

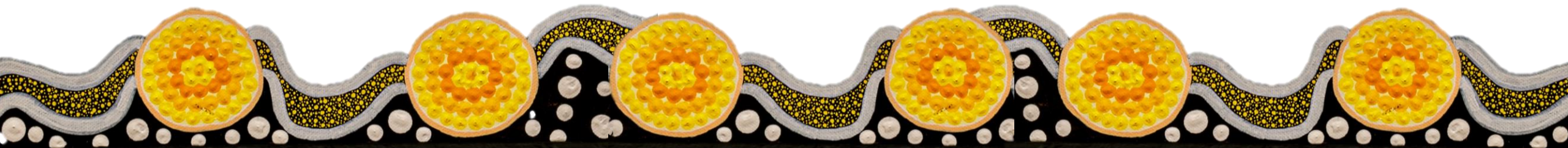
# **Enhancing access to needle and syringe programs for Aboriginal peoples in Boorloo: the Healthy Blood Healthy Body project**

STI and BBV Quarterly Forum

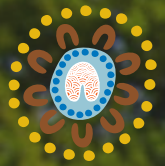
27 August 2025

Roanna Lobo, Curtin University

Donna Garcia, HepatitisWA







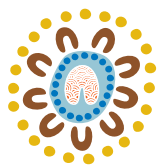
**HEALTHY BLOOD  
HEALTHY BODY**



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**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT  
OF COUNTRY**





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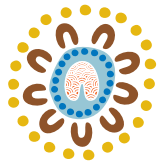
# The project

Aboriginal consumer-led  
intervention research project to  
increase access to needle and  
syringe programs (NSP) for  
Aboriginal people who inject drugs in  
Boorloo (Perth), Western Australia  
(Aug 2021- June 2025)

[www.hb2project.org](http://www.hb2project.org)



*'Finding the resources' original artwork by Mavis Lyndon, 2022*



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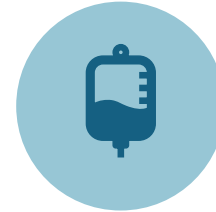
## NSPs...



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**are cost effective** -  
infections averted and  
future healthcare  
savings



**prevent BBVs** - Australia has  
one of the lowest rates of HIV  
due to introduction of NSPs

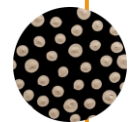


**connect people** - bring people  
who inject drugs into contact  
with the health system



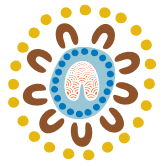
**meet people 'where they are'**  
**with no judgement** - reduce  
stigma associated with drug use

**6 002 500** needles and syringes distributed in WA (2022-2023)<sup>1</sup>  
**82%** distributed through NSEP<sup>2</sup>/health service NSP



<sup>1</sup> Needle and Syringe Program Annual Report 2022-23 Western Australia

<sup>2</sup> Needle & Syringe Exchange Program



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# The team



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## **Aboriginal Advisory Group**

Anthony Kickett, Curtin University  
Ursula Swan, East Metropolitan Health Service  
Michelle Webb, Consultant  
Mick Adams, Consultant

## **Collaborators**

Kim Gates, Aboriginal Health Council of WA  
Jill Rundle, WANADA  
Donna Mak, Communicable Disease Control Directorate, DOHWA

## **NSP/Drug and Alcohol Services**

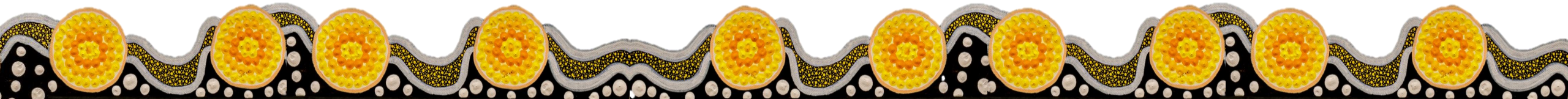
Rebecca Smith, Donna Garcia, hepatitisWA  
Daniel Vujcich, Gavin Brunini, WAAC  
Luca Saraceno, Derbarl Yerrigan Health Service  
Duc Dau, Wungening Aboriginal Corporation  
Paul Dessauer, Peta Gava, Peer Based Harm Reduction WA

