Prevention Policy and Practice: Preventing Violence Against Women
VicHealth Conference 14-15 July 2015

Plenary - In conversation with:
- **Dr Anastasia Powell, Senior Lecturer Justice and Legal Studies, RMIT University**
- **Georgie Ferrari, CEO, Youth Affairs Council of Victoria**
- **Dr Michael Carr-Gregg, Managing Director of the Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre**

"Working it out for themselves? Young people and relationships in the digital age."

Speaker 1:

People in [inaudible] Victoria. [Georgie] has more than 20 years' experience in the not for profit sector, working in the areas of youth, health, housing and violence prevention in New Zealand, New South Wales and Victoria. She currently serves on the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition board.

Dr. Anastasia Powell is a senior lecturer, justice and legal studies at RMIT University. Anastasia's research has specialised in policy and prevention concerning violence against women. She has published widely in this field including three books, including 'Sex, Power and Consent: Youth Culture and the Unwritten Rules'.

On the end we have Dr. Michael Carr-Gregg, he's the Managing Director of The Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre which is committed to exploring and understanding the role of new and emerging technologies in young people's lives. He sits on the board of Smiling Mind, he's a community ambassador for Big Brothers, Big Sisters and [Playgroup] Victoria. Will you please welcome our guests.

Just to set the stage, when we talk about young people today, we are talking about people aged between 12 and 25. My age group, I know such cheek. Twelve to 25 so we're not talking about children, we're not talking about people under 12. Once again, it's really good to remember we're talking about primary prevention and that's stopping violence before it starts. The focus of this session is not about young people witnessing family violence in their homes so much as the strategies that young people can use to build respectful and equal relationships in their own lives.

We also need to acknowledge that there are no young people on this panel. Youngish ... we've just had a hard life. There are no young people. Now, the organizers did try to get a young person but there were various reasons why this was not possible but we do acknowledge that there is a gap there and that's a shame.

In recent years there's been a lot of research released about young people's attitude to violence against women, we've had research in White Ribbon, there's a UNSW study, and Our Watch market research which informed their campaign called 'The Line' which is quite fantastic if you get a chance to check it out. Also more recently, VicHealth's research as part of the national community attitudes survey has talked about young people. Every time some piece of research comes out, some new piece it tends to make the front page as if it's confirming what most of us believe anyway which is that young people have really shocking, dreadful ideas about relationships and the internet is destroying the world.

Often, I think, when people think about primary prevention in young people, they straightaway think about young people, and schools, and education. Early life does seem like a logical place to concentrate prevention efforts but it's not as straightforward as it sounds and it's getting more complex to do prevention in this space. The purpose of the day is to look at some of those complexities and also talk about what can be done outside of education to support young people in respectful relationships and, of course, we will also be talking about [education]. We want to cover the whole gamut.

To start, the question posed for this session was working it out for themselves, and it's based on a quote arising from recent Our Watch research. I'd like to ask, are young people working it out for themselves? Georgie?

Georgie:

Thanks. Is this on?

Speaker 1:

Yes.

Georgie:

Thank you very much Martha, thank you for the opportunity to be here. I'd like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet, the people of the Kulin nation, and pay my respects to their elders past and present. I think, they are working it out for themselves, young people and, I think, that that's both good and bad. I think it presents some challenges but also some real opportunities for us. I thought I'd like to start with the challenges and then move on to a few of the positive aspects.

The surveys and the research that you mentioned I'm also drawing on them. My thanks to Dr. Jesse [inaudible] for assisting me in putting this together. Really all of that research finds that young people are highly attuned to the issue, they're concerned about the issue which I think is a really good thing. Also, obviously as you've noted, they have some confusing ideas about it. I think, that this becomes even a little bit more problematic when we look at what young people's help seeking behaviours are. A lot of the other research that I've looked at shows ... and Michael you'll be familiar with this in your work in [adolescent] health as well, that your people mainly turn to each other for information and advice. Then, we know that, they also turn to the internet ... at least half of them do to the internet but they speak to each other first and foremost. If they have some issues with understanding exactly what the problems are in preventing violence then it's a little bit tricky that they are turning to each other for advice and support.

