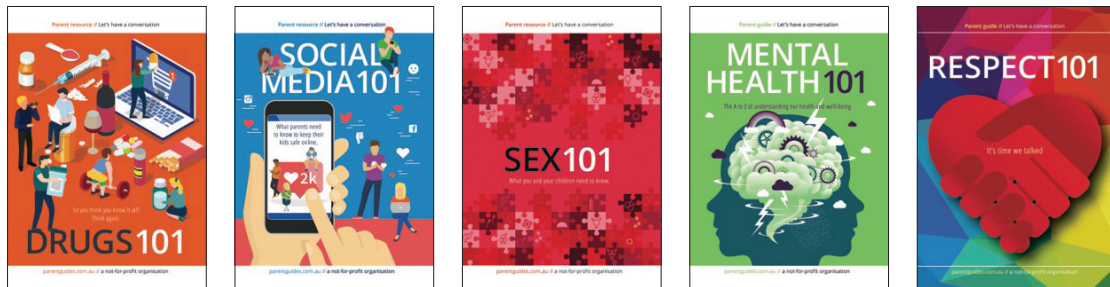


LET'S HAVE A CONVERSATION

ABOUT SEX, DRUGS, SOCIAL
MEDIA, MENTAL HEALTH, RESPECT



PARENT FORUM NIGHTS

**HELPING
FAMILIES
NAVIGATE
THE ISSUES**

*Presented by Parent Guides
in collaboration with your school community*



PARENT GUIDES

Keeping Your Children Safe

Young people have never had so many communication tools, yet connecting with them is as tricky as ever. Our Parent Guides content is transparent, trustworthy and relevant. Talented, like-minded researchers, editors, experts and case studies create evidence-based guides with the latest information. We want to champion change, and minimise and prevent harm.



RESPECT 101

No longer just a word to be sung, R.E.S.P.E.C.T. is all about kindness and community.

SOCIAL MEDIA 101

Social media can be a godsend. It can also be a nightmare. We tell parents what their kids are doing online.

Phone: 0407 542 655

Website: www.parentguides.com.au

Email: eileen@parentguides.com.au

CONTACT US

EILEEN BERRY // FOUNDER + EDITOR

eileen@parentguides.com.au 0407 542 655

FIND US

WEBSITE // www.parentguides.com.au

FACEBOOK // www.facebook.com/parentguides

TWITTER // twitter.com/ParentGuidesAu

INTRODUCTION

PARENT GUIDES: LET'S HAVE A CONVERSATION

Talking honestly about drugs, mental health, social media, sex and respect can help families navigate these complex issues

WHO WE ARE

The *Parent Guides* series encourages important conversations between parents, carers and teenagers. Tackling issues such as drugs, mental health, sex and respect, these valuable resources provide the latest data, advice and personal stories to help families navigate these complex issues.

To ensure a quality product, *Parent Guides* uses talented, like-minded researchers, editors, experts and case studies to produce evidence-based booklets highlighting the latest national statistics and research. The project has ACNA not-for-profit status.

WHAT WE DO

To ensure a quality product is produced, *Parent Guides* uses talented, like-minded researchers, editors, experts and case studies to bring highlight the latest evidence-based national statistics and research.

We champion change with customised published products that empower parents to take ownership and connect with their children over issues that can be difficult to broach. Our 36-page resources are substantial because parents are hungry for detailed information that is relevant and current.

The information is tailored for parents so they can be open, honest and candid without resorting to sensationalism. Our guides do not glorify or catastrophise words or images.

Ultimately our aim is to ensure that through their parents and carers, our teenagers have the life skills needed to be resilient, cope with negative external influences and become healthy adults.

We want them to have the confidence to say no to drugs and other potentially dangerous activities by speaking the truth with no hidden agendas.

WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED

Since *Parent Guides* began in 2014, we have produced five comprehensive resource materials – *Drugs 101*, *Sex 101*, *Social Media 101*, *Mental Health 101* and *Respect 101* in digital format and in hard copy. We also hold information nights with expert panels.

CURRENT AND FUTURE INITIATIVES

In early 2019 *Parent Guides* published *Respect 101*, a timely look at developing respect in all aspects of young people's lives, including family, sexuality, gender, race, religion and community. This guide was produced with a grant from the federal Office of the Status of Women. Our other resources have been self-funded. *Respect 101* coincided with the development of our ground-breaking play about suicide by theatre veteran Alan Hopgood AM.

Jess Chooses Life (formerly *Suicide: It's Time We Talked*) won a state *Pick My Project* grant and was successfully performed in Geelong in 2019. We are working to present the play in other parts of Victoria.

WE ARE ALSO WORKING TOWARDS

- Securing funding to update and distribute resources to parents through schools and organisations
- Securing funding for and developing *Gambling & Gaming 101*, *Resilience 101*, *Money 101* and *Body Image 101*
- Working with education departments to deliver our resources and information sessions in schools
- Collaborating on related projects with other not-for-profits
- Continuing to develop and build upon our newsletters
- Appointing young people as ambassadors.

WHAT WE NEED


To achieve our aim of sparking important conversations and minimising harm among young people, *Parent Guides* needs funding and "in-kind support" to produce more resources in a range of formats and distribute them as widely as possible. Ideally, they will be accompanied by information nights and community events where experts can educate families directly and answer the many questions parents and carers have.

