



# Small towns need big thinking

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Carl Heslop



Juat

Balardong

Whadjuk

Njakinjaki

Pindjarup

Wiilman

Wudjari

Njunga

Wardandi

Kaneang

Koreng

Pibelmen

Minang

Acknowledgement  
of Country






- No specialist sexual health or youth health services
- Delivery of RSE needs support
- Limited GP options
- Great initiatives – lack of coordination
- Accidental experts

## Small towns

Need big  
thinking



- Localised advocacy
- Strong organizational networks
- Commitment and clarity
- Champions
- Coordinated approaches



‘Everyone knows everyone’:  
Youth perceptions of relationships and sexuality  
education, condom access and health services in  
a rural town

and

‘You’re not going to get the whole town to start  
thinking about adolescent sexual health’:  
Stakeholder perceptions of relationships and  
sexuality education, backlash and health services  
in a rural town

# Stakeholders

“You’re not going to get the whole town to start thinking about adolescent sexual health”

Backlash, stigma and secrecy

Being consistent, credible and available

Small-town communication

# Youth

Relevant and credible sexual health education

Make it easy

GP accessibility

Discreet condom supply



# Condoms

*"Nicky, Nicky can I have some condoms please?" (youth)*

*"The girls only have the tampons and the pads and the boys only have the condoms." (youth)*

*"I mean if they start you know, you find used condoms in the toilet and stuff like that, then obviously that's going to be an issue" (youth)*

*"Stealing them's easier"(youth)*

*'They weren't willing to have condom machines outside [central supermarket]. Well we can't let that happen, that's encouraging them to have sex. Hey Charlie, they're already having sex' (stakeholder)*







### Suggestions

Doctors and staff at this Practice are committed to providing you with a high standard of patient care. Your input will help us to improve our service.

Do you have any comments about us?  
Is there any aspect of our care that could be improved?

### WE ASK BECAUSE WE CARE

Your safety is our **BIGGEST** concern:  
In order to ensure your medical safety

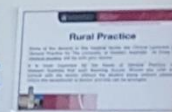
we need to verify your identity at **each and every visit**.  
To undertake this we are obliged to ask you the following questions:

1. Your full name;
2. Your date of birth;
3. Your current address; and
4. We will even check your phone numbers as well!



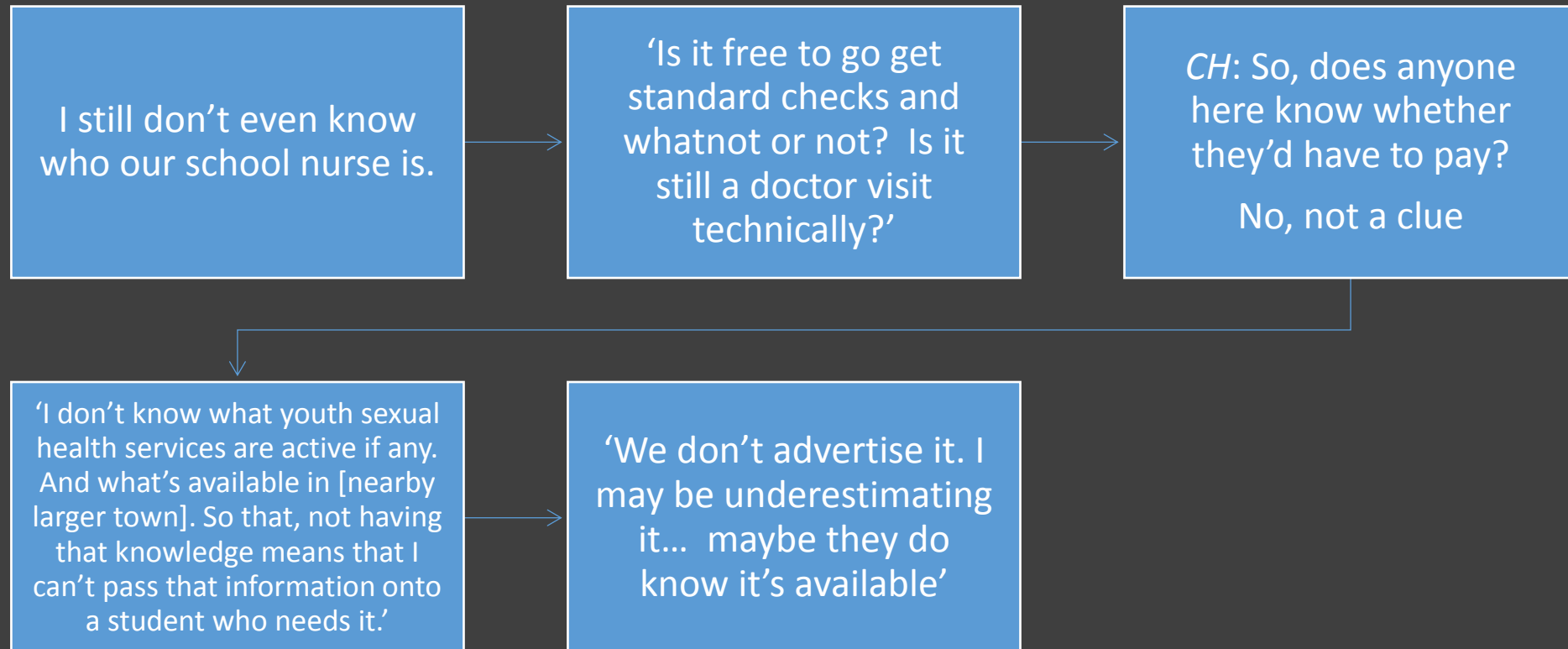
### We use My Health Record

Ask us to update your record today  
[myhealthrecord.gov.au](http://myhealthrecord.gov.au)

