



# Evaluation Report:

Evaluating True Relationships & Reproductive Health's 'Every Body Needs to Know' program to enhance relationships and sexuality education for Queensland students with disabilities.

This report was prepared by Annie Shewring, who led this evaluation. Support and supervision were provided by Natasha Milner.

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### **Acknowledgment of Country**

True acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, culture and community. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

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## List of Abbreviations

ASD – Autism Spectrum Disorder

EBNTK – Every Body Needs to Know

HI – Hearing Impairment

HIC – Highly Individualised Curriculum

II – Intellectual Impairment

MMM – Modified Monash Model

PI – Physical Impairment

RSE – Relationships and Sexuality Education

SDSS – Specialist Disability Support in Schools

SED – Social Emotional Disorder

SLI – Speech-Language Impairment

UN – United Nations

VI – Vision Impairment

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## Executive Summary

*This evaluation sought to measure the effectiveness of True Relationships & Reproductive Health's Every Body Needs to Know program, which provides school-based relationships and sexuality education for student with disabilities in Queensland.*

In Australia and globally, people with disability have faced barriers to accessing information about relationships and sexuality. This is largely because societal attitudes have failed to acknowledge that people with disability are sexual beings and have the same rights to sexual expression, education, and health as people without disability.<sup>1,2</sup>

True Relationships & Reproductive Health's Every Body Needs to Know (EBNTK) program delivers comprehensive relationships and sexuality education (RSE) to students with disability (Prep -Year 12) in Queensland schools. Funded By the Queensland Government's Specialist Disability Support in Schools (SDSS) program, EBNTK supports students with disability to participate in education and addresses barriers they may face in accessing the national RSE curriculum.

In 2023, True Relationships & Reproductive Health (True) received supplementary funding from the SDSS program to conduct a small-scale evaluation of the EBNTK program. The purpose of this evaluation was to identify good practice and positive program impacts, as well as highlight any gaps and challenges in program design and implementation. Drawing on case studies, stakeholder feedback surveys, and de-identified administrative data from the past five years of service delivery (2019-2023), a mixed methods approach was used to identify main themes and emerging trends across time, region, and school context.

Findings from the evaluation will be used to update the EBNTK program and will contribute to an improved evidence-base for how to better meet the needs of students with disabilities in accessing comprehensive relationships and sexuality education.

### Key Findings

#### Key Finding 1: Insights and Trends

The EBNTK program has demonstrated substantial reach and impact since 2019, engaging over 2,100 students from 74 schools across a variety of service regions and educational contexts. The vast majority of students serviced were those with intellectual impairment and/or autism spectrum disorder, accounting for 90% of the total listed student disabilities. It is vital to consider this trend when reviewing program design and delivery, whilst also continuing to recognise the diverse and individuated needs of students. Program content was age and developmentally appropriate and covered a broad range of RSE topics including types of touch, puberty, consent, and sexual health. There was an overall trend of initial student discomfort to increased understanding and engagement. Successes in engagement were observed particularly in schools with prior collaboration with True. These insights and data trends are vital for assessing the program's overall reach and impact and for understanding how to effectively tailor our program to support the needs of those we are servicing.

#### Key Finding 2: Positive Impact and Program Excellence

True's EBNTK program has demonstrated significant positive impact and program and excellence, evidenced by its extensive reach and positive stakeholder feedback. Many participating students recording positive feelings after having completed sessions. School staff rated the program as highly effective in its ability to support student participation in education and in collaborating with school staff. Most school staff believed the program's goals had been or will be successfully met, indicating its value for

vulnerable student populations. Professional development for staff was emphasised as beneficial, enhancing their confidence in handling sensitive RSE topics. The program's adaptability to various student needs and learning styles was frequently commended, with its tailored content enabling effective student engagement and comprehension. True's expertise in delivering the program at appropriate developmental levels further contributed to this success. The professionalism and expertise of True educators were also highlighted, who were noted for their ability to create non-judgmental, safe, and inclusive learning environments. The quality of the program's resources, its curriculum alignment and real-world applicability, and its ability to comprehensively cover RSE topics were also highlighted. The findings are vital as they provide insights into the mechanisms and factors that contribute to the program's success and impact.

#### Key Finding 3: Gaps, Challenges, and Improvement Areas

The evaluation revealed key challenges and improvement areas within True's EBNTK program. A significant issue is the low engagement in parent/carer sessions, often cancelled due to limited interest. Enhancing participation in these sessions is vital for a holistic educational approach. There was also a notable service gap in non-metropolitan areas, particularly 'very remote communities', with most activities concentrated in metropolitan regions. This trend indicates an opportunity to expand services to these underserved areas, addressing disparities in sexual and reproductive health education. School staff feedback highlighted the need for adjustments in the pacing, duration, and number of sessions to better suit students' learning needs. Enhanced visual aids were

also suggested to improve engagement and understanding. Moreover, stakeholders expressed a desire for comprehensive support throughout the program, including pre-session preparation and ongoing post-session support. This approach is crucial for maximising the program's effectiveness and impact. While parent/carer feedback showed some ambivalence towards the program's effectiveness, it emphasises the importance of adapting content to diverse student maturity levels and learning needs, underscoring the necessity for tailored and responsive educational approaches.

#### Key Finding 4: Feedback Mechanisms and Data Management

The evaluation of True's EBNTK program revealed key findings related to feedback mechanisms and data management. Substantial stakeholder feedback and administrative data have been collected, yet there is a need to critically assess what data is gathered, its purpose, and how it is managed for effective program refinement. Operational constraints have led to a focus on reportable data, but capturing broader data, like parent/carer feedback, may provide valuable program insights. Inconsistencies in data collection, especially regarding staff professional development and parent/carer sessions, limit the ability to assess the program's full impact. Challenges in collecting and analysing student feedback from those with disabilities, and a significant drop in school staff survey completions in 2023, likely due to increased bureaucratic demands, highlight the need for more adaptable data collection methods. The program's extensive reach and positive impact are evident, yet enhancing feedback and data management practices is essential for meeting the diverse needs of stakeholders and ensuring ongoing program efficacy.

## Project Background

About True and the Every Body Needs to Know program

*Established in 1972 as Family Planning Queensland, True is the leading provider of sexual and reproductive health services and RSE in Queensland. Our goal is to achieve substantial, positive social impact by improving reproductive and sexual health and promoting safe and respectful relationships. We achieve this through the delivery of expert clinical services, education, and counselling.*

True has been working with children and young people with disabilities in the area of sexual and reproductive health and education for over four decades. More recently, True has been funded by SDSS to deliver its EBNTK program to ensure that RSE is delivered directly to students with special needs in classrooms. The SDSS program's overarching objectives are to support schools to provide reasonable adjustments for students with disability to access and participate in education through 1) identification of barriers to access, participation and achievement and 2) the provision of supports to enhance student attendance, participation and achievement in schooling.

True's EBNTK program provides age-appropriate sessions that are modelled on the Australian National Curriculum and have been modified to be accessible for students with disabilities who may require specialised instruction to learn positive and protective skills and behaviours. The program consists of four comprehensive RSE lessons, staff professional development, parent/carer information sessions, and resource provision. Funding is provided to deliver sessions to 400 students per year and bookings are confirmed on a 'first come, first served' basis.

## Disability and Relationships and Sexuality Education

Historically, people with disabilities have been stripped of their sexual rights by denial of opportunities for intimacy, infantilisation, reproductive control including forced sterilisation, and lack of sexuality education.<sup>3</sup>

*"Ensuring access to relevant, inclusive and affirming sex education can help [students with disabilities] achieve autonomy and self-care with regards to their own sexuality, identities and relationships."<sup>4</sup>*

### Right to education

All students have a right to education, health, and safety. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child mandates nations to prioritise child welfare, including education and safety.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, under article 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Australia has an obligation to recognise the rights of people with disability to education.<sup>6</sup> Schools must provide an environment where every student can achieve personal health and safety, supported by curricular guidelines. However, findings from the 2023 Commonwealth Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (referred to as 'the Royal Commission') have shown that many students with disability continue to be denied access to safe, quality, and inclusive education. The Royal Commission emphasises that inclusive education is crucial for combating negative attitudes and misconceptions about disability and underscores the prevailing issue of unequal access to information and communication for people with disabilities in Australia, despite existing legal obligations. This lack of access can have detrimental effects on health, education, and justice outcomes. It is therefore crucial to cultivate respect for the rights of individuals with disabilities at every level of the educational system.<sup>6</sup>

### Knowledge and skill acquisition

RSE benefits students with disabilities by equipping them with the necessary knowledge and skills and foster positive self-worth, protective behaviours against abuse, healthy relationships, and awareness of sexual health risks. As they transition to adulthood, it is essential that young people with disabilities comprehend the physical, social, and emotional changes they will face. Special education professionals recognise the importance of planned RSE tailored to students' needs:

*“Young people with disabilities are more likely to require direct instruction to learn positive and protective skills, and research shows that sexuality and relationships education can contribute to knowledge and skills acquisition as well as influence positive behaviour development.”<sup>7</sup>*

### Vulnerability to abuse

Findings from the Royal Commission revealed that 55% of people with disability report experiencing physical or sexual violence compared to 38% of people without disability.<sup>8</sup> International research has shown that children with disabilities are twice as likely to experience abuse (including sexual abuse) than children without disabilities. They are also far more likely to be bullied by their peers.<sup>9</sup> Often, students with disabilities don't receive adequate education or support to understand their bodies, boundaries, or relationships and lack of such information heightens their vulnerability.

