



Applying Behavioural Insights in Victoria: An Update

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Foreword



The reform agenda of this government is significant in both breadth and depth, and a modern public service needs to be able to keep up with the pace of change through embedding new and innovative approaches to the way we work.

DPC's Behavioural Insights Unit was established in 2016 as part of this drive towards new ways of working. The behavioural insights approach is aligned with three key elements of modern day public policy making:

- Policies and services should be both evidence informed and evidence generating
- Testing, trialling and adapting as we go helps us to understand what works more quickly
- Listening to, respecting and understanding the people for whom we ultimately create public policy leads to better outcomes.

When the Unit was first established, I asked them to go big. Behavioural insights has been used successfully across the world to optimise service delivery, and this report includes Victorian case studies of how behavioural insights has been used to deliver cost effective solutions to individual policy issues.

But I also asked the team to test whether behavioural approaches can be applied to the most complex of policy challenges. The case studies included here on how behavioural insights is being used in Victoria to approach cross-sectoral complex issues such as child protection and family violence are particularly exciting. They emphasise the importance of bringing an awareness of what we know about human behaviour to the core of policy making, and that designing solutions in collaboration with the people most affected by them is likely to achieve the best outcomes.

Importantly, the report also highlights trials and projects that have not had the expected effect; demonstrating the importance of testing to really know what works and that we can't always assume that even strong evidence from other jurisdictions will translate to a Victorian context.

Behavioural insights is a leading example of how we can deliver public value for the people of Victoria in new ways, as we seek to transform the public service for the future.

CHRIS ECCLES AO
SECRETARY
DEPARTMENT OF PREMIER AND CABINET

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1.0 What is behavioural insights?



The Victorian Behavioural Insights Unit

The Behavioural Insights Unit is part of the Department of Premier and Cabinet's Public Sector Innovation Branch.

We work collaboratively across the public sector to deliver projects, trials and interventions that improve outcomes for Victorians.

What is behavioural insights?

Behavioural insights helps us understand how people make decisions. It draws on psychology, behavioural economics, human-centred design and systems thinking to better design, develop and implement public policies. Behavioural insights is an approach that recognises that humans are not the entirely "rational actors" that traditional economics and public policy design often assumes.

Our decisions can be affected by seemingly irrelevant things such as how information is presented or what others are doing, and we don't always follow through with what we intend to do, even when we know those things would be in our best interests.



What is behaviour?

Behaviour is observable human action. Perceptions can drive behaviour, but they are distinct from behaviour itself. Attitudes, counterintuitively, often follow behaviours rather than leading to behaviour change.

I'm aware of the environmental cost of takeaway coffee cups and so I have a reusable cup. But every Monday morning on my way to work, I don't use it. There's a barrier to implementing my intention, a **friction cost**. My cup is in the office, but the coffee shop is right there.

How we work



Project work

We work collaboratively with partners on projects that have a clear behavioural issue. We can help partners define a problem target statement, assess whose behaviour is contributing to the policy issue and design and test behaviourally informed interventions using concepts such as salience, loss aversion or reciprocity (see glossary for more).



Advisory

We provide behavioural insights advice on specific pieces of work such as the messaging in surveys, letters or websites, and provide information on the behavioural science evidence that might support more effective implementation of a policy.



Building capability

We partner with leading behavioural insights experts and organisations, including the UK's Behavioural Insights Team and Monash University's BehaviourWorks Australia to build the behavioural insights capability of the Victorian Public Sector through formal training, workshops and thought leadership events.

Behavioural insights recognises that perfect information does not always lead to perfect decision making. For example, more is not always better and the timing of information matters almost as much as the quality. We can provide support to improve the way information is presented and the channels used to deliver that information.

We do more than test

Where we work in the policy lifecycle

Behavioural approaches are complementary to traditional policy approaches and can span the entire policy cycle. The Behavioural Insights Unit targets its support at the phase of the policy cycle where we can add the most value.



Problem definition

We can help define the behavioural problem, target behaviours to change and assess how these behaviours link to the overall policy or program objectives.



Explore & analyse

We can review the behavioural literature into what works and undertake qualitative research with workers and citizens to address our knowledge gaps.



Policy design

We can develop behaviourally informed solutions and provide advisory support to guide policy design.



Implementation

We can support the roll out of a policy or program as a trial, including via randomised controlled trial techniques, to demonstrate the impact of the policy.



Evaluation & scaling

We can analyse and report the learnings of a behavioural insights project to translate the findings into policy recommendations to scale.



2.0 Case studies

Since the Unit was established in 2016 we have worked with every department, helping to bring a behavioural lens to improving the lives of Victorians in the social, economic and environmental domains.

The following case studies give insight into some of our work, as well as the key learnings we are taking forward.





2.1 Increasing organ donor registrations

Behavioural studies have shown that one of the best ways to overcome the intention-action gap is to make the preferred choice, the easy choice.

The problem

In Victoria, families need to consent to organ donation. Nine out of ten families will consent to organ donation if a person has registered their intent to donate. But while 69% of Australians say they would donate their organs, only 33% of the adult population has registered. This is an example of the intention-action gap.



The intention-action gap refers to the difference between what people say they want to do, and what they actually do. It occurs in many facets of our lives. From bringing a reusable cup to the coffee shop, to doing more exercise, or deciding not to eat the entire chocolate bar in one go. Often there is something in our surroundings, or a feature of the choice itself, that prevents our best intentions occurring.

