



# MAKING the LINK

Promoting **HELPSEEKING** for Cannabis Use & Mental Health

**NCPIC Conference  
2009**

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**nctic**  
national cannabis  
prevention and  
information centre

Orygen  
**YOUTH** Health

# NCPIC & Orygen Youth Health

Cannabis & Mental  
Health First Aid  
Guidelines

Unit of Competency  
in Certificate IV

Brief Intervention  
for cannabis/mental  
disorders

Psycho-educational  
materials

School-based project:

**MAKINGtheLINK**

# Orygen Youth Health

Early  
intervention



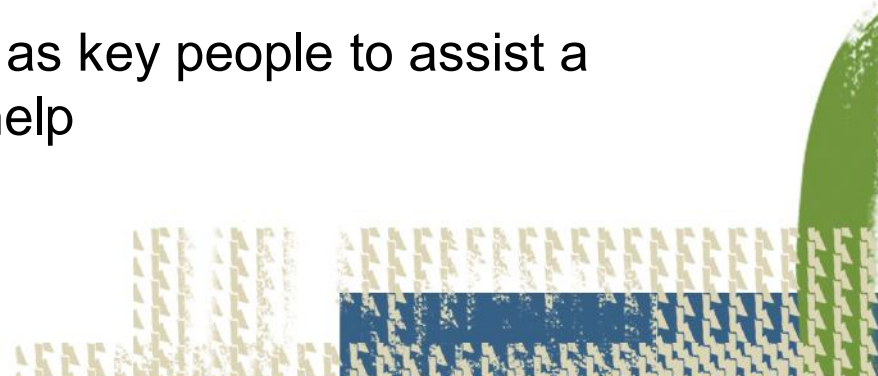
# What is MAKINGtheLINK?

- A curriculum-based program for schools to promote helpseeking for cannabis use and mental health problems, which:
  - Teaches young people to help each other to seek professional help
  - Promotes the idea that *Mates Help Mates*
  - Reduces the barriers to seeking help from professionals
  - Educates teachers about students' helpseeking behaviour and how to assist them to seek professional help for cannabis use and mental health problems

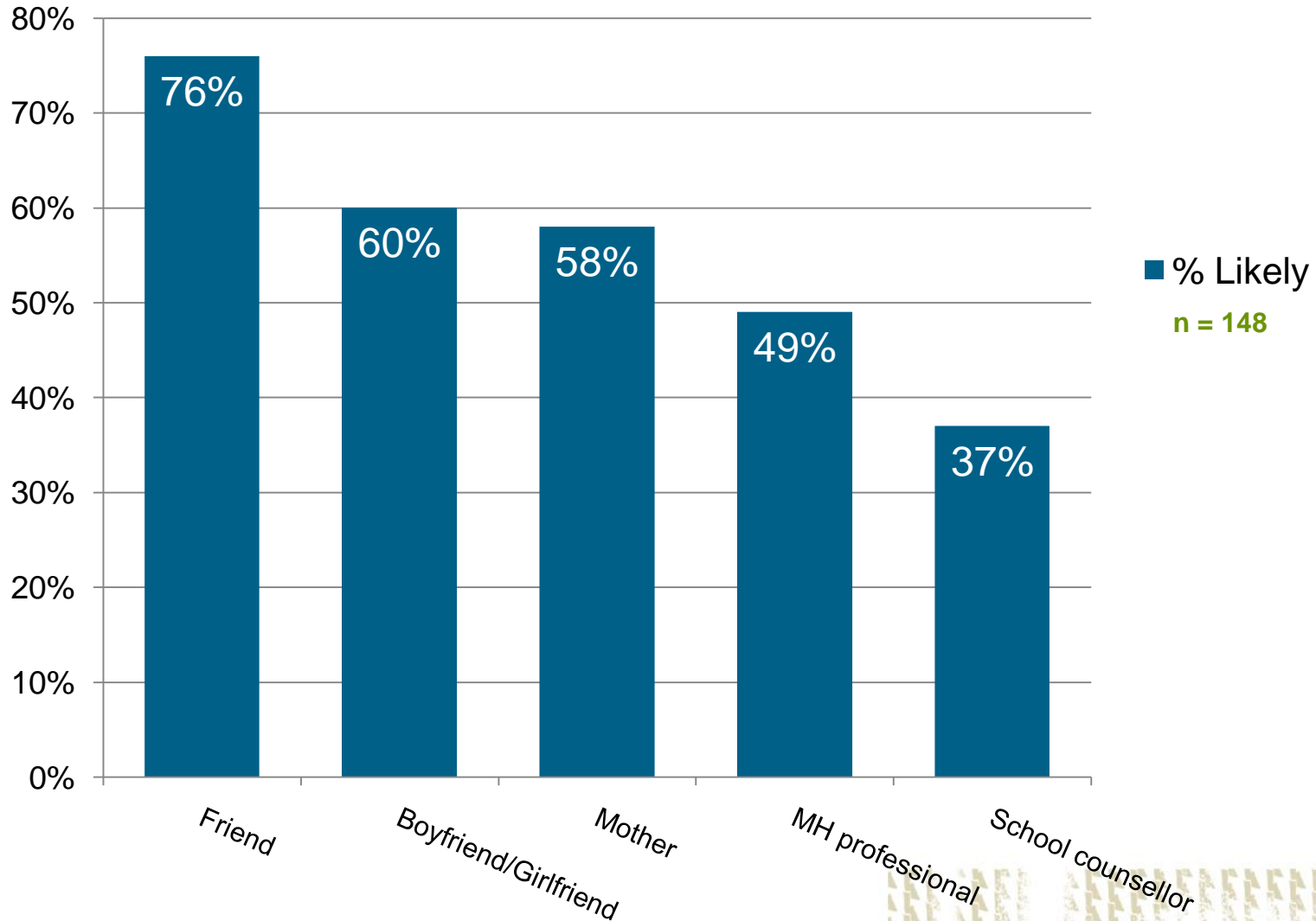


# Why promote professional helpseeking for cannabis & mental health?

- Cannabis use is a risk factor for the development of mental health problems
- Early intervention and treatment is a strong predictor of recovery
- Many barriers prevent young people from seeking professional help
- Existing school resources don't teach students how to overcome these barriers...
- ...nor focus on friends and teachers as key people to assist a young person to seek professional help

