

## Comments on Smashed Project – viewing in Sydney (Eagle Vale High School) Sept 5



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Thank you for the opportunity to attend the viewing in Sydney and give my opinion on its suitability for the NZ context. It was also useful to talk with Chris and Tim after the presentation – some of my comments below relate to things we discussed at that meeting.

Overall, I think the programme could work well in NZ to complement health education learning in the curriculum and/or whole school approaches (WSA) to student well-being.

There were some aspects of the delivery and the play itself that should be adapted to suit the NZ context (see recommendations on page 2 below), but overall these would be manageable.

On the **plus side**, the presentation:

- Was engaging for the students
- Was very professional – I was impressed with the Australian company's (Gibber) understanding of the issues involved in delivery to schools
- Is reasonably closely aligned to what is typically taught in health education around alcohol education (best fit in my opinion was NZ year 10 level)
- Raised some important issues around alcohol, relationships, decision-making, peer pressure, parental expectations and academic achievement
- Was very interactive – kept the audience on its toes. Incorporating video, social media, photos was really effective against the simple set – it worked well.
- I saw potential for cross-curricular learning springboarding from this – for example, health and English, or health and drama.

The facilitation after the play was excellent. The questions/activities were appropriate to the content of the drama, and were really well facilitated by the actors. I liked how it ended on a positive note – a range of strategies to deal with peer pressure. The activity where the students asked the characters questions (one month later...) was also great – students asked very thoughtful questions here.

I was impressed with what I saw of the teaching resources – these would add value to a health teacher's tool box, and align well to the sorts of activities used in health education in NZ. I liked the parent guide that Gibber had developed, and I like the idea of involving parents in the presentation (e.g a parent evening or invite them to view it in the school) if feasible.

Some **negative things** from my point of view:

- There was a little too much on the physical dangers/risks of alcohol use – this was a bit 'low level' (knowledge recall) and a little on the 'scare tactics' side. The long-term effects of alcohol misuse didn't sit well with the otherwise very teen-focused presentation.
- Some people might see the sculling as a glorification of alcohol use.
- Breaking off into smaller groups for the second part may have been more effective than a whole group facilitation.
- An hour and a half would be ideal – to unpack some of the issues raised a little more, instead of finishing quite abruptly as the students had to move on to the next class.
- It was disappointing not to see health teachers visibly present. I fail to see how health education learning can wrap around this presentation if the health teacher did not attend alongside his/her students.

**Recommendations:**

- Cost-benefit will need careful consideration – this is likely an expensive programme to run, with little overall impact on learning/attitudes around alcohol if used as a ‘one off’.
- Modification is needed for the NZ context – some aspects of the play, and also the accompanying guidance and teacher resources, for alignment culturally and also in terms of the New Zealand Curriculum.
- Need to be cognisant of New Zealand guidelines around effective alcohol and drug education programmes (see Ministry of Education guide\*). For example, the MoE advice states that one-off presentations are not effective or are limited in their effectiveness.
- It would be important to provide guidance to schools about good practice in implementing the programme – ie that it’s not a one-off presentation, learning is wrapped around it, the health teachers are involved, parents are included.
- Delivery is key – a theatre company with experience in theatre-in-education (in the area of health education/sensitive issues) is essential. For example THETA\*\*.

\*<http://health.tki.org.nz/Teaching-in-HPE/Policy-guidelines/Alcohol-and-other-drug-education-programmes>

\*\*<https://www.theta.org.nz/>