



'The Growing Brain' campaign

COMMUNITY TOOLKIT

DRUG AWARE

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The Mental Health Commission acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians of Western Australia and its waters. The Mental Health Commission pays respect to Elders both past and present and extends this to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples seeing this message.

'THE GROWING BRAIN' CAMPAIGN

ABOUT THE TOOLKIT

This Toolkit is a collection of resources and creative assets from the 'The Growing Brain' campaign, an initiative of the Drug Aware program.

These resources can be used by community organisations and groups to help spread the message that cannabis can harm a young person's developing brain.

You may wish to use one or all the campaign resources in this Toolkit. You are in the best position to decide which resources and strategies will work best for your networks and communities.

If you need support to implement the campaign resources, please contact the Community Support and Development Programs Team at the Mental Health Commission.

Email: communityprograms@mhc.wa.gov.au

ABOUT THE CAMPAIGN

The Drug Aware program aims to prevent, delay and reduce drug use and related harm by providing credible and evidence-based information to Western Australians to help them make informed decisions about illicit drugs.

'The Growing Brain' campaign is a joint initiative by the Mental Health Commission and Cancer Council WA that aims to prevent and delay cannabis use among 14 to 24-year-olds.

A young person's brain continues to develop until around the age of 25, and during this time it is more vulnerable to the harms from alcohol and other drugs. Cannabis can impact a young person's developing brain, which can affect memory, learning, attention and problem solving. The risk of harm is greater the younger a person starts and the more they use.

Perceived risk of harm and acceptance of use are important factors in preventing drug use, and young people have said they want factual information about the risks associated with using cannabis.

The campaign and its adaption for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people was developed in consultation with young people in Western Australia and guided by researchers and clinicians.

KEY MESSAGE

Cannabis can harm a young person's developing brain.

TARGET AUDIENCE

Young people aged 14 to 24 years old in Western Australia.

CAMPAIGN OBJECTIVES

Short-term objectives

- Decrease the belief that cannabis use is harmless.
- Increase awareness that cannabis use can harm the developing brain.
- Increase awareness that cannabis use can impact memory, learning and mental health.

Long-term objectives

- Increase the average age of initiation of cannabis use.
- Decrease self-reported use of cannabis (recent use) and frequency of use.

EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE CAMPAIGN

CANNABIS, WEED, GUNJA – WHAT IS IT?

Cannabis comes from a plant called *cannabis sativa*. Other names for cannabis include weed, pot, hash, dope, gunja, yarndi, mull, bud, or joint.

Cannabis is a cannabinoid drug, meaning it acts on the cannabinoid receptors in the brain and body. Cannabis is primarily a central nervous system depressant, but it can also alter sensory perceptions and produce hallucinogenic effects.

Cannabis contains two main active compounds: THC (delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol) and CBD (cannabidiol). THC is the psychoactive chemical in cannabis which produces the 'high', affecting a person's mood, perception and behaviour. CBD has no psychoactive effects.

Cannabis comes in different forms and can be smoked, eaten or vaporised. Marijuana (the dried leaves and buds) is the most common form. Other forms include hashish (dried plant resin), hash oil (liquid) and concentrates (extracts often vaporised). Different forms can have different levels of THC and CBD, which can impact the risk of immediate and longer-term health effects.

Cannabis can also come in synthetic form. Synthetic cannabinoids are not cannabis and have been associated with more severe health effects.

THE STATS

- Cannabis is the most commonly used illicit drug in Western Australia.¹
- One in 10 (11.2%) Western Australians (aged 14 years and over) reported recently using cannabis in 2019.²
- One in five (19.3%) people aged 15-24 years old reported recently using cannabis in 2019.²
- One in six (16%) school aged students (12-17 years) reported having used cannabis in their lifetime in 2017.³
- The average age people reporting first trying cannabis is 18 years old.²
- Under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1981, it is illegal to use, possess, manufacture or supply cannabis in Western Australia.

SHORT-TERM EFFECTS

Each person's brain chemistry, genetics, and life experience can determine how they experience the drug. The same person may have a different experience on separate occasions or over their lifetime. The effects will also depend on how much is used and how often, the type of cannabis, and method of use.