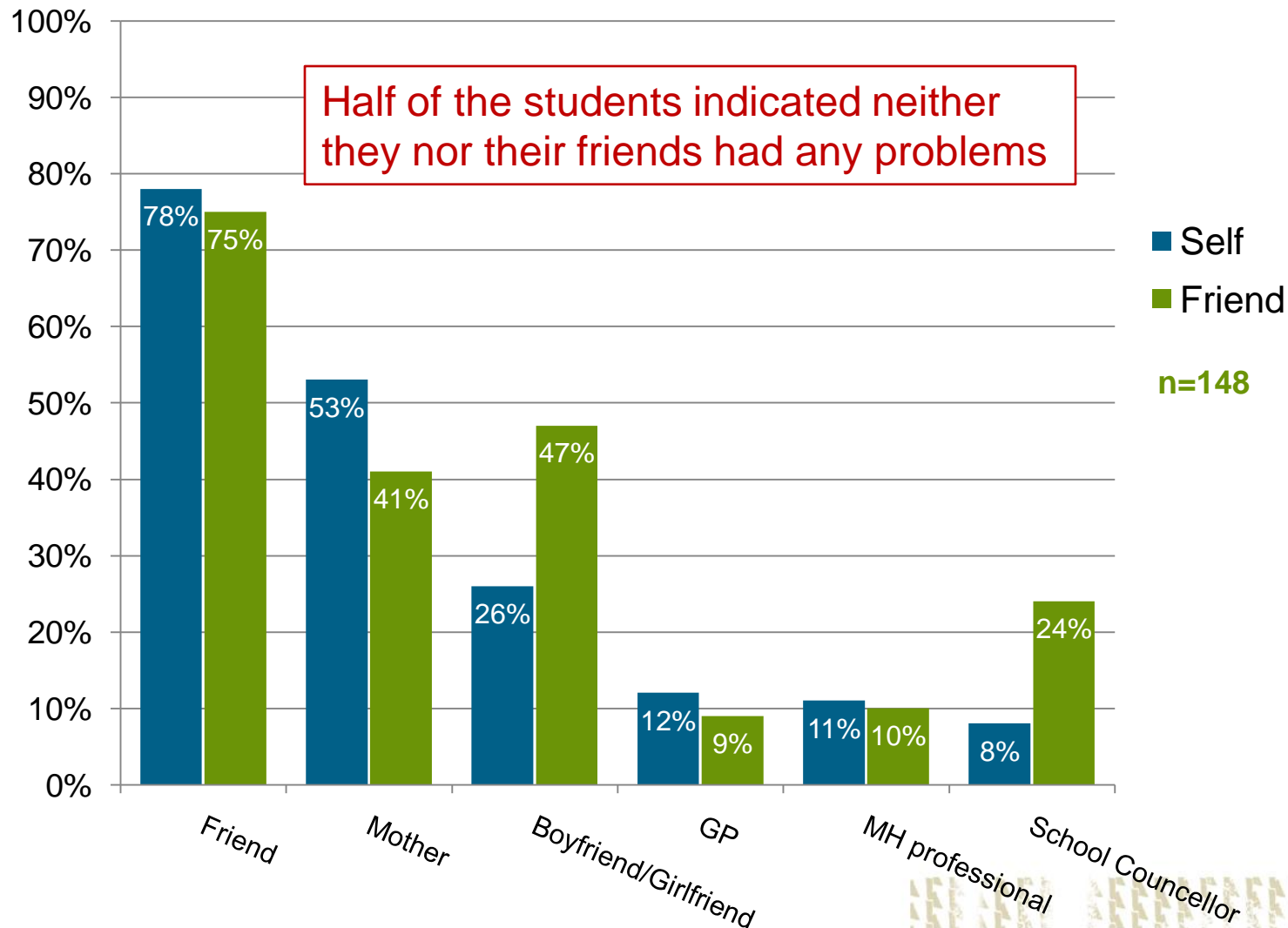


# Future helpseeking intentions: Students prefer to seek help from friends



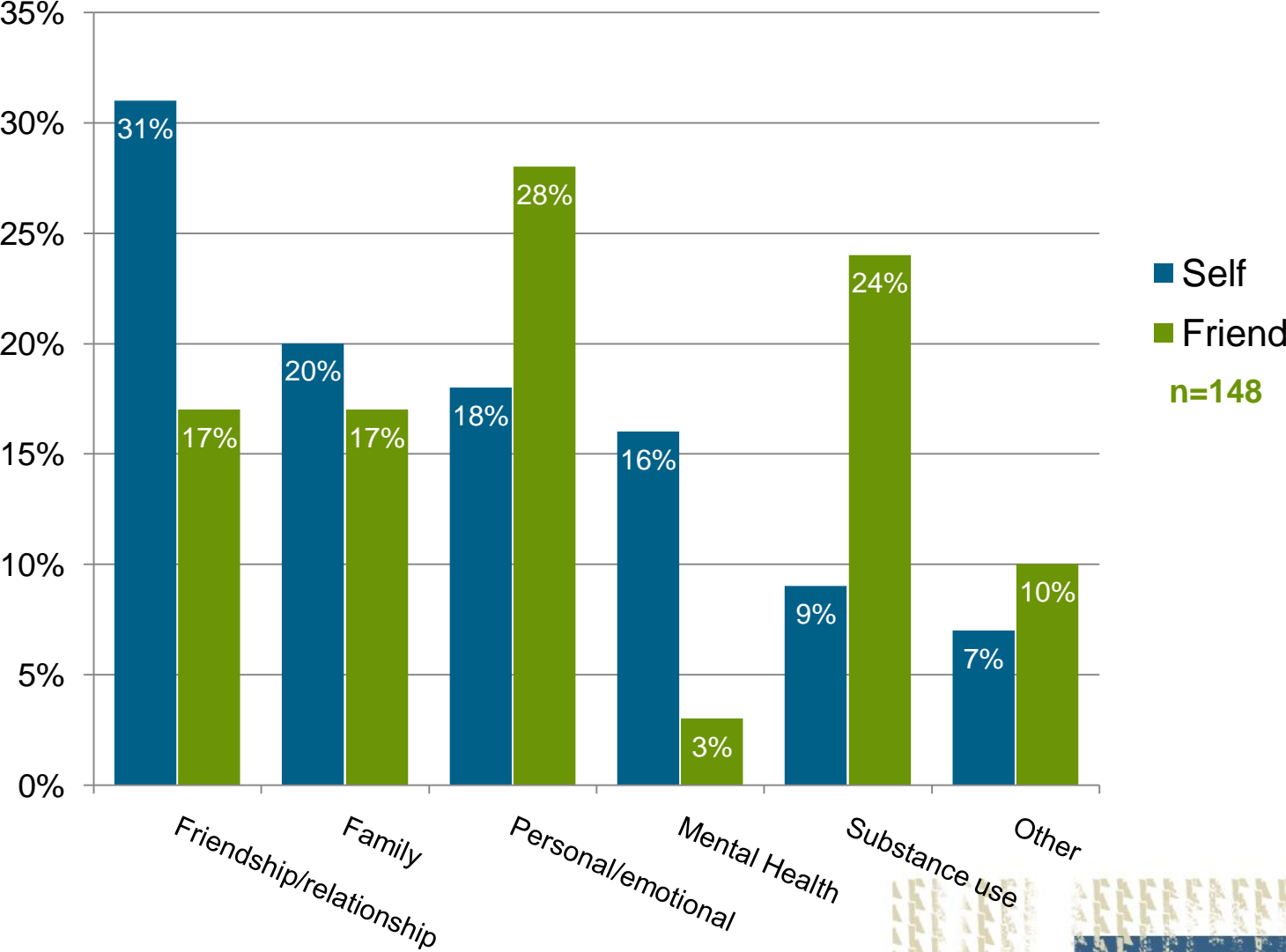
(General Help Seeking Questionnaire,  
Wilson et al, 2005)

# Helpseeking in the last 6 weeks: Students sought help from informal sources



(Actual Help Seeking Questionnaire,  
Rickwood & Braithwaite, 1994)

# What kinds of problems do students seek help for?





Why aren't young people seeking  
professional help?



**BARRIERS**



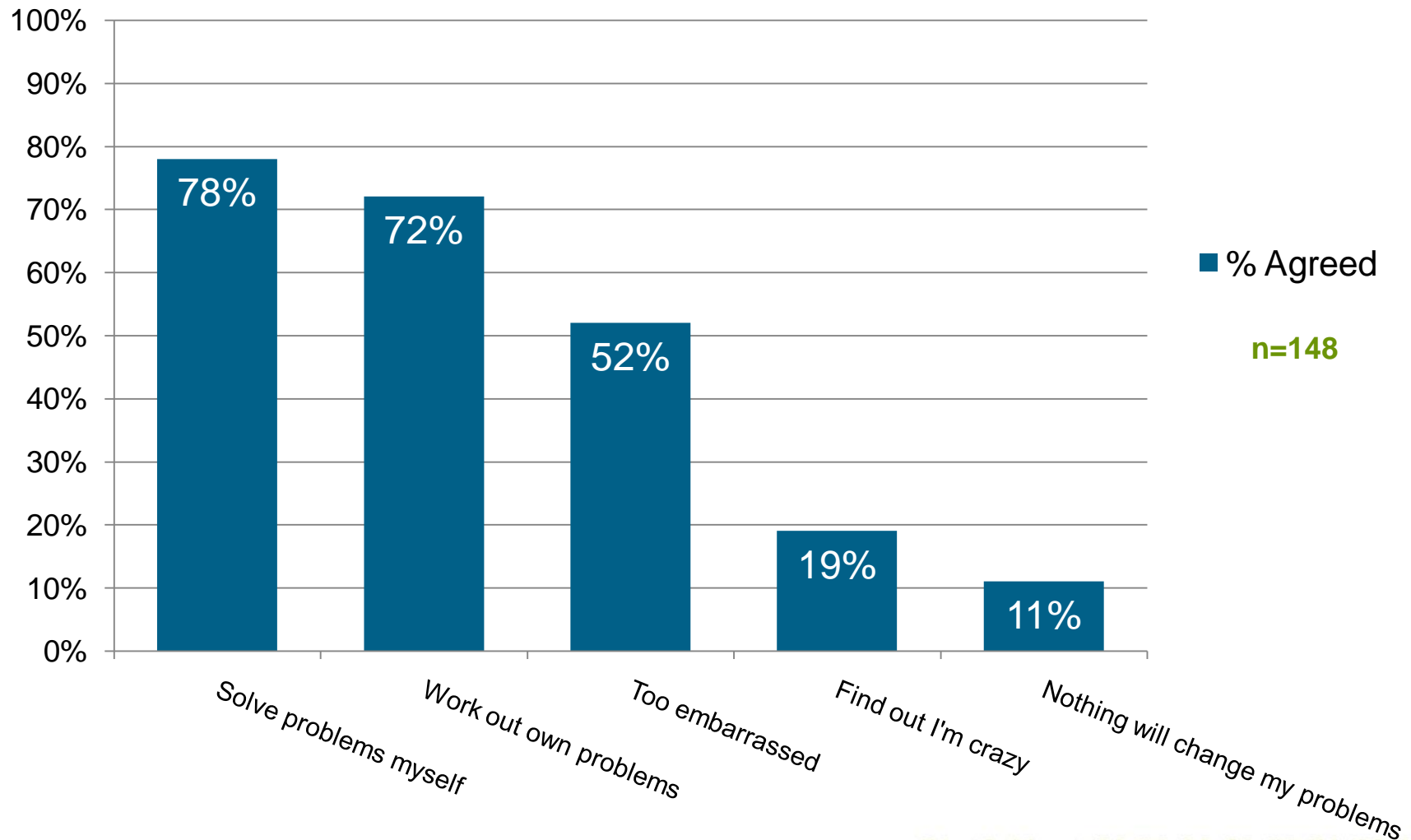
# Barriers to professional helpseeking for young people

- Unable to recognise or acknowledge they have a problem
- Unsure about where to go and what will happen
- Stigma, embarrassment, shame
- Concerns about confidentiality
- Believe they should manage their own problems
- Believe that no one can help
- Cannabis use itself as it can increase anxiety and decrease motivation

Jorm & Wright (2007)