## **Chief Investigators**

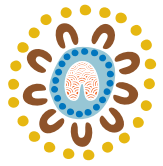
Principal Investigator: Roanna Lobo, Curtin University  
Rosa Alati, Curtin University  
Jude Bevan, Department of Health WA (DOHWA)  
Gemma Crawford, Curtin University  
Francine Eades, East Metropolitan Health Service  
Sandra Eades, University of Melbourne  
Alvin Edney, Derbarl Yerrigan Health Service  
Jacqui Hendriks, Curtin University  
Linda Portsmouth, Curtin University

## **Curtin Project Team**

Belinda D'Costa, Curtin University  
Roisin Glasgow-Collins, Curtin University





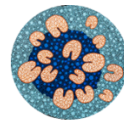


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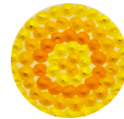


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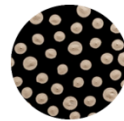
## Five project strategies



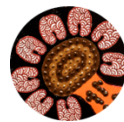
Increasing cultural security of NSPs



Community education and awareness campaign about harm reduction



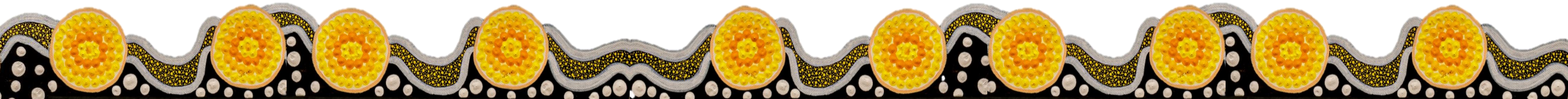
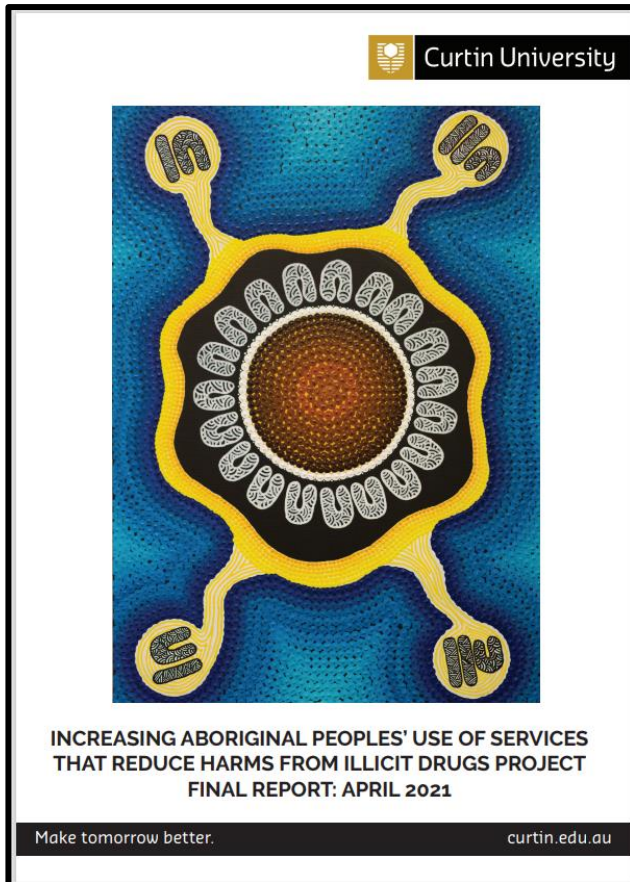
Peer referral program pilot

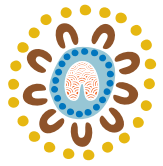


Towards a holistic service model



Exploring the feasibility of increasing NSP service availability





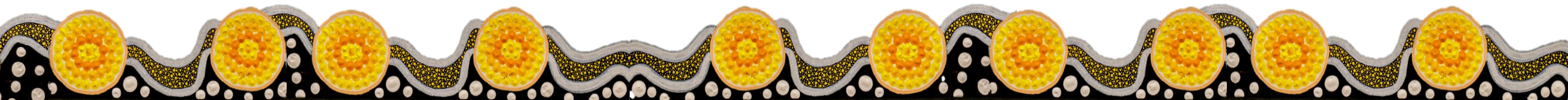
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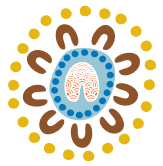


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## Approach

- yarns took place at services where consumers had an existing relationship
- trained lived experience interviewer conducted and recorded yarns in person, co-facilitated with service staff
- opportunistic recruitment
- refreshments provided and cash payments
- questions explored experiences of accessing services
- mean duration of yarns ~24 mins
- data were thematically analysed