### Improved student engagement

Students may be suspended or excluded from school for behaviours that are sexually or socially inappropriate. Moreover, “in education settings, behaviours of students with disability can be mischaracterised as wilfully disruptive or naughty. Educators might

then respond punitively, rather than attempt to understand or address the underlying cause of the behaviours”.<sup>6</sup> True's EBNTK program receives SDSS funding in part to prevent the suspension or exclusion of students from educational settings and thus support and enhance participation. Beyond increased academic achievement, school participation plays a crucial role in fostering social inclusion, allowing students with disabilities to feel like an integral part of their school and local community, build strong relationships, and develop essential skills for lifelong success.<sup>6</sup>

### Purpose and Scope of Evaluation

With an increased awareness of the specific needs of people with disability in relation to RSE, this evaluation represents a timely opportunity. Drawing upon a substantial historical dataset (and supplementary new data), we aimed to comprehensively assess the effectiveness of the EBNTK program. This evaluation endeavours to achieve the following objectives:

- Identify areas of positive impact and excellence within the program.
- Identify gaps and recurrent challenges in program design and delivery.
- Generate actionable recommendations for program updates and improvements.
- Enhance our ability to fulfill our mission to better serve students with disability.
- Inform policy and sector recommendations.

In sum, this evaluation is not merely a retrospective exercise, but a forward-looking initiative designed to strengthen our program, align it more closely with the needs of our diverse participants, and contribute to broader advancements in policy and practice within the sector.

## Evaluation Methodology

### Evaluation Timeline

True conducted the following research activities from July to December 2023:

Research Activity	Timeframe
Literature review	July
Evaluation parameters set	July
Data analysis	August – October 2023
Parent/Carer feedback survey	October 2023
Report write-up	November – December 2023

### Methods

Initially, parameters were placed on the scope of the evaluation. It was decided that the evaluation would rely on existing program data from the past five years (2019-2023) to ensure the relevancy of this evaluation. Additionally, from 2019 improvements were made to data collection procedures, making it easier to retrieve and interpret data from this period. The existing program data encompassed various sources:

- School-Staff Feedback Surveys (n93): These surveys were collected using SurveyMonkey (see Appendix A).
- Student Feedback Surveys (n64): Student feedback was gathered through paper handouts administered at the end of 1-hour classroom sessions (see Appendix B).
- De-Identified Administrative Data: This category included school booking and student information.
- Educator Case Studies (n50): True educators routinely compile case studies after session deliveries, as these are a requirement of the SDSS program. These case studies are informed by educators lived experience within the classroom, as well as formal and informal feedback from students and staff. The compilation of case studies is guided by a set of qualitative questions (see Appendix C).

In addition to existing data, feedback from parents and carers was collected during the evaluation period. This was necessary as no

pre-existing data was available for this stakeholder group. To obtain feedback from parents and carers, we initiated a voluntary survey via SurveyMonkey (see Appendix D). We reached out directly to previously participating schools, requesting that they forward the survey link to parents and carers. Unfortunately, uptake for this survey was very low, with only 6 completions.

### Analysis

Data was analysed using a mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches, with the aim of identifying overall program trends, positive program impacts, and current gaps in service design and delivery. Thematic coding of qualitative data (case studies and open-ended responses on stakeholder feedback surveys) was undertaken to identify emerging themes.<sup>10</sup> Basic quantitative analysis such as descriptive statistics, frequency distributions, and cross-tabulations were completed to identify patterns, trends, and relationships within the data. For example, analysis of de-identified administrative data provided information about the location, disability, year accessing service, and overall quantity of students who have participated in the program. This information, combined with stakeholder feedback, helps to understanding the program's reach, effectiveness, and to assess whether specific groups are being serviced more effectively than others.

## Limitations

### Collecting Student feedback

Throughout the EBNTK program, True educators have faced several challenges when collecting student feedback. The time-intensive nature of this task often leads to educators prioritising learning activities over feedback collection. Additionally, working with students with disabilities, who have differentiated learning needs and capacity, at times makes it challenging to collect quantifiable feedback. To compound the challenges of collecting student feedback, we identified issues with the survey design, as well as the storage and management of collected data. Often, raw feedback data was not retained; instead, staff compiled summaries of student feedback for each school, which were difficult to quantify or analyse meaningfully. In some cases, the design of feedback forms resulted in poor data quality, evidenced by many incomplete forms.

Despite these barriers to collecting robust student feedback, we believe it is crucial to include the voices and perspectives of students with disabilities in this evaluation report.<sup>11</sup> While this feedback might not be generalisable, it provides valuable insights into individual student perspectives and recurring themes within the limited data set.

### Case studies

It is important to note that the case studies that were analysed may be limited due to their specificity and subjectivity. Firstly, the reliance on educators' perceptions and interpretations can introduce bias. Their viewpoints might not fully capture the students' experiences or might be influenced by their own beliefs and expectations. Secondly, case studies may lack generalisability. The findings might be highly relevant to the specific contexts they describe but may not be applicable to all school settings or student populations. Thirdly, there

may exist variability in reporting amongst True educators. The quality and depth of case studies may vary depending on the educator's skill in observation and reporting. Inconsistent documentation can lead to gaps or unevenness in the data.<sup>12</sup>

However, these case studies are considered important to the evaluation as they provide a rich qualitative dataset; case studies offer detailed insights into individual experiences and contexts. They can capture nuances and complexities of how the program impacts students with disabilities in different school settings. Additionally, these case studies provide lived experience insights; the educators' lived experiences in the classroom bring a level of depth and understanding that can't be captured through quantitative data alone. This can lead to more empathetic and effective program adaptations.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, the fact that these case studies incorporate informal feedback from students and staff (in addition to more formalised feedback mechanisms) ensures a broader perspective, which can help in understanding the program's effectiveness from multiple viewpoints. Recording informal student feedback is particularly important given the limitations to capturing formal student feedback noted above. To ensure consistency, and to mitigate against excessive bias and subjectivity, a set of qualitative questions is used to guide the compilation of case studies. Importantly, these case studies were combined with more direct stakeholder feedback to provide a more comprehensive view of program impacts.

### Time constraints

The short time frame of evaluation meant that we were limited in our capacity to collect new data, such as in-depth qualitative interviews with previously participating school staff.

## Key Findings

### Key finding 1: Insights and Trends

#### Reach

Since 2019, the EBNTK program has had a broad reach and impact:

- 2163 student reached.
- 109 school bookings, reaching 74 unique schools.
- 630 sessions and significant communications delivered.
- 6 different regions throughout Queensland serviced.

True's EBNTK program was delivered in a range of settings such as Special Education Schools, State Schools (Primary and Secondary), Alternative Education settings, and Catholic Education schools.

The average number of visits and/or significant communications per school was between 5 and 6. These were made up of 4 student lessons, and may also include a staff professional development session, a parent/carer information session, and other significant communications with school staff and/or parents/carers.

Of the 74 schools serviced, 17 schools had 2 repeat bookings, 6 schools had 3 repeat bookings, and 2 schools had 4 repeat bookings. In other words, just over one third of schools booked True's EBNTK program more than once throughout the five-year evaluation period. This data is important as findings revealed that student engagement and comprehension increased over time and with repeated exposure to content.