Effects can be felt immediately if smoked, or within an hour or two if eaten. General effects can include mild euphoria, relaxation, and talking and laughing more than usual. Other effects can include increased heart rate, headache, dizziness, nausea, reduced inhibitions, impaired memory, balance and coordination, difficulty thinking and problem solving, changes in perceptions of time, sound, light, touch and distance, hallucinations, anxiety and paranoia.

If a person uses a high dose of cannabis, the effects will be stronger and last longer. Depending on the method of use (e.g. smoking or eating), effects can be felt for up to 6 to 12 hours.

¹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2022). Retrieved from Alcohol, tobacco & other drugs in Australia, Cannabis - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (aihw.gov.au)

² Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2020). National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2019; data table S.29. Retrieved from Canberra

³ Guerin, N. & White, V. (2020). ASSAD 2017 Statistics & Trends: Australian Secondary Students' Use of Tobacco, Alcohol, Over-the-counter Drugs, and Illicit Substances. Second Edition

EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE CAMPAIGN

THE DEVELOPING BRAIN IS VULNERABLE TO HARM

A young person's brain continues to develop until around the age of 25, and during this time it is particularly vulnerable to harm. Regularly using cannabis can impact memory, learning, attention, problem solving, self-regulation, impulse control, and stress management.

Research shows people who start using cannabis during adolescence are more likely to leave school early, develop dependence on cannabis, and experience mental health issues including anxiety, depression, and psychosis. Regular cannabis use over the long-term is associated with respiratory problems, heart disease and cancers.

The most effective way to reduce health risks from cannabis is to not use it. The earlier a person starts using cannabis, the more they use, and more frequently they use, the greater the risk of harm.