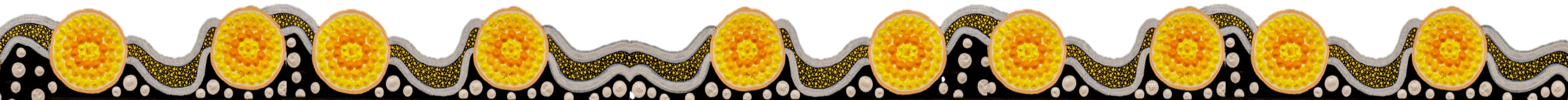
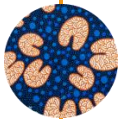




## Yarns

Yarned with people to find out:

- why people do or don't use NSP services
- what makes NSP services feel safe
- what people needed from a service
- what health professionals should know, say or do to make people feel comfortable
- what is the service doing well / what could be better
- what messages would increase knowledge about harm reduction and NSPs
- how should we communicate messages





www. **hepatitis***wa*.com.au

## Education & Workshops



Workforce Development  
Health Promotion  
CALD  
Prison Programs



## General Practice

Testing and treatment



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Our commitment to  
your safety and care

## NSP Needle and Syringe Program



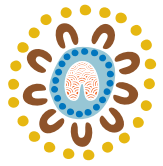
Harm reduction  
Naloxone  
Food and hygiene supplies  
Volunteers



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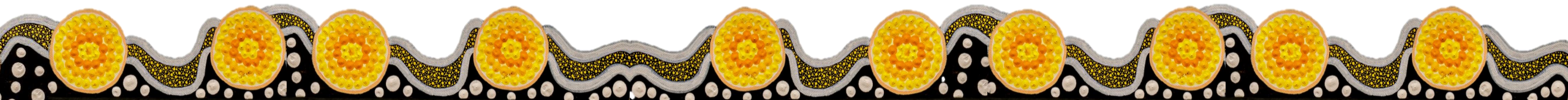
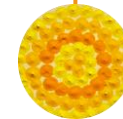
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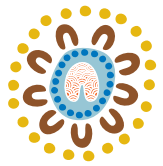
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## What worked

- Who we yarned with – started with regulars, then word of mouth
- Trust and existing relationships
- Clinic co-located with NSP helped
- Flexibility – allowed groups to come in and yarn
- Using their language
- No stigma or judgment
- Shirts – talking point

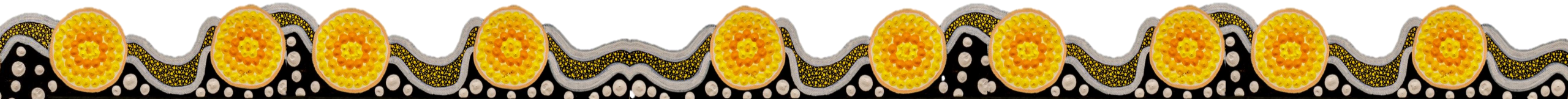


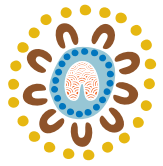




## Learnings

- Artwork – welcoming, positive
- There's a lot of shame and stigma associated with injecting drug use and BBVs. Stops people accessing services
- **Building trust and relationships is essential.** Also showing people **we will do something with what they tell us**
- More Aboriginal people accessing NSPs
- All services can support
- Capacity building/↑knowledge





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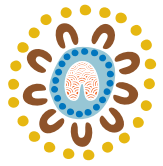
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# Educultural Toolkit



- **Enhancing cultural capability of needle & syringe programs for Indigenous Australian peoples who inject drugs**
- For NSP service providers and staff in Perth; may also apply to other WA harm reduction services and contexts
- 3 modules - each includes information, video links, activities, reflection questions and suggested readings
- Digital version (40pp) available via [www.hb2project.org](http://www.hb2project.org) + some hard copies