A new guide costs almost \$50,000 to produce and distribute, and our play costs \$20,000 to perform. To continue and expand upon these important projects, we need financial and "in-kind support" to:

- Ensure that our resources and the information they contain is relevant and up to date
- Develop new resources and products
- Innovate on social media, which is where young people now "hang out"
- Develop more information nights for schools, community groups and libraries
- Nurture ongoing and new relationships with schools and other not-for-profits
- Expand our operations and events nationally.

BECOME A 'CHAMPION OF CHANGE'





RESPECTING DIVERSITY

Support for diversity is crucial for the health and wellbeing of LGBTIQ+ young people.

Q&A

STUDENT SEXUAL ATTENTION QUESTION

Which of these statements best describes your sexual feelings as a young person?

When I came out ...

Many of my friends ...

How would you describe your experience of coming out?

Such an anticlimax! Ever since the world to come in, it was actually not that hard and was super thankful for it. I did not feel most of the time, and he was fine.

Only to people of the opposite sex

SEX	PERCENTAGE
MALE	53.2%
GENDER	76%
FEMALE	78.8%

// PARENT TIPS

Every child needs different things from their family and every relationship is unique. You can show them support by:

- Focusing on the love that you have for your child/teen and not
- Learning all you can about the LGBTIQ+ community, networks, support groups and issues relating to people.
- Researching social groups for LGBTIQ+ people that you may like to support your child or loved one around.
- Encouraging yourself and your child/teen to read about safe sex, HIV/AIDS and other STIs.

From Respect 101

[illegible]

RESPECT 101
This resource was produced with a grant from the federal Office of the Status of Women.

PARENT SERIES: LET'S HAVE A CONVERSATION

parentguides.com.au 5



A GUIDE TO PARENT GUIDES

We must equip young people with the skills and strategies needed to deal with taboo topics and build resilience

DRUGS 101 *Let's have a conversation*

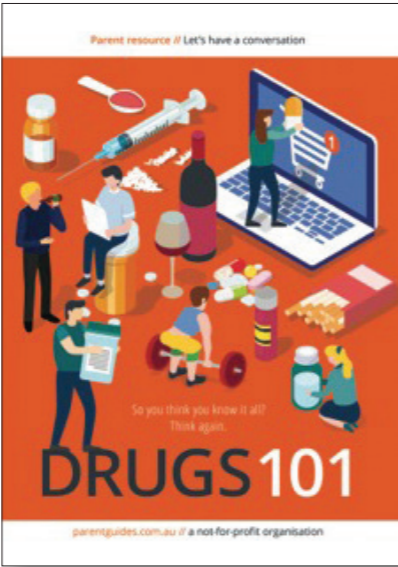
Drugs 101 is a resource for parents, carers and teachers of children aged 8-17. It features what drugs are, their effects, interviews with users and tips from experienced experts.

CONTENT: *Parent Guides* are a resource that create trust, credibility and confidence in families to deal with issues affecting young people, in this case using and abusing drugs.

We want to encourage open and honest conversations between parents, carers, teachers and young people, to educate and minimise harm.

Drugs 101 aims to empower adults with information and strategies to help guide those important discussions. *Drugs 101* explains what drugs are, who takes them and how to educate kids about them.

It covers everything from marijuana to ecstasy and heroin, profiles former users, speaks to experts who help those with drug problems and provides links to useful resources and services.



KEYWORDS:
Education;
parenting; parent
guide; parent
resource; drugs;
drug problem;
addiction;
teenagers; children.

SOCIAL MEDIA 101 *Let's have a conversation*

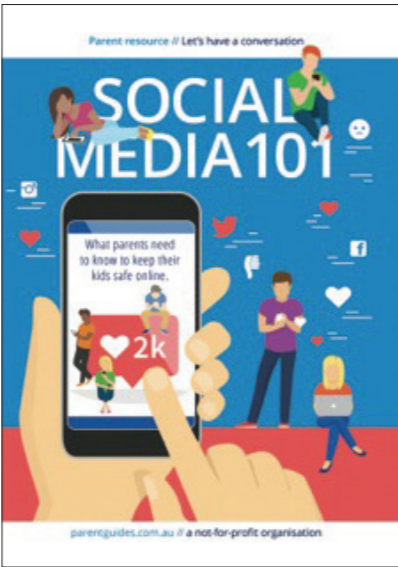
Social Media 101 helps parents understand what their kids are doing online, when it might be a problem and how to make the most of the positive aspects of cyberspace.

CONTENT: Young people have never had so many communication tools yet communicating with them is as tricky as ever.

For parents, teachers and carers, the cyber age provides enormous opportunities but also brings many challenges. *Social Media 101* provides them with information about what kids are doing online, when it might be a problem and how to make the most of the positive aspects of cyber space.

Speaking to a range of experts, we cover apps, websites, gaming, gambling, cyber-bullying, cyber laws, privacy laws and 'device advice'.

Armed with this information, adults will find discussing these issues with children and teenagers easier and more fruitful.



KEYWORDS:
Education;
parenting; parent
guide; parent
resource; social
media; online;
internet; cyber
safety; cyber
bullying; teenagers;
children.