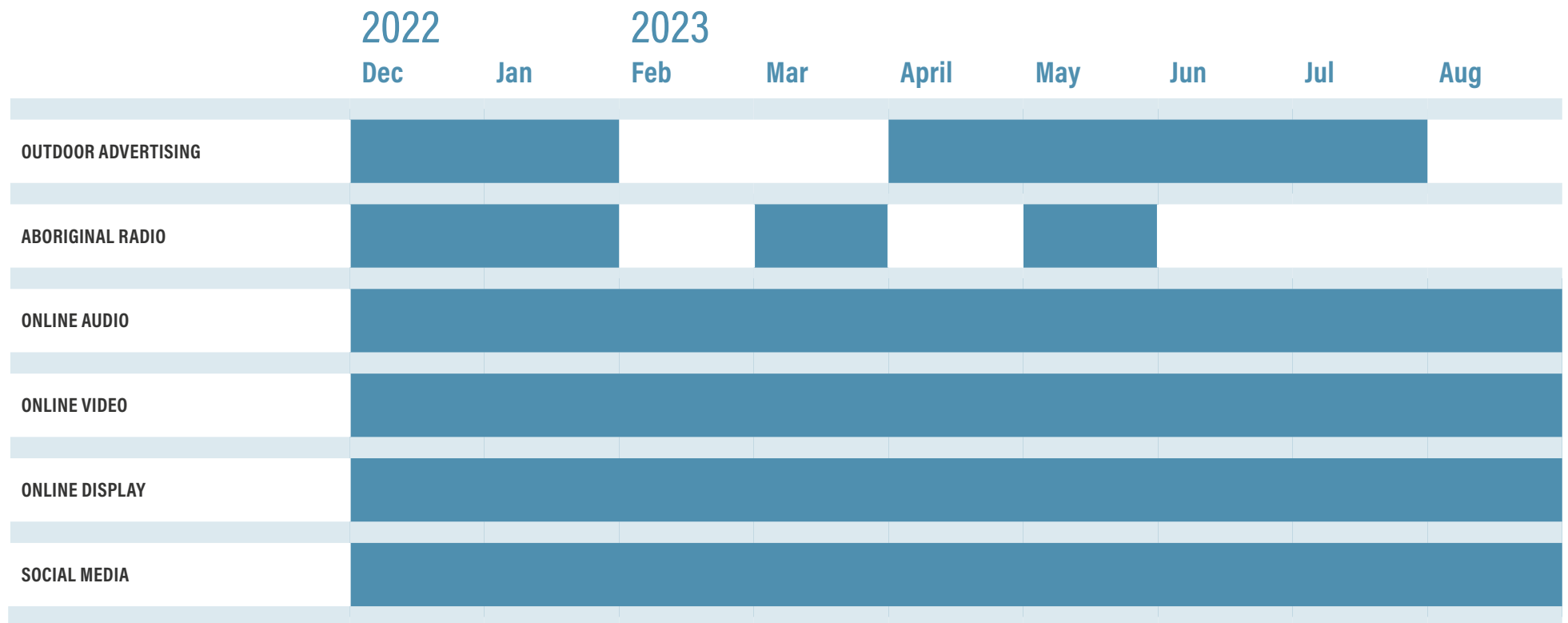
HARMS FROM CANNABIS COST THE COMMUNITY

The social cost of cannabis to the Australian community is estimated at \$4.5 billion each year. This includes hospitalisations and other healthcare costs, and costs related to crime and criminal justice, workplace productivity, injury, and absenteeism, road traffic crashes, and premature death.⁴

Costs to the community from cannabis are significant, and follow only after tobacco, alcohol, heroin and methamphetamine.

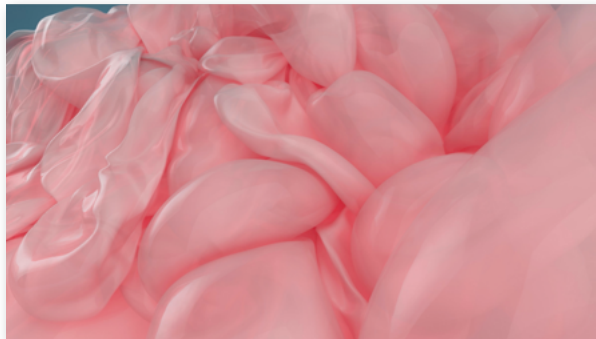
⁴ National Drug Research Institute, Curtin University (2020). Quantifying the Social Costs of Cannabis Use to Australia in 2015/16. Retrieved from T287.pdf ([curtin.edu.au](https://www.curtin.edu.au))

STATE-WIDE CAMPAIGN SCHEDULE



CAMPAIGN RESOURCES

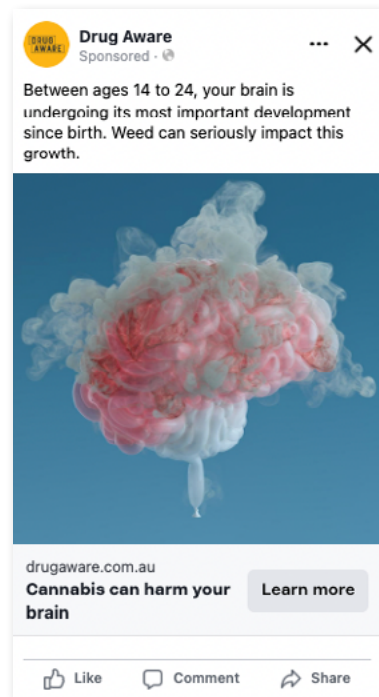
ONLINE VIDEO 15 SEC



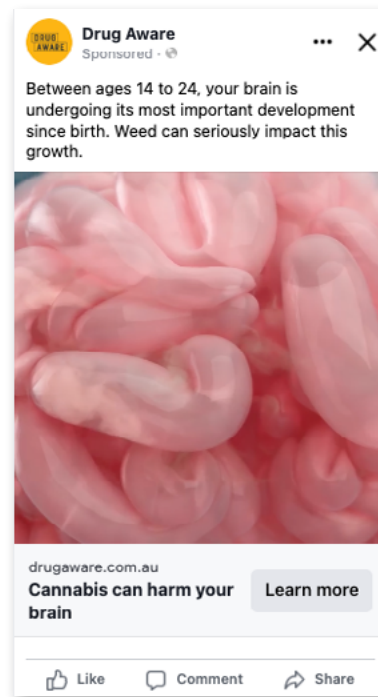
CLICK WATCH THE
15 SECOND VIDEO

CAMPAIGN RESOURCES

SOCIAL MEDIA ASSETS – STATICS & VIDEOS



Static image



15" Video



CLICK TO DOWNLOAD
DRUG AWARE SOCIAL
MEDIA ASSETS

We encourage you to share these social media assets through your organisation's social accounts, website, or newsletters.