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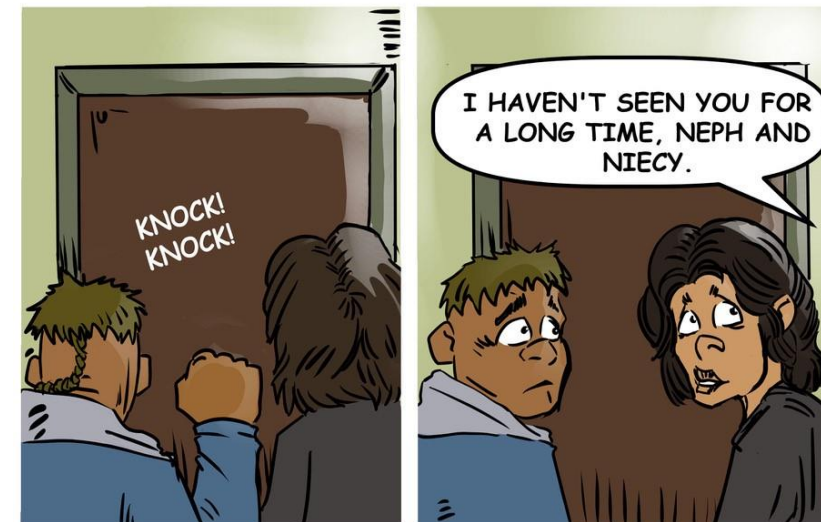
## Campaign

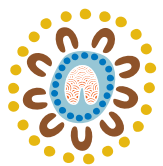
*Keep your blood  
healthy to keep your  
body healthy*

A community education and awareness  
campaign developed by the *Healthy Blood  
Healthy Body* project



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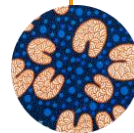




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## Campaign elements

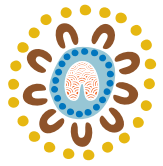
- **2 comic strips**
  - 1 for Mob, 1 for Aboriginal community
    - Digital and hard copies
    - Audio animation of comic strips for Tik Tok and other social media
- **2 posters** – 1 for Mob, 1 for Aboriginal community
- **Website pages** – For Mob, For Services
- **Stickers** for safe disposal containers



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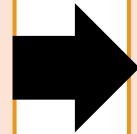
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## Campaign development

**2023:**

**Yarning & initial  
development**

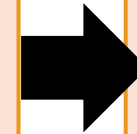
42 people  
(35 are Aboriginal people)



**2024:**

**Refining &  
pre-testing scripts**

32 people  
(27 are Aboriginal people)



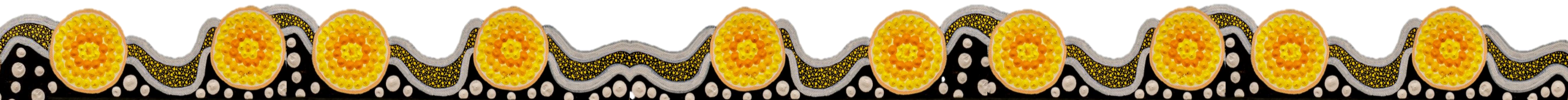
**2025:**

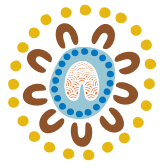
**Refining & pre-testing  
comic images**

35 people  
(32 are Aboriginal people)

~around  
98 people  
were  
involved,  
81 were  
**Aboriginal  
people**

**Involved:** Aboriginal Advisory Group, the project team and staff & clients of PBHRWA, WAAC, hepatitisWA, St Pats, Wungening, EMHS Aboriginal Health Team, Department of Health WA, community members including Elders