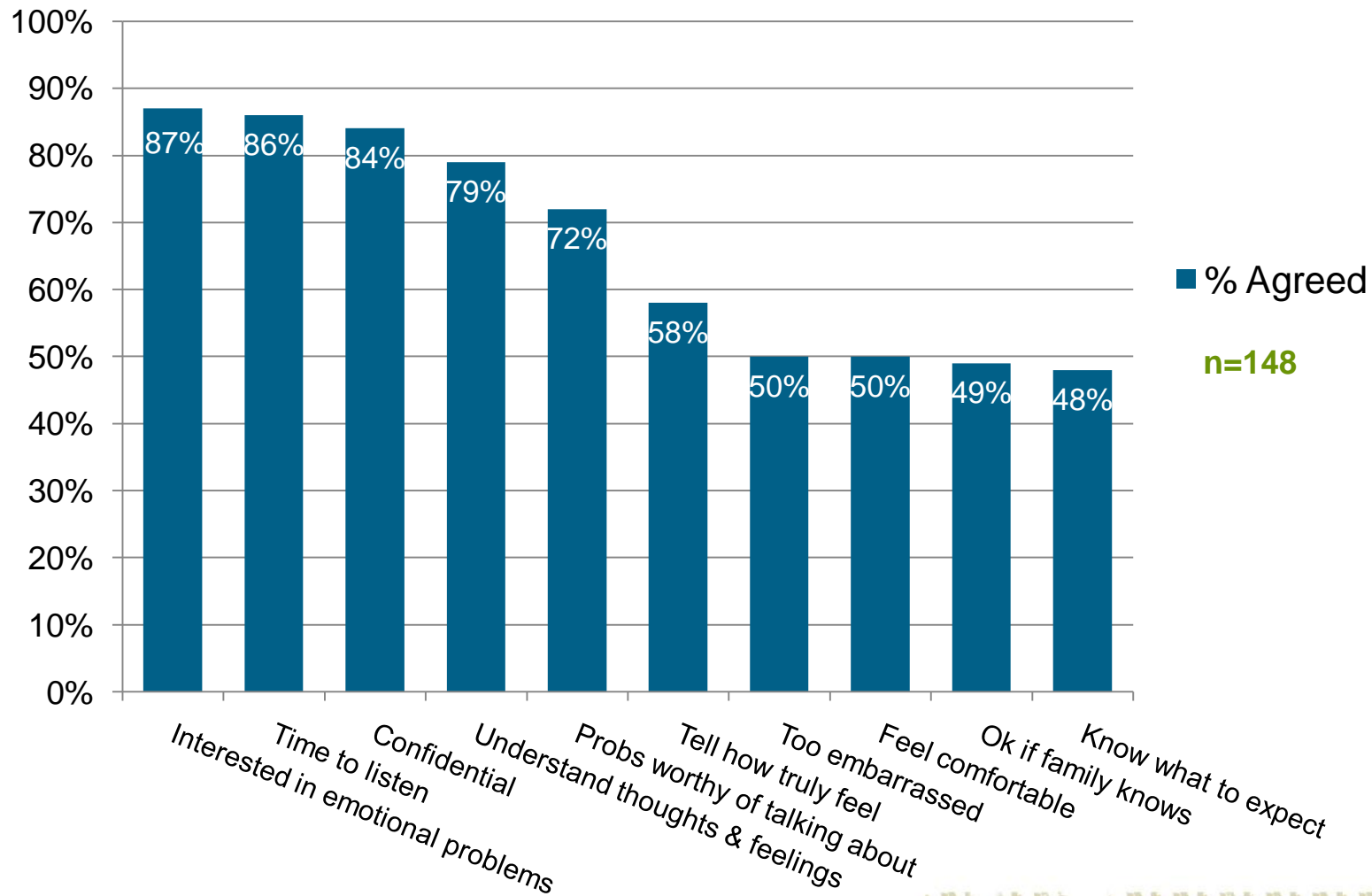
Rickwood, Deane, Wilson, & Ciarrochi (2005)

Our sample showed young people believed they should solve their own problems and felt embarrassed to talk to a professional:



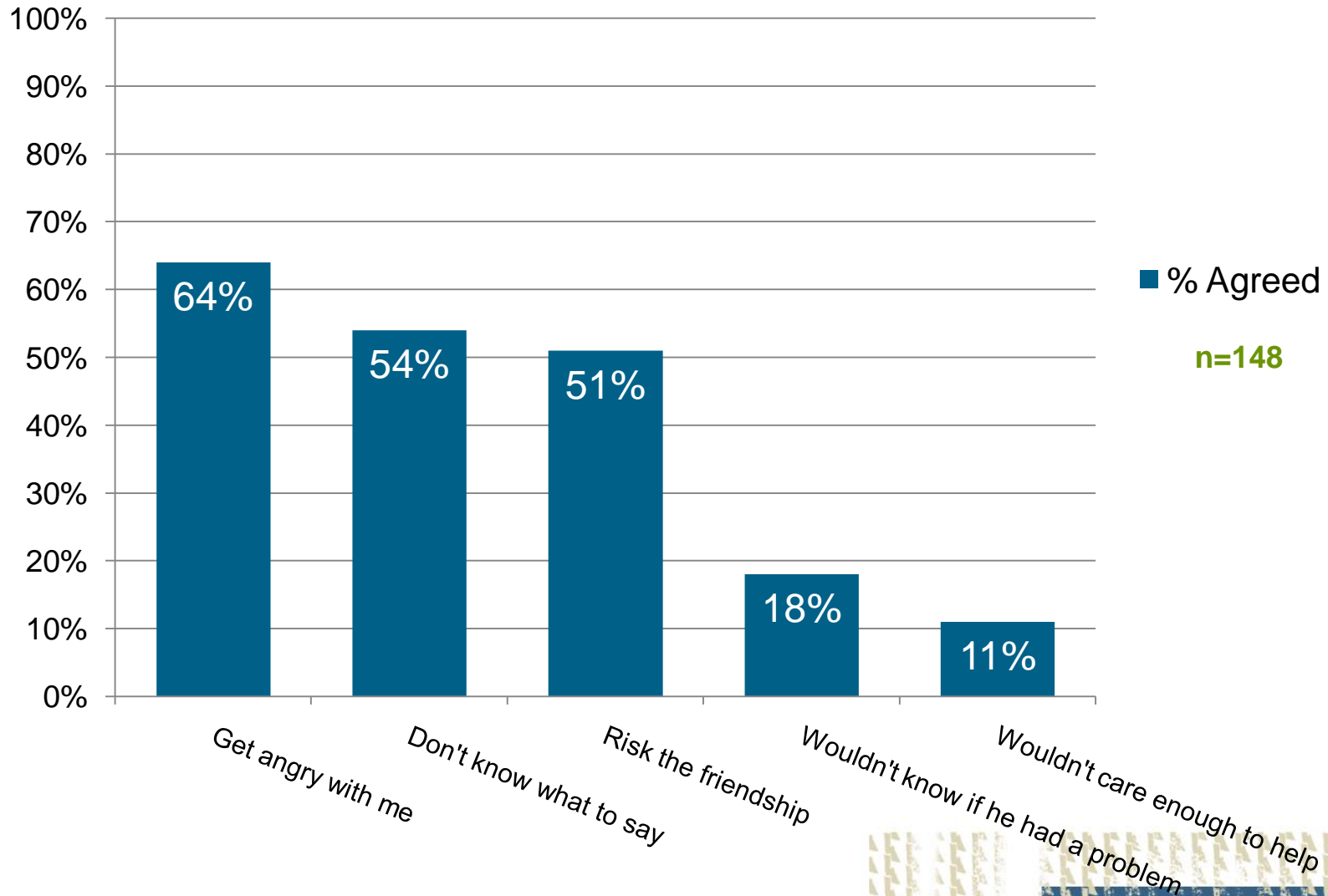
(Barriers to Adolescents Seeking Help Scale, Kulh et al. 1997)

...yet they had positive attitudes towards mental health professionals:

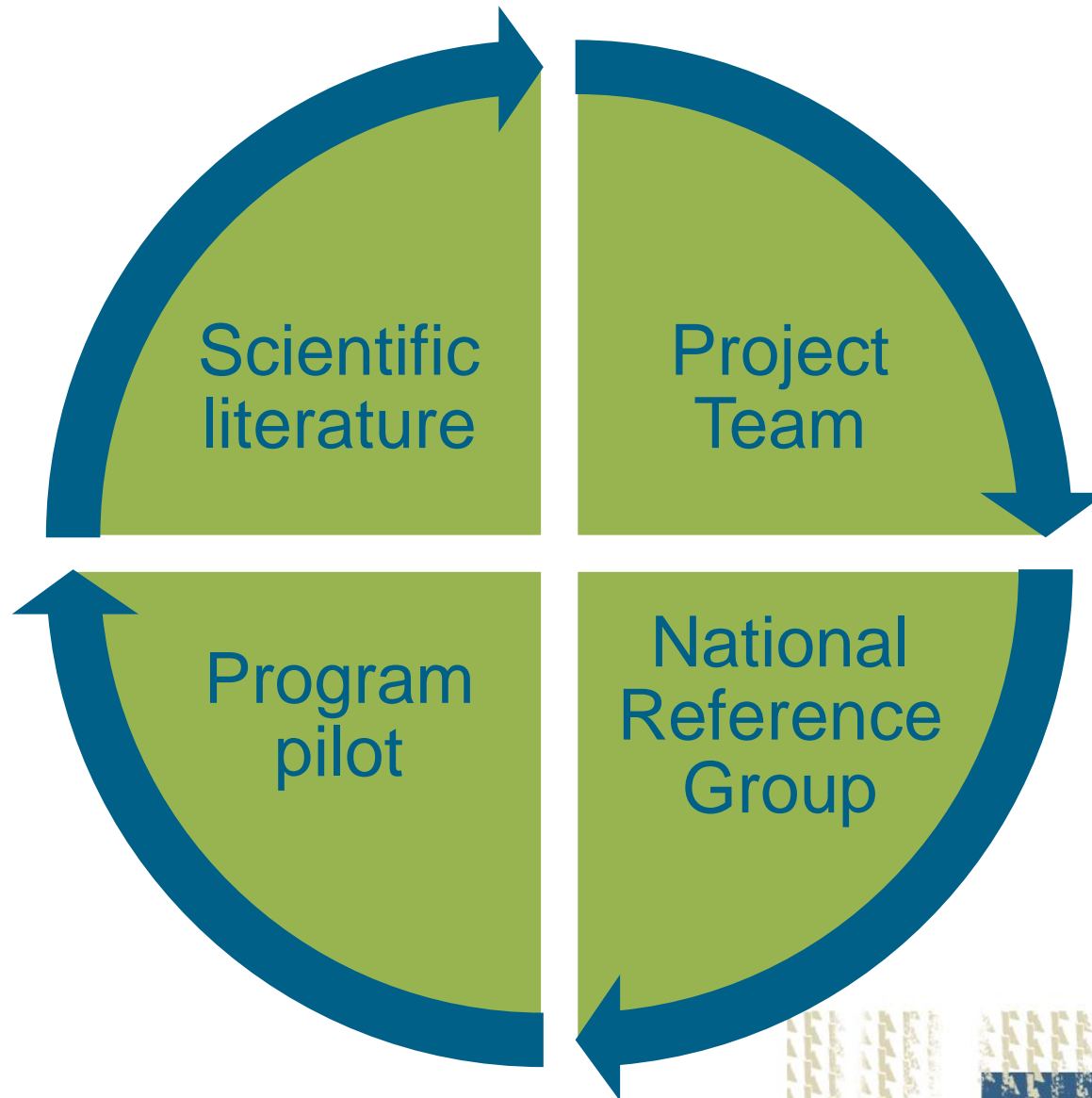


(Barriers to Engagement in Treatment Screen, Wilson et al, 2008)