The positive, I guess, the opportunities that that leads us to is that a lot of the research finds that it might be 25% of young people think it's okay to be coercive in a sexual situation. That leads me to think that, maybe, 75% either don't know or don't think that's okay. I think, the opportunity exists within that [25%] for us to work with them because we know their peers are going to be talking to them so we work with that group to shift. Models of behaviour change and attitude shifts show that you work with the ones that are easy to move first and then you work on the harder ones. I'm looking at an [peer level] model, obviously, that's informed and evidence based as an opportunity for us to really work productively with these young people.

I also think there's an opportunity in the fact that young people are actually saying, "I think that's okay. I don't see a problem with that." If they're talking out loud about their attitudes to family violence or violence against women and saying, "I don't see a problem with that," then at least we can tackle the issue. I think when it's more hidden ... I've been in workshops over the last couple of days and I heard a few comments like, "There's no place for attitudes like that," and I understand that but let's get the attitudes out there. If young people are expressing these attitudes let's have an open environment where they can discuss them because an opportunity in that as well.

Speaker 1:

Yeah and, I guess, even more so than a lot of other groups of people you are dealing with people who are just starting out and so they should have an opportunity to make those mistakes or, at least, voice what they've, obviously, absorbed in some capacity without being frightened away.

Georgie:

Absolutely. I think, when you think about primary prevention we've got an opportunity to really work with young minds in a really positive way. Rather than just saying, "You can't say those things." It's like well [inaudible] first let's talk about that, why those things are bad."

Speaker 1:

Yeah. What do you think Anastasia?

Anastasia:

At the risk of agreeing with my colleague, Georgie, look I think, absolutely young people are working it out and it represents both opportunities and challenges. We know that young women are the highest age range/gender for sexual violence. We know about 1 in 10 young women have experienced sexual violence just in the last 12 months. The rates, if you include, pressured, coerced, and unwanted sex vary enormously across the research but often around 40% of women reporting that they've had pressured or unwanted sex so we know we have a significant problem for young people in trying to encourage ways to negotiate sex with consent, with mutuality, with respect, dare I say with pleasure. We have some opportunities there.

I think, the other thing just to go further on what Georgie was talking about is that young people want to have conversations about sex and consent. They want to have opportunities to talk about how tricky it is to know if a partner wants to have sex or not, for example. How do you read the signals? How do I ask? What do I say? How do I do this? We have a huge opportunity there to engage young people in conversations about promoting the other percentage of young people that are experiencing positive sexuality, how do we promote that? How do we provide other young people with the tools, and the strategies, and the knowledge, and the skills to further their positive experiences? That's where the opportunity lies, I think.

Speaker 1:

Great. Michael do you disagree?

Michael:

No, sadly, I don't. I come from the perspective of having been, for the last 10 years, the agony uncle for Girlfriend Magazine. When, 10 years ago, I was asked to do that it was pointed out to me that 85,000 young women and some young men read this magazine every month. After the internet, it is

still a respected source of information. On the basis of what I've heard from my readers over the last 10 years there is a growing awareness and that's terrific. I think, that there are some ... I would agree it's, probably, about 75/25. 25% still have a way to go to work it out but that's a lot better than it was when I started.

I was just thinking, listening to Georgie speak, she's got a 3 year old boy and Anastasia's got a 4 year old boy and I'm wondering, by the time they're teenagers, will it in fact be 90/10? I hope it will be. I think, we're moving in the right direction and I'm very encouraged but I still think there's a way to go.

Speaker 1:

Picking up on that Michael, though, what do young people actually know? What kind of questions do they ask?

Michael:

Very much about their rights and I think, young women are really much more okay, now, about saying, "No." The right to say, "No," and when I was at school, and this was before electricity, there was a very clear view that guys who had lots of either protected, or mostly unprotected, sex with as many girls as possible were regarded as heroes. The girls who engaged in that behaviour were, obviously, the opposite. I'm wondering, because I'm not at school, how much that's changed? I was wondering if either of you two could tell me? Is that still the law?