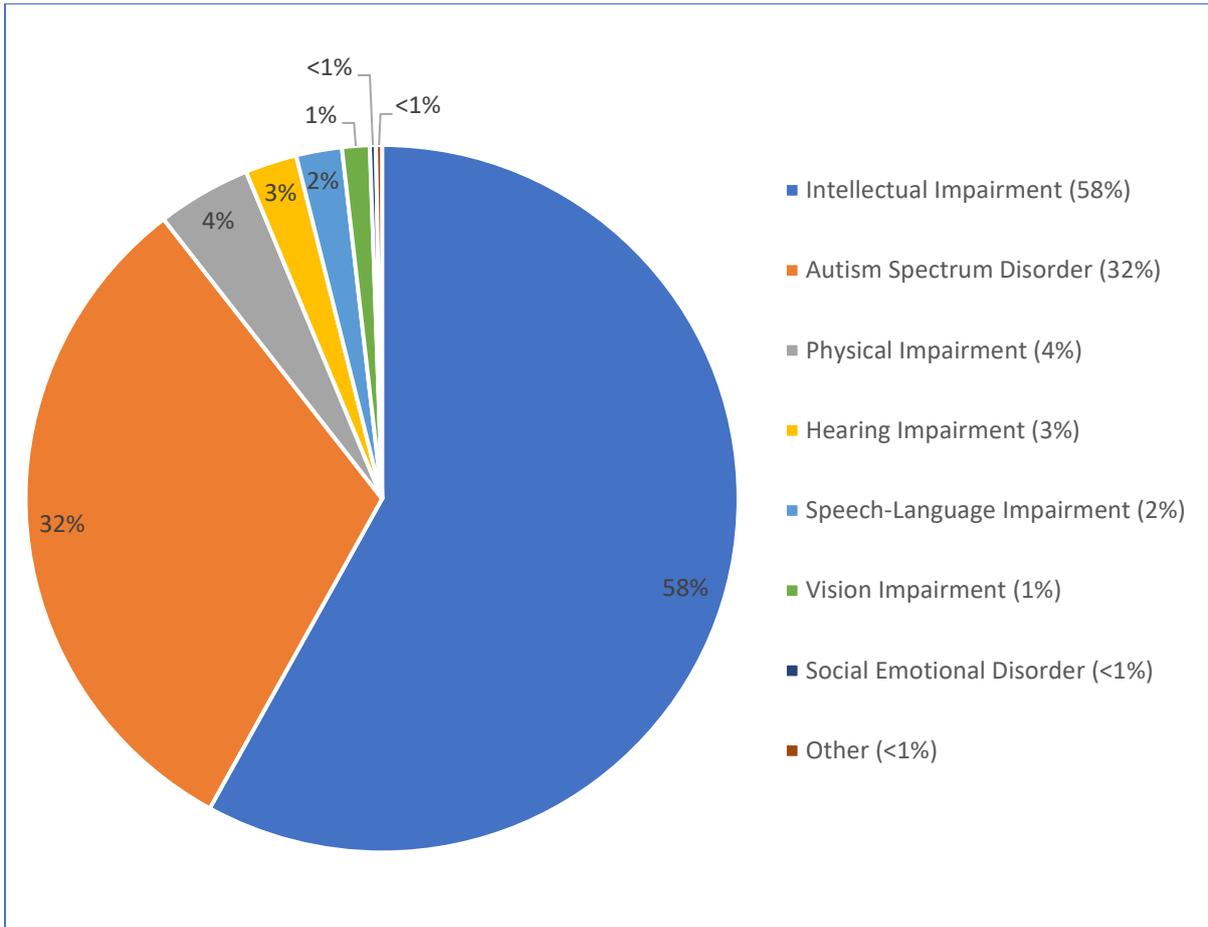
#### Disability

Schools that book our program are required to provide information on the disabilities of the students participating. This information, which is crucial for reporting to our funders, also helps us understand our service demographics and adapt our offerings to meet various student needs (see Figure 1 for the types of disabilities we service). Intellectual impairment (II) and autism spectrum disorder (ASD) are the most frequently listed disabilities, constituting 90% of the overall total. Notably, there has been a significant increase in the rate of students with II, rising from 37% in 2019 to 82% in 2023 (as depicted in Figure 2).

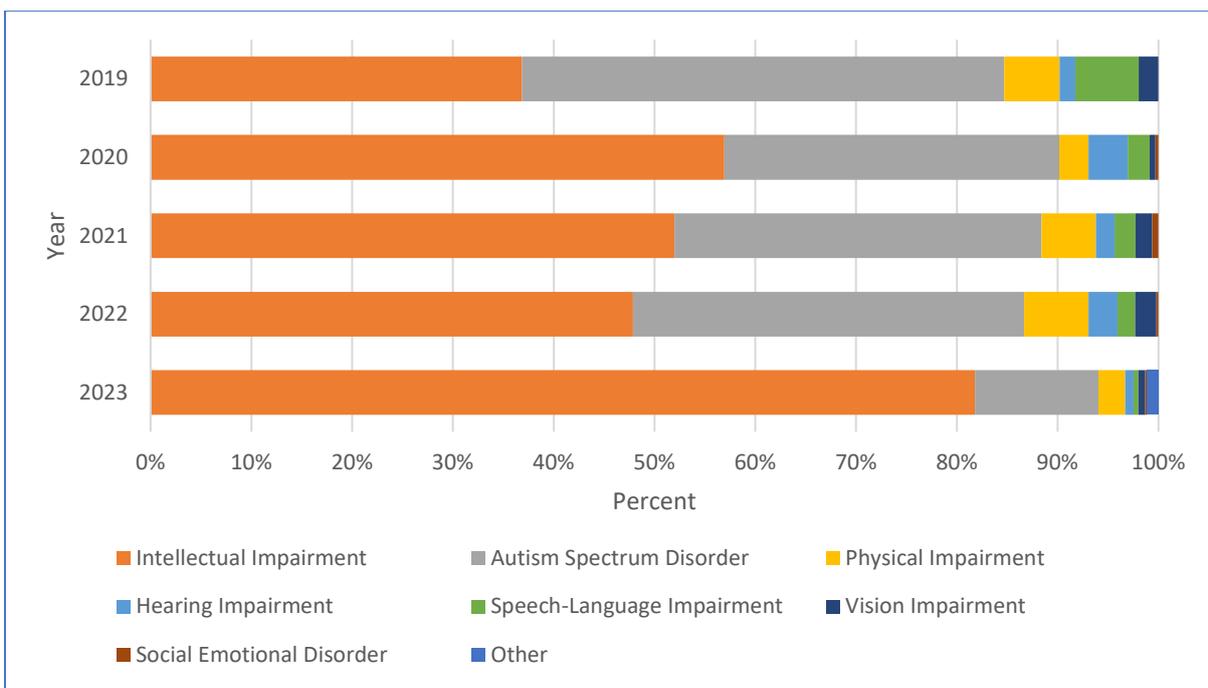
Previous research has shown that young people with intellectual disabilities experience higher rates of sexual abuse and are at higher risk of contracting sexually transmissible infections.<sup>2</sup> Given these findings, it is crucial to factor in the needs of students with II and ASD when revising our program's content and methods of delivery. However, it is equally important to recognise the diversity within these groups. Our program must maintain a commitment to providing tailored, sensitive, and responsive content and delivery methods that support diverse and individuated student needs.