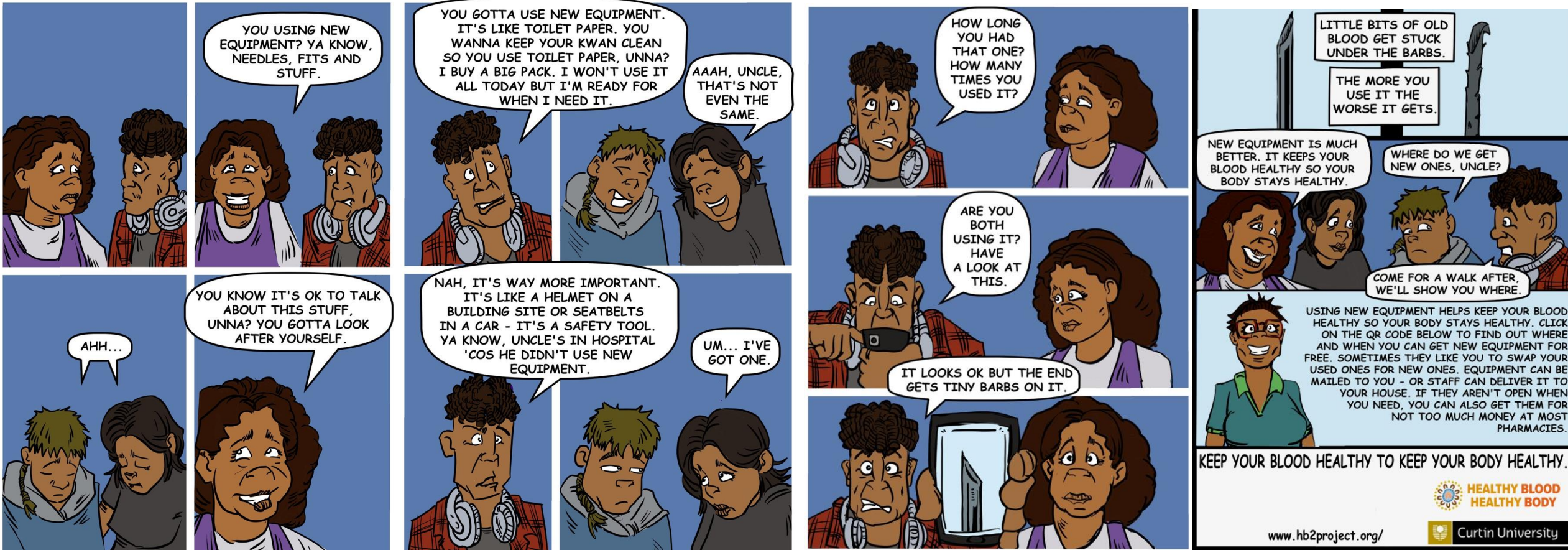


# HEALTHY BLOOD HEALTHY BODY

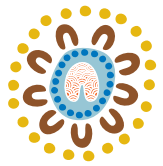


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- Some draft snips from comic script 1, finalising with the artist
- Comic book, posters and stickers will be available soon!

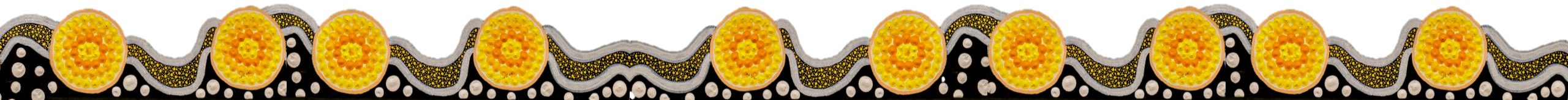


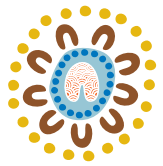




## Project highlights

- Collaborated with **63** stakeholders across **9** organisations
- Engaged with **24** (38%) Aboriginal stakeholder collaborators
- Hosted **11** student placements including **4** Aboriginal students
- Supported Aboriginal businesses – artists, graphic design, logo, artwork
- Applied principles of participation, creating reflective spaces, and integrating diverse voices
- Valued opportunities for 2-way capacity building
- Developed a model of what can be achieved through community-led work
- Established trust with peers and stakeholders and their active engagement
- Achieved recognition for the **peer referral pilot program** - as a finalist for a WANADA award
- Gained trust of Aboriginal community and their participation to develop the **campaign**. Around **81** consumers, Elders, community members and staff were consulted

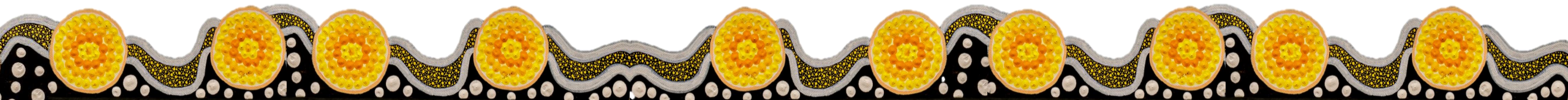
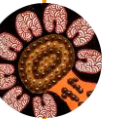




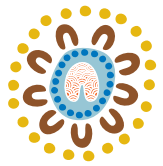
# Learnings for services

## **Experiences of shame and stigma were common**

- Building trust through relationships – taking time to have a yarn
- Offering support, advice, education
- Awareness of culture - using lingo
- Employing mob and peers with lived experience
- Ways to reduce shame – all staff showing respect, being friendly and welcoming, no judgement, bulk supply of free injecting equipment
- Safety from other consumers
- Discreet location, ‘exit’ strategies (other reasons why they could be at the service)