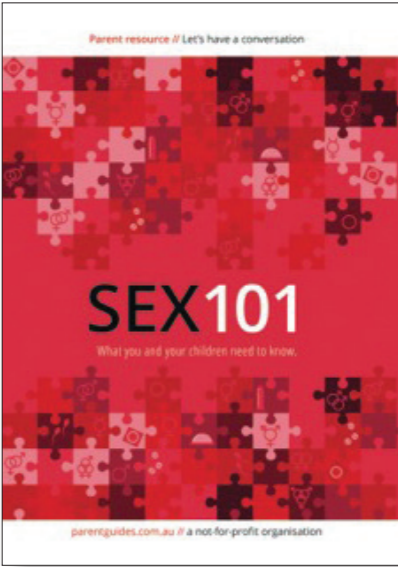
SEX 101 *Let's have a conversation*

Let's talk about Sex. Sex 101 tells parents and carers what their teens are doing – or not doing – and offers advice on how to keep them safe as they navigate relationships.

CONTENT: *Sex 101* looks at sexual activity, growing up, sex education, relationships, safer sex, sexting, the law, STIs, and LGBTIQ+ issues.

The no-nonsense guide informs adults about what their kids are doing and thinking, and arms them with information that can facilitate positive conversations about sex and sexuality.

It also emphasises the importance of accepting and embracing diversity, so all teens feel comfortable with their individual sexual identity. Useful contacts for more detailed resources are also provided.



KEYWORDS:
Education;
parenting; parent
guide; parent
resource; sex;
relationship;
sexuality; LGBTIQ;
gender; diversity;
teenagers; children.

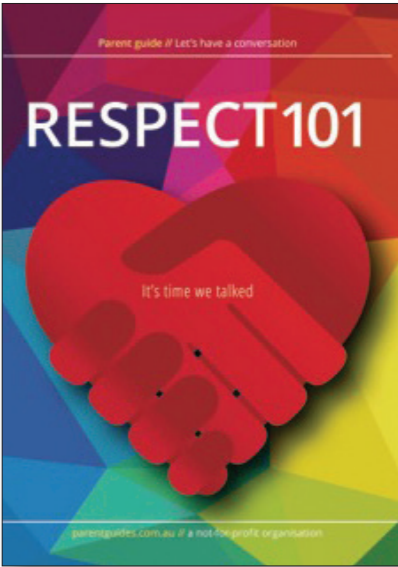
RESPECT 101 *Let's have a conversation*

Respect 101 identifies what respectful behaviour is, how to turn disrespectful into respectful, create life-long relationships and embed respect within the culture of adolescence.

CONTENT: *Respect 101* helps families to define respect and encourage it in their children. Written by education and psychology experts with input from students, educators and other teen specialists, it is designed as a starting point to build respect and develop resilience in children.

It looks at how adults can provide positive role models while guiding young people through today's cyber minefields and empowering them to be strong and respectful.

Experts look at family life, values and how family breakdown and domestic violence can affect children. There are sections on sexism and equality, racism, social media and LGBTIQ+, as well as pointers to more assistance.



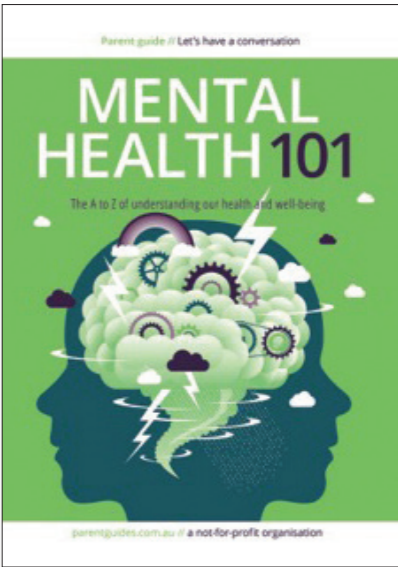
KEYWORDS:
Education;
parenting;
parent guide;
parent resource;
respect; resilience;
relationships;
racism; sexism;
homophobia;
teenagers; children.

MENTAL HEALTH 101 *Let's have a conversation*

This important guide looks at how families can avoid and/or deal with issues such as suicide, anxiety, depression, ADHD, self-harm, eating disorders and other mental illnesses.

CONTENT: Honest and open conversation is a must for parents and carers dealing with teen mental health. *Mental Health 101* covers important issues including suicide, anxiety, depression, ADHD, self-harm, eating disorders and other mental illnesses. It contains statistics, expert advice and case studies involving families and health professionals.


Parents, carers and teachers can use the information, drawn from reputable sources, to start important conversations with teenagers about mental health. Young people have never had so many communication tools yet communicating with them is as tricky as ever. *Mental Health 101* hopes to help break down barriers and encourage meaningful dialogue between generations.



KEYWORDS:
Education;
parenting; parent
guide; parent
resource; mental
health; mental
illness; mental
disorder; anxiety;
depression;
teenagers; children.

BEHIND EVERY PARENT GUIDE

Meet our panel experts



STEVEN DUPON | *Gaming | Social Media 101*
Founding Director of the Institute of Games


- Steven is the Founding Director of the Institute of Games, an organisation that keeps gaming safe and fun for children.

He is the author of *Video Games: How to deal with Excessive Gaming and the Video Games Report*. He is also a winner of the READYS for excellence and innovation in the delivery of youth services in Victoria.



STEPHANIE MERKOURIS | *Gambling*
Deakin University School of Psychology
Research Fellow

- Dr Stephanie Merkouris is a Research Fellow, in the School of Psychology at Deakin University, with over 8 years of research experience. One of her main research interests relates to the examination of factors associated with the development of behavioural addictions (e.g., gambling and gaming), and how advances in technology can be utilised for assessment, intervention and dissemination purposes.



