

Students Gather to Record Sting for the Jailbreak Radio Program

FELICITY BARRY

Fourteen students from the Graduate Diploma in Indigenous Health Promotion at the University of Sydney gathered at the 2SER-FM studio in Broadway in September to record a radio sting for the *Jailbreak* radio program, which broadcasts on Tuesdays from 6.30pm and provides information on criminal, prison and health issues and connects prisoners with the broader community.

For most students, it was their first foray into the world of radio. "This was definitely something new for me – a real learning experience," said Lily-Annie Ahmat, who travels to Sydney from Badu Island in the Torres Strait every few months to attend classes. "It was exciting trying to deliver a radio program. It was different for me as it's a different kind of health promotion. I'm used to a more clinical setting where I speak to people one-on-one," she said.

Devised by Suzanne Plater, Acting Course Coordinator of the Indigenous Health Promotion program, and in partnership with Kate Pinnock, the *Jailbreak* Health Project Coordinator, the project aims to develop students' skills in promoting health using limited and mass reach media. Working with the *Jailbreak* program has provided the students with a unique opportunity to develop and practise their skills in communicating with a target audience about a specific health issue.

Students worked in groups to research and build a profile of the target audience. They identified hepatitis C, a chronic and life-threatening virus commonly spread through needle-sharing, as a priority health issue. The class was divided into three groups and each group focussed on a different target segment - people who were going to prison, those currently in prison and those just about to be released from prison.

Students then developed scripts around key messages aimed at increasing awareness of hepatitis C and discouraging the risky

business of needle-sharing. Actor and voice-over artist Simon Westaway (of *Underbelly* fame), provided expert assistance in the writing and acting of the scripts and ensured students made the most of language, and were using the correct tone of voice and pace.

"We really had to make sure we used the right lingo," said James Briggs, a student who also works as an Indigenous Health Promotion Officer in Physical Activity at Hervey Bay, Queensland. "That's why we used the word 'fits' instead of 'needles'. We really want to make sure we catch the audience's attention."

The Graduate Diploma in Health Promotion was designed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers to assist them in the promotion of health in their communities. Communication is a vital part of health promotion, says Suzanne Plater, whether it is interpersonal, small group or limited and mass reach.

"In this case," she said, "the aim was to use radio, a mass reach tool, to increase health literacy among the inmates to help them make healthier choices. The students learn that this would be just one part of a multi-strategic intervention designed to address all the contributing factors of a health issue. In many communities, the radio station can be a powerful way of raising awareness and increasing knowledge and I really wanted the students to leave here feel comfortable in using this tool."

James said that the course gave him the opportunity to get qualifications he can use to get a job anywhere in the world.

"It also means that I'll be a good role model to my kids. Before I started this course I'd never even set foot on the University campus even though earlier in my life I spent 11 years living in the inner west," he said.

The radio stings recorded by the students are expected to broadcast nationally in October.

About the Graduate Diploma in Indigenous Health Promotion:

- Developed in response to an Indigenous workforce skill deficit in Health Promotion (HP). Largely what was needed to build health capacity in Indigenous communities giving graduates the capacity to implement health change, autonomy in assessing what the specific issues are and a measureable framework to address them.
- More than 100 students have graduated from the program since it began in 1998.
- The course is structured to include six teaching blocks conducted at the University of Sydney.
- Twice offered off-campus to a cohort of students in the Torres Strait (2006/7) and, in 2008, to a cohort of students at Mt Isa. (These are in addition to the Sydney-based program).

Website: www.sydney.edu.au/medicine/public-health/future/coursework/indigenoushealth/index.php

