

Breaking the Binary Code Project

Celebrating gender and sexuality diversity, challenging stereotypes and relationship expectations.



Acknowledgements

The Sexual Assault & Family Violence Centre acknowledges the traditional owners of the land on which we work, the Wadawurrung people, and we pay our respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and Elders of the past, present and future. We acknowledge that the land on which we work, was never seeded and will always be Aboriginal land.

To the young people and LGBTIQ+ communities who shared their stories and provided feedback during the project — thank you. Your voices have been heard and were integral to this project.

We acknowledge and thank everyone in the community, youth and primary prevention sector, who contributed to the development and implementation of this project.

We acknowledge the support of the Victorian Government and Free from Violence funding. Special thanks to our partner organisations BATForce, City of Greater Geelong and Creative Geelong Inc and staff from The Sexual Assault & Family Violence Centre.

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The Sexual Assault & Family Violence Centre

The SAFV Centre is a community based, not-for-profit service offering a range of free and confidential trauma-informed sexual assault and family violence services across the Barwon, Wimmera and Western Melbourne areas of Victoria. The organisation specialises in services across the continuum of primary prevention to response, including the delivery of professional training services.

BATForce

The Barwon Adolescent Taskforce (BATForce) is an alliance of organisations with a stake in the provision of services with and for young people. These organisations focus on young people of all ages 10 to 25 from all socio-economic, cultural and geographical areas within the region. These organisations also focus on services that range from universal (for all young people), early intervention (for young people at risk) and tertiary (for young people at extreme risk).

City of Greater Geelong

The local government of the City of Greater Geelong has undertaken a number of initiatives that support gender equality and diversity, prevention of family violence, and delivery of the GASP program. The GASP program aims to ensure that the strength and diversity of LGBTIQ+ young people are valued, celebrated and affirmed.

Creative Geelong Inc

Creative Geelong Inc is a community of collaborators who want to support and highlight the social and economic benefits of the creative industries. Creative Geelong Inc was formed to work on understanding work of the future, telling stories of Geelong's creativity, being a forum for local creative collaboration and solving problems in the community.

Overview

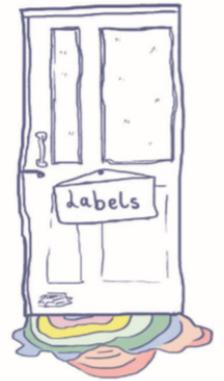
Breaking the Binary Code was an 18 month primary prevention partnership project with The Sexual Assault & Family Violence Centre, BATForce, City of Greater Geelong and Creative Geelong Inc, funded by the Victorian State Government under the Free from Violence Fund.

In Australia, family violence is mostly understood through a binary gender concept – predominantly a perpetrator who is a man, and the victim/survivor a woman – all within the context of a heterosexual relationship. While this work continues to emerge, rarely, if ever, is it focussed on LGBTIQ+ communities. Actions to prevent family violence includes, celebrating gender and sexuality diversity and challenging stereotypes and relationship expectations.

The project was driven by a strengths-based approach and worked with LGBTIQ+ young people and stakeholders. An underlying principle of this project was to ‘do no further harm’ ensuring that non binary young people impacted by family violence are not marginalised, traumatised or victimised by our work, and that our work doesn’t ‘shift blame’, trivialise, minimise, or perpetuate myths about the causes of family violence.

Project objectives

- Support the community in increasing awareness and understanding of what a healthy, safe and respectful relationship looks like in a LGBTIQ+ relationship.
- Challenge images of gender, sexuality and expectations in relationships, that are portrayed through pornography and the online environment, and promote healthy, safe and respectful relationships that are free from violence.
- Develop key terms to include in a narrative that will support parents/carers in having conversations with young LGBTIQ+ people about the subject matter.
- Challenge the binary constructs of women and men and provide supportive and inclusive language for young people exploring gender and sexuality.



With an emerging evidence base on the prevalence of family violence in LGBTIQ+ communities, consultations and engagement with the community and sector was central to the Breaking the Binary Code Project.

During the consultation and engagement phase, presentations were delivered in schools, and consultations and surveys at community events and workshops, capturing stories and data on the lived experiences of family violence and exploring the societal constructs of gender and sexuality and expectations in relationships.

Consultation and engagement

The project engaged 18 stakeholder organisations, in addition to four project partner organisations, at a regional and state-wide level.

The project included direct consultations and presentations with young people in a variety of settings, formal surveys, and consultation with youth and family violence sector representatives.

The consultation and engagement phase achieved:

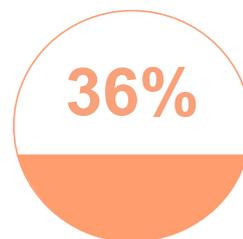
520 consultations across schools, community events and youth and community sector.

112 completed surveys (online and face-to-face).

18 external stakeholder organisations connected through the project.

Contributing to the evidence base

Of the 112 people who completed the formal survey:



had experienced intimate partner violence.



had experienced family violence from a family member.



identified as part of the LGBTIQ+ communities.



rated that rigid gender roles and stereotyping **never** has a negative impact. Both identified as not within the LGBTIQ+ communities.

Project learnings

- Overwhelmingly, those surveyed understand rigid gender roles and stereotypes highly contribute to family violence.
- Young people are aware that healthy relationships include freedom, choice and respect and acknowledge that power and control are characteristics of negative relationships
- It is suggested by the community that there is a lack of LGBTIQ+ relationships and representation of diversity and role models in media.
- Stereotypes of femininity and masculinity frequently reflect a heteronormative narrative of relationships.

The Project utilised the data and information collected during the consultation and engagement phase, with three key themes emerging. With further analysis of each key theme, a narrative and key messages were developed.

Key themes and messages

Inclusive language makes you feel safe

Encourage conversations about healthy, safe, equal and respectful relationships for LGBTIQ+ young people, and challenge harmful expectations.

As put by the young people themselves:

'You may not notice inclusive language, but those who are excluded do'

'I'd rather you politely ask than leave me out entirely'

Promote diverse representation of LGBTIQ+ relationships and role models

Recognise and value the experiences of LGBTIQ+ communities and celebrate diversity.

In the words of young people:

'If you aren't represented, who do you look up to?'

'Everyone deserves to see a reflection of themselves in the media succeeding.'

Challenge binary gender constructs and stereotypes

Challenge a world where everyone is assumed to be heterosexual and binary gender.

As one young person noted:

'Breaking away from stereotypes normalises diversity.'

Resources

The key themes and narratives gained from this project informed and guided the development of three Zines, led by artist, Samantha Thompson. The Zines align to the three key themes and messaging that support and encourage discussion of gender, sexuality, relationships and diversity.

The Zines are available for the community at

www.safvcentre.org.au/our-services/primary-prevention/breaking-the-binary-code