RUSSELL PRATT | *Sex 101 | Respect 101*
Forensic and Counselling Psychologist

- Dr Russ Pratt is recognised as one of Australia's most experienced Forensic Psychologists working in the field of sexual abuse and child protection issues. Russ regularly writes and presents both nationally and internationally about youth exhibiting sexually abusive behaviours, the impacts of pornography on sexual practice, particularly for youth and with those adolescents who sexually harm others, and trauma, attachment and brain development issues.

MATTHEW BOYD | *Resilience | Mental Health 101*
AFL Development Academy Coach

- Matthew is a former professional athlete in the Australian Football League (AFL) where he spent 16 years as a player for the Western Bulldogs Football Club from 2002-2017, captaining the club from 2011-2013. He is currently working at the Collingwood Football Club as a Development Academy coach, where he works closely with 1-4-year players.

Outside of football, Matthew attended Deakin University where he completed a Bachelor of Commerce (2008) and a Master of Business Administration – MBA (2013). In 2014, he undertook a 1-year internship at PwC where he worked in the Business Advisory

arm of the firm on various internal and external projects. He is currently completing his Level 3 High Performance Coach accreditation.

FRANK ZOUMBOLIS | *Resilience | Mental Health 101*
Psychotherapist

- Frank Zoumboulis has worked in private practice as a psychotherapist in Melbourne for over 20 years. His work is informed by experience and psychological theory from a psychodynamic approach i.e. in order to feel good about ourselves and our lives we need to develop good relationships with others. Frank is an advocate for young people having a say about what may be bothering them. He works with adults and young people who are experiencing anxiety, depression, body dysmorphia, relationship issues and low self-esteem.

KIRSTEN CLELAND | *Drugs 101 | Mental Health 101*
headspace

- Kirsten is a mental health social worker who has worked in the public mental health sector for 25 years. For the past decade she has been the Manager of headspace Elsternwick. Headspace was established to provide a model of early intervention for young people and their family and friends, and see young people with social and family issues, mental health concerns as well as difficulties with school or work and drug and alcohol misuse/abuse.

PAULA ROSS | *Drugs 101*
Psychologist | Williams Rd Family Therapy Centre

- Paula is a practising psychologist and holds a master's degree in counselling psychology. She has worked in the drug and alcohol field for over 20 years. Paula has particular interest and experience in working with individuals, couples and families with issues of substance use and addiction and completed her Masters' thesis on therapists' perspectives on engaging family members in alcohol and drug counselling. She maintains a private practice, is a senior consultant with LeeJenn, and is on the advisory committee of Family Drug Help at the Self Help Addiction Resource Centre (SHARC).

MARIE MCLEOD | *Mental Health 101 | PoPsy Founder*

- Qualified in social work, adult education and positive psychology Marie's work blends a deep understanding of positive psychology with a long-term commitment to community development in vulnerable communities. Marie has worked in child protection, juvenile justice and disability.

Profile // Travis Barugh

THE ADDICT

Travis Barugh began drinking alcohol at the age of 12. Later he became addicted to speed, ecstasy and ice. Today, he believes abstinence is the most effective way to stay clean.

Q. HOW DID YOU FIRST EXPERIMENT WITH ALCOHOL?

A "I grew up in a middle-class family. My father worked hard and my mother was a stay-at-home mother. They both drank every night. I wanted to be an Olympic high jumper – it's all I wanted – but I broke bones in my leg when I was 12. About two weeks later I was at a party and I didn't have an excuse not to drink any more. I'd go to parties and was given way too much free rein. From about the age of 15 mum would drive me to the bottle shop and buy me vodka. I could do whatever I wanted."

Q. WHAT DID ALCOHOL AND LATER DRUGS DO FOR YOU BACK THEN?

A "From the first time I tried alcohol, I loved it. It quietened that inner self-critic. Throughout my teenage years I was still a good kid, I still helped out the football club and played and coached basketball. I finished year 12 and did well but a few months after I finished school my parents separated. I had nobody to talk to and thought no one cared about me. A house of seven people turned into just me and my father. The broken family tore me apart. I find most drug addicts are really sensitive to everything in life and I guess from a young age I learnt that if you have a shit day and things get tough, you can get rid of it with alcohol or other drugs."

Q. HOW DID USING DRUGS HAVE AN IMPACT ON YOUR LIFE?

A "During the time I was using ice – from when I was 19 until 32 – I had what resembled a life. I had a partner, then had a wedding and a wife and we had a business. But I was using ice non-stop. When I was 25 my little brother committed suicide and I didn't feel I had any reason to live any more. The drugs totally exploded. I pushed myself to not feel. I was 78 kilos – now I weigh 105 kilos. My brain started shutting down. I would suddenly black out – that happened about 100 times in the last month before I stopped. I had five car accidents. My whole world fell down around me."

Q. WHAT DO YOU THINK WOULD HAVE HELPED YOU AVOID ALCOHOL AND DRUGS, OR REDUCED THE EXTENT OF THE PROBLEM?

A "The whole time I was using drugs, not once did someone say, 'What are you doing? You're a good bloke... you're going down the wrong path'. All I wanted as a child was some boundaries. I didn't get anything. I couldn't say as a child that I wanted boundaries and some love and that I wanted my parents to care. For boys, it's your father. I think it's a given that your



Photo: Supplied

"About two weeks later I was at a party and I didn't have an excuse not to drink any more."

mum's going to be good to you most of the time but having that strong fatherly figure and a good relationship with your father is important."