Policies frequently have unintended consequences, or simply don't work. Rigorous evaluation techniques, such as randomised controlled trials, help policy makers understand whether a policy is working, and for whom. In instances where a randomised controlled trial is not possible, we can still gather useful evidence to test the effectiveness of policies.

We thank our partners the Department of Health and Human Services, DonateLife Victoria, and VicRoads, and the Behavioural Insights Team (UK) who advised on trial design.

What we did

We tested five behaviourally informed messages against a control message via banner ads on the VicRoads 'renew your licence' website (to harness the historic association between registering to be an organ donor and applying for a driver's licence). Two messages were tested at a time, with a "winner stays on" approach. Visitors to the site were randomly assigned to either the control group or a message we were testing.

Whichever message 'won' by producing the most registrations was then tested against another message. Although ideally we would have tested all the messages at the same time, the data gathered provided evidence for the messages we might trial in the future.

Messages that we tested

Did you tick the organ donor box on your driver's licence years ago?

It's time to confirm your registration.

Click here to join the Australian Organ Donor Register today.



Priming

Priming occurs when a message presents information or stimulus that has associations with another stimulus, and goes on to trigger particular responses or behaviours.

If you'd say yes to a life-saving transplant, have you said yes to being an organ donor?

Click here to join the Australian Organ Donor Register today.



Reciprocity

People have a tendency to match or exceed how they have been treated.

There are 1,400 Australians waiting for a lifesaving transplant. You can help end their wait.

Click here to join the Australian Organ Donor Register today.



Attention, scarcity and personal relevance

This message emphasised the limited resources and connected to what the person can do about it.



Click here to join the Australian Organ Donor Register today.



Images

Images can be emotive and create a more powerful message.

One organ and tissue donor can save more than 10 lives.

Click here to join the Australian Organ Donor Register today.



Gain frame

A gain frame is when a message is focussed on the positive outcome, compared to a loss frame which focuses on costs or loss. People tend to avoid risk when they focus on what they could lose out on.

What we found

We found that the gain frame was the 'winning' message. However, because there was a low click through rate across all messages (including the control message), we hypothesise that visitors to the site were focussed on achieving their goal of renewing their licence and did not want to be diverted to another task via a banner ad - a nice example of people following through on their intentions!

Key statistics



496,503 total views



946 click-throughs



127 registrations



One organ donor can save up to seven lives

And now what?

We are now trialling new messages on another government website. This trial is using a landing page approach after the original purpose for visiting a site is completed. Initial results for this new trial suggest that a landing page is an effective way to get people to click through and successfully register. Our initial results are promising. The ratio of those registering for organ donation after clicking through has increased by 43% in our new trial.



2.2

Ensuring children get the right support

In public policy some of the areas with the greatest possible impact are also those with the most difficult problems. Making progress on complex problems generally requires:

- Behaviour change by a group of individuals
- Efforts from multiple stakeholders, often with different opinions about how these problems should be solved
- Intricate interdependencies, spanning across work areas and accountabilities.

The protection of vulnerable children is a complex problem with multiple stakeholders. The Child Protection Reporter Support project is helping to tackle this issue through a collaborative inter-departmental project and by using a behavioural insights approach to understand the problem.

The problem

Demand within the Child Protection system has grown significantly over the last decade.

The education sector is a particularly important stakeholder. Teachers and other school staff interact with children regularly and are often the first to notice if a child is at risk or needs support.

This project sought to better understand the decision making process of professionals from the education sector, Child Protection Intake and Child FIRST lead agencies for identification of whether a child is in need of support or protection and appropriate response.

Project Objectives



1

Help children and families receive the right support at the right time.

2

Support Child Protection, Child FIRST and education professionals to use their areas of expertise in a coordinated way to meet the needs of children and families.

We thank our partners the **Department of Health and Human Services**, the **Department of Education and Training** and the **frontline professionals** who generously gave their time and expertise.

What we found

Diagnose

Data is an important tool for policy makers. It can give clear indications of inputs, outputs and outcomes. But quantitative data alone cannot shed light on why people are behaving in a certain way. Field-based research enables us to examine the daily experiences of professionals, and how small details that are not often incorporated into traditional policy making can produce different outcomes in practice. This allows us to:

- Understand the context of a problem
- Observe behaviours that people may not think are important enough to mention in interviews
- Give frontline professionals the opportunity to contribute directly to the decision making process.

Fieldwork and observation

Qualitative research is a key input into policy making and service design. Unlike traditional consultation, observing people while they are doing a task rather than having them describe the task to you provides a more fulsome understanding of how a process really works. When we are familiar with something we often don't comment on steps that have become second nature. We are surrounded by information and our brains automatically filter most of it out to allow us to focus on the things that we need to make a decision. It is then difficult for us to articulate these steps; we have simply put them to the back of our minds.

Approximately 180 hours of fieldwork and consultations by the cross-departmental team were conducted with Child Protection Practitioners, education professionals and Child FIRST lead agencies to understand:

- How a child or young person's risk is first recognised and understood
- How professionals respond when a child or young person is identified as at risk
- How supported by each other education professionals, Child Protection Practitioners and Child FIRST Practitioners feel to meet the child's needs.

This fieldwork provided rich qualitative evidence about what possible actions would help to make the system work better.

