seeing our reality.</p> <p>Outreach program, and targeted interventions to young people at risk, in a range of settings, including individuals and small groups.</p> <p>If we can incorporate respectful relationships into the lives of small children and reinforce it throughout their education, we may be able to create a more cohesive community - as opposed to the fragmented society that exists. We have a wonderful mediation organisation that has grown from the vital need to defuse volatile events, and it has made a difference in the number of blowouts but not yet the simmering tensions that result from poverty, inequality and envy.</p>

makes other children feel unsafe. Not good enough.

**Staff understanding and competence to deliver the program**

The main challenge is finding the right kind of staff, with appropriate training, willingness and understanding of the importance of educating young people on Respectful Relationships.

Ensuring schools allow time for these subjects to be delivered by people who value and share the philosophy of respectful relationships. This type of information is rarely delivered in an effective manner by those who have trained in Mathematics or Science - unless the teacher/person has a specific interest in building that message into their daily subjects.

That all involved are comfortable with all aspects of the program and take an active role in it.

To do it slowly and with care not to upset anybody.

Lack of awareness of importance of Respectful Relationship education

Increase awareness of issues youth are facing in relationships; consequences of being involved in disrespectful relationships; better engagement with schools and other youth specific services to implement regular Respectful relationship education sessions.

**Perceived relevance and motivation of young people**

The people wanting to make the change.

Motivational Interviewing skills and Mindfulness Relationships skills assist change.

Keeping young people interested in the topic

Variety and continuous interaction

I work with a relatively small cohort of young people, of which only some of these will feel the course is relevant to them, therefore we wouldn't be likely to get the numbers to do the full course.

If open courses were run where we could send one or two young people

Peer pressure is difficult to manage in the environment as they pick on those who attend Love Bites modules.

**Time and resources**

Not enough room in curriculum

More training available and promotion

The sheer volume of resources and variations required for facilitating activities.

Although having many formats and variations to fit different contexts/age groups could be useful, the sheer amount of material can seem over whelming ... the amount of material in the booklets/guides/manuals in front of us leaves me unsure where to start.

Funding is currently also the biggest hurdle. Love bites stand -alone modules began and then we didn't have enough funding to keep staff to run it.

More staff! More funding.

Scheduling of suitable amount of time to facilitate a thorough education session

I am also a Counsellor, but my current role at the Women's Centre is diverse and time-poor.