Anastasia:

I'm going to take that one, so yes, I think, we absolutely still have the slut/stud dichotomy. I will say the word if you won't Michael.

Michael:

I wasn't going to.

Anastasia:

We absolutely do have that and it's to do with this continued gender stereotyping, our cultural attitudes around gender which value young men based on their sexuality, and their performance, and their mainstream masculinity are constructed in that way. Value women according to passivity and their relationship building and these dichotomies for gender, I think, are still very influential for young people. The problem that that creates for negotiating consent which is, obviously, my particular field is that even though young women might be more aware that they have the right to say, "No," that there are laws around sexual assault often they don't feel able to, or they feel like it's not fair, that their role is to keep the relationship together, their role is to accommodate their male partner. There are other more [silo] pressures, and attitudes, I think, that play a role in that pressured/coerced sex which is the other part of that issue I was talking about before.

Speaker 1:

Georgie, do you have anything to say to that?

Georgie:

No, I'm just in furious agreement really, I'm sorry. I know you wanted the ...

Speaker 1:

I'm like, "Come on." I guess, what are the key influences? What are the key influences and drivers of their attitudes and choices?

Georgie:

I say this a lot but young people don't exist in a vacuum, they live in our world. Hands up if you've ever been a teenager. We've all been there and we all know that we live in the same world. I talk about this a lot when talk about attitudes to alcohol. You say, "How can we prevent teen binge drinking?" I'm like, "Oh, look at what we all do." It's we need to understand that young people's attitudes to this stuff, they're just calling a mirror out to the world that we all live in. The sooner we recognize that ... and there's been a lot of talk around that, that the culture that we live in being a violence enabling culture in terms of women down to the last two days, when we recognize that and we stop saying, "Young people are the problem in this," and actually just recognizing that the world that they live in is what we need to be looking at and working on, I think, we'll be halfway there.

Speaker 1:

We can't really expect though ... and this is naivety I guess, we live in these very sheltered environments where we hang around people who agree with us generally. I would think that when I was growing up and I was a teenager and there were shocking ideas like this everywhere things had changed a lot. They actually have changed a lot, we have come quite far in terms of gender equity the last couple of decades. Yet young people are still quite challenged by all of these things, it hasn't really improved that much. Although, you were saying, Michael, it has.

Michael:

If I could give you some research evidence, Rosalind Wiseman, who's one of my colleagues in the United States, did a survey recently and she found that 47% of middle school boys, so they're tier 9 boys, and 61% of the teenage boys agreed that female characters are treated too often as sex objects in video games. There's no way you would've gotten that level of agreement 5 years ago, or even 10 years ago. It just strikes me as there is a seismic shift happening, and thank God, and about time. I think we mustn't lose sight of that. That's really quite significant.

You add that to the research of the Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre and we discovered that 88% of young people were in fact far more cyber savvy than the cyber safety people gave them credit for and particularly about respectful communication online across genders. I'm actually massively optimistic. The internet gets a really [bad] press but if you actually dig down and look at the research Facebook isn't Satan, there are in fact huge benefits from playing those video games, and not all video games are in fact horrible and sexist.

Speaker 1:

I wonder how much too, when you mentioned that I know ... was it that horrible car video game that they kill people ...

Michael:

Grand Theft Auto 5.

Speaker 1:

Obviously, I'm really hip to the jive. Sorry.

Michael:

I can't tell you about that because ...

Speaker 1:

There was a Target that pulled it off the shelves and that's a signal isn't it?

Michael:

The average age of gamers in Australia is 32, 47% are female, and over 75% of the people who play these games are over the age of 18. We have this view that 4 year olds are playing Grand Theft Auto. To me, it boils down to really good parenting, having the capacity to find your digital spine, set limits and boundaries around the use of these games, use the parental control and that way you don't have the problem. It's pretty straightforward.