## Young people were worried about the social consequences if they tried to help a friend to see a professional:



# How was MAKINGtheLINK developed?





# MAKINGtheLINK Resources



Implementation Guide (PDF)



Teacher Manual & Classroom Activities (PDF)



Staff Information Session (PowerPoint)



Parent Information Session (PowerPoint)



Program Poster (PDF)



Information Flier (PDF)

# Implementation Guide

- Describes the development of the program
- Outlines a general set of principles to consider when implementing the program in your classroom or across the whole-school





## Implementing MAKINGtheLINK



**STEP 1.** Assess readiness to promote helpseeking



**STEP 2.** Make the link with appropriate youth agencies



**STEP 3.** Drive the program

**STEP 4.** Plan 'best fit' with your current programs



**STEP 5.** Decide who leads and who receives



**STEP 6.** Inform and involve staff and parents



**STEP 7.** Evaluate the program

# Student Helpseeking Program

Each activity has background information, learning aims, resources required, instructions, alternative and extension options.





# Summary of Classroom Activities

## Activity 1 – Ranking Situations

- Task:** Students rank problem situations of young people according to how concerned they are and who they think needs help.
- Strategy:** Think, Pair, Share
- Alternative:** Whole-class discussion
- Extension:** Students write their own situations and rank them.
- Aims:** To enable students to explore their values and attitudes with respect to their friends' emerging problems.

*On Sunday your friend had a few bongos and then drank a few beers and ended up vomiting on his lounge room floor.*

## Activity 2 – Myth or Fact?

- Task:** Students decide between myth and fact to learn about the detrimental effects of cannabis use.
- Strategy:** Whole-class
- Alternative:** Small group activity
- Extension:** Students write their own list of questions about the effects of cannabis based on information they find on the NCPIC website.
- Aims:** To improve students' understanding of the negative impact of cannabis use on mental health and daily functioning.

*Myth! Fact! (Clare!)*  
*Using cannabis can make a person's mental illness worse.*

## Activity 3 – The Hot Seat

- Task:** Students take on the roles of 'for' and 'against' helping a friend in need.
- Strategy:** Role play
- Alternative:** Debate
- Extension:** Students brainstorm their own responses for the 'for' and 'against' arguments.
- Aims:** To explore when and why you would help a friend who has a mental health and/or substance use issue.





# Summary of Classroom Activities

## Activity 4 – Helpers

- Task:** Students learn about different types of helpers and decide which helper the young person in the story should seek help from.
- Strategy:** Whole-class discussion and role play
- Alternative:** Small group activity
- Extension:** Students compare helper choices depending on their knowledge of which helpers are bound by professional confidentiality.
- Aims:** Identifying different types of help available, and overcoming barriers that stop young people from seeking professional help.

Parent

Doctor

Sibling

## Activity 6 – Web Quest

- Task:** Students are required to explore the *headspace* and NCPIC websites and answer questions relating to stories about helpseeking and young people.
- Strategy:** ICT activity
- Alternative:** Homework activity
- Extension:** In small groups, students present information from *headspace* factsheets to the rest of the class.
- Aims:** To introduce students to useful and reliable helpseeking sites for cannabis and/or mental health problems.



## Activity 5 – Mates Help Mates

- Task:** Students watch the clips and discuss which approach is most helpful in talking to a friend about their concerns and assisting them to seek professional help.
- Strategy:** DVD and whole-class discussion
- Alternative:** Role play
- Extension:** Students write their own scripts encouraging a friend to seek professional help.
- Aims:** Overcoming barriers to helping a friend and seeking professional help for a mental health and/or substance use issue.



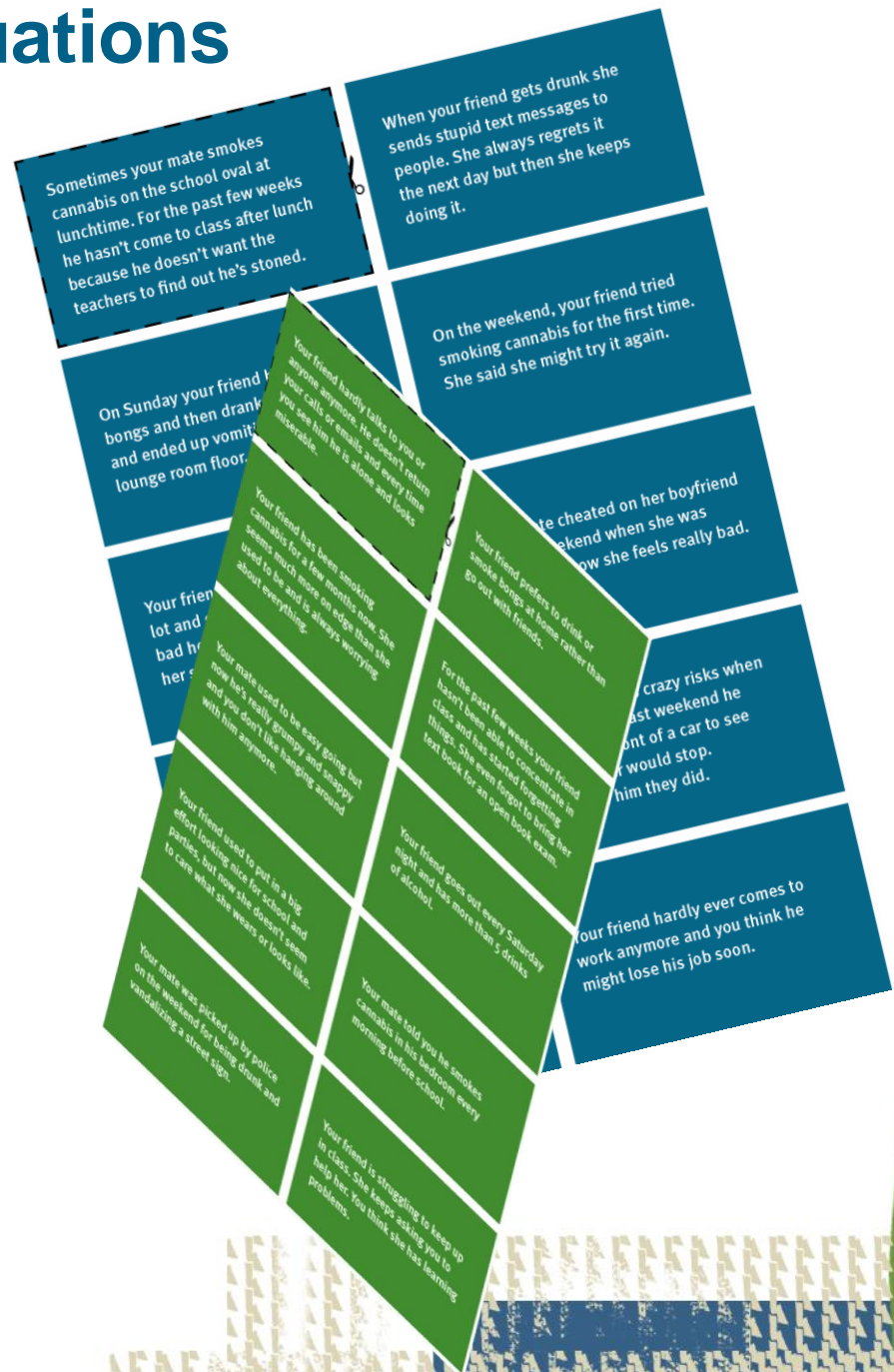


# Activity 1: Ranking Situations

**Task:** Students rank situations of young people according to how concerned they are and who they think needs help

**Strategy:** Think, Pair, Share

**Aim:** To enable students to explore their values and attitudes with respect to their friends' emerging problems



## Activity 2: Myth or Fact?

**Task:** Students decide between myth and fact to learn about the detrimental effects of cannabis use

**Strategy:** Whole-class

**Aims:** To improve students' understanding of the negative impact of cannabis use on mental health and daily functioning

1: Myth? Fact? Unsure?  
Using cannabis can make it harder for you to concentrate and remember things.

2: Myth? Fact? Unsure?  
Young people less at risk of developing mental health problems from using cannabis than older people.

3: Myth? Fact? Unsure?  
Cannabis use is linked to anxiety and depression. It also increases anxiety and depression in men and women.

4: Myth? Fact? Unsure?  
Using cannabis can make a person's mental illness worse.

5: Myth? Fact? Unsure?  
Using cannabis affects how well you do at school.

6: Myth? Fact? Unsure?  
You cannot become addicted or dependent on cannabis.

7: Myth? Fact? Unsure?  
It is safe to drive if you have used cannabis.

8: Myth? Fact? Unsure?  
Using cannabis can make a person's mental illness worse.