You can also share and like our social media content at:

Instagram: [@drugaware_wa](https://www.instagram.com/drugaware_wa)

TikTok: [@drugawarewa](https://www.tiktok.com/@drugawarewa)

Facebook: www.facebook.com/drugaware/

YouTube: [@DrugAwareCampaign](https://www.youtube.com/@DrugAwareCampaign)

CAMPAIGN RESOURCES

AUDIO ASSETS



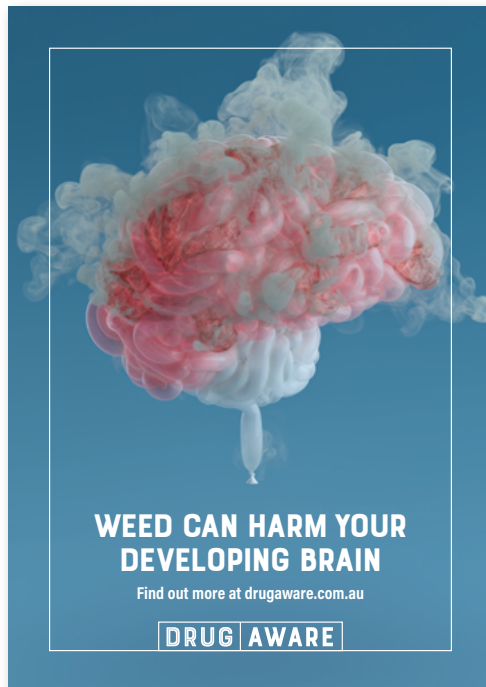
30 Second Online Audio Commercial



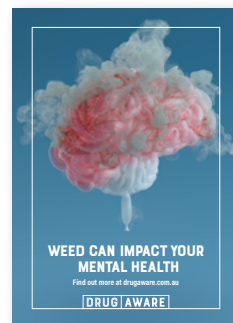
ONLINE AUDIO
COMMERCIAL

CAMPAIGN RESOURCES

RESOURCES TO ORDER



Posters



Fact sheet



Website cards

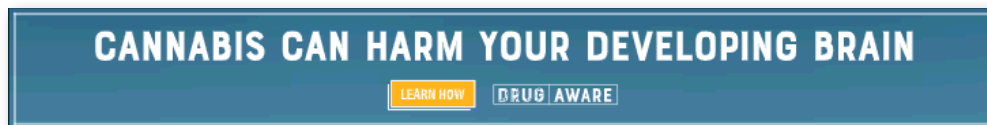
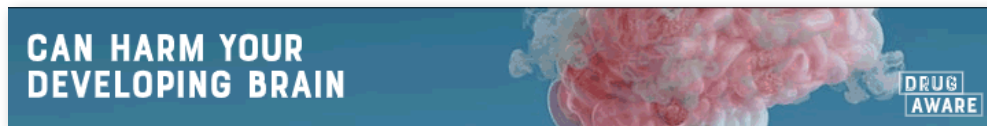
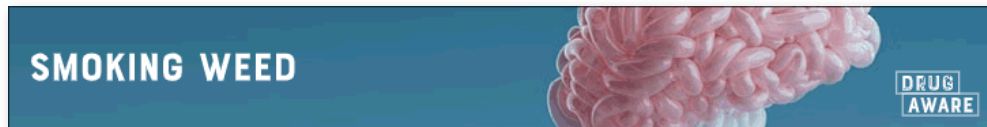


CLICK TO DOWNLOAD

ORDER HARD COPIES AT:
campaigns@mhc.wa.gov.au

CAMPAIGN RESOURCES

ANIMATED EMAIL SIGNATURE



CLICK TO DOWNLOAD

Show your support for 'The Growing Brain' campaign by including an animated banner to your email signature.