Speaker 1:

We'll talk more about the digital world a bit later. We are going to touch upon it but we will save the highlight. The triumph will be digital ... yeah, that's good. That's good because Anastasia I'd like to hear your thoughts on these, what about influences? You've written books about this kind of thing so you do know.

Anastasia:

Look, I like the metaphor of young people shining a mirror to our own practice and what we're modelling to them, they are mirroring back to us. Hopefully, that is the reason why we're asking for change and I absolutely agree with you that we have seen change. We've had a period of rapid societal change over the last few decades and we are seeing positive outcomes from that which is reason to be optimistic. We do also know that young people are continuing to see models around them that are modelling inequality and disrespect and a tolerance of violence against women, and even a condoning of violence against women. I think, there's a lot that we still have yet to do in a very concerted way, a very strategic way, a well-resourced and funded way that challenges the places where we are modelling poor behaviour and poor attitudes in culture to young people and that's where we've got a lot of room to grow.

Speaker 1:

Okay. Let's move on to government then, what the role that government would play in all of this. What role can governments realistically play impacting on these attitudes? Georgie?

Georgie:

It's interesting because I was sitting in my workshop session we had a [potted] history of relationships, healthy relationship education over the last 30 or 40 years and I really reflected in my own organization [YACVic's] 55 years old this year. We've got a huge archive of everything we've ever done and when you look through it there's a real period when we had a lot of gendered programs and gender funding and it was really quite specific around young women stuff and it was around young women's rights. Then that just faded out completely and in the mid '90s to late '90s all of that work in [YACVic's] archives was completely gone. I think, there's something in that around actually funding programs that work specifically with young women and specifically with young men. I think we need to get back to some of that stuff.

When we work with young men it can't be around skateboard parks, and building pizza ovens, and bricks and mortar stuff, and all of that. It needs to be around what does it mean to be a man? We need to be talking about masculinity. We need to be unpacking that. With young women we need to be doing assertiveness, and right space stuff, and information around being strong young women in the world. I think, all of that stuff is gone. I think, governments have a role to play in looking at that and doing the base funding again.

Speaker 1:

That's the progress stuff too, isn't it? On one hand I can imagine ... I've got an 8 and a 5 year old and those are ideas are already there completely. It's a girl and a boy, my children and I see already passivity, all of that, and the way that there's something to that. You need something to get kids 12 up until 25 you already have so much work to do. It's easy, like you say, to build a pizza oven, or do positive mountaineering or something to actually then say, "What is it to be a man? What is it to be a woman?" That's hard.

Georgie:

Yeah and that's why, I think, we need [thought] leadership from governments to say, "This is how we're going to change. This is where we're going to start with young people and young minds and we can fund programs like this." We also need governments to understand that cultural change, the sort that we're talking about, will not fit conveniently into an election cycle and that they need to be investing in the long term for this. They need to be talking bipartisan across all parties going, "We want this now. You will need to invest if we lose the next election and we will reinvest when we get back in, in future down the track because this is a 20 year plan. We know that we won't win votes with this but we will win much bigger things than elections and votes."

Speaker 1:

Anastasia?

Anastasia:

Yes, I absolutely think there's is a really key role for government in leading that strategic direction, putting the policy frameworks in place, backed up with the resources, and I think you're right that one of the problems we see is we get pilot funding. Test a project here, and [community] agency gets a small bucket of money here, they don't get enough money to evaluate it, we don't know the outcome, and then we can't justify the case, the evidence to say why it should be funded into the future. I think government needs to be more strategic about how it funds prevention programs. Also that our policy framework needs to allow for multiple points of prevention work, multiple levels of engagement, different sites in which we do this work.

We were talking about young people mirroring to us what we model to them. Think about all the different sights that we model to young people. Either respect or disrespect, whether it's in our homes, whether it's in our workplaces, whether it's in schools both within the classroom but the relationships between teachers, the seniority amongst teachers. Is that gender equitable? All of those sorts of environments where young people are seeing men and women engaging, are they engaging with respect? Those are the sorts of places that we can make real end roads into cultural change and into systemic change. I think we will start to see the impact amongst young people themselves.

Speaker 1:

Michael?