For example, professionals reflected that they don't always receive feedback on the results of the reports into the Child Protection system. Behavioural science literature suggests that timely feedback on a decision or action is more likely to change behaviour the next time a similar decision or action is required. We are currently considering how this feedback could be provided.

"We're the ones seeing the kids five days a week and we have to support the child when you [Child Protection] go."

Education professional

"All professional reporters should be advised of the outcome of their call."

Child Protection Practitioner

And now what?

This project is now moving into its next phase. We will be able to confidently propose policy directions, knowing that impacted frontline and policy professionals have contributed to their development throughout the decision making process.



2.3 Changing channels

“Since introducing the new message, 70 to 80% of our callers visit the Consumer Affairs Victoria website before contacting us, allowing our staff to focus on more complex questions.”

Consumer Affairs Victoria

Government going digital

Victorians increasingly want to do business online, and government can deliver programs and services at scale efficiently through online service delivery. However, many Victorians are not aware of which government services are available online, so interact with government in traditional ways, such as phone calls and paper bills.

What we did

We have worked with a range of business areas to encourage Victorians to use digital services, including the State Revenue Office and Consumer Affairs Victoria.

Using the behavioural science concept of salience, we worked with the State Revenue Office to run a randomised controlled trial to test the most effective message to encourage land tax payers in Victoria to switch to BPAY View, redesigning the Land Tax Assessment Notice and including a step by step guide to registering for BPAY View when the notices were mailed out.

We also worked with Consumer Affairs Victoria to change the on hold message for the Consumer Affairs Helpline, supporting customers to manage their enquiries through the website where possible. This allows the Helpline to prioritise callers who are unable to self-serve through the website as well as complex enquiries that require a personalised response.

We thank our partners **The State Revenue Office** and **Consumer Affairs Victoria**.

What we found



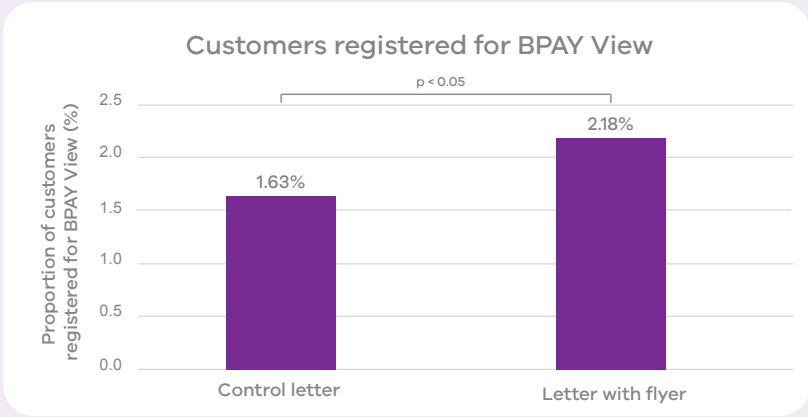
Small changes can have significant impact

Land Tax Assessment Notice

The inclusion of a BPAY View flyer with the redesigned Land Tax Assessment Notice increased BPAY View registrations by 34%. Although this was from a low base (only 1.63% of Victorian customers previously received their notices electronically), it demonstrates the ability for simple changes to increase uptake of digital services.



34% increase in BPAY View usage

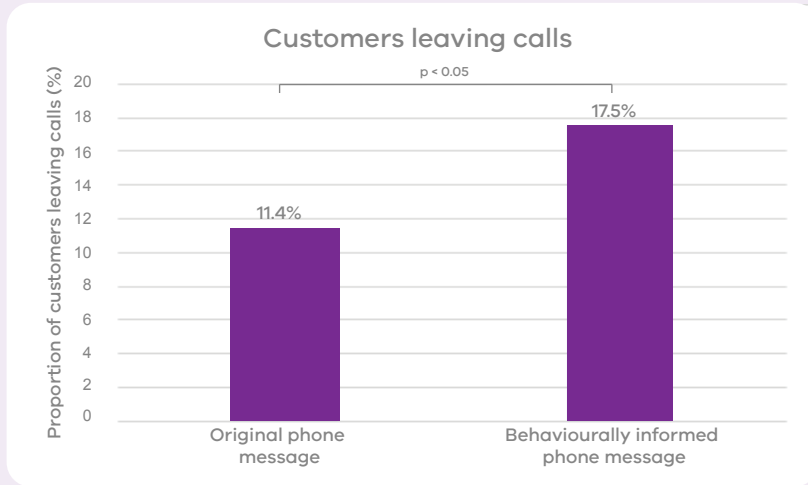


Transitioning Consumer Affairs Victoria queries to its website

The simplified messaging that encouraged callers to use the Consumer Affairs Victoria website resulted in a significant increase in people leaving their calls, from 11.4% to 17.5%, with corresponding increases in website traffic. The new message has been implemented and is estimated to be moving approximately 13,600 callers from seeking telephone help to the website every year.



54% increase to website diversions



And now what?

Digital channels need to be easy to take up. While our trial with the State Revenue Office significantly increased the proportion of customers using BPAY View, most Victorian land tax payers receive their notices via mail. There are multiple steps required to sign up for BPAY View, including logging into the separate platform of your online banking. In contrast, the Consumer Affairs Victoria website is a straightforward way for customers to find answers to general queries about consumer matters.

As more and more government services go digital, it will be more important to consider the human factor behind the screen, so that citizens can easily and efficiently make the decisions that best meet their objectives.



2.4 Supporting VET students

Students found SMSs with study tips and motivational messages the most valuable.