#### Region

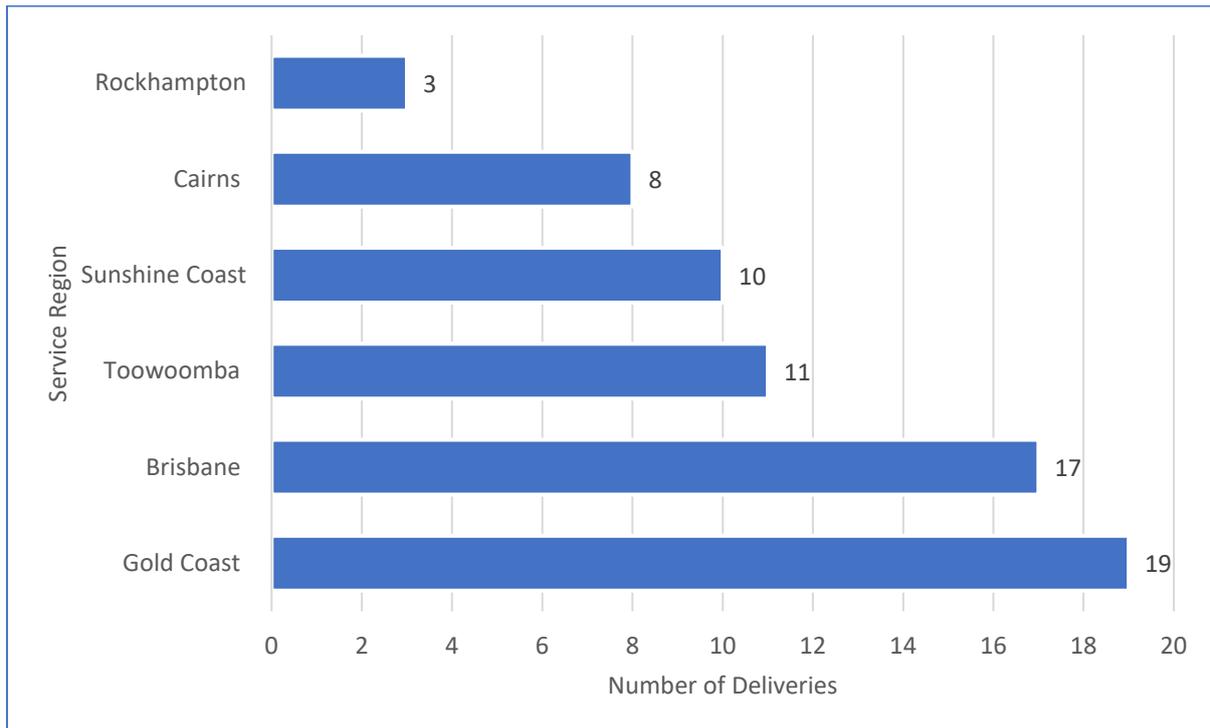
The EBNTK program operates in six distinct service regions across Queensland, targeting a diverse population of students (see Figure 3). The distribution of deliveries across True's service regions is a key metric; however, it is also vital to assess the types of areas being served—metropolitan, rural, or remote. Existing research indicates that individuals in rural and remote areas face barriers to accessing comprehensive RSE.<sup>13</sup> Within the last five years, 60% of the program's total deliveries were made to metropolitan areas (details illustrated in Figure 4).



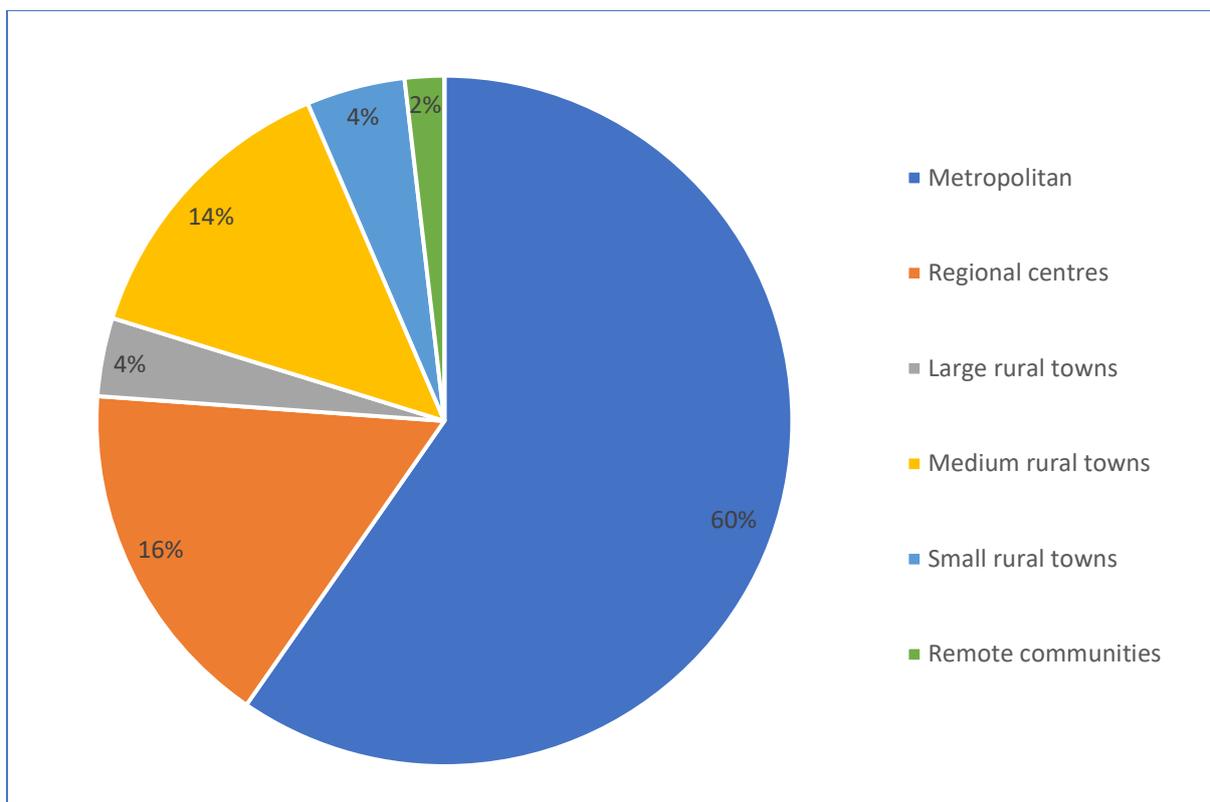
**Figure 1: Disabilities served by program.** Note: Some students have multiple disabilities recorded; this chart reflects the percentages of total recorded disabilities rather than total number of students.



**Figure 2: Disabilities served by program by year.** Note: Some students have multiple disabilities recorded; this chart reflects the percentages of total recorded disabilities rather than total number of students.



**Figure 3: Total number of deliveries per service region.**



**Figure 4: Deliveries per region type.** Note: Region type is based on the 'Modified Monash Model' (MMM – see Appendix E) which classifies metropolitan, regional, rural and remote areas according to geographical remoteness, as defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and town size. The MMM also includes the region 'very remote communities' – not shown here as there were no deliveries in these areas.

**Content**

The EBNTK program comprehensively covers a range of RSE topics. Analysis of educator case studies revealed key topic areas, including 'types of touch,' 'public and private', 'personal safety', 'puberty', and 'consent'.

Importantly, the program is structured to provide age-appropriate content tailored to different grade levels, ensuring that students receive information that suits their developmental stages. It also adapts its curriculum to meet the specific needs and maturity levels of various student groups.



The program provides students with an understanding of types of touch and rules about touch, emphasising personal safety and consent. It allows students to recognise and distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate touches. The concepts of 'public' and 'private' in relation to body parts, places, and behaviours are also discussed. The program offers a comprehensive discussion of puberty, helping students grasp the physical and emotional changes that occur during this phase.

Analysis revealed recurrent knowledge gaps among students, particularly in areas like online safety, pornography, and healthy relationships online. These gaps prompt meaningful questions and discussions, indicating the program's role in addressing students' curiosities and providing essential information.

Across age groups, there is a progression from foundational concepts, like personal safety, protective behaviours, and bodily changes, to more complex topics such as sexual health, safer sex, consent, and online interactions.

**Student comfort, engagement, and comprehension**

Qualitative analysis of True educator case studies and school staff feedback showed that students' comfort, engagement, and comprehension varied across schools and between students. However, a clear pattern emerged showing that these factors improved with time and repeated exposure to content. There was an overall trend from initial discomfort and or limited comprehension to heightened understanding and engagement.

Students demonstrated an ability to recall and discuss topics more effectively in subsequent sessions, suggesting that repeated engagement with the material bolstered their learning. A notable transition was observed as students moved from initial reticence to active participation, becoming more familiar and at ease with the content through regular interactions with the material and the educators. These observations offer insights for refining future sessions:

*A student who had been reluctant to participate in the sessions, demonstrated a turn-around in engagement, and asked if we could talk about STI's in our next session.*  
– True Educator

*By the final session, focused on healthy sexuality, the students had become much more comfortable and were much more focused on the topic.* – True Educator

Additionally, schools who had previously collaborated with True exhibited a solid foundational knowledge among students, which was further developed in subsequent visits. This cumulative learning fostered an environment where school staff felt more confident in navigating sensitive discussions.

The educational climate significantly influenced student outcomes. Supportive teachers and staff, along with inclusive and sensitive teaching methods, cultivated a safe learning environment that facilitated student comfort. The varying knowledge and comfort levels among students necessitated an adaptable approach to content delivery.

## Key Finding 2: Positive Impact and Program Excellence

### Extensive reach

The programs extensive reach and impact is clear, evidenced by the number of students served, schools visited, and the breadth of regions covered. This impact is further amplified by the scarcity of dedicated RSE services for students with disabilities in Queensland, highlighting the essential role that True plays in providing this vital service.

