



KEEP IT SIMPLE EVALUATION REPORT 2007

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Manly Drug Education and Counselling Centre (MDECC) developed community based peer education programs within their Health Promotion Program in 1999. Two very successful programs were developed for targeting young people and their parents after consultation with the Northern Beaches local community. Building onto these existing peer education models, Keep It Simple (KIS) Club Project was developed in 2004 as a response to the needs of local club owners/operators. It became clear that there was a significant need for drug education and harm reduction information among the hidden populations of 'clubbers' and 'ravers', not only locally, but also throughout the Sydney metropolitan area.

Fifteen young people from the 'clubbing' community were recruited to become KIS peers. Three people dropped out before training. They were a mix of university and TAFE students with part time jobs who had an interest in the harms of drug use and the impact these harms could potentially have on the lives of themselves and their friends. They were intensively trained in the most current information, utilising research from drug information agencies. The training included knowledge, skills and attitudes to equip them to pass on credible and reliable information in a non judgmental way. The training was comprehensive and had a special focus on mental and sexual health issues which are becoming an increasing concern of drug users and their friends. All recruited peers completed training and participated in the program.

The primary aims of the project included providing the dance-going public in Sydney with information about 'club drugs', informing people attending dance events about the potential harms of drug use and to informally monitor drug trends in the 'dance-scene'.

Over 3,570 people were reached through attendance at events, conversations in informal settings and hits to the website. In the field, the KIS peers gave information

to over 849 punters by means of drug quizzes and conversations. KIS peers also provided resources such as the KIS website cards, condom packs and written materials. With informal conversations the majority took place at either the KIS peer's home or their friend's home or where the peer is studying. A further proportion took place in pubs, restaurants, venues and house parties. This showed that in informal settings, conversations around drug use and harms arise. Therefore, there are social advantages in equipping young adults with the information required to lead conversations around these topics, so that when they come up, informed and responsible answers are given. The KIS website was created with KIS peer input and this complemented their work in the field.

Partnerships were reformed with Loveworks @ The Big Day Out, Transmission raves and a host of new event promoters. KIS worked closely with the Inspire Foundation who specialise in youth mental health and Clinic 16 provided sexual health support through training and resources.

Qualitative and quantitative research methods were used to externally evaluate the project and the following outcomes were concluded from the data. As expected, peer knowledge increased and this was recorded by means of a pre and post training knowledge test. Peer confidence in conducting peer education was rated as confident to fairly confident.

Simple satisfaction surveys provided feedback to the personnel involved in the project as to the relevance and appropriateness of the training. The KIS peers rated 85% of their training as being 'very useful' and 'excellent'.

In 2007 the KIS project was invited to participate in a research project in which the efficacy of peer education was to be examined. The National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC) selected three projects in Australia and one in Amsterdam to follow-up recipients of peer education three months after the initial conversation. Peers were trained to administer baseline surveys to the patrons who agreed to participate. The results of this first major study about the efficacy of "club" based education will be published in 2008. Many valuable insights were gained and collaboration with NDARC lent more credibility to the project in general.

Out of the 849 conversations held in clubs, approximately 800 drug quizzes and baseline surveys were completed during the 10 events attended. Overall 41% of questions in the five different quizzes were answered incorrectly and gave the KIS peers plenty of opportunity to educate about drugs, dispel myths and most importantly pass on harm reduction tips to punters.

It has become clear after collating the data from the field that young males (n=474) were more likely to make contact with KIS than young females (n=375). This is a significant change from previous MDECC peer education programs where education was passed on to approximately 50% males and females. This result is very encouraging in that young males are generally perceived as the most difficult

demographic for services to reach. Through the KIS project, it may be possible to link more young people and especially young males into appropriate services if required.

Another unexpected outcome arose from the peer education in informal settings data. Most recorded that conversations were with friends (and friends of friends), followed by relatives and work colleagues, but it was interesting to note that just over 6% of all recorded conversations took place with strangers or 'randoms', as some peers referred to them. This shows that this style of intervention mainly flows through established social structures but also through to other people. Peers were passing on information to these 'randoms' while out in bars, clubs and pubs. It shows that the intervention creates a snowballing effect which is impossible to measure in its entirety.

Since the project began in 2005, there has been a noticeable shift in attitudes from promoters. Initially promoters were fearful of providing drug education because they did not want to be perceived to be 'flaunting' the fact that patrons used drugs. In 2007 it is a different story and promoters and club owners are welcoming projects such as KIS. Patrons or punters generally appreciate the effort being made to offer them health and referral information. The summer 2006/07 saw a very credible Club Drugs Campaign launched by the Community Drug Strategies Unit of NSW Health. Having credible resources such as produced by the campaign worked well in conjunction with the project as too many times in the past young people would initially be wary of any 'education' offered in reaction to being exposed to 'scare tactic' style campaigns.

In summary, the KIS project has met all of its stated aims and objectives. Twelve KIS peers were trained with credible, reliable and comprehensive drug information aimed at reaching their friends and other peers with harm prevention strategies. A solid base has been created to expand on and further funding will ensure that the project continues to provide the hidden populations that attend clubs, raves and events with education, harm reduction information and health services if needed.

This project report will be disseminated to the funding body (Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing), key stakeholders and interested parties as requested.