The problem

The vocational education and training (VET) system is vital to building a strong economy and a healthy society. It seeks to equip students with the skills they need to succeed in the workforce and contributes to a pipeline of talent to meet the needs of employers in a growing economy.

In 2018, around 240,000 students enrolled in VET courses in Victorian Technical and Further Education Institutions (TAFEs). However, many students who enrol in Victoria's VET system drop out early or fail to complete their course. In some courses fewer than half of the students who enrol go on to complete their course. This represents a lost opportunity for the students and potential employers, and a poor return on public investment in the sector.



What we did

In 2018 we partnered with the Department of Education and Training and three TAFEs to test whether sending behaviourally informed SMSs to students would increase student retention.

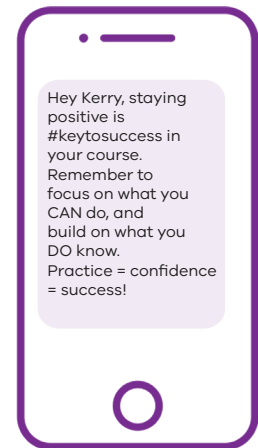
We thank our partner the Department of Education and Training.

Focussing on courses for 'in-demand' skills that have a history of low student retention (e.g. early childhood education and community services), we worked with TAFEs to send students personalised SMSs every week for up to 18 weeks. To assess the impact of the messages, we ran a randomised controlled trial where students were randomly allocated to one of three groups:

Control group Students received a single introductory SMS informing them that they may receive weekly SMSs as part of a trial of new student support services. It provided the opportunity to opt out of receiving further SMSs.

Group A: Supportive SMSs Students received the same introductory message as the Control group, plus weekly SMSs. These were designed to support student engagement drawing on concepts such as motivation, positive reinforcement, self-determination, growth mindset, grit, practical advice, and planning prompts.

Group B: Supportive and personalised SMSs Students received the same series of SMSs as those in Group A, with additional references to the job associated with their specific course (e.g. nurse, childcare worker).



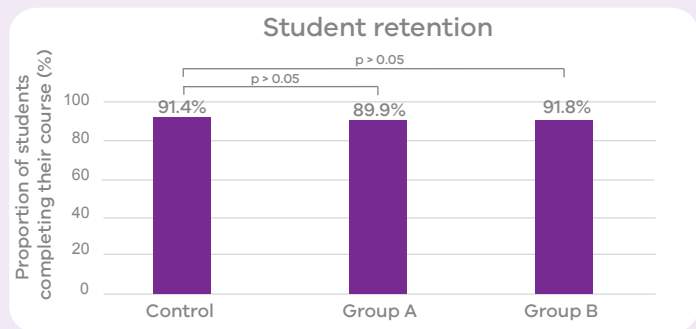
What we found

Overall, the results showed there was no difference in student retention across the three groups. Students who received the behaviourally informed messages (Groups A and B) were no more or less likely to continue in their course for the period of the SMSs than those students who did not receive the behaviourally informed SMSs (Control group).

Equally, students who received SMSs with references to the job associated with the course (Group B) were no more or less likely to continue in the course than those who received messages without such references (Group A).

We also ran a survey at the end of the trial to gauge student feedback. The results indicate that the vast majority of students (75%) thought the SMSs were a good idea and should continue in the future.

We found that students valued the SMSs containing study tips and motivational messages above others.



Some of the qualitative responses from students further emphasise these points:

"Great little motivational tactic, was helpful and useful with information that I didn't know I needed. Keep it going!"

"I enjoyed the motivational messages and the ones that reminded me that I wasn't alone and that my whole class were in the same position."

Other qualitative data showed that many students engaged deeply with the SMSs and that they contributed to student wellbeing. This was particularly evident for students who were finding their studies challenging.

And now what?

While the results of this trial did not show that the messages produced a significant impact on student retention, there are several positive outcomes that can guide future work. It showed the potential to integrate the behavioural insights approach with TAFEs' strategic focus on student experience. It demonstrated the value of testing innovative policy solutions on a small scale to build an evidence base prior to wider adoption. The project also helped build the capability of staff at both the Department of Education and Training and TAFEs to apply a behavioural approach on an ongoing basis.

2.5 Specialist clinic attendance

The problem

Missed appointments are a significant cost to the health care system, and patients who do not attend appointments miss out on valuable care.

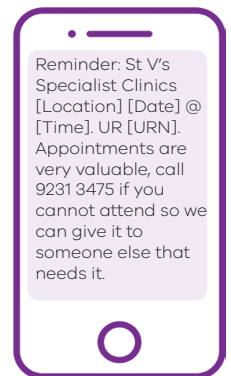


What we did

We partnered with the Department of Health and Human Services and several health services to improve patient communications as part of a new Communications Toolkit for health services.

To understand what works, we designed a range of behaviourally-informed SMS reminders and letters to reduce the number of patients who do not attend hospital appointments.

First, we partnered with St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne to run a randomised controlled trial to test several SMSs sent ahead of specialist clinic appointments. All patients received an SMS, with the "control" group message being the current SMS used by St Vincent's.