### Positive stakeholder feedback

Feedback from stakeholders, such as participating students and school staff, has been overwhelmingly positive. For example, school staff perceptions of the program's effectiveness were overwhelmingly positive. 83% of respondents found that True staff were 'effective' or 'highly effective' in supporting students to participate in education. 93% of respondents found that True staff were 'effective' or 'highly effective' in collaborating with school staff in supporting students. Collaboration with school staff is perceived as slightly more effective than True's effectiveness in supporting students to participate in education, with higher rates of 'highly effective' responses and lower rates of 'partially effective' responses. This implies that this direct collaboration component is particularly strong and well-received.

When school staff were asked how the support provided by True staff could be improved, over one third of respondents indicated that they did not think the program needed any improvements. They indicated this by answering either "N/A", "no improvements needed", or by providing positive feedback on the program.

When asked whether they feel the program goals have been (or will be) achieved, over 75% of school staff answered affirmatively, without qualification, that the program goals had been, or will be, achieved:

*Yes, feel this is a valuable service for our students who are a highly vulnerable part of the population and could help to reduce risk.*  
 – School Staff Respondent

These responses are useful as they give insight into the mechanisms or factors contributing to the perceived success of the program.

A further 10% of respondents gave affirmative responses that were conditional or qualified:

*Yes, However, due to students learning style the content will need to be retaught numerous times.* – School Staff Respondent

These responses are crucial for project evaluation, as they can highlight both the potential and the limitations of the project.

The remainder of respondents either believed the goals had been partially met, were uncertain, or gave outlying comments or feedback:

*Yes, partially. A good place to start & then build upon with the students.*  
 – School Staff Respondent

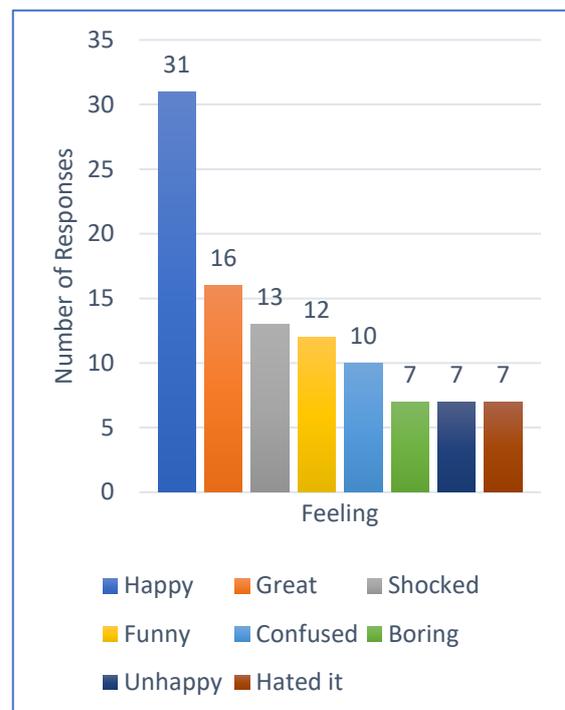
In addition to positive feedback from school staff, there was several examples of positive feedback from both students and parents/carers.

Four out of six parent/carer survey respondents agreed that participating in the EBNTK program increased their child’s confidence in discussing relationships and sexuality.

When asked how they felt about the session, the most reported student feeling was “happy”, followed by “great”. However, some students also reported negative feelings such as being shocked, confused, bored, unhappy, or hating the session (see Figure 5 for an overview of how students felt about sessions).



When asked what they thought was the most important topic they learnt, just under a quarter of student respondents said that learning about safety was most important. While this was often not qualified in further detail, the EBNTK program has a strong focus on teaching personal safety, protective behaviors, online safety, and safer sex. Learning the difference between public and private body parts, places, and behaviours was regarded as the second most important topic learnt (Note: in some instances, student selected the same answers for what topics they like least and what they liked most about the session).



**Figure 5: Student feeling about session.**  
 Note: students were able to select multiple responses.

Analysis of feedback from school staff revealed that they perceived program excellence in several key areas. When asked what they found valuable about the support provided by True, a number of prominent themes emerged:

### Staff professional development

Many respondents emphasised the importance of professional development for teaching staff. These sessions increased staff confidence and capability in addressing sensitive topics related to RSE. Respondents also noted that the student sessions were an opportunity to see good practice and pedagogical strategies being modelled in a classroom setting:

*The training sessions for teachers were invaluable; they equipped us with the necessary skills to facilitate these important conversations with our students. – School Staff Respondent*

*The professional development workshops helped me feel more confident about teaching sensitive topics; it's evident that the team really knows their stuff. – School Staff Respondent*

*Really great up to date ideas on how to teach sensitive topics and how best to answer the tricky questions students could ask or address situations that could arise in sexual education lessons. Great practical ideas how to teach the topic and get interest of students. – School Staff Respondent*

True's program excellence in this area is vital as the Royal Commission found that "greater support and training for teachers are required to develop the skills and expertise to teach students with disability, particularly students with cognitive impairment or intellectual disability".<sup>6</sup>

### Adaptive, differentiated, and appropriately levelled content and delivery

School staff highly valued the program's flexibility and its ability to cater to a wide range of student needs and learning styles. This adaptability was the most frequently cited aspect of the program's value. The program's inclusive and differentiated design and delivery ensured that students could effectively engage with, and benefit from, the program. Staff feedback highlighted that the content was appropriately tailored to match the students' abilities and developmental stages, which is crucial for their understanding and engagement with the material:

*The differentiated instruction techniques used were impressive; they took into consideration the individual needs of the students, including those with learning differences. – School Staff Respondent*

*Lessons were taught at the appropriate level so that students could understand and apply information provided. – School Staff Respondent*

These sentiments were echoed by True Staff, who noted that the program's adaptability allowed students with various learning needs, comprehension levels, and disabilities to effectively engage with the content. True staff stressed the importance of tailoring the content to the students' age and maturity level, and they noted that topics were adjusted to suit different grade levels, ensuring that the information provided was suitable and comprehensible.

These findings are in line with previous research, which has highlighted the significance of differentiated instruction for students with disabilities.<sup>14, 15, 16</sup> For instance, Strogilos (2018) states that "differentiated instruction provides a learning environment that takes into consideration the individual characteristics of students and, as such, is a useful approach for the inclusion of students

with special needs/disabilities in mainstream settings.<sup>15</sup> This adaptive and responsive delivery method is especially important as evidence presented to the Royal Commission showed that schools often “failed to provide students with disability the adjustments and supports necessary to access and participate in all aspects of their education.”<sup>6</sup>

### Expert delivery

The professionalism, expertise, and passion of the True educators, along with their ability to establish rapport with students, are noted as key factors in the program's effectiveness. True educators are mentioned for their adaptability, effective teaching styles, clarity, and ability to create safe learning environments. The delivery was described as "explicit teaching in a non-judgmental way," ensuring that information was not only relevant but also resonated with the students on a personal level. This high-quality delivery was particularly noted for its inclusivity and responsiveness to the varied needs of students:

*The Educator was exceptionally helpful, knowledgeable and connected really well with both students and staff. – School Staff Respondent*

*The experts leading the sessions were incredibly knowledgeable and had a way of presenting that was both authoritative and approachable. – School Staff Respondent*

*The quality of delivery was exceptional; clear, concise, and compelling. Even complex topics were made easily digestible. – School Staff Respondent*

The overarching theme is one of a highly skilled, considerate, and effective delivery of education, tailored to the needs of a diverse student body.

Several less cited but significant themes emerged when school staff discussed the value of the support provided by True. Firstly, school staff noted the quality of resources and learning materials and highlighted their ability to enhance the educational experience for both teachers and students:

*The materials provided were top-notch, up-to-date, and culturally sensitive, which made a huge difference in how the content was received. – School Staff Respondent*

Secondly, the program's curriculum alignment, real-world applicability, and its ability to facilitate "real-world, no-nonsense" conversations was also noted:

*What I appreciated the most was the real-world applicability of the content; it wasn't just theoretical but directly related to their everyday experiences. – School Staff Respondent*

*The curriculum aligns perfectly with our educational goals and offers practical knowledge that students can apply immediately. – School Staff Respondent*

Lastly, the program was valued for comprehensively covering specific topic areas:

*The types of touch activity was good. – School Staff Respondent*

*[I valued] the initiation of discussions around Safe Relationships and Consent. – School Staff Respondent*

True's EBNTK program has demonstrated significant positive impact and program excellence across several key areas. The program's ability to increase access to important RSE curriculum is vital.