9: Myth? Fact? Unsure?  
Using cannabis gives you more energy.

10: Myth? Fact? Unsure?  
Young people who use cannabis are more likely to have behaviour and social problems than those who don't use.

# Activity 3: The Hot Seat

**Task:** Students take on the roles of 'for' and 'against' helping a friend in need

**Strategy:** Role play

**Aims:** To explore when and why you would help a friend who has a mental health and/or substance use issue

**Scenario 1**

Your friend has been going out partying all the time and barely returns your calls anymore. She started hanging around with some older guys a few weeks ago who don't go to school and they all drink together. Most of the parties you go to she ends up vomiting. She recently lost her job because she got into a fight with the manager. She can't keep her mind on her studies and her marks have dropped. Her parents and friends are very concerned about what's going on.

Do you talk to her about it?

FOR	AGAINST
You should definitely talk to her because she's a friend of yours and you care about her	Just leave her alone, it's none of your business

**Scenario 1**

I would want her to help me if I was in her situation

It's worth a try, you've got nothing to lose...

Just talk to her, what's the worst that could happen?

It is better if she gets help now before things get worse

She drinks so much more than others, and when she passes out, anything could happen to her

If you offer to go with her to see a counsellor she's more likely to go...

Just leave her alone, it's none of your business

If she wanted help she would ask for it

Why risk it, she'll probably just get angry with you!

Don't talk to her, she'll just tell you to leave her alone and you'll feel like an idiot

You should let her hit rock bottom so she wakes up to herself!

Lots of people drink, it is part of being a teenager!

Why get involved? You are doing fine, she should sort her own life out

# Activity snapshot

## Hot Seat Scenario 1



Your friend has been going out partying all the time and barely returns your calls anymore. She started hanging around with some older guys a few weeks ago who don't go to school and they all drink together. Most of the parties you go to she ends up vomiting. She recently lost her job because she got into a fight with the manager. She can't keep her mind on her studies and her marks have dropped. Her parents and friends are very concerned about what's going on.

**Would you talk to her about it?**



# Activity 4: Helpers

**Task:** Students learn about different types of helpers and decide which helper the young person in the story should seek help from

**Strategy:** Whole-class discussion & role-play

**Aims:** Identifying different types of help available & overcoming barriers that stop young people from seeking professional help

## Bree's story

Bree is in Year 10 and lives with her parents and younger brother in the suburbs. She gets really nervous around groups of people, especially new people and boys. She thinks she is ugly and boring. She only has a few friends at school. In social situations she feels her mind goes blank and she cannot think of what to say and feels

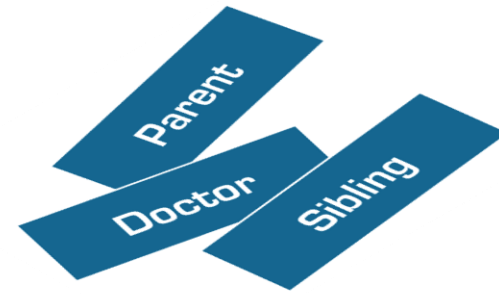
## Mitch's story

Mitch is in Year 10 and works part-time job at the local supermarket. His older brother moved out 3 months ago and now it is just him and his mother at home. Mitch started smoking cannabis in Year 9 with mates and now smokes much more than the rest of the group and often smokes alone. He feels crap most of the time and just wants to stay at home and sleep, or smoke bong. In the past few weeks he has started skipping classes, not going to parties and has quit band practice which he used to do almost everyday after school. Last Saturday, he turned up to work stoned and was sent home by the manager. His friends at work had to do extra work to cover for him and now they are really annoyed with him and are wondering what is going on.

**Mitch needs help but who should he talk to?**

to?

## Activity snapshot: Mitch's story



Mitch is in Year 10 and works part-time at the local supermarket. His older brother moved out 3 months ago and now it is just him and his mother at home. Mitch started smoking cannabis in Year 9 with mates and now smokes much more than the rest of the group and often smokes alone. He feels crap most of the time and just wants to stay at home and sleep. In the past few weeks he has started skipping classes, not going to parties and has quit band practice. Last Saturday, he turned up to work stoned and was sent home by the manager. His friends at work had to do extra work to cover for him and now they are really annoyed with him and are wondering what is going on.

**Mitch needs help but he should he talk to?**

# Parent

*I am bound by Professional Confidentiality.*  
I can refer you to a mental health professional if I think you need more help.  
I have been trained to deal with all sorts of physical and mental health issues.  
I am a General Practitioner or family doctor.

# School Counsellor

*I am bound by Professional Confidentiality.*  
I can refer you to see another counsellor.  
A lot of students find talking to me really helpful but if you don't, that is totally fine.  
I have training and experience in different strategies to help young people and together we can work out a plan to assist you with whatever you're going through.

# Mental Health Professional (outside of school)

*All mental health professionals are bound by professional confidentiality.*  
I may be a psychiatrist, psychologist or learning health problems.  
I use problems as well as behaviour or learning problems.  
I have expertise in helping people manage a range of mental health and substance about their problems and discussing different ways of managing them.  
I can help by providing counselling which is the process of talking to a person in a way that helps them.

# Siblings

*I am bound by Professional Confidentiality.*  
I can refer you to see our family doctor or a counsellor and I can be a good support for you along the way. Give me a chance!

# Teacher

*I am bound by Professional Confidentiality.*  
I will also know who else you can talk to if I am not able to help you out.  
Of course you know I can help you with medical problems but I can also talk to you if something is upsetting you, like difficulties at school or home.  
I am a School Nurse.

# School Nurse

*I am bound by Professional Confidentiality.*  
I will also know who else you can talk to if I am not able to help you out.  
Of course you know I can help you with medical problems but I can also talk to you if something is upsetting you, like difficulties at school or home.  
I am a School Nurse.

# Friend

*I am bound by Professional Confidentiality.*  
I know you really well and we have similar thoughts and feelings.  
I know you really well and we have similar thoughts and feelings.  
I know you really well and we have similar thoughts and feelings.  
I know you really well and we have similar thoughts and feelings.

# General Practitioner

*I am bound by Professional Confidentiality.*  
I can refer you to a mental health professional if I think you need more help.  
I have been trained to deal with all sorts of physical and mental health issues.  
I am a General Practitioner or family doctor.

# Alcohol & Drug Worker

*I am bound by Professional Confidentiality.*  
I can provide information and counselling and can talk to you about how drugs are affecting your life. We can also discuss ways to cut down what you're using if that is something you are ready to try.  
Even if you don't know if you have a drug problem, that's ok, you can still come and talk to me.  
I am an alcohol and drug worker.



## Activity 5: *Mates Help Mates*

**Task:** Students watch the clips and discuss which approach is most helpful in talking to a friend about their concerns and assisting them to seek professional help

**Strategy:** DVD & Whole-class discussion

**Aims:** Overcoming barriers to helping a friend and seeking professional help





# Mates Help Mates



**Clip 1.**  
**Should we help Bree?**



**Clip 2.**  
**Helping Bree**



**Clip 3.**  
**Should we help Mitch?**



**Clip 4.**  
**Helping Mitch**



**Mates Help Mates**  
**Discussion Questions**



**MAKINGtheLINK**  
**Resources**

# Activity 6: Web Quest



**Task:** Students are required to explore the *headspace* and NCPIC websites and answer questions relating to stories about helpseeking and young people

**Strategy:** ICT activity

**Aims:** To introduce students to useful and reliable helpseeking sites for cannabis and mental health problems

A worksheet titled 'MAKINGtheLINK Web Quest' with a green header and a blue section for instructions. It includes a form for Name, Form, and Date, and a computer monitor icon showing a website. The worksheet is divided into two parts: Part 1 (Log onto www.headspace.org.au) and Part 2 (Log on to www.ncpic.org.au).

**MAKINGtheLINK Web Quest**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Form: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Part 1: Log onto [www.headspace.org.au](http://www.headspace.org.au)

1. There are many *headspace* sites around Australia. Which one is the closest to where you live?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Using public transport, work out how to get to your local *headspace* from your house.  
How many minutes/hours would it take? \_\_\_\_\_
3. If there is no *headspace* in your town or suburb, where else could a young person go if they had a mental health and/or cannabis use problem?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Part 2: Log on to [www.ncpic.org.au](http://www.ncpic.org.au)