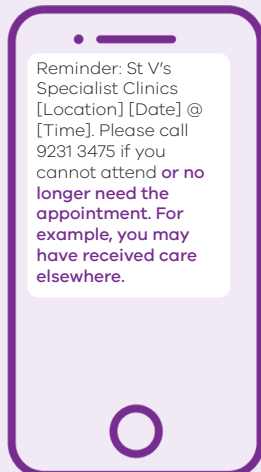
Control SMS

Taking stock of what we learned from this first trial, we are currently running four other trials:

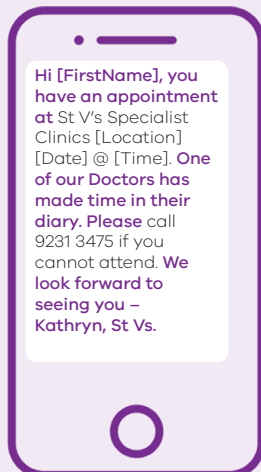
- 1) With St Vincent's Hospital, we are building on the most successful SMS reminder and testing a new reminder letter;
- 2) With Eastern Health, we are testing a new SMS highlighting the financial cost of missed appointments to the hospital;
- 3) With Northern Health, we are testing a new reminder letter; and
- 4) With Western Health, we are testing distributing appointment letters via SMS.

We thank our partners **Department of Health and Human Services, St Vincent's Hospital, Western, Eastern and Northern Health services.**

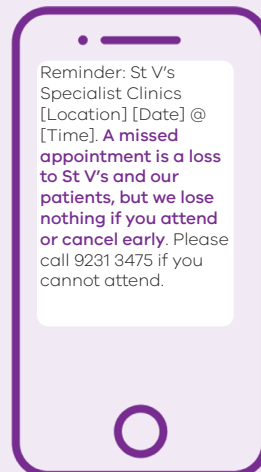
The SMSs



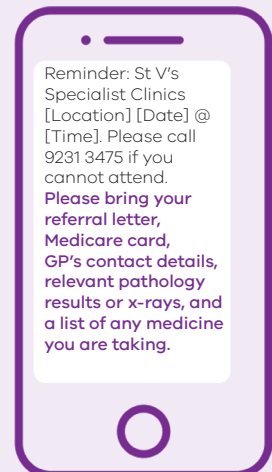
Reason to Cancel



Personalisation & Reciprocity



Avoided Loss to Hospital



What to bring

What we found

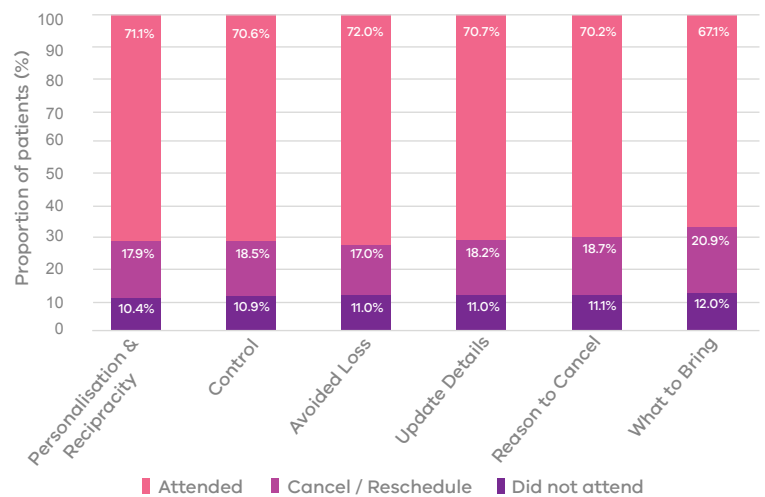
From this first trial at St Vincent's we learned that the Personalisation & Reciprocity SMS appears most effective at reducing the number of patients who do not attend hospital appointments (see the graph on the right).

"Thank you for the reminder, I will be there on Monday."

We also learned that patients engaged more with the Personalisation & Reciprocity SMS. The patients who received this SMS were twice as likely to reply "Thank you", "Yes" or "I'll be there" compared to other SMSs.

Health services may better engage patients before appointments by personalising their SMSs and highlighting that the doctor has scheduled time for the patient.