### Key finding 3: Gaps, Challenges, and Improvement Areas

#### Lack of uptake of parent/carer sessions

True educators consistently reported a lack of uptake of parent/carer information sessions. They noted that often sessions were scheduled, and then cancelled, by schools due to a lack of parent/carer interest. Reasons cited by parents/carers for not attending information sessions were that the time did not suit them, or the school did not offer one.

It is vital to address this lack of uptake of parent/carers information sessions as they help to facilitate a 'whole-school approach' to student learning and inclusion. The recent Royal Commission findings outlined that inclusive education should empower "the leadership and voice of students with disability, while engaging parents/carers in planning and decision making" and build "inclusive attitudes and behaviours among parents, students, teachers and school leadership."<sup>6</sup>

#### Lack of service to non-metropolitan areas

Over the five-year period from 2019 to 2023, no EBNTK sessions took place in 'very remote communities', and only two sessions ran in 'remote communities'. Additionally, there was an increase over time in deliveries to metropolitan areas (see Figure 6). Although we continue to receive program interest from non-metropolitan schools, they are typically slower in completing the required paperwork and therefore often miss out on accessing the program's fully funded sessions. This trend was likely further exacerbated by a range of internal and external factors (such as Covid-19 and organisational restructures).

The implications of these findings are nevertheless significant as previous research has outlined inequalities in sexual and reproductive health experienced by young people living in rural, regional, and remote areas.<sup>12</sup> True's EBNTK program must strive to provide equitable and accessible RSE to students with disabilities throughout all of Queensland.

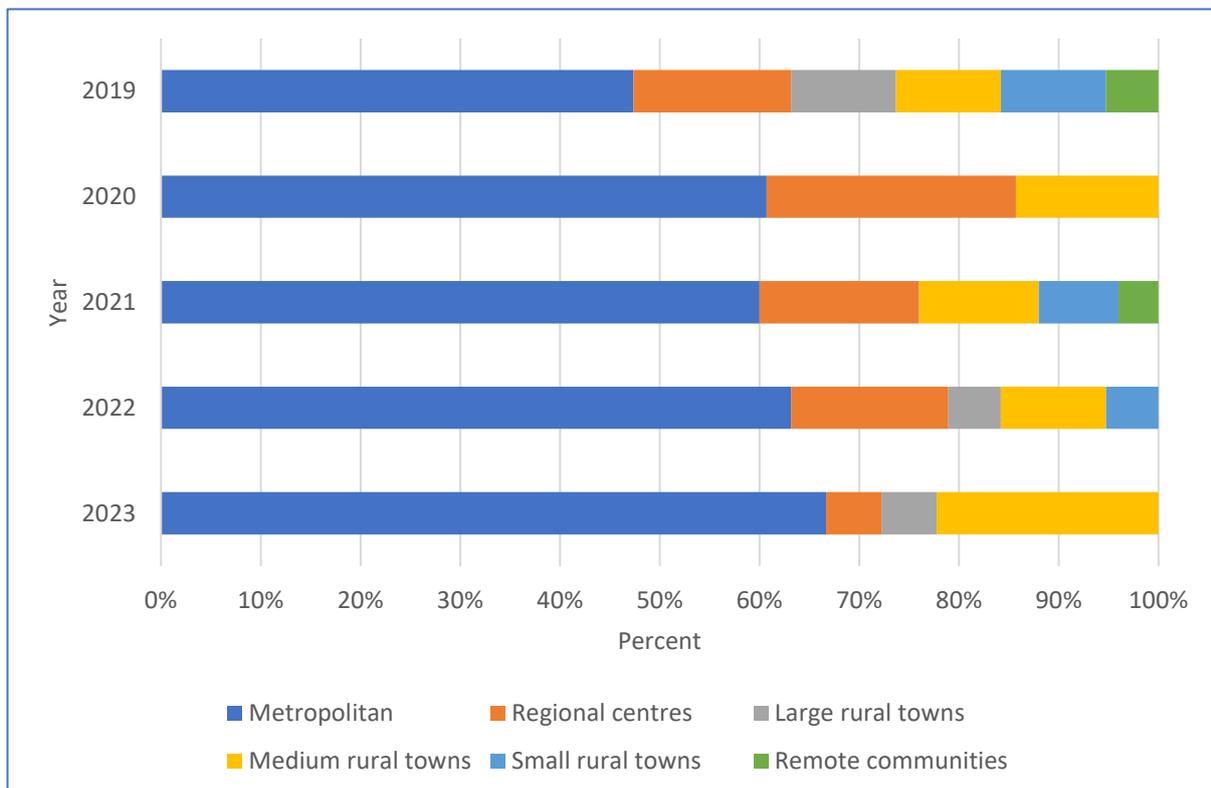


Figure 6: Deliveries per region type by year.

### Pacing, duration, and number of sessions

Thematic analysis of school staff feedback provided valuable insights into how the support provided by True could be improved.

The most common theme related to the pacing, duration, and overall number of education sessions. The responses show a consistent want for restructuring the time allocation, with the aim of allowing students to process and understand the content more effectively and ensuring that their questions and needs are adequately addressed:

*The 5 lessons had too much content and not enough time for students to seek feedback. – School Staff Respondent*

*Honestly with the time we had, a lot was achieved. If it could be delivered to students for maybe 6 sessions instead of 4. – School Staff Respondent*

*Break session into 2 or 3 smaller chunks with follow-up activities between each session to do in class. – School Staff Respondent*

### Visual learning materials

The theme of incorporating or enhancing visual aids and learning supports emerged consistently across multiple school staff respondents. These respondents indicated that visuals are particularly important for students with special needs, including those with a High Individualised Curriculum (HIC) level and those who are non-verbal. The emphasis on visuals ranged from requests for clearer images and illustrations to the use of specialised language boards for non-verbal students:

*ICT visuals always support students to engage in learning area topics. Students with disabilities require visuals to support them to comprehend the topics of discussion, expected skills required within a task, communicate their answers about a topic or engage with the curriculum. – School Staff Respondent*

*Use clearer images and pictures. More visuals. E.g. a body they can stick the parts onto. – School Staff Respondent*

*Have a visual power-point display so non-verbal students can participate and make their own choices. – School Staff Respondent*

The data clearly indicated that there is a strong demand for improved and more versatile visual aids in the EBNTK program.

### Support mechanisms

School staff expressed a strong desire for holistic support encompassing pre-session, during session, and post-session phases.

Firstly, school staff requested more comprehensive pre-session preparation and support. For example, staff suggested lead-in activities that schools may run prior to True sessions, as well as pre-session meetings with True staff to review content, discuss specific school/student needs, and to receive briefings on how to best implement protective interrupting techniques. There was also requests for more detailed information on True's website for parents and school staff who are unable to attend information sessions.

Secondly, respondents reflexively acknowledged the need for increased school staff engagement and support during the sessions. This encompasses more active participation from school staff in the classrooms to aid learning to assist in managing challenging students during the program. This finding was echoed by True educators who reported challenges in delivery when school staff were not actively engaged in student behaviour management and in creating a supportive and safe classroom environment.

Lastly, there was a recognised need for ongoing post-session support, which could include additional professional development focusing on follow-up programs and referrals, and/or the provision of resources and information as future needs arise.

Overall, the feedback points to a desire for a more integrated approach to support, ensuring continuity and consistency from preparation to follow-up, and enhancing staff engagement throughout the program. This holistic support is seen as crucial for maximising the program's effectiveness and impact.

#### Ambivalent parent/carer feedback

While the limited parent/carer feedback was in some instances positive, data analysis revealed a trend of overall ambivalence towards the program's effectiveness from this stakeholder group. For example, two thirds of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that participating in the EBNTK program increased their child's knowledge of topics related to relationships and sexuality.

Of the three respondents who provided qualitative program feedback, two were critical of the programs content and/or delivery methods. One respondent raised concerns about the content's appropriateness for student's differing lived experiences and maturity levels. They stated that the true educator "discussed things that could have been left out, as kids do not need to know 'everything' in one or two sessions or before their maturity level is ready to hear things." This response underscores the need for careful consideration of content and its

presentation, considering the varying maturity levels and backgrounds of the students. The second respondent suggested that the program was not differentiated for those on 'Highly Individualised Curriculums' (HIC). When discussing the program, they stated that it "seems a useless experience if there is limited understanding from the service of needs of HIC students." This reflects a concern about the program's ability to adapt to the varied learning needs of students.

