

MEDIA RELEASE

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Helping young men accept online rejection– Crushed But Okay, for young people by young people

Being friendzoned, ghosted and negged online are realities of everyday life for most young people. Now, a new youth-led campaign has launched to equip young men aged 15-17 with practical tips and tools to help them accept and understand rejection.

[Crushed But Okay](#) is an Australian-first social media and advocacy campaign featuring content co-designed by national not-for-profit, the Alannah & Madeline Foundation, and young people from schools, sporting clubs and gaming groups across Australia. This early intervention campaign promotes healthy and reflective dialogues about rejection and ways to communicate respectfully together online.

Aiming to equip young men with essential skills to have open conversations when online intimate relationships don't go the way they expect or hope, Crushed But Okay features fun reaction videos made by young people for young people.

These are designed to start young men talking about ways to reframe and process common online scenarios of rejection, including - by episode title - where there is a 'A Clear No', you've been 'Friendzoned', when someone is just 'Not Interested' and 'Compliments Gone Wrong'.

Pat Schlesinger, 17 and a Year 12 student, was one of six young people who worked on the design and content of the campaign and program. Altogether, 133 young people participated in the co-design process with the Foundation.

Pat said he learned a lot from the process.

"I've always thought I'm pretty respectful online and in person but being part of this co-design and talking openly about rejection really made me think about things and reevaluate," he said.

Pat said the best part "was listening to other people's perspective and realising that being upfront, genuine and honest" when approaching girls is best.

"It's not going in with an end-goal to meet someone but being more genuine about what you want out of it. I have a twin sister and am pretty used to being around women, but it was good to think and talk about these issues."

Another piece of advice for young men is not pretending to be a friend when you really want a girlfriend, "like bombarding a girl online with compliments isn't something you'd do in real life and most of those compliments can be a bit distasteful".



“No one likes rejection but it’s pretty normal. You’ve got to learn why it happens and not let it knock you down too hard. If you think it’s going to shake you, you won’t have the confidence to try again,” he said.

Social media content creator and fashion influencer, Ruby Sheohmelian, 20, said she has been subjected to online hate, but also plenty of DMs offering unwanted “compliments”.

“This started around Year 11 and mostly from strangers, but my online presence definitely exacerbated it,” she said. “I’ve built up a really thick skin and after a while it became part of my life, which is sad.”

Ruby said the process “opened her eyes”.

“In terms of boys and their friendship dynamics, it’s opened my eyes to how that works. But the boys have been so lovely and vulnerable it’s given me another perspective. Now I find those unwanted DMs less funny. I see that it could have been well-meaning, but the boys didn’t know how to express it.”

TikTok content creator and final year law student, 21-year-old Jay Chaaban thinks #CrushedButOkay is a “very important program”.

“It will help young men a great deal,” he said.

“I’ve got a young male audience on my social media, and these are ideas they can hear from me to help them make better choices – to be more open and softer about how they are feeling and not just immediately reacting angrily.

“I understand to an extent that reaction. But the biggest message this campaign is giving is anger is not always the best reaction to a situation that can hurt your feelings and pride. There are healthier ways to channel that emotion. Speaking openly with your friends and being productive, finding someone else to focus on..things like that.”

All three believe the program will broaden mindsets.

“I hope boys see how to take rejection more positively,” Ruby said. “People are allowed to be upset, but this might make it easier to comprehend and accept.”

Foundation CEO Sarah Davies AM said the program takes a strengths-based approach to early intervention and ultimately aims to reduce instances of harmful sexualised behaviour online.

“While the scope for the project was to predominantly support young men in heterosexual relationships, we hope – subject to evaluation outcomes and funding – future iterations will increase inclusivity and representation,” Ms Davies said.



Funded by the eSafety Commissioner, and backed by research from Swinburne University of Technology, the Foundation hopes to eventually extend the program's reach and support.

eSafety Commissioner Julie Inman Grant said that tackling core issues which affect young people in the online world, such as managing social exclusion, navigating online rumours and handling rejection, is critical.

"There can be a real-world impact from these types of online harms for young people. Along with trying to help reduce those harms, we also need to create some real positive change in online behaviours— acknowledging that we all have a role to play here. This campaign shows just how valuable it is for younger people to be involved in shaping these messages and talking with their peers in a way that gets real attention."

Professor Kath Albury from Swinburne University of Technology said the campaign was the outcome of 18 months of consultation with young people, researchers and leaders in the field of young men's wellbeing.

"The evidence around online abuse makes it clear that there is no single solution to this complex problem, but the Swinburne team is proud to be part of this project that centres on young people's experiences and takes a positive approach to online harm reduction," Professor Albury said.

"The outcome is a set of innovative resources that help young men build practical skills to sustain ethical online relationships."

For more information about [Crushed But Okay](#) or for interviews, please call media manager Deb Morris on 0499 202 001 or email deb.morris@amf.org.au

The Alannah & Madeline Foundation

Not for profit, the [Alannah & Madeline Foundation](#) has worked in the online safety and anti-bullying space for more than 10 years through its eSmart program in schools and communities across Australia. It is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year.