Q. HOW HAVE YOU GOT OFF DRUGS AND STAYED OFF THEM?

A "I had six months in rehab and going through all that, you learn to forgive. When I was growing up the parenting emphasis was more on, 'this is my way and this is how we're doing it'. Nowadays I think people discuss stuff more. Dad doesn't have too much to do with me although he's proud of the changes I've made. I get along well with mum. Through getting clean and abstaining from all drugs and alcohol, I've also learnt how to deal with the stuff that goes on in my head. It's been quite a journey in learning about myself."

// Travis Barugh is a construction manager for Delco Developments who last year won the Master Builders Victoria Award of Excellence for best renovation/addition \$500,000 to \$750,000.

WHY SCHOOLS USE PARENT GUIDES

Our guides and parent nights facilitate important conversations



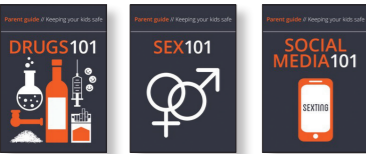
"Eileen and her team had been working with us for more than two years. It has been great to work collaboratively with Eileen to develop the information resources and run the information evenings for our school community. Each resource has been drafted with care and expertise to ensure that they can be a useful resource for families navigating life.

"The **101 Parent Guide** series are informative and contain relevant and pertinent information. As a school it is great to be able to give our families concrete relevant information to walk out with after a parent information evening. It's a resource we can keep referring back to and can be used as a conversation starter with young people at home."

KATE MAJOR
Director of Wellbeing, Firbank Grammar School



MAKING A DIFFERENCE
Firbank Grammar with parents and teachers in attendance for Drugs 101. Our wonderful panel included Travis, a recovered drug addict who shared his brave journey from addiction to abstinence.



"The best resources I have ever read on the subjects of children's exposure and involvement with drugs, sex and internet evils.

"Every GP should read these informative resources.
"Every parent should have this information at their fingertips. I have urged my daughters to read them [and discuss with my grandchildren]."

DR ANN KELMANN, GP



"At Trinity Grammar School, staff have worked with Eileen Berry on **Parent Guides** for **Drugs 101** and **Mental Health 101**.

"These resources offer a comprehensive, but effective way to update parents on current issues affecting young people. They are both factual, with plenty of research findings included, but also reveal compelling personal stories from young people, parents and experts in the field.

"They are visually impressive and complement other information provided to parents from our school regarding student wellbeing."

ANNABEL COBURN
Head of Counselling, Trinity Grammar School, Kew



"The latest event in our 'McKinnon Parent Series', **Mental Health 101**, was a great success thanks to the support and guidance from Eileen Berry from **Parent Guides**. **Parent Guides** have become an incredibly popular and appreciated resource within our parent community as they provide our parents with a take-home resource that not only provides them with access to reliable, relevant and up-to-date information but also a conversation starter and a resource that can be shared with friends and family."

PATTY ETCELL
Wellbeing Coordinator, McKinnon Secondary College



"A big warm thank you for your support and your contribution to our education capsule on 19 June 2019. **Parent Guides**' insights and perspective on BIG issues like RESPECT are of great value to us and our readers. I am hopeful that we can continue with this sort of collaboration in the future."

KIMBERLY BARRY
Senior Business Manager, Education, Domain, Nine

"You are on the right track [with these resources] and have produced some excellent material."

DR TONY MORDINI
Creator of Thinking Ethically education program for teachers and deputy principal Mount Ridley College

WHAT WE ARE ABOUT

We want parents to feel confident in equipping their children with 21st century life skills

Today the 'Gig Economy' – also known as the sharing economy, the platform economy, the access economy or the collaborative economy – allows people to connect and share their assets and talents for minimal cost.

We can easily see that technology is changing the dynamics and forcing institutions to be more transparent, inclusive, dynamic and personalised. In our opinion, there is a shift in trust from institutions back to individuals, reversing the historical trend and bringing with it profound implications for society. We believe institutional trust will continue to unravel and collapse.

As the influence of institutions decreases, trust and influence grow among our peers albeit in family, friends, classmates, colleagues and even strangers. No longer is the 'top down' influence of elites, authorities and institutions a given. We are seeing a social and cultural shift in society, and this is why our **Parent Guides** booklets are needed in our communities to create trust, credibility and confidence.

Our ethics have driven our passion to develop and create products that can translate to the wider community. To us it matters that we get transparency and trust right. We co-opted a group of highly talented, like-minded researchers, editors, experts and case studies to produce evidence-based booklets highlighting relevant national statistics and research that are contemporary and answer the difficult questions that can hinder important conversations between parents and teenagers.

MISSION STATEMENT (PURPOSE)

To minimise and prevent harm to our youth.
We will champion change with smart innovations providing customised published products that empower parents to take ownership.

WE WILL BE BOLD

- We have gathered highly talented, passionate people to distil insights and wrestle clarity from complexity through well-researched, independent facts.
- We are not a 1300 or 1800 number, a double-sided brochure, a four-page pamphlet or a blog. Why? because we want parents to have meaty and robust conversations with their teenagers over a hard copy booklet and not a PDF.
- It is what it is: plain and simple.