While this parent/carer feedback may provide valuable insights, it is important to note that with only six respondents, this feedback is not generalisable, and is in direct contrast to the numerous and overwhelmingly positive staff feedback related to the programs differentiated, adaptive and age/developmentally appropriate content and delivery. The program's ability to adapt to a wide range of student needs, including those with differing intellectual abilities, is often cited by school staff. It is also worth noting that the concerns expressed by these respondents closely resemble the common concerns that are raised during pre-program parent/carer information sessions. Importantly, these concerns are typically resolved during these sessions, as participants are provided evidence-based and accurate information about the content being taught in classrooms. Moving forward, it is recommended that efforts are made to assess the viability of collecting more robust parent/carer feedback.

#### Key finding 4: Feedback Mechanisms and Data Management

This section focuses on the program's feedback mechanisms and data management processes, revealing several critical insights.

The evaluation process highlighted that while substantial stakeholder feedback and administrative data have been collected, there are aspects of data collection, management, and utilisation that require additional consideration. Importantly, administrative and feedback data should not simply be collected for its own sake, but rather we must think critically about what data is being collected, how, and for what purpose, and ensure this information is managed, stored, and evaluated effectively for continuous program refinement.

Operational limitations have led to prioritising data essential for reporting to funders. However, it is crucial to consider capturing additional data for ongoing program improvements, such as parent/carer feedback, which, although not mandated by funders, can provide valuable insights. Currently, there is no requirement to report specific statistics on whether staff professional development sessions and parent/carer feedback sessions occur, resulting in inconsistent and non-quantifiable data collection in this area. This lack of precise data makes it challenging to assess the impact of a whole-school approach on student outcomes.

Throughout the five-year evaluation period, rigorous systems for effectively storing program data were lacking. For instance, the year levels of participating classes were not systematically recorded and raw data on this variable was difficult to obtain, making data collation and analysis based on this variable time-consuming and beyond the scope of this evaluation. This information may be important for understanding which year levels are being served more or less effectively.

In terms of student feedback, collecting data from students with disabilities, who have varied learning needs and capacities, poses a challenge. The survey design was overly complex, leading to many incomplete forms. Additionally, the feedback was often summarised by True educators rather than being retained in its raw form, making meaningful analysis difficult.

School staff feedback surveys were the most robust data source for this evaluation, yet completion rates declined significantly in 2023. The percent of participating schools who had at least one staff member complete the online feedback survey dropped to just 17% from a peak of 60% in 2021. This decrease is speculated by True project staff to be a result of 'paperwork fatigue', a consequence of heightened bureaucratic demands imposed by funders on schools for program access.

In conclusion, the evaluation of True's EBNTK program has highlighted significant areas of success, including its extensive reach and positive impact on students and educators. However, it also reveals critical areas for improvement, particularly in the mechanisms of feedback collection and data management. The need for a more rigorous approach to data collection, storage, and analysis is evident, especially in capturing valuable insights from underrepresented groups like parents and carers. Additionally, the fluctuating engagement in feedback surveys underscores the importance of adapting methodologies to ensure comprehensive and consistent data collection. Addressing these challenges is essential for the ongoing development and refinement of the program, ensuring it continues to meet the diverse needs of its stakeholders effectively and remains a vital resource in providing comprehensive and inclusive education.

## Recommendations and Next Steps

### Program Recommendations Continued whole-school approach

*“The whole-school approach is a recognised best practice approach to fostering a partnership between the student, home, school and community to support positive outcomes for students in all their relationships, online sexual safety and their reproductive and sexual health.”<sup>17</sup>*

A continued whole-school approach, including workforce development, information provision, and holistic support, is vital for maintaining and enhancing the program's effectiveness. This approach includes:

- The sustained delivery of high-quality staff professional development sessions; by equipping educators with the necessary skills and knowledge, the program ensures a consistent and appropriate delivery of RSE across the school.
- Increased accessibility of parent/carer information sessions; despite low uptake, parent/carer sessions remain an integral part of the whole-school approach. True is adapting these sessions into pre-recorded digital formats, which will make them more accessible to a broader audience. Additionally, maintaining channels for parents and carers to inquire and follow up on these sessions is important, as it ensures ongoing engagement and support.
- Enhanced pre-session and post-session support; providing schools with lead-in activities before the program commences is recommended to facilitate a smoother transition into the program content. Post-session support may include opportunities for school staff to engage in specialised, in-depth professional development.

Implementing these recommendations will foster a more integrated and supportive environment throughout the program's lifecycle.

### Continued expert delivery

The ongoing success of True's EBNTK program hinges on its ability to maintain adaptive, developmentally appropriate, and curriculum-aligned content and delivery. It is crucial that the program continues to tailor its content to match students' abilities and developmental stages, as this is fundamental to their understanding and engagement with the material. Alongside this, it is essential to continue training True educators to deliver the program in a professional, expert, and passionate manner. These educators should possess in-depth, current knowledge and be skilled in building rapport and creating safe and inclusive learning environments.

It is recommended refinements are made to pacing, duration, and number of sessions. There is a need to reevaluate the current structure to better facilitate student comprehension. This could involve modularising content into smaller, more digestible units spread across multiple sessions, increasing the frequency of sessions while reducing their duration, and/or increasing the time within each session for student questions, discussions, and feedback.

It is recommended that visual learning aids and materials are updated to increase efficacy and versatility. Updating and modernising existing visual materials to make them more effective, along with incorporating interactive elements like digital slideshows, manipulatives, and language boards, will enhance hands-on learning, especially for non-verbal students. By addressing these visual aid needs, the program will likely become more effective across a wider range of learning styles and needs.

### Targeting non-metropolitan areas

It is recommended that True carefully evaluates the potential for greater engagement in non-metropolitan areas. The current lack of service to non-metropolitan areas calls for innovative solutions to overcome accessibility challenges. For example, reserving a number of bookings for non-metropolitan schools, utilising online and blended learning methods, and/or establishing partnerships with schools in non-metropolitan areas could aid in effectively integrating comprehensive RSE programs into these communities. As expansion efforts take place, it is crucial to implement robust monitoring and evaluation in these new areas. This will help in understanding the impact and effectiveness of the program and in making necessary adjustments.

### Improved data collection, storage, and management

It is recommended that improvements are made to data collection, storage, and management processes. For example, simplifying student feedback forms will ensure ease of completion. Enhancing the uptake of staff feedback is also crucial. Additionally, it is recommended to assess the viability of collecting feedback from parents/carers, as this is an important stakeholder group who may have meaningful insights into the program's success and/or shortcomings. If pursued, this feedback should be integrated into the program's existing feedback mechanisms and collected promptly post-program delivery in schools. Finally, reviewing data storage and management systems is recommended. This includes assessing current data management practices and exploring options that can streamline the process, enhance data security, and facilitate easier access and analysis. These improvements in data handling will not only optimise the program's operational efficiency but also enhance the quality and usability of the information collected, supporting better decision-making and program development.

### Policy Recommendations

Leveraging the insights gained from the evaluation of True's EBNTK program, policy development and sector recommendations can significantly enhance comprehensive relationships and sexuality education, particularly for students with disabilities. We advocate for policies that support:

- Continued funding for the implementation of specialised support for students with disability to access RSE curriculum.
- The continued integration of protective education against abuse into RSE, addressing the higher risk of sexual abuse among people with disabilities.
- The implementation of RSE in non-metropolitan schools to ensure equitable access and systematic engagement.
- Ongoing evaluation and review of disability focused RSE programs to ensure they remain relevant and effective.

### Next Steps

The immediate priority for True's Every Body Needs to Know program is to implement updates based on these evaluation findings, ensuring the program's continuous improvement and impact. We aim to share these findings with key stakeholders, both within and outside the organisation. Developing a robust evidence base through these actions will enhance educational inclusivity and responsiveness to diverse needs. Crucially, it is vital to establish a culture of continuous evaluation and review within the program. Rather than treating this evaluation as a one-off exercise, it should be embedded into the ongoing operational framework of the program. Regular reviews and evaluations will enable the program to adapt to changing needs, incorporate new insights, and continually refine its approach, ensuring that it remains relevant, effective, and impactful in its delivery of comprehensive relationships and sexuality education for Queensland students with disabilities.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A: Staff Feedback Survey

### True Relationships & Reproductive Health Group Education

Please take a few minutes to complete this survey. Evaluation of True Relationships & Reproductive Health services is a requirement of the Specialist Disability Support in Schools (SDSS) Program and your feedback is important to the ongoing development of our services. The survey is to be completed by the Primary Contact Person for the students being supported. You may however like to consult with other members of the students support team in completing the survey. Please inform your Principal that you have completed this survey.

