

What is the project?

Breaking the Binary Code is a 12-month project aiming to engage young people who are or identify as LGBTIQ+ and their parents/carers, and explore what is considered and currently accepted as 'normal' roles and expectations of gender and sexuality. As an outcome, Breaking the Binary Code will research and develop a narrative for families (young people and their parents/carers) that supports healthy, safe and respectful relationships. The Sexual Assault & Family Violence Centre, together with the Barwon Adolescent Task (BAT) Force, City of Greater Geelong and Creative Geelong Inc, have been funded via the Victorian Government's *Free From Violence Fund* to deliver this primary prevention initiative.

The Evidence

In Australia, family violence is mostly understood through a binary gender concept – a perpetrator who is a man, and the victim/survivor a woman – all within the context of a heterosexual relationship. Rarely, if ever, are LGBTIQ+ issues acknowledged.

"Research informs us that 1 in 3 people who identify as LGBTIQ+ experience intimate partner and/or family violence from a partner, ex-partner, or family member."

<https://vac.org.au/LGBTI-health/relationship-family-violence>

THE IMPACT OF THE ONLINE ENVIRONMENT AND PORNOGRAPHY

Pornography often depicts aggressive and violent behaviours. This has serious implications for young people's capacity to negotiate free and full consent. Maree Crabbe (*Reality & Risk: pornography, young people and sexuality project*) highlights that the ways young people understand and experience gender and sex is being influenced by what they, or their partners or peers, observe in pornography online.

PROBABILITY OF VIOLENCE AND ABUSE

The probability of violence is higher when the consequences of gender inequality intersect with other forms of inequality and discrimination (*Change the Story Framework*). Trans and gender diverse people are more likely to experience mental illness, verbal abuse and physical abuse, as well as cyber bullying and social exclusion (*Safe and Strong: A Victorian gender equality strategy*).

What is the purpose?

Based on research and engagement, the resulting narrative will aim to:

- Challenge the images of gender and sexuality and expectations portrayed through pornography, and promote healthy, safe and respectful relationships;
- Provide key terms to support parents/carers in having conversations with young LGBTIQ+ people;
- Identify what healthy and consenting sex looks like and promote equality and respect; and
- Challenge the binary constructs of women and men and provide supportive and inclusive language for young people exploring gender and sexuality.

What Next?

"Together we will create an alternative narrative for young people who are or who identify as LGBTIQ+. The narrative will be foundational as a way to educate the community and encourage discussion of gender and sexuality in order to prevent violence."