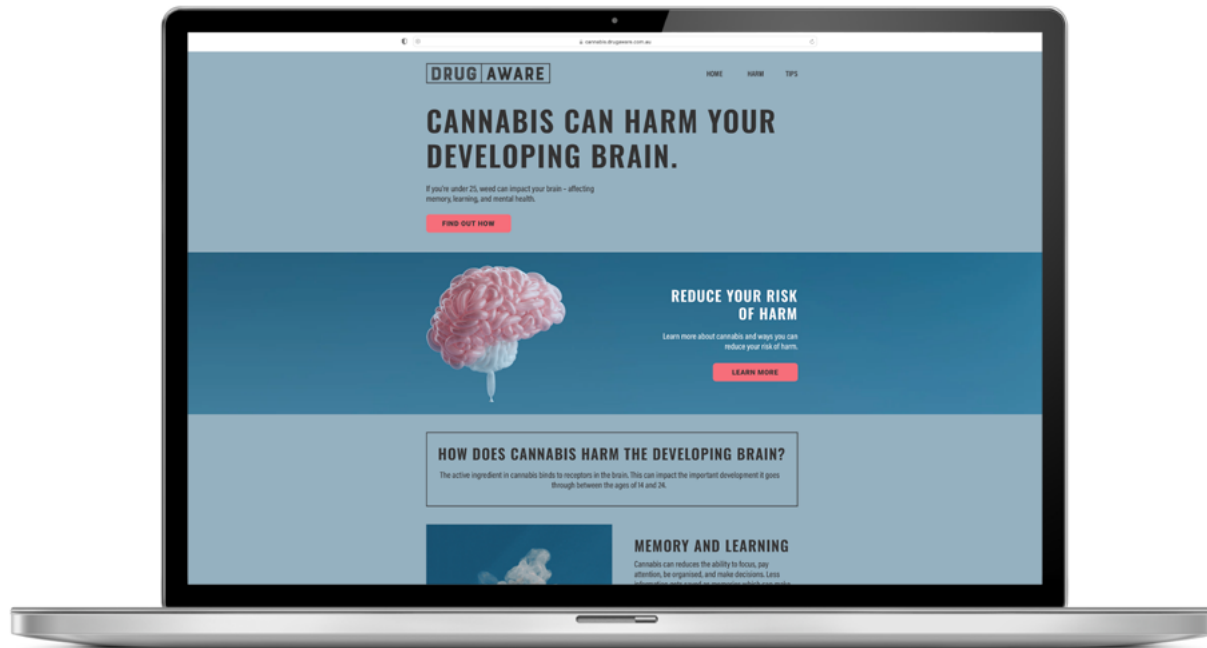
How to add the banner to your email signature:

Outlook

1. Click on the download link below
2. Right click and save the banner to your computer
3. Open Outlook > File > Options > Mail > Signatures
4. Choose the signature you wish to edit
5. Click on the image icon in the toolbar to upload the GIF file from your computer
6. Click 'OK' to save your signature

CAMPAIGN RESOURCES

CAMPAIGN WEBSITE



CLICK TO VISIT WEBSITE

CAMPAIGN RESOURCES FOR ABORIGINAL PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES



**ONE IN THREE (29%) ABORIGINAL PEOPLE
AGED 15 TO 29 YEARS OLD REPORT RECENTLY USING
CANNABIS IN 2019.⁹ CANNABIS IS COMMONLY REFERRED
TO AS GUNJA IN ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES.**

Smoking gunja can make it harder to keep a strong spirit and a strong mind. It can harm the growing brain, making it harder to stay close with mob and manage moods and emotions.

Drug Aware has partnered with the Strong Spirit Strong Mind Aboriginal Program to develop a culturally secure adaptation of 'The Growing Brain' campaign to prevent and delay young Aboriginal people from using gunja. The campaign was developed in partnership with Aboriginal-led suppliers, with input from Aboriginal young people (aged 14 to 24 years old) in Western Australia and guided by researchers and clinicians.

This Drug Aware x Strong Spirit Strong Mind campaign adaption will run state-wide as part of the campaign schedule and be promoted in culturally and contextually relevant locations, including online.

⁹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2019). National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey. Available from: <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples/national-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-health-survey/latest-release>

CAMPAIGN RESOURCES FOR ABORIGINAL PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES

ONLINE VIDEO 15 SEC



CLICK WATCH THE
15 SECOND VIDEO

CAMPAIGN RESOURCES FOR ABORIGINAL PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES

SOCIAL MEDIA ASSETS – STATICS & VIDEOS



Static image



15" Video



**CLICK TO DOWNLOAD
VIDEO AND STATIC
SOCIAL MEDIA ASSETS**

We encourage you to share these social media assets through your organisation's social accounts, website, or newsletters.