Patient specialist clinic attendance

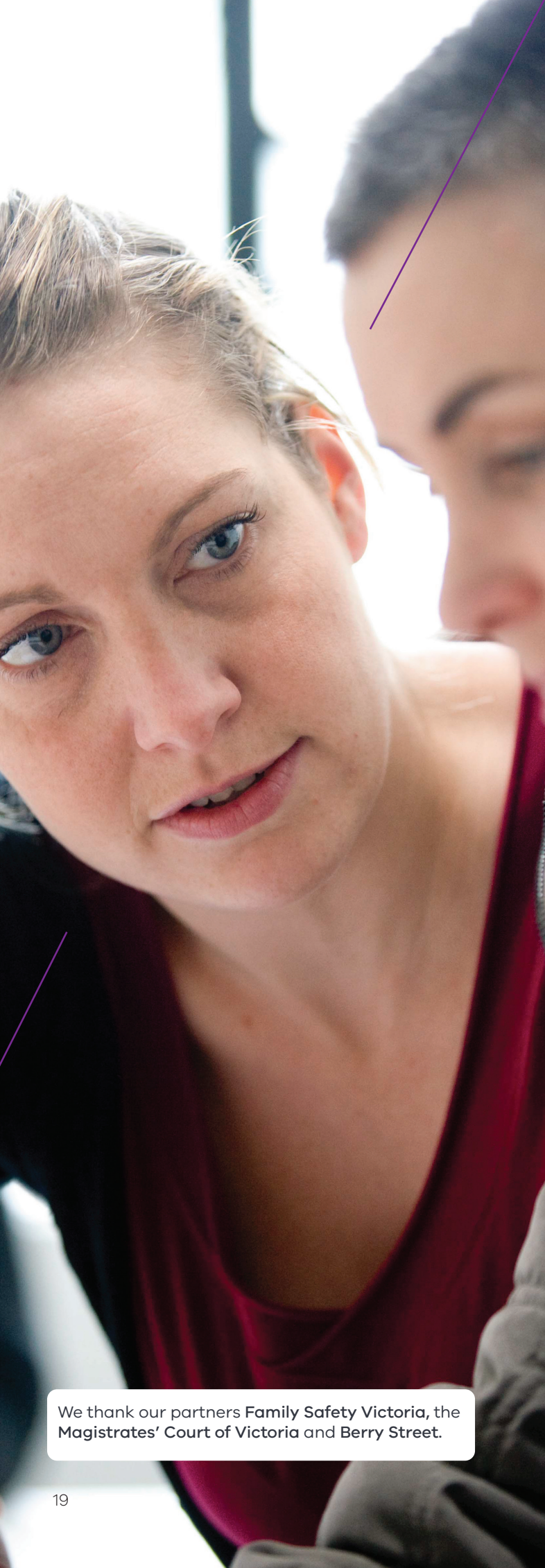


Scaling up learnings

In October 2019, the findings from our trials at St Vincent's Hospital, Western, Eastern and Northern Health services will be published in a new Communications Toolkit for health services.

Our findings will help health services better engage with patients by shedding light on some key questions such as:

- What is the most cost-effective channel to remind patients about upcoming appointments?
- What behavioural insights concept is the most effective at changing patient behaviour?
- What is the best time to send reminder messages?



2.6 Understanding information sharing in the family violence system

Good policy design and service implementation require a deep understanding of the issues that face workers on the ground who are integral to service delivery.

Using insights gained from fieldwork (such as observations and interviews), behavioural science can help us understand how policy is likely to be implemented and the behavioural issues at play.

The problem

The family violence system requires many people—including police, case workers, and specialised family support services—to share information and collaborate so that victims of family violence are safer, and perpetrators are held to account. However, the Royal Commission into Family Violence described a system in which information was not routinely or systematically shared, potentially exposing victim survivors to further harm.

The Family Violence Information Sharing project aimed to understand the flow of information in the system using a behavioural insights approach.

What we did

We conducted fieldwork to gain a deeper understanding of what information sharing looked like in practice for family violence workers. We explored both the psychological and contextual factors that influence how frontline workers share information.

We thank our partners **Family Safety Victoria**, the **Magistrates' Court of Victoria** and **Berry Street**.

What we found

Our fieldwork revealed some unexpected findings around why information was not always shared. We found that workers sometimes did not share information because they wanted to ensure victim survivors were not disempowered. Frontline workers only shared information with others in the system after obtaining victim survivor consent, even though this was not a legal requirement. They wanted to strengthen victim survivors' internal locus of control by signalling:

'You decide how your information is shared. You have a choice.'

We also learned that the workplace and system design influenced whether information was readily shared among workers. For example, visibility, proximity and accessibility to other workers affects whether information is shared. The setup of workspaces, corridors and general building features can affect staff interactions, which can in turn affect client outcomes. For example, open building design facilitates conversations and information sharing between staff.

Conversely, restricting access to areas in which specialist staff are located can hinder information sharing.

Good policy design will consider the choice architecture presented to the person and reduce the "hassle factors" involved in doing the desired behaviour.



Locus of control An individual's belief they can or cannot control the consequences of their actions. Individuals with an internal locus of control believe they control the consequences of their actions whereas people with an external locus of control believe that the consequences of their actions are determined by chance, fate or other people.

Choice architecture and principles for better design

- 1 **People generally take the path of least resistance** - Making something slightly more difficult for people, such as having to ask a Registrar in order to speak with a support practitioner, reduces the chance that the action will occur.
- 2 **Expect error** - People make mistakes. Physical and system design should reduce the consequences of those mistakes wherever possible.
- 3 **Incidental interactions allow workers to give each other real time feedback** - Incidental encounters between workers allow them to thank one another for information or inform each other how their information was used. Both forms of feedback are powerful ways to motivate information sharing.

And now what?

Understanding how these small, seemingly unimportant, factors shape behaviours on the ground helps policy makers design and implement better policies. For example, we applied the principle of simplifying choice architecture to redesigning the Ministerial Guidelines, which are used by family violence support workers to decide whether to share information. Working with Family Safety Victoria, we simplified the number of issues workers must consider in deciding whether to share information from 47 down to 13. This simplification should improve efficiency and reduce errors in workers' decisions.



2.7 Boosting vaccination rates

Data is critical for government to deliver effective, evidence informed policy. Data is important both for delivery of services (e.g. having people's current contact details) and to allow government to understand what works. But the administrative path to getting data is not always straightforward.

Our work on boosting Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination rates demonstrates how behavioural approaches can help.

The problem

The Australian National Immunisation Program in Victoria involves all three levels of government. The Australian Government funds the program, the Victorian Government administers it and the vaccinations are delivered by local councils through secondary schools. Schools hold the relationship with students and parents, and local councils rely on student and parent contact information provided by schools to record vaccinations. Without this information, it's not possible for local councils to accurately track vaccination outcomes or send parents reminders to improve attendance on vaccination days.