Michael:

I, again, have to agree about the whole idea of sustained investment and activity in prevention. The big question, for me, is always who's going to fund all this stuff? I've got the solution and that is, that someone with political courage in the federal government needs to slap a 10 cent per bottle alcohol tax on all alcohol beverages and put a significant amount of that money into tackling domestic violence. That would, I think, really allow these programs that you guys are talking about ... it's a public health approach to this issue. We have tremendous success around tobacco, we really stalled on the alcohol thing because, again, the government's [inaudible] to alcohol tax. If we can show some political courage and really fund these programs that are so desperately needed that would be great. Whoever stands for that, I'll vote for them.

Speaker 1:

What would you like to see? Let's say in some way you do all this. We have the tax and it's fantastic what would you do? What you actually do?

Michael:

Apart from the service provision which, of course, at the moment is abysmal I'd love to see adequate education campaigns. I'd like to see a public health campaign along the tobacco lines around these issues which are on the internet, which are on public television. We should be having community service announcements every third commercial break on this issue because it's such a big one. If you actually had a long term perspective you could actually think about the benefits to Australia long term in terms of the reduction in depression, anxiety, substance abuse that you would then see. It's just a little bit of forethought.

Speaker 1:

Anastasia?

Anastasia:

Not to disagree ...

Speaker 1:

Oh no, do. Press on.

Anastasia:

I think we do need to be careful to have a little bit more nuance in the way that we think about community education campaigns and, I agree with you, there's a need for community education campaigns. We have not put the money into violence against women that we've put into road toll and to tobacco and some of those big campaigns.

Speaker 1:

[Inaudible].

Anastasia:

A campaign, in a way, it's a passive message it tells you either do something or don't do something. Yes it can have an impact but we're not talking here about a disease we are actually talking about a set of behaviours, a set of attitudes, a set of cultural practices between individuals who are making choices about their behaviour and about how they're going to engage. We need to think of other ways to engage people than just the messaging.

Speaker 1:

What are they?

Anastasia:

Part of that, I think, is about programming and there's some great research evidence around this with young people that actually involves them in a conversation about how do they want to experience their relationships? What works for them? What are the kinds of different strategies they can use to negotiate what they want in their relationships? There's some great evidence both in Australia, the [Sex and Ethics] Program, for example, with young people. There's also some great work in New Zealand from Louisa Allen's work around sexuality education but also other ways into having this conversation with young people that actually gives them the opportunity to build

strength and capacity in negotiating the sex they want and the relationships that they want in a more positive way and that's a real gap.

Speaker 1:

I suppose, there's also that danger ... I was brought up very Catholic so I was taught one thing about sex and it took me a long time to unravel that. You don't all need to hear this but, I guess, the reason I'm making that point is, is there a danger then too when you're talking to kids about relationships they do have to have some freedom in how they sort out their desires, and their negotiations, and it would be so easy to stigmatise bad sex, good sex. There are some basic principles, of course, but beyond that those conversations can go a bit wrong, can't they?

Anastasia:

I think, we do have the issue where often in the school environment, for example, teachers aren't specifically trained or resourced, or supported to deliver these sorts of education packages so there's certainly a gap there. Think about the other places in the community that we could be having these conversations with young people. Supporting them in the home, or thinking about our sporting clubs, or other community support structures and services that young people are engaged with. There's lots of ways to have this conversation with young people about negotiating the kinds of respectful, and healthy, and positive relationships that they want. I think we do need to be careful that we don't pretend that one of the reasons that young people are having sex is because it's pleasurable. We can't shy away from that fact, we can't say to them, "Oh, it's so dangerous and risky," because they know that we're not telling the truth and they won't listen to what we're saying to them.

Georgie:

Just picking up on Anastasia's point, if we actually engage with young people in the program design phase then we're guaranteed to not be doing the bad sex/good sex or bad behaviour/good behaviour chat. If they co-design these programs with us which is one of the recommendations that we have in our book 'Mission Submission' is that any work that's targeted specifically at young people must engage them in the design phase, then we really minimize the risk of actually being quite didactic and all fuddy duddy. I know we're going to get asked the internet question in a minute but young people are leading the charge with youthful led content, they are decided content rapidly. They are putting it up on the web, they're doing all that stuff. They're way more savvy than you or I so we need to be working with them.