You can also share and like our social media content at:

Instagram: [@strongspiritsstrongmind](https://www.instagram.com/strongspiritsstrongmind)

For more information about the Strong Spirit Strong Mind Aboriginal Program and what information and support they provide, visit strongspiritstrongmind.com.au

CAMPAIGN RESOURCES FOR ABORIGINAL PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES

AUDIO ASSETS



Time: 0:30

30 Second Radio Commercial - English



Time: 0:30

30 Second Radio Commercial - Kriol



Time: 0:30

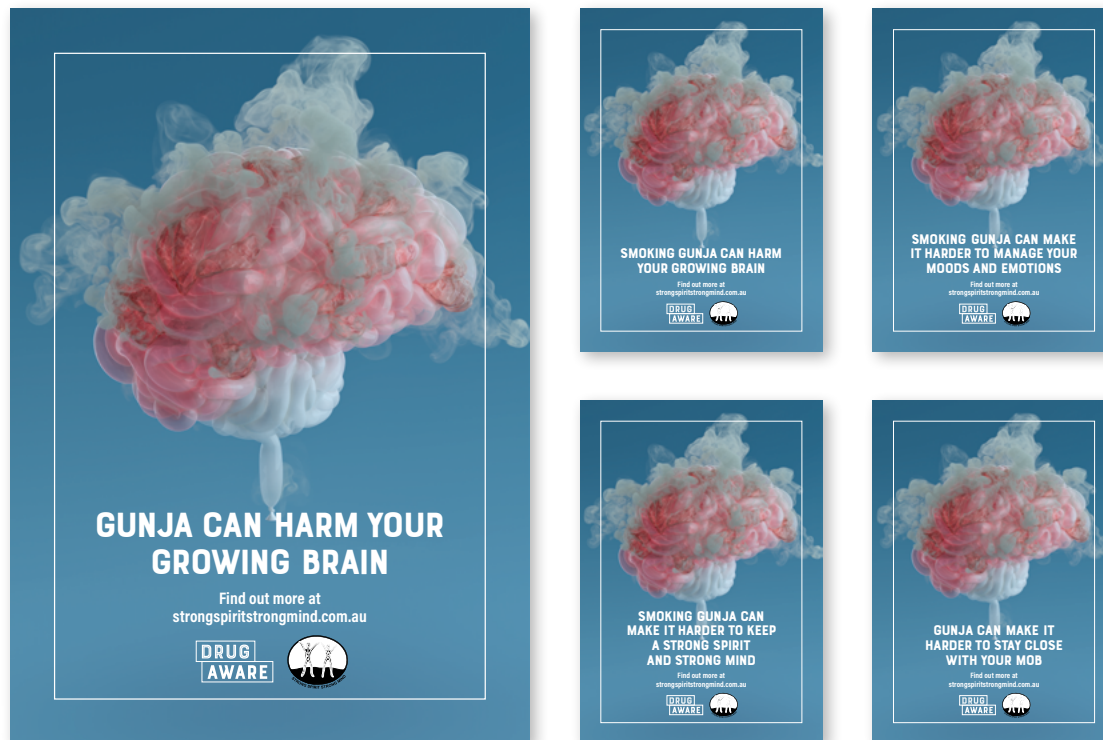
30 Second Radio Commercial - Martu



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RADIO COMMERCIALS

CAMPAIGN RESOURCES FOR ABORIGINAL PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES

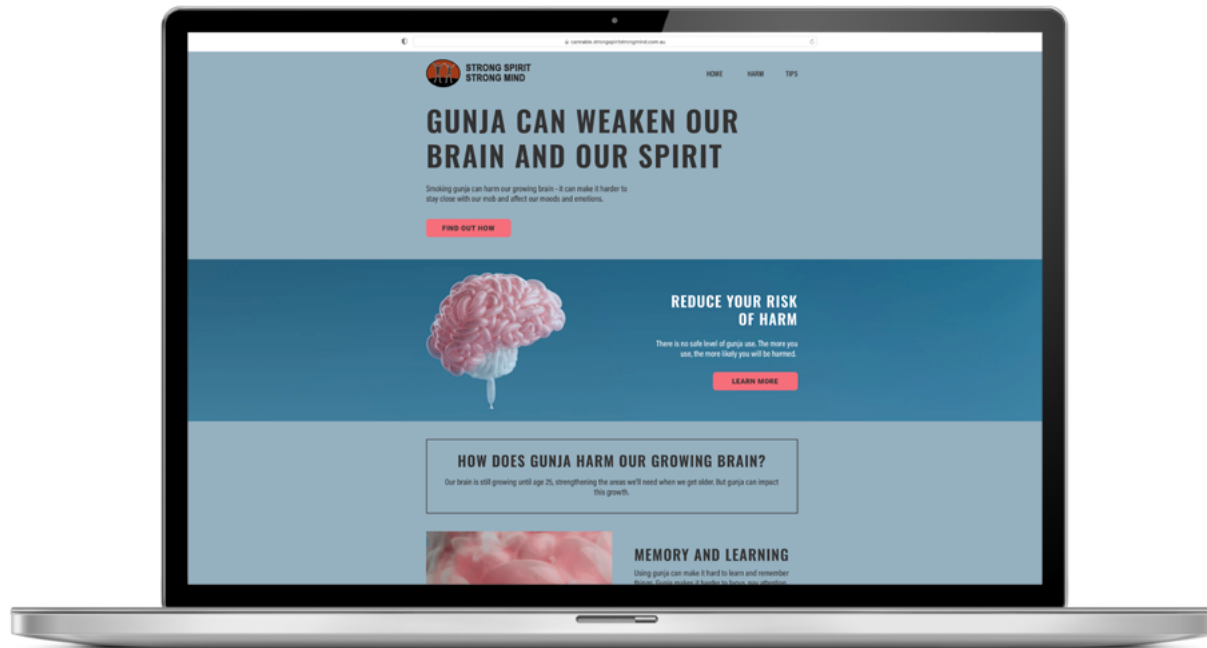
POSTERS



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CAMPAIGN RESOURCES FOR ABORIGINAL PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES

CAMPAIGN WEBSITE



CLICK TO VISIT WEBSITE

EXTENDING THE CAMPAIGN LOCALLY

WE ENCOURAGE COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS AND GROUPS TO USE THE CAMPAIGN RESOURCES IN THIS TOOLKIT TO EXTEND THE REACH OF 'THE GROWING BRAIN' CAMPAIGN.

Co-branding

If your organisation would like to partner with Drug Aware or Strong Spirit Strong Mind to adapt existing or develop additional resources to support local activities, please get in touch with us at campaigns@mhc.wa.gov.au.

Any use of the Drug Aware or Strong Spirit Strong Mind logo or its branding outside the campaign materials in this Toolkit requires approval from the Mental Health Commission.

Please provide the following information to campaigns@mhc.wa.gov.au

- Purpose of the publication/materials
- Target audience
- Key messages you are intending to communicate
- Where/how the resource will be used
- How long it will be used for
- When you need approval by

Disclaimer

The resources and materials within this toolkit are designed for the purpose of supporting local alcohol and other drug prevention and health promotion activities in Western Australia.

These materials should not be used in such a way or associated with a brand, service or organisation that may reduce the effectiveness and/or integrity of the materials or may damage the reputation of the Drug Aware or Strong Spirit Strong Mind brands.

Contact the Community Support and Development Program Team for assistance interpreting the appropriate use of these materials.

USEFUL CONTACTS

Drug Aware

Visit the Drug Aware website for more information and resources about cannabis and other drugs.

drugaware.com.au

Strong Spirit Strong Mind

Visit the Strong Spirit Strong Mind Aware website for more information and resources about alcohol, other drugs and social and emotional wellbeing for Aboriginal peoples and communities.

strongspiritstrongmind.com.au

Alcohol and Drug Support Line

A free 24-hour, state-wide confidential, non-judgemental telephone counselling, information and referral service for anyone seeking help for their own or another person's alcohol or drug use.

Metro callers: (08) 9442 5000 | Country callers: 1800 198 024

mhc.wa.gov.au

Wungening Aboriginal Corporation

Wungening alcohol and other drug (AOD) support services are a multidisciplinary team who have a strong focus on cultural security in service delivery for the community. Together the team provide programs to Aboriginal youth, families, men, women (and their children), schools and community groups and to clients within prisons.

wungening.com.au

Kids Helpline

A free 24-hour, national, confidential, online and phone counselling service for young people aged 5 to 25. Qualified counsellors are available to talk to young people anytime and for any reason.

kidshelpline.com.au | 1800 55 1800

13YARN

A free, 24-hour, national support line for mob who are feeling overwhelmed or having difficulty coping. 13YARN is run by trained Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who can provide a safe space to yarn with no judgement or shame.

13yarn.org.au | 13 92 67



drugaware.com.au

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