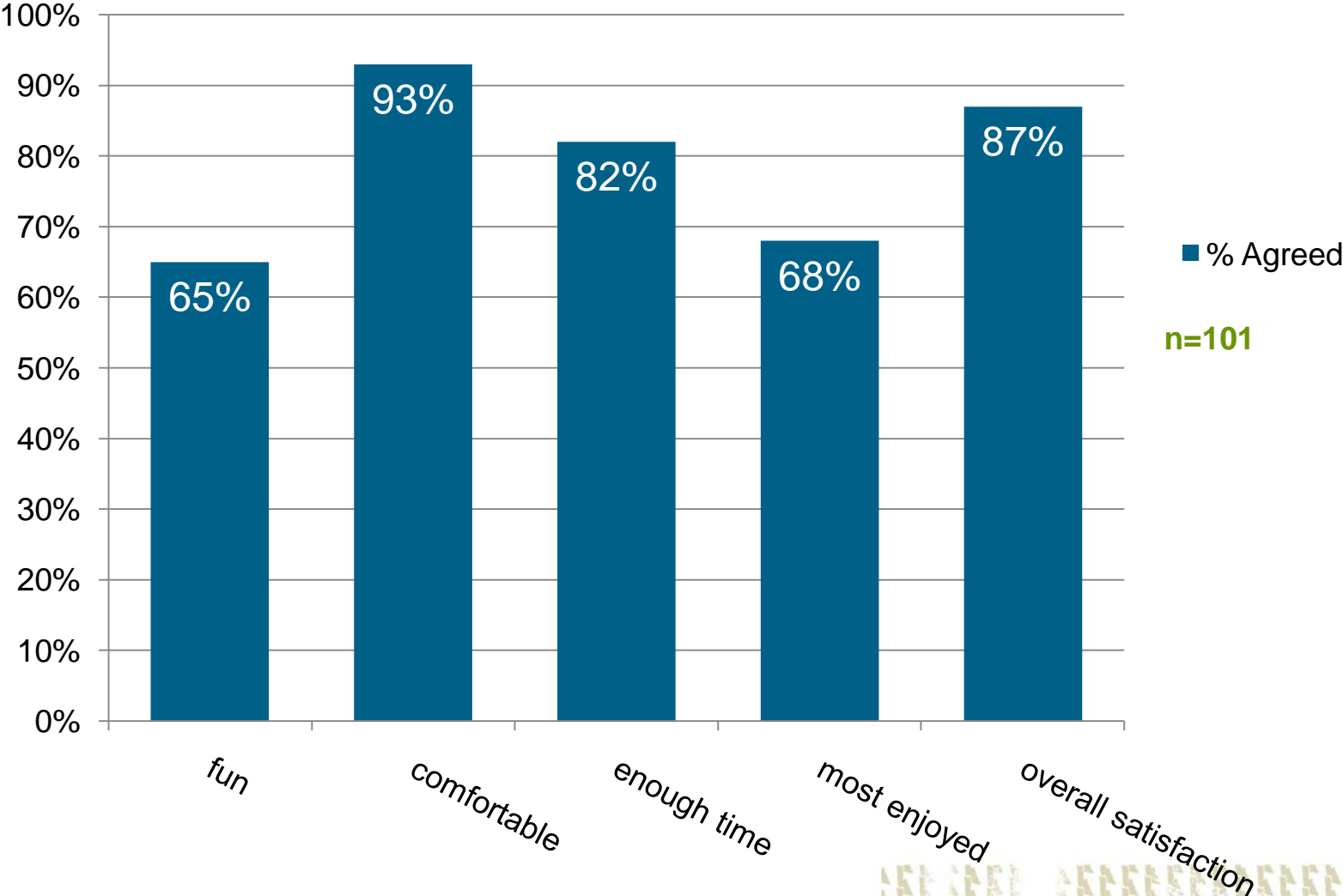
- Click on the 'young people' tab then click on 'Nine Young People Tell Their Cannabis Stories'.
- You will see that there are 9 names of young people to choose from across the top of the page. Click on the young person's name to answer these questions:

1. Why was Ahmed's friend 'freaked out' by what happened to the girl who used cannabis?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Pilot Findings



# Students indicated they enjoyed the program:





“Most teenagers struggle trying to work out whether or not to get help, especially for their friends so this was a good tool to show kids how to bring it up with friends”.

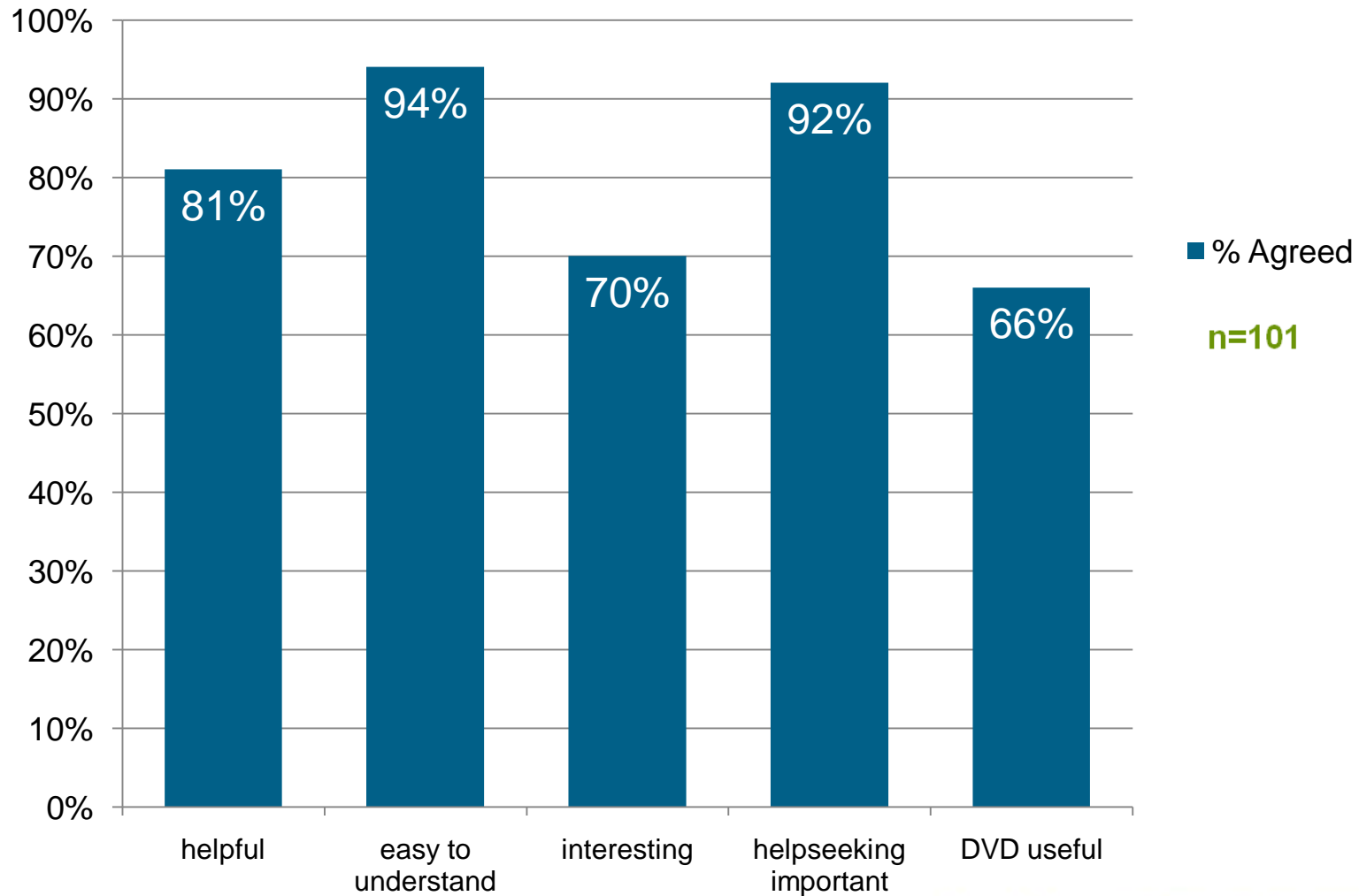
“It is a good program to encourage kids and teens to seek help if they need it and gives examples when they should”.



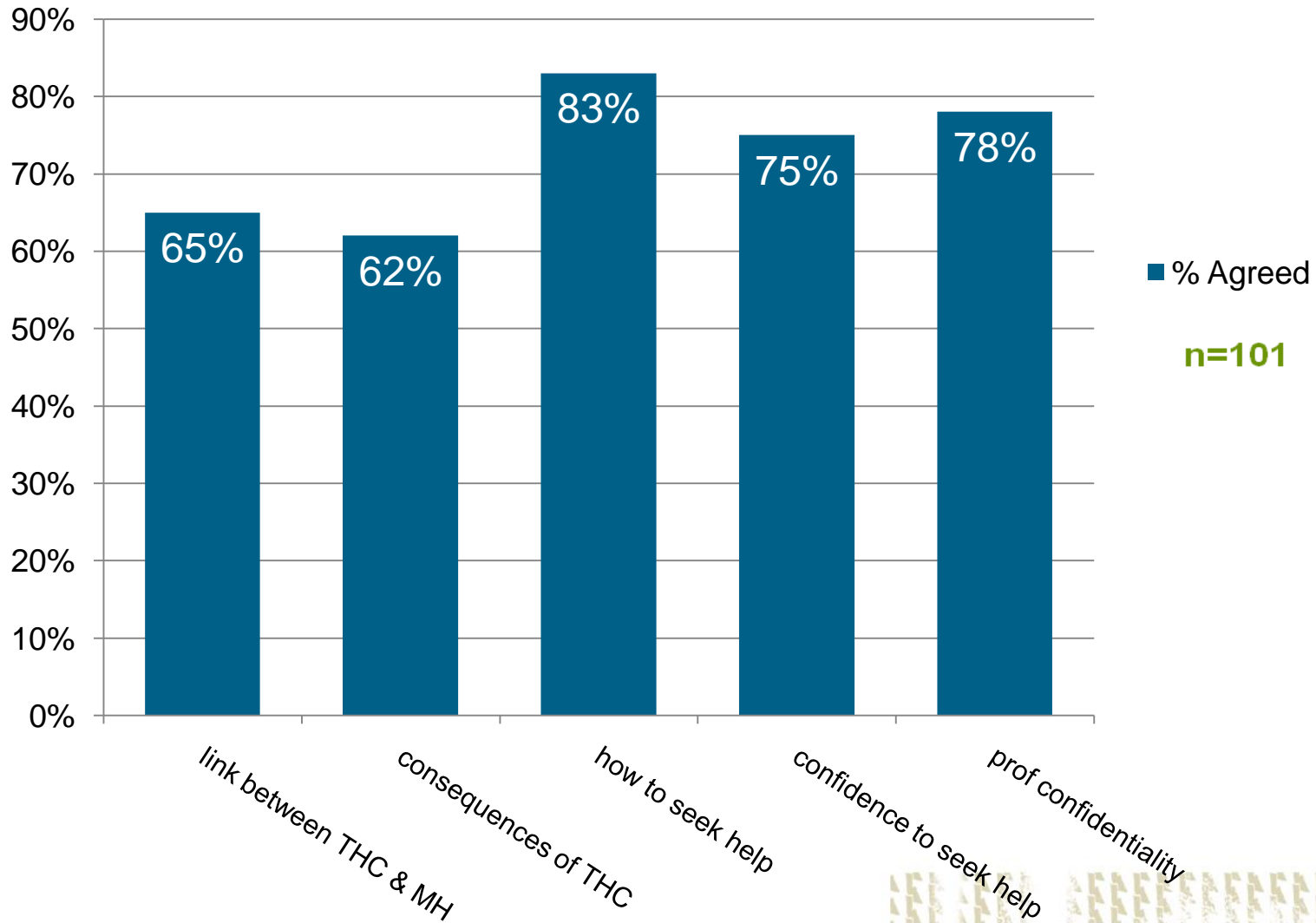
“The session allowed me to have more confidence to seek help if I ever needed it”.