Young and Well have been doing a lot of great work in this space, actually engaging young people and working them in designing messages that are really hitting the mark because they're designed by young people with the evidence base and the support of non-young people, like myself, underneath them. I encourage you to check out Minus 18 which is a same sex attracted support group for young people, their website all user generated from young people. All of their stuff on their site, their blogs, all of their work is just fantastic and it's what happens when you have a youth participation model in action.

Speaker 1:

Picking up on that though, youth participation it's a funny one because we've talking about today has been targeted to specific groups, youth is huge, isn't it? Like you said, everyone's been a teenager. Who are these young people? How do you engage different young people? There's so many different considerations between young people themselves, isn't there? Michael?

Michael:

Yeah and, of course, there are particularly vulnerable groups there, LGBTIQ, young indigenous people, you talk about the homeless, talk about the ones that are locked up, incarcerated. There actually is no such thing as 'young people', there are a whole lot of groups. That participating design stuff that you're talking about, that is core to what the Young and Well CRC do. There's no point in doing a program unless you involve young people in the early stages and, I think, that's been shown very clearly. I agree very much with what you say, sadly, because I can't find a point of disagreement. I don't see it as an add/or. Obviously, using the programs that have worked very well and putting money into them is important. My point was, at the moment, whenever I go to a government minister, state or federal, I get the same message, "We have no money." What we have to do, I think, in the sector is generate ideas.

Remember that VicHealth started as the world's first ever [hypothecated] fund, it had tri-partisan support. We have legends like Dr. Gray and Rhonda Galbally who made that happen. We seemed to have lost sight of that model, we need to go back to it.

Speaker 1:

Do you think that governments understand this model? In terms of what we've been talking about the last two days, primary prevention. I made the point yesterday, I think, it takes a lot to get your

head around in a way that you're giving a talk about young people in danger but then you have to talk about we need to change everything. The staff, they're talking about engaging on all these different levels, actually the ambition in that takes a bit of line shift, doesn't it?

Michael:

Yeah but you needed Nigel Gray to explain it to the government what's going on, a skilful media manipulator, and he was just about the best ever, who can go out and talk in lay language to the general public. What I've learned is that politicians will very rarely move anywhere North of where they think the main public opinion is so if we can shift public opinion we could get some really good thing. Rosie Batty's appointment, obviously, is a start but it's not enough.

Speaker 1:

She was talking about culture change this morning and I think hearing that concept of, "Oh, actually we need to change the culture before we can change the pointy end ..." Anastasia?

Anastasia:

I don't know there's been so much agreement on this panel. I think the point about young people not being one be all category is really important to keep in mind. Again, it's about logical ways of entering into the prevention conversation, isn't it? We know, for example, there are young people who aren't engaged in school so if all the prevention work that we do is targeted around schools and sexuality education we're actually going to miss, probably, the most marginalized and most vulnerable cohort of young people. Absolutely, I agree, we have to think about where are the other entry points? Where are the other places in the community? Is it with young people who are at risk or who are involved in youth [inaudible] and other different environments? Is it young people that are not engaged in their schooling but they are engaged in their sporting club or they are engaged in their faith community? Or they are engaged some other way? We need to think carefully about that.

Speaker 1:

Yeah. Georgie got anything to say to that?

Georgie:

I don't know if I'm being asked the next question, forgive me if I am but, I guess, it's also struck me under the last couple of days sitting here, there's been presentations. We had Maree Crabb this morning who was talking so eloquently and so brilliantly about her work around [inaudible] and equality, and the interplay of pornography and violence against women. You've got Danny Blay they're coming on in your debate and Danny's been spearheading the No Means No Show for quite some time with Nelly Thomas, a fantastic piece of theatre that talks with young people about consent. Probably nobody in this room, or very few people in this room will know that neither of those programs are actually funded in any coherent way. It's just big as belief, to me, that these are evidence based, tested, evaluated programs that do excellent work that have no sustainable funding underneath them, nothing that actually upholds their work. They just go from one philanthropic grant to another, they fund themselves, they do fee for service work, whatever it is, whatever it takes to get that message out.