**\* 1. What year did True visit your school?**

**\* 2. Your name (as the primary contact for this project)**

**\* 3. Name of your school**

**4. Your Role**

- Teacher
- Special Needs Teacher
- Teacher Aid
- Guidance Officer
- Head of Special Education Services (HOSES)
- Advisory Visiting Teachers (AVT)
- Therapist
- Deputy
- Principal
- Director

Other (please specify)

**5. Name of True Educator**

**\* 6. What were the goals you had entering into the project agreement?**

- Assessment of child's needs
- Development of Sexuality and Relationships Education program
- Direct, face to face sexuality and relationships education
- Professional development
- Report writing
- Collaborative skills exchange/strategy development
- Resource loan/trial

Other (please specify)

**\* 7. How effective would you say the above True service has been in supporting students to participate in education?**

- Not at all effective
- Partially effective
- Effective
- Highly effective
- Don't know/unsure

**\* 8. How effectively would you say we collaborated with the school staff in supporting the students?**

- Not at all effective
- Partially effective
- Effective
- Highly effective
- Don't know/unsure

**9. What was valuable about the support provided?**

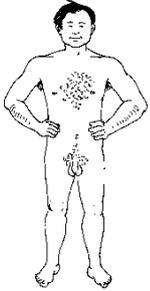
**10. How could the support provided be improved?**

**11. Do you feel the goals have been (or will be) achieved?**

## Appendix B: Student Feedback Form

1. What did you like most about the program?

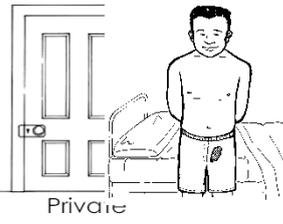
Learning about:



bodies



public/private



puberty



relationships/ friends



safety

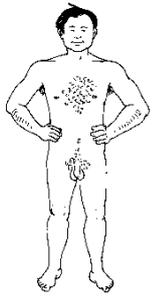
2. What were the two most important things you learnt?

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3. What did you like least about the program?

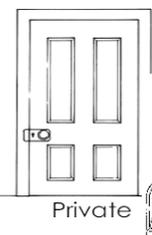
Learning about:



bodies



public/private



puberty



relationships/ friends



safety

4. Any other comments?

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Thank you

## Appendix C: Parent/Carer Feedback Survey

1. What school did your child/children attend when participating in the EBNTK program?

2. What year/s did your child/children attend the EBNTK program? (if multiple years, select all that apply)

- 2019  
 2020  
 2021  
 2022  
 2023  
 None of the above

3. Please select whether you think the EBNTK program has had a lasting positive or negative impact on your child/children.

- Very positive  
 Positive  
 Neutral  
 Negative  
 Very negative

Please select whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:

4. Participating in the EBNTK program increased my child/children's confidence in discussing relationships and sexuality.

- Strongly agree  
 Agree  
 Neutral  
 Disagree  
 Strongly disagree

5. Participating in the EBNTK program increased my child/children's knowledge of topics related to relationships and sexuality.

- Strongly agree  
 Agree  
 Neutral  
 Disagree  
 Strongly disagree

6. Participating in the EBNTK program led to a decrease in unhealthy sexual or relationship behaviours in my child/children.

- Strongly agree  
 Agree  
 Neutral  
 Disagree

- Strongly disagree
- Not applicable

\* 7. Did you attend a EBNTK parent/carer information session?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Please select whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:

8. Attending the parent/carer information session increased my confidence in engaging my child/children in conversations about relationships and sexuality education.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

9. Attending the EBNTK parent/carer information session increased my knowledge of topics related to relationships and sexuality education.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

10. Why did you not attend the parent/care information session?

- The school did not offer one
- The time of the session was unsuitable
- Other (please specify)

11. Do you have any other feedback or comments (E.g. What was positive/negative about the program, what should be changed or added, what was your experience overall)

12. This information is used to improve our services. It may also be published in True's Annual Report and other public documents. Any information you provide is anonymous and de-identified. Do you agree to True using this information in public reports and other public documents?

- Yes
- No

## Appendix D: True Educator Case Study Template

### Specialist Disability Support in Schools Program: Case study

Each case study must be limited to a maximum of five pages and must include the following information.

Organisation Name:

---

School:

---

Year level of student:

---

Verified disability or disabilities (please indicate the primary verified disability if there are multiple):

---

Provide a summary describing the service:

---

Summarise the impact of the service and the student's outcomes relative to the objectives of the Specialist Disability Support in Schools Program:

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Explain how the impact and outcomes of the service were measured:

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Conclusion and recommendations:

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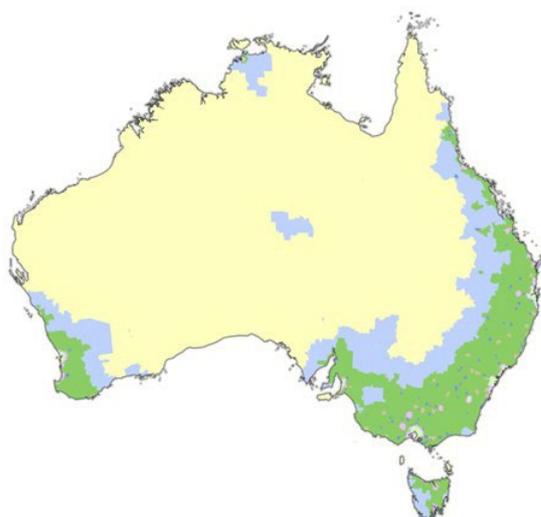




## Modified Monash Model

The Modified Monash Model (MMM) 2019 has been updated to align with the latest available census data (2016).

The model was developed to better target health workforce programs to attract health professionals to more remote and smaller communities. The MMM classifies metropolitan, regional, rural and remote areas according to geographical remoteness, as defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), and town size.



Health programs will begin transitioning to the new MMM 2019 from 1 January 2020.

The MMM is used to determine eligibility for a range of health workforce programs, such as rural Bulk Billing Incentives, Workforce Incentive Program, Bonded Medical Program.

MM1	Metropolitan
MM2	Regional centres
MM3	Large rural towns
MM4	Medium rural towns
MM5	Small rural towns
MM6	Remote communities
MM7	Very remote communities

Modified Monash Category (MMM 2019)	Description (including the Australian Statistical Geography Standard – Remoteness Area (2016))
MM 1	<b>Metropolitan areas:</b> Major cities accounting for 70% of Australia’s population All areas categorised ASGS-RA1.
MM 2	<b>Regional centres:</b> Inner (ASGS-RA 2) and Outer Regional (ASGS-RA 3) areas that are in, or within a 20km drive of a town with over 50,000 residents. For example: Ballarat, Mackay, Toowoomba, Kiama, Albury, Bunbury.
MM 3	<b>Large rural towns:</b> Inner (ASGS-RA 2) and Outer Regional (ASGS-RA 3) areas that are not MM 2 and are in, or within a 15km drive of a town between 15,000 to 50,000 residents. For example: Dubbo, Lismore, Yeppoon, Busselton.
MM 4	<b>Medium rural towns:</b> Inner (ASGS-RA 2) and Outer Regional (ASGS-RA 3) areas that are not MM 2 or MM 3, and are in, or within a 10km drive of a town with between 5,000 to 15,000 residents. For example: Port Augusta, Charters Towers, Moree.
MM 5	<b>Small rural towns:</b> All remaining Inner (ASGS-RA 2) and Outer Regional (ASGS-RA 3) areas. For example: Mount Buller, Moruya, Renmark, Condamine.
MM 6	<b>Remote communities:</b> Remote mainland areas (ASGS-RA 4) AND remote islands less than 5kms offshore. For example: Cape Tribulation, Lightning Ridge, Alice Springs, Mallacoota, Port Hedland. Additionally, islands that have an MM 5 classification with a population of less than 1,000 without bridges to the mainland will now be classified as MM 6 for example: Bruny Island.
MM 7	<b>Very remote communities:</b> Very remote areas (ASGS-RA 5). For example: Longreach, Coober Pedy, Thursday Island and all other remote island areas more than 5kms offshore.

A map showing MMM 2019 can be viewed at [doctorconnect.gov.au](http://doctorconnect.gov.au)