Parent Guides is tailored for PARENTS, CARERS AND TEACHERS so they can be open, honest and candid without resorting to sensationalism. Our guides do not glorify or catastrophise words or images. The material is plain and simple, open and honest, non-judgmental. We ultimately aim to ensure that through their parents our teenagers have the life skills needed to be resilient, cope

with negative external influences and become healthy adults. We want them to have the confidence to say no to drugs – and other potentially dangerous activities – by speaking the truth with no hidden agendas.

VISION

We have unprecedented access to wealth, health and education. However our kids also face unprecedented external pressures when it comes to issues such as sex, drugs, social media and body image.

Parent Guide resources open up topics that allow open and honest conversations between parents and carers teachers and health professionals to ensure that future generations know the dangers between drinking and taking drugs to excess; sexting and revenge porn; resilience; and, enthusiastic consent and respect. It's a very different world to the one we all grew up in.

THROUGH PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS WE WILL:

- Identify champions of change and contribute to the wellbeing of the adolescent community by strengthening the bridge between teenagers and their parents or carers.
- Aid them to navigate traditional and emerging issues they will encounter, including drugs, sex, social media, pornography, gambling and mental health.

STRATEGY

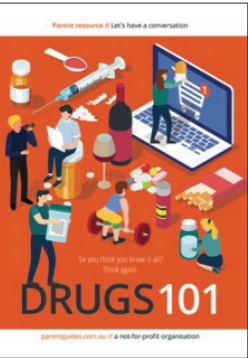
Our strategy is to address the uncertainties and fears that parents face by providing research that is trusted, investigated, transparent, ethical and allows parents to say **"Let's have a Conversation"** with their kids. The resulting communication affirms parents are more accountable and helps kids to feel more included at a grassroots level.

It can't be left up to the teachers and schools to take ownership over all the taboo subjects.

We create editorial that is genuinely independent, with no embedded or subliminal messages. We are the detached observers, the warriors for impartiality.

We will create systems that will monitor and measure the impact **Parent Guides** have on the community.

YVONNE HACKETT
PARENT GUIDES,CEO



DODGY DRUGS: A FEW WISE WORDS CAN SAVE LIVES

By **EILEEN BERRY** | *editor of Drugs 101, a guide for parents on all things drug-related.*
www.parentguides.com.au

THE AGE & THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD | December 7, 2015

Be realistic: young people will always do drugs. The best that parents can do is arm them with knowledge about the dangers and the confidence to say no.

Parents of teenagers entering the world of raves and dance parties have probably tried some of the drugs their kids are now encountering. Been there, done that.

But the world is a very different place and today's young people are exposed to many more drugs, including potent and dodgy batches that can kill. The tragic deaths of two Stereosonic patrons highlight the need to educate our kids about drugs and help them to protect themselves.

No one is advocating a drugs free-for-all. But we must acknowledge that illegal substances aren't going anywhere and the best way to deal with them is with open, honest conversations.

Following the Stereosonic deaths, some people will no doubt want such events banned. That won't help. Kids would simply take their drugs somewhere else, probably even more unsafely.

As an adult I've attended music festivals, such as Earthcore, and rave parties. It was fun – a lot of fun. These events are built around music sets that kick in just as your E is working at its best. From my experience, that's around 6am, just as the sun is coming up. DJs, who are specialists in this "line of work", are highly prized globally for sets that recognise this and give revellers what they want.

But things can and do go wrong. I was at Earthcore when a disoriented young man slipped down a river embankment and drowned. Was he "out of it" at the time? Possibly. I and others who attended were very upset. "Love in the air" quickly turned to grief.

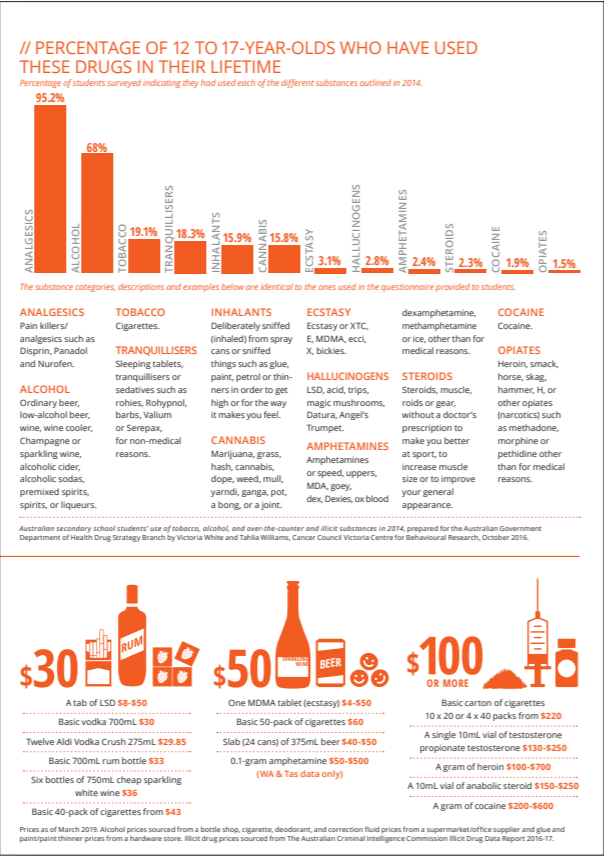
Providing drug testing facilities to see if pills are safe could help prevent bad trips that can lead to deaths such as this one and those at Stereosonic. Easing back on heavy-handed searches could also prevent overdosing: safety would improve if patrons didn't feel they had to swallow all their pills at the gate to avoid police dogs sniffing out their stash.