“[The Helpers activity] was helpful because we found out where we can go for help and who could be the best suited for ourselves to talk to”.

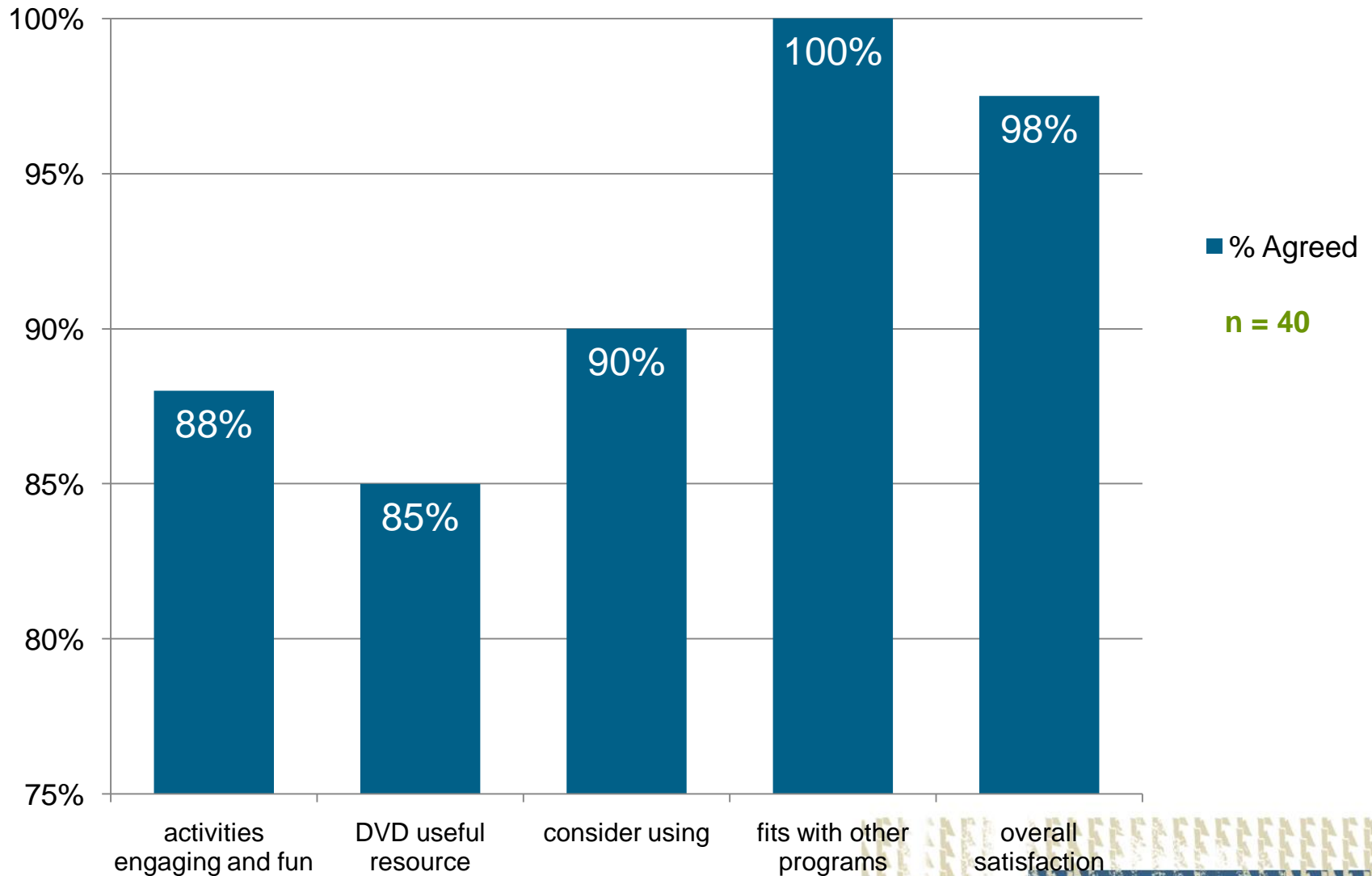
## Students found the content useful:



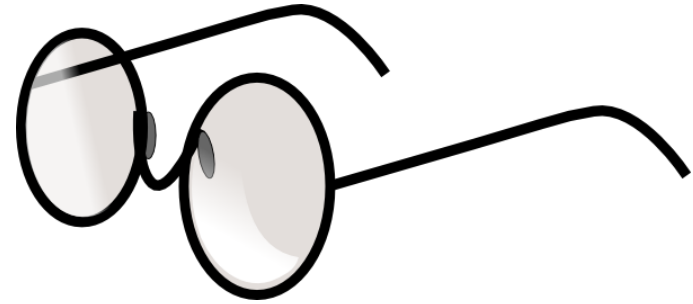
...and reported they were more aware of the key messages:



## Teachers approved of the program and saw it's relevance to other programs and initiatives:



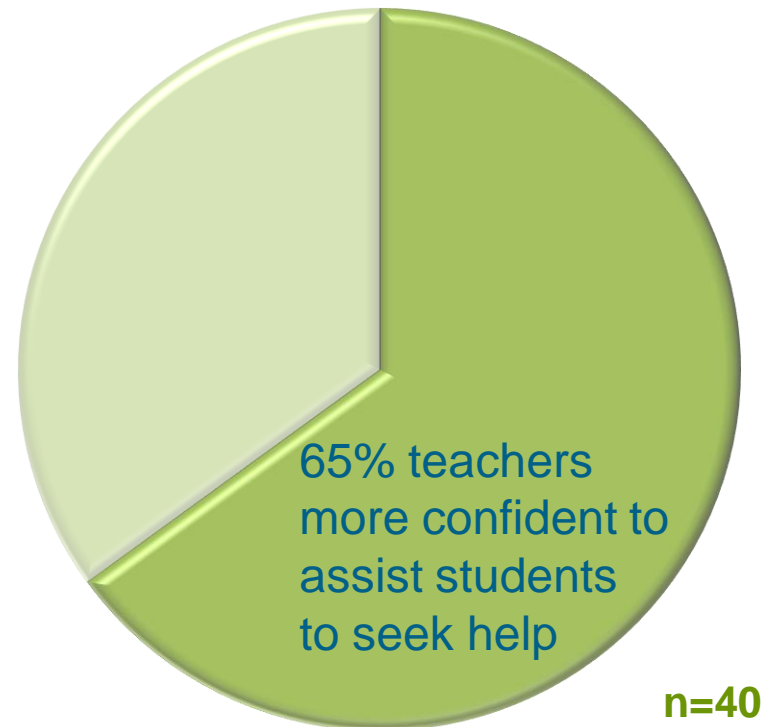
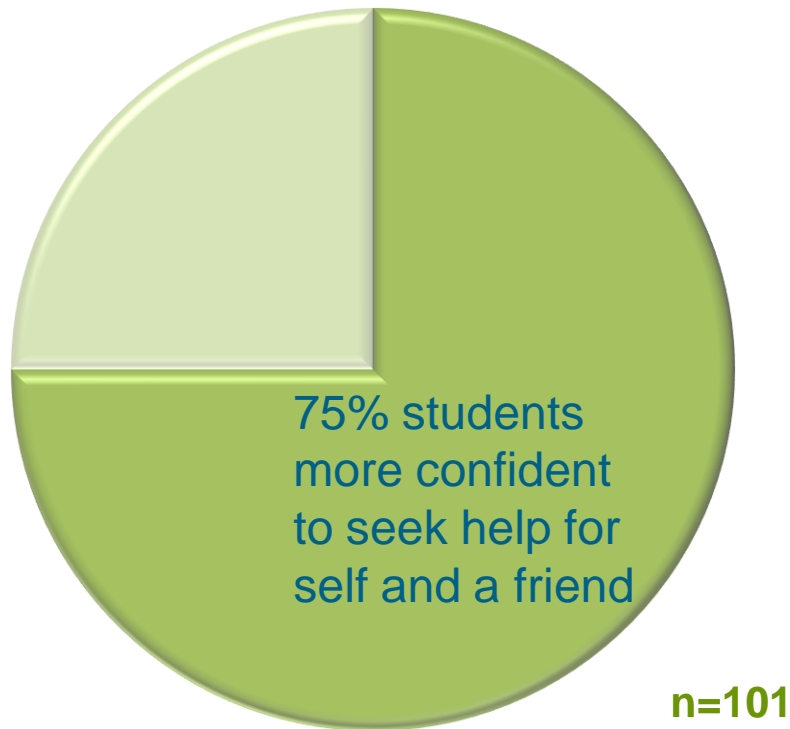
“The students were engaged and interested. They enjoyed talking about the scenarios presented to them and learnt a lot from each other. The activities were structured very well, students had opportunities to talk to each other, work in groups, move around...all very enjoyable”.