In this day and age, with this problem being so at the forefront of our minds, how is that really good work is not funded in this coherent way that actually means that the message can out and across much broader audiences?

Speaker 1:

This seems to be one of the things that keeps coming up over the last couple of days too is, we cannot talk about anything to do with prevention unless we see the long term. There's no point in having that conversation is it? I can imagine you could cause more damage along the way if you're not building on what you already have.

Digital world, here we are. I was trying to hold off because I know they're, "Oh," they were actually talking about this beforehand. I was telling them to not do that. The digital world, the big, dangerous digital world. Michael, a force of good or evil?

Michael:

I think it's, obviously, where young people are so I don't think it's actually a matter of good or evil. I think it's about the fact that young people don't have in their mind an on or offline world, for them it's seamless. One of things that Young and Well are very interested in doing is developing apps, web based program, and biometric devices which help young people essentially manage their own wellbeing which I think is the [inaudible]. There are apps, for example, which are lovely to look up. This one particular app called The I Matter app which was developed to help young women understand the warning signs of abusive and controlling behaviour in relationships and promote healthy self-esteem, that would be one app the I would want all young women particularly ... I'm

promoting it through Girlfriend Magazine and Sunrise, and 3AW, and all the other platforms that I've got but I need you to do the same thing.

There's another app called, The Circle of 6 where you can connect with your friends to stay close, stay safe, and prevent violence before it happens. It's a very clever app. I could go on, there are heaps of these types of things which have been developed in association with young people, they're out there, and what they do is they actually show that you can use the internet to promote really good behaviour not just amongst young men but also amongst young women.

Speaker 1:

Anastasia?

Anastasia:

It's interesting, there's a lot of moral panic, and a lot of concern around young people's engagement with the internet and it's not just for them. I have to tell you, for me, my technology experience is not online or offline it is absolutely, 100% with me all the time and part of what I'm doing every day. I think that is the way that we all communicate and engage now. I think we've also go to think about the internet, this isn't just about individuals and equipping individuals with ways ... it's a part of a picture. This is all about multiple points of entry. It's part of the picture but it's not just about an app that's going to help a young person identify are they experiencing warning signs in a relationship? Or how do they take care of themselves and their friends?

One of the interesting things about the internet is that it is, again, another mirror to our culture. Sometimes we see wonderful positive models of communication and engagement online and sometimes we see absolutely horrible cultures of downright misogyny and abuse. What that should say to us is don't stop going young people going onto the internet. Think about what is it about our culture that is allowing this kind of expression of such hatred of women in some spaces? What can we do to challenge that? I don't have a good answer to that. I think, one of the things we need to do is think about, it's about multiple messages.

We know, for instance, if young people are getting their information about sexuality and relationships from pornography and from their friends where are the other places we can make sure we can give them other messages so that they're not being dominated by what might often be pretty negative messaging and stereotyping? It's interrupting the culture, it's interrupting the conversation, I think, and we can do that in all the places that we've talked about today.

Speaker 1:

I suppose too it's interesting that link there when you talk about you're always online. I notice with my kids I tell them not to use the iPad too much and I'm sitting with my phone all the time and I'm on my iPad, it's news. It's actually there's an interaction that goes beyond, well we can't just take young people out but we tend to talk about young people as if they're this separate species rather than living among us. Georgie?

Georgie:

I guess, to extend that analogy about the internet holding up a mirror to our society. If we think about the internet as a form of society, what I'm more interested in structurally is how the internet's regulating itself and looking at ways that we can assist certain aspects of it to regulate itself a little bit more. If you look at Clementine Ford's recent experience of her reposting abusive comments that were made to her, violent, aggressive, foul comments that made to her on Facebook. She reposted them rather than deleting which is what she normally does and Facebook banned her for 30 days for posting offensive messages on Facebook but not banning the original messages. There's something inherently wrong with the internet society, if you let me use that analogy, where certain things are allowed but certain things aren't.