HPV is a difficult virus to protect against. A vaccination rate of more than 80% is essential for reaching herd immunity against HPV. Achieving this will prevent many young Australians from developing cervical cancer in the future.



"This literally saves lives. There will be women alive in years to come because of the increased immunisation coverage being achieved today."

Dr Brett Sutton
Chief Health Officer

We thank our partners the Department of Health and Human Services, BehaviourWorks Australia and the Public Sector Innovation Fund.

What we did

We developed a communication intervention designed to encourage schools to share better quality data. We wrote a letter in plain language, included an action planning sheet, and sent these directly to school immunisation coordinators.

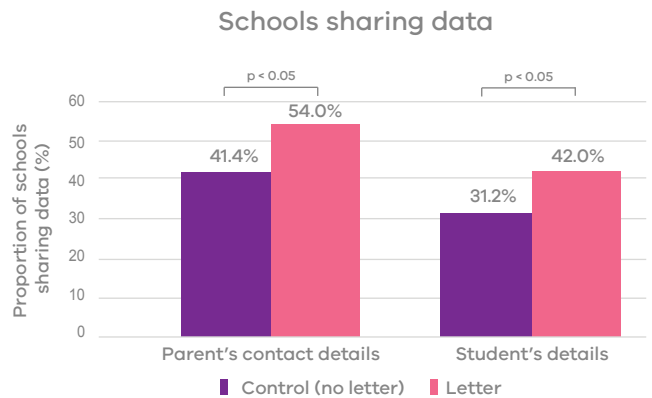
40 councils participated in the study, resulting in 307 schools in the trial (almost half of all secondary schools in Victoria). A randomised controlled trial was conducted where half of the schools in each council were randomly assigned to receive the letter and action planning sheet, and the other half didn't receive anything. This allowed us to understand if an increase in data sharing could be attributed to the letter and action planning sheet.

Encouraging schools to share better quality data was the key step in achieving our goal of improving immunisation rates.

What we found

Sharing data

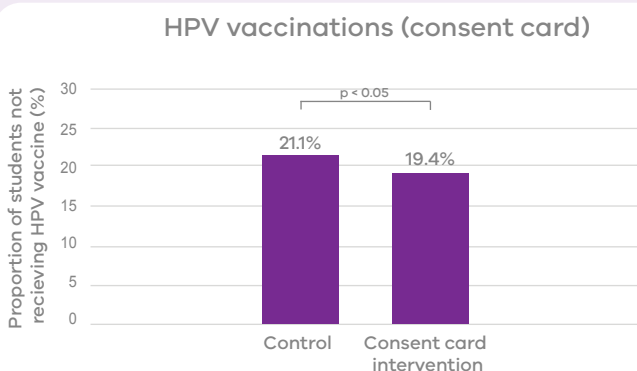
We found that more schools shared data when they received our letter and action planning sheet than did schools in the control group.



Related trials

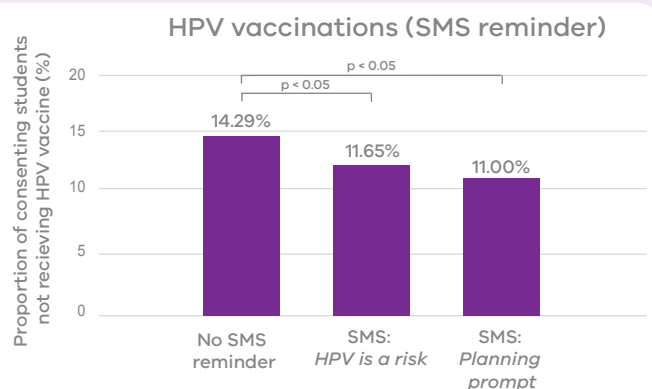
Consent card

In a second trial we sent improved consent cards and a letter directly to schools. This intervention increased the likelihood of a parent or guardian returning the consent card by 3.5 percentage points, and increased the likelihood of the student receiving the HPV vaccine by 1.7 percentage points, bringing the share of unvaccinated students down from 21.1% to 19.4%.



SMS reminder

In a third trial we sent SMS reminders to parents when it was vaccination day at school. This reduced the share of students who had consented to immunisation but were not immunised from 14.29% to 11.00%. At scale, this type of intervention can get us past the last-mile of achieving full vaccination coverage for HPV.



And now what?

A behavioural insights approach is not just useful for understanding what works, but can also be used to enhance policy implementation. This trial shows that taking a simple step, like sending a letter and action planning sheet, can result in government receiving better quality data which in turn helps government improve outcomes for Victorians. Behavioural insights informed communications have significant potential for helping to improve policy implementation.

3.0 Other behavioural insights work

Since 2016, the Behavioural Insights Unit has been supporting the Victorian Government's commitment to make government more citizen centric.

This work has covered many different areas of the public purpose sector.

Several other projects using a behavioural insights approach are being run independently by other departments in the Victorian Government, demonstrating the uptake of behavioural insights as a new way of working.

Behavioural insights is also being applied to the way we do our work in the public service, from how we think about project risks to how we consolidate learnings from training programs and how we support public servants to make decisions.

Work underway

Balanced choices in post-secondary education

Explore ways to assist students to make active and informed decisions about post-secondary school pathways.



PARTNER: Department of Education and Training

Emergency Department Diversion

Divert patients with non-urgent healthcare needs from the emergency department and into more appropriate service providers.