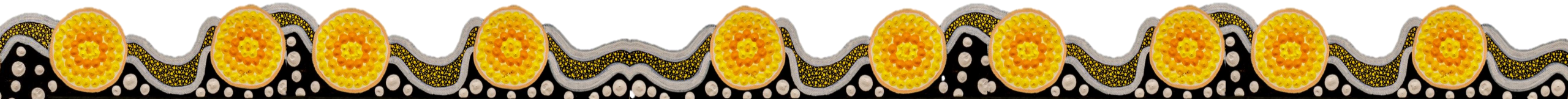
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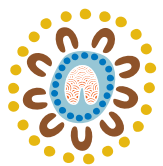


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## Learnings for services

- Acknowledge context – past experiences of stigma or judgment drive future behaviour and lack of trust in services
- If we want consumers to trust services, we need to trust that consumers know what's best for them
- Requires a commitment to making mainstream services as safe as possible for Aboriginal people – assess cultural safety + build changes into service agreements for sustainability
- Some 'quick wins' as well as medium term changes - employing Aboriginal people / people with lived experience, seek opportunities to partner with ACCHOs to increase cultural safety





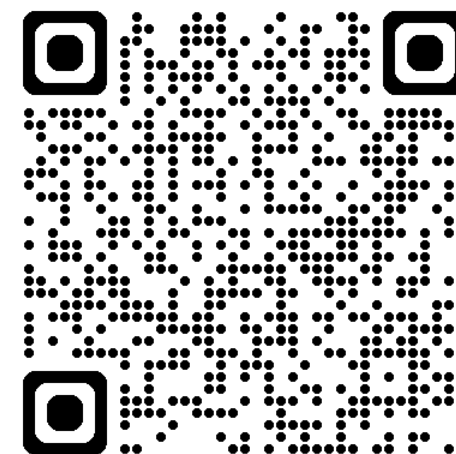
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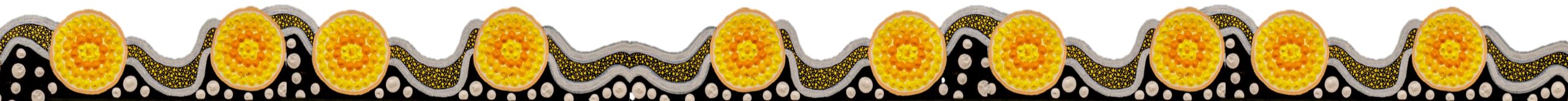
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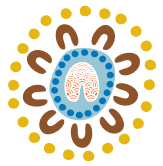
## Take aways for services

- *What can your service do to increase use of NSPs by Aboriginal peoples who inject drugs?*
- *Is there a place in your service where you can promote the campaign?*
- Access the digital Educultural toolkit via the QR code or email [nsp@curtin.edu.au](mailto:nsp@curtin.edu.au) for a copy
- Find out more about the project at: [www.hb2project.org](http://www.hb2project.org)



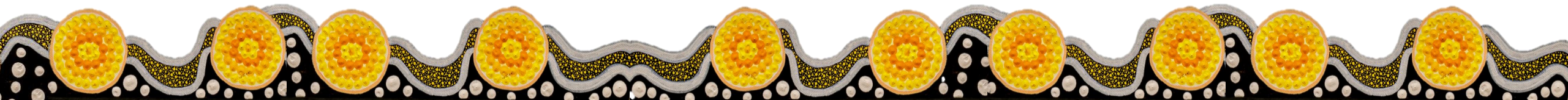
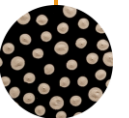
***Scan here for  
the Toolkit***



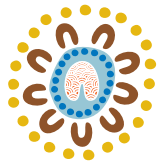


## What's next?

- Grant submitted to extend some project activities to regional areas including adapting the campaign, version 2.0 of the Educultural Toolkit, and expanding the peer referral program
- Finalise and disseminate campaign materials
- Community report with key findings
- Policy brief summarising findings and areas for action
- Evidence review resources available soon
- Peer-reviewed journal articles (n=6)
- Conference presentations – we will be at ASHM HIV&AIDS Conference in September!







**HEALTHY BLOOD  
HEALTHY BODY**



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**DERBARL  
YERRIGAN**  
HEALTH SERVICE



Government of **Western Australia**  
Department of **Health**

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***Thanks to everyone involved in  
Healthy Blood Healthy Body***

**[www.hb2project.org](http://www.hb2project.org)**

For more information contact:

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[roanna.lobo@curtin.edu.au](mailto:roanna.lobo@curtin.edu.au)

08 9266 1101



**Aboriginal  
Health Council**  
of Western Australia



**peer based**  
harm reduction wa



Government of **Western Australia**  
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