We need to work with the powers that be behind Facebook ... and Instagram have done similar things, banned women's photos of them breastfeeding their children, the most natural thing in the world to do ...

Speaker 1:

[Egregious] nipple.

Georgie:

Exactly that but that breach is smoothly sanded so we need to be working with the structures of the internet, if you like, the powers behind it to actually shift some of those attitudes to they can be calling things out in that space.

Speaker 1:

A lot of people end up saying on Facebook, "Oh, I just don't do it." It's like it is here, it is part of our lives, we can't ... Anastasia?

Anastasia:

No, I was going to add to that. You mentioned before Georgie about being a fan of that peer education and peer led] model the missing word here is bystander. It's not just individual bystanders who might see something inappropriate online and post the opposite comment or call it out for what it is but it's about [inaudible] bystanders and that social responsibility and other players in that field to be pro-social bystanders and to challenge the culture of misogyny, and violence, and abuse, and encourage ways of intervening in that. I think we've seen such rapid change in this space that we've got to admit we're all taking baby steps in how we deal with this new internet society. We haven't yet got a good sense of how we manage that as a community but we're seeing rapid change in that space so I don't actually see that as a bad news story either.

Speaker 1:

Michael?

Michael:

I'd just like to recommend a website to everybody called It's Time We Talked which is put together by a [inaudible] people and it's just a wonderful website to take parents through, to take kids through around understanding what is actually wrong about pornography. The average age at which young people see pornography in this country is 11 years of age. The research tells us that at 16 years of age, 100% of 15 year old boys have seen violent, nasty pornography and 80% of 15 year old girls so this is clearly a behaviour change exercise. The more we talk about it, the more we give the parents the skills, the knowledge, and the strategies to address this because the most common question I get in my private practice from parents these days is, "Oh my God, my kid's been watching porn, what do I do?" They have no clue and we need to start that conversation.

Speaker 1:

Anastasia, one last comment?

Anastasia:

One last comment, well look I do want to address the comment about pornography because, obviously, it's a really challenging issue to tackle and there's going to be individual things that parents need to do and other sorts of measures. I think the other thing to keep in mind there's a reason why young people are going to pornography to get information and it's because there's not a lot of other avenues through which they can get good information about sex, about how it works, about how to negotiate it, about what's meant to happen. We're talking about very young people who are curious, they're developing, they're not yet often ...

Michael:

It's the leading sex educator in Australia, I agree.

Anastasia:

The problem is not just about addressing ... no, I agree, it's addressing pornography, it's talking about strategies to try and limit access to certain violent and inappropriate content but it's also about is there a gap there that we need to provide some decent information to young people in a way that's engaging and it's at the level that they are interested in so that we're not allowing pornography to be the dominant messenger, that's the problem.

Speaker 1:

Georgie, finally words of wisdom?

Georgie:

Oh, lovely. Final words. Another recommendation and submission to the Royal Commission that's on our website, if you want to go and have a look, was that I was amazed to find that there's no mandatory requirement for healthy relationships education in schools in Victoria and Australia. You can teach it if you want but you don't have to teach it. I don't mean that we should just focus on the schools but it's a good place to start. We recommended that there should be a mandatory ... and I see I've got an email from Rosie Batty] earlier today saying, "Sign my petition, I'm going to be taking this to the politicians." It needs to be taught at every age level, appropriate obviously to the age, and it needs to be across all schools, and it needs to be a whole of school approach. It needs to be

culpable change within the schools rather than just one teacher teaching in one class, it needs to be a massive change [crosstalk].

Speaker 1:

[Chaplaincy] money maybe …

Georgie:

Oh yes. Can we have another whole panel about the [chaplaincy] money one day?

Speaker 1:

Unfortunately, not today but yes. Thank you so much. You guys are wonderful and what a fantastic panel. Can we have a give hand?