I've seen pills tested inside venues and police and security turn a blind eye. In my day, pill testing was usually done by "newbies" who had never taken one and were unsure how it worked. They had researched E identifiers (plus the pill reports) on the web, how they worked and what they were likely to contain.

But they still relied on others to "talk them through". What happens when? How much water is too much? When's the best time to take it? How many pills over a weekend? This side of it hasn't changed.

With summer dominated by Schoolies and music festivals such as Stereosonic, Soundwave, Falls and Rainbow Serpent, now is the time for parents to start honest discussions with their kids about all this.

What would I now tell my younger self about keeping safe? I'd ask: Am I going with a friend or group of friends I can trust? Do



we have a designated driver? Do I know where the ambulance post is? First aiders?

Look for officials who want you to be safe. They can hydrate you. They can put you in a cool spot. They can watch over you.

I would also ask: Is there a testing van or tent? Do we have a spare E to test? At \$25 a pop, pooling resources to buy a spare pill for testing would at least let you know what's in the pill. What if the E is laced with something bad? Am I really going to take it? If in doubt, don't. (Most Es are made from MDMA and ketamine or MDMA and caffeine. See www.ecstasydata.org).

Do we know anyone who has had an E from this batch? Sometimes sourcing is not a problem, but come music-festival time there are so many "batches" it can be hard to know what's what.

Do we have spare Es from a different batch? Speaking from experience, one year the batch was great, the next year a complete dud. Scrounging around for Es halfway through an event is definitely not the way to go.

SOUTHPORT SCHOOL'S DRUG-TEST PRINCIPAL FEELS VINDICATED

By **REBECCA URBAN** | *National Education Correspondent*
THE AUSTRALIAN | July 20, 2019

A Queensland school that was panned for introducing mandatory drug testing seven years ago has hailed the policy a success, with its principal claiming it has helped students to resist societal pressures to take drugs.

The Southport School on the Gold Coast attracted national headlines in 2012 when, looking for a new way to handle the issue of students dabbling with drugs, it unveiled the drug testing policy.

"We had some issues that saw some boys expelled so we asked ourselves is there anything else we can do," principal Greg Wain said.

"I started looking around at drug prevention policies and found that a lot of education campaigns just weren't working. Many (drugs) actually pique the boys' interest because many of them think they're 10-feet tall and bulletproof and are natural risk-takers."

The independent school, which counts a swag of elite athletes among its alumni, as well as former Queensland premier Rob Borbidge and Australian News Channel boss Paul Whittaker, is not alone in grappling with how to prevent teenage drug use.

While drug testing in schools is not popular or widespread — Victoria's Department of Education does not recommend it, while NSW does not permit it — recent revelations from the NSW inquiry into the drug-related deaths of young people at music festivals have many experts questioning the effectiveness of drug education programs.

As part of the national health curriculum, schools are required to deliver drug education to students and each state sets its own drug education policy that includes dealing with drug-related incidents in schools.

The prevailing approach is based on harm-minimisation and supporting young people who have drug issues.

Yet the latest national survey of Australian secondary school students' use of alcohol, tobacco and illicit substances suggests smoking and drinking among young people has declined but the use of some drugs, largely cannabis and ecstasy, has increased.

Drug educator Paul Dillon, who gave evidence at the NSW inquiry, said some worrying trends had emerged in recently years.

"Many young people I deal with believe that MDMA (ecstasy) is harmless. And it's not," he said.

Eileen Berry, who publishes the parent guide **Drugs 101**, said the quality of education provided by schools was variable — some were proactive; many did not want to do too much in case it was interpreted as a sign that there was a drug problem at the school.

She said she saw no issues with drug testing in schools: "Why not? They do it in the airline industry."

Mr Wain was initially opposed to drug testing students, concerned it would erode trust. However, the policy attracted overwhelming support from students and their families, who backed it on the condition that those who tested positive for the first time would be provided with confidential counselling. A second positive test results in expulsion. Now, on a Monday morning every few weeks, around 40 boys are selected to take a urine test. Two or three boys out of 900 record a positive test each year and since the policy's introduction, four have been unable to stay off drugs and have been expelled.

"The boys now have a reason to say no to drugs," Mr Wain said.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

EDUCATE, DON'T BAN

Eileen Berry's wise words (*Comment*, 8/12) on contemporary drug-taking reminds me of my generation's absurd behaviour with a socially acceptable mood changer: alcohol.

Public discussion about damaging effects of alcohol slowly brought an understanding of binge drinking as negative conduct and "skol, skol, skol" faded as an exciting chant.

Laws forbidding teenagers to buy alcohol were always successfully defied, as was the moral finger-wagging of concerned parents. In my view, the stupid, self-indulgent behaviour Berry describes will continue and banning various substances isn't going to resolve the issues.

Public education will, as it has done with smoking and road safety. The stigmatising of drug taking has to be removed and medical care given priority at "rave" functions.

Des Files, Brunswick

Eileen Berry is editor of **Drugs 101**, a guide for parents on all things drug-related. www.parentguides.com.au

'JESS CHOOSES LIFE'

PLAY PERFORMED BY HEALTHPLAY + Q&A WITH EXPERTS

A play written by leading playwright Alan Hopgood AM, looks at the impact of one teen’s suicide on a family and a community

WHAT’S THE PLAY ABOUT?

Jess Chooses Life is a 35-minute play that addresses youth suicide in the online era and how young people can reach breaking point without their parents realising.