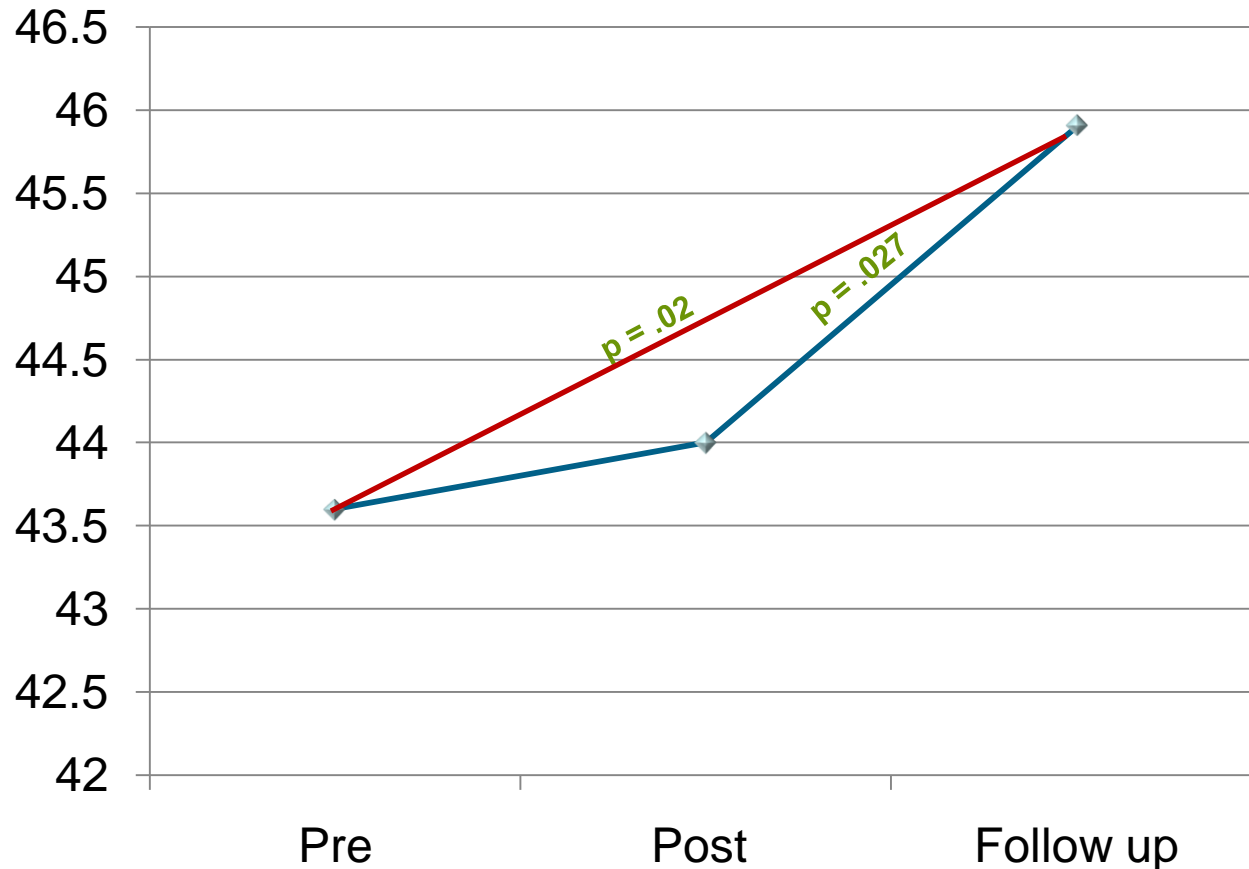
Home group teachers  
who observed the  
program being run with  
their Year 10 classes

“I thought all of them [activities] gave students an opportunity to look at different aspects of helpseeking. I thought they were all useful”.

# Students and teachers confidence to facilitate helpseeking was increased following the program:



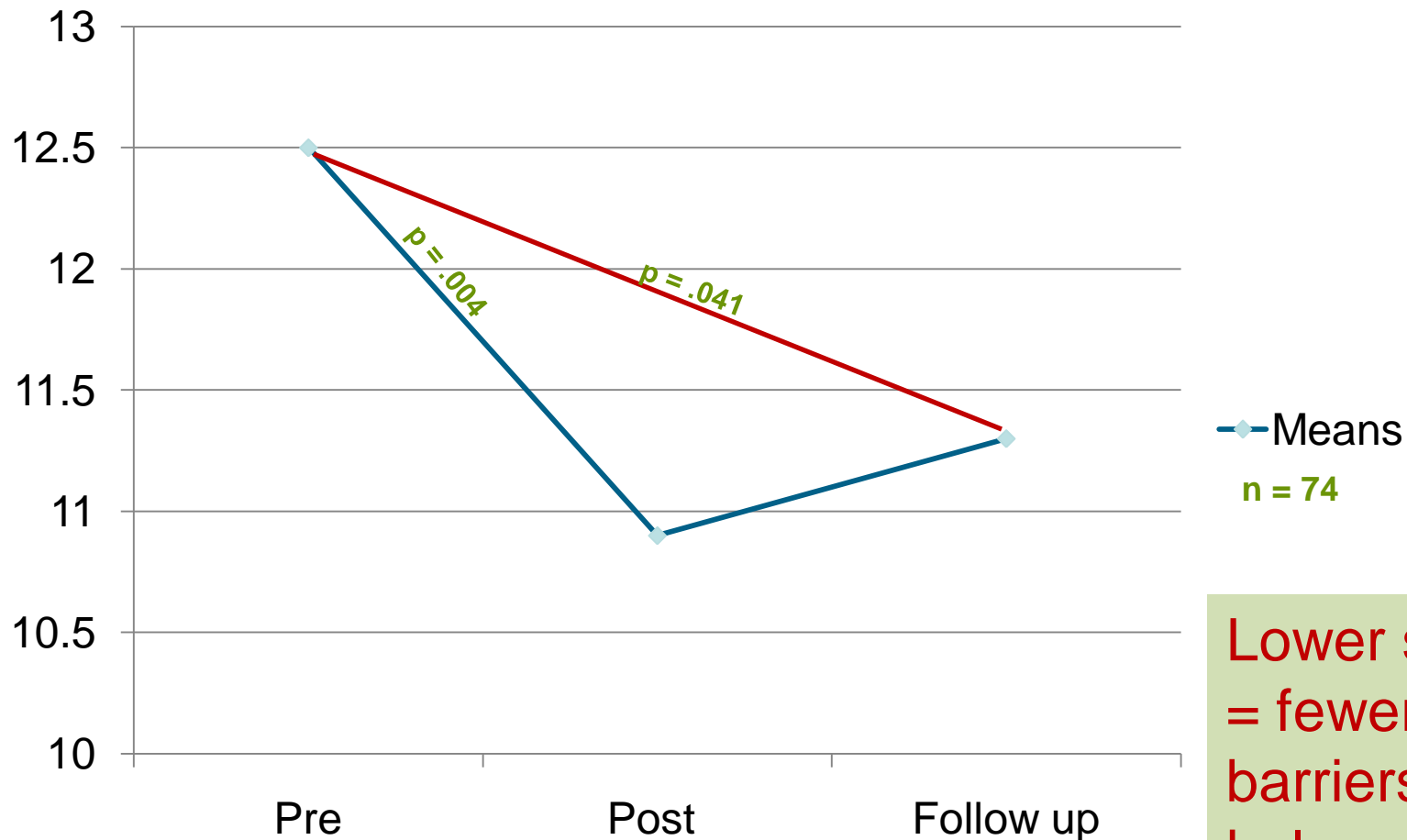
Students perceived barriers to seeking help reduced over time and was sustained for 6 weeks:



◆ Means  
n = 74

Higher scores  
= fewer  
barriers to  
helpseeking

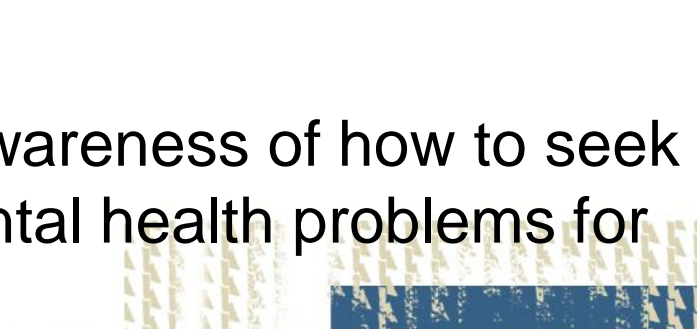
...as did the barriers to seeking treatment from mental health professionals:



Lower scores  
= fewer  
barriers to  
helpseeking



## Achieved Program Aims

- ✓ Increased understanding of young people's helpseeking behaviours, including barriers to helpseeking
  - ✓ Reduced barriers to helpseeking for mental health and cannabis use problems among young people
  - ✓ Increased teacher and student confidence to facilitate helpseeking for young people
  - ✓ Raised student and teacher awareness of how to seek help for cannabis use and mental health problems for young people
- 

# Acceptability & Feasibility

- ✓ Considered acceptable and feasible within a school setting. Both teachers and students found it fun, engaging, interesting and helpful.
- ✓ It was considered by the Principal, leadership and student services team as a beneficial program which complemented overarching school goals and national DEEWR initiatives.
- ✓ The pilot school wants to implement again next year.



# Data Limitations



- A second set of data is currently being collected.
- A further expansion of the pilot is planned for 2010.
- Relevance for other mental health, drugs, alcohol and problematic behaviours/relationships

# National Dissemination Strategy

A light green map of Australia with state and territory boundaries, serving as a background for the text.

Information sessions run through the Departments of Education in each state, targeted at identified drug education and student wellbeing representatives.

The program will soon be available for download on the **NCPIC** website under the section '*Workforce/Teachers/Resources*'.