PARTNERS: Department of Health and Human Services, Public Sector Innovation Fund, Banyule Community Health

Client Engagement with Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Services

Understand how, why and when clients engage, disengage or re-engage with their alcohol and other drug treatment.



PARTNER: Department of Health and Human Services

Family Violence Intervention Order court reminders

Trial SMS reminders to encourage respondents in Family Violence Intervention Order matters to attend court hearings.



PARTNERS: Neighbourhood Justice Centre, Victoria Police

Birth Registrations

Transition to a system of online birth registrations while maintaining Victoria's strong rates of birth registration



PARTNERS: Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages

Fines Enforcement

Understand the different cohorts of people with outstanding fines and how best to engage with them.



PARTNERS: Victorian Centre for Data Insights, Fines Victoria

Completed work



Joining the Australian Supplier Payment Code. We advised Small Business Victoria on encouraging large businesses to commit to fair payment practices in their dealings with small business suppliers by joining the Australian Supplier Payment Code.



Methadone Permit Compliance. We worked with the Department of Health and Human Services to improve doctors' compliance with methadone permit requirements.



Public Transport Interchanging. We collaborated with Public Transport Victoria to assist passengers to navigate changing train lines.



Healthy Homes: Energy Efficiency Retrofit. We worked with Sustainability Victoria to measure the impact of home energy efficiency upgrades on the health and wellbeing outcomes of low-income households.



Fatal Distraction Campaign. We worked with the Department of Education and Training to review the 'Kids in Cars - Fatal Distraction' campaign to raise awareness of the risks of leaving children in cars during hot weather.

Other behavioural insights work across the Victorian Government

Energy Consumers Decision Making. We supported the Essential Services Commission and the UK's Behavioural Insights Team to help consumers to get the best energy deal from their retailer.

Connecting with nature for biodiversity. The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning worked with BehaviourWorks Australia to undertake a foundational survey of Victorians' connection to and engagement with nature in order to identify potential target groups for behaviour change programs.

Improving safety outcomes from bushfires. The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, the Country Fire Authority, Emergency Management Victoria, Parks Victoria and local councils are delivering the Safer Together Program, which is exploring the use of behavioural insights strategies to target the community's 'information to action gap,' and improve safety outcomes from bushfires.

Energy Demand Management. We worked with the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning to reduce energy consumption during peak demand periods.

Engaging landlords in waterway frontage works. The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning has commenced investigating effective behavioural strategies for engaging landholders to participate in waterway frontage management programs across Victoria.

Applying behavioural insights to promote positive parenting. We worked with the Department of Education and Training in the development of a project to determine how best to engage parents to promote positive parenting attitudes and behaviours.

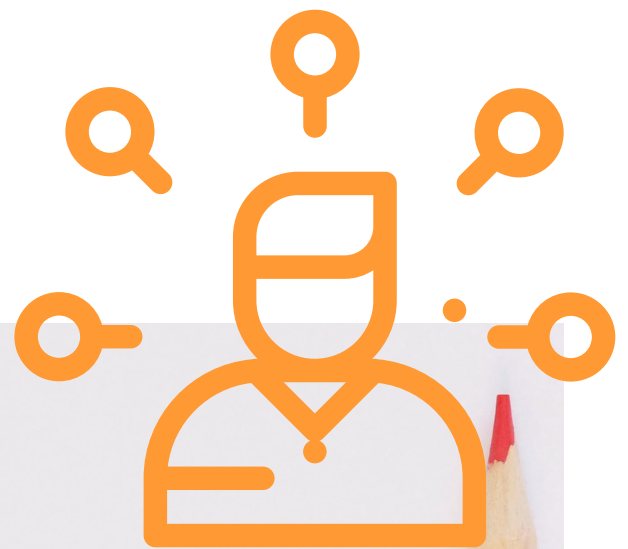
4.0 Building behavioural insights capability

People are the public sector's greatest organisational asset.

The Behavioural Insights Unit is building workforce capability by equipping our colleagues with the skills to apply behavioural insights to their work.

We provide formal training, facilitation of events and workshops, and support procurement of external behavioural insights expertise by teams across the Victorian Government.

We partner with leading behavioural insights experts and organisations, including the UK's Behavioural Insights Team and Monash University's BehaviourWorks Australia to build the Victorian Public Sector's behavioural insights capability. This helps our colleagues learn from the latest advances in behavioural science and connects government, academia and international thought leaders.



The Behavioural Insights Unit has delivered more than a dozen different courses across 42 separate education and training sessions. These courses covered the application of behavioural insights concepts and methodologies across the full policy cycle and ranged from introductory sessions to advanced masterclasses.

Between July 2017 and February 2019 more than 1,300 Victorian public servants attended training or events.



They represented more than 40 organisations including all major Victorian departments and agencies, courts and legal services, health organisations, environmental bodies and frontline emergency services.

More than 95 per cent of surveyed attendees recommend the course to others. Within the first year, half of participants had already applied their learnings to their work, and 95 per cent planned to do so in future.

Behavioural insights events in 2018 included local and international experts sharing their knowledge about how we can:

- Improve our decision making using predictive tools
- Enhance decision making in the public service
- Use behavioural insights to reduce crime and improve policing.



Other behavioural insights concepts

Checklists

Checklists are a structured, sequenced list of actions for completing complex tasks. Checklists make it easier for people to perform an action by segmenting the task into smaller chunks, automating the