Written by Alan Hopgood AM, it follows the model of all HealthPlays with a 30-minute Q&A and an expert panel.

The idea is for teenagers, young adults and parents to attend together. Some people fear that talking about suicide might have a “copycat” effect, but it is now agreed that appropriate discussion can help to prevent it.

VALUE
\$13,790
+ GST

TUESDAYS ONLY:

7.15pm-9.30pm

WELCOME & INTRODUCTION TO THE EVENING

by Parenting Guides Ltd founder Eileen Berry

PRESENTATION OF THE PLAY:

Jess Chooses Life

Q&A

LOCAL GP, headspace (clinician) and PoPsy founder Marie McLeod (positive psychology) answer questions from the audience in a Q&A format

SESSION ENDS

Feedback survey distributed

Light refreshments served

RESOURCES

Everyone leaves with:

- + A 36-page parent resource *Mental Health 101*
- + *Workbook* by PoPsy
- + Local assistance telephone numbers and organisations

FEEDBACK:

Long Walk Films to take short video of audience comments, feedback and expectations.

Testimonial link below from Geelong performance

29 March 29, 2019

<https://vimeo.com/327637872/a0f46a1fc9>



IT’S TIME WE TALKED

WHY SEEING THIS PLAY MATTERS

We must equip young people with the skills and strategies needed to deal with taboo topics and build resilience



OLIVIA SHYING

A THOUGHT-provoking play about mental health and suicide will encourage Geelong parents and children to open up about the subject.

The State Government-backed play *It's Time We Talked* will be performed at Geelong's Sacred Heart College.

The story follows a young girl, Jessica, whose parents find suicidal comments on her computer when she climbs out her bedroom window.

After giving her parents a scare, Jess discusses her concerns with them, including bullying and her friend Lindy's suicide.

The performance will be followed by a 30-minute

“AS WE RAISE AWARENESS, IT BECOMES LESS OF A TABOO TOPIC AND PEOPLE FEEL MORE COMFORTABLE TALKING ABOUT IT.”

MARIE MCLEOD

question-and-answer session with a panel of experts, including positive psychology advocate Marie McLeod and headspace manager and mental health social worker Kirsten Cleland.

Ms McLeod said the play and panel session would provoke important conversations around mental health.

“As we raise awareness, it

becomes less of a taboo topic and people feel more comfortable talking about it,” she said.

“The play is incredibly helpful in a visual way.”

“That’s really the catalyst for the conversation.”

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, suicide was the leading cause of death among Australians aged 15-44 in 2016.

A 2016 Orygen report also found small but gradual suicide rate increases over the past 10 years.

The free play will be held on Friday from 6.30-9.30pm at Sacred Heart College.

Register at eventbrite.com/e/suicide-its-time-we-talked-tickets-55317826107

If you need help, call Lifeline 131 114.



LET’S TALK: A new play coming to Geelong explores the taboo subject of suicide to build resilience among teens.

Taboo talk in Sacred night

“It’s time to talk about suicide,” according to the writer and social workers behind a new play broaching the taboo subject.

Suicide: *It's Time We Talked* comes to Newtown's Sacred Heart College on 29 March with an expert panel in a 30-minute Q&A session afterward.

The free, 35-minute play offered “strategies to build resilience”, said panellist Marie McLeod. “As we raise awareness, it becomes less of a taboo topic and people feel more comfortable talking about it,” Ms McLeod said.

The social worker and positive psychology advocate argued that suicide had been taboo for too long.

Suicide was the leading cause of death among Australians aged 15 to 44 in 2016, according to ABS data. Twice as many girls aged 15 to 19 suicided in 2015 than in 2005, with rates for children under 14 also rising over the same time.

Some people feared that talking about suicide could have a copycat effect but “appropriate discussion” could be preventative, McLeod said.

“We can’t stop adversities in life. We need to think about how we equip young people with skills and strategies, and one of those strategies is talking.”

The play follows character Jessica, whose parents find suicidal comments on her computer. She then discusses her concerns with them, including bullying and friend Lindy’s suicide.

Panellist and Headspace Elsternwick manager Kirsten Cleland said the play encouraged youths contemplating suicide to stop, think and talk to someone.

“It’s really helpful because I think that it can enable conversation and make sure that the message gets out clearly,” Ms Cleland said.

Play author and theatre veteran Alan Hopgood agreed.

“There’s no reason why we can’t discuss it more openly,” he said.

Attendees will receive additional resources such as a copy of not-for-profit group Parent Guides’ *Mental Health 101*.

Parent Guides founder Eileen Berry encouraged parents and teens to attend.

“Our mission is to encourage people to seek help, maintain connections and raise awareness while providing practical tools.”

Registrations for the evening are available at eventbrite.com/e/suicide-its-time-we-talked-tickets-55317826107.

Anyone needing help with mental issues can phone Lifeline on 13 11 14 or Beyondblue on 1300 224 636.

LET'S HAVE A CONVERSATION

ABOUT SEX, DRUGS, SOCIAL
MEDIA, MENTAL HEALTH, RESPECT



**CONTACT US TO
DESIGN A PROGRAM
FOR YOUR SCHOOL**

EILEEN BERRY // FOUNDER + EDITOR

eileen@parentguides.com.au
0407 542 655

FIND US

WEBSITE // www.parentguides.com.au

FACEBOOK // www.facebook.com/parentguides

TWITTER // twitter.com/ParentGuidesAu



ABN // 78 621 298 093