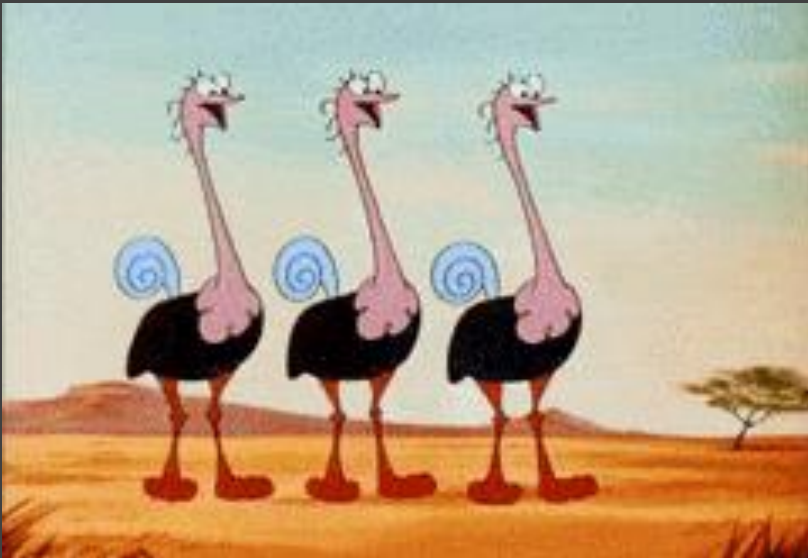




# Communication



The best way to avoid backlash is to do nothing.  
Or to hide what you are doing.




Slide it under the radar

Country communities are conservative

I certainly wouldn't want to be a young gay or lesbian person in town

The community would be against sexual health promotion as such unless it was in a very contrived environment



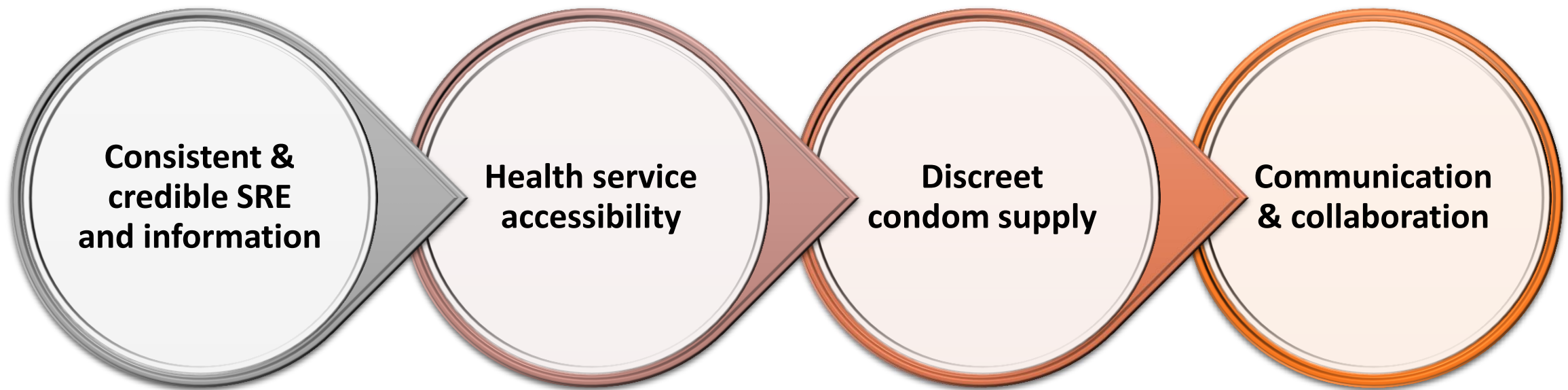
“You’re not going to get the whole town to start thinking about  
adolescent sexual health”

but

we need to support, advocate and champion those that do









# Publications

- Heslop, Carl William, Sharyn Burns, and Roanna Lobo. 2019. "'Everyone Knows Everyone': Youth Perceptions of Relationships and Sexuality Education, Condom Access and Health Services in a Rural Town." *Sex Education*: 1-17.
- Heslop, Carl William, Sharyn Burns, Roanna Lobo, and Ruth McConigley. 2017. "Developing a Framework for Community-Based Sexual Health Interventions for Youth in the Rural Setting: Protocol for a Participatory Action Research Study." *BMJ Open* 7 (5).
- Heslop C, Burns S, Lobo R. Managing qualitative research as insider-research in small rural communities. *Rural and Remote Health* 2018; 18: 4576. <https://doi.org/10.22605/RRH4576>
- [accepted for publication] Heslop, Carl William, Sharyn Burns, and Roanna Lobo. 'You're not going to get the whole town to start thinking about adolescent sexual health': Stakeholder perceptions of relationships and sexuality education, backlash and health services in a rural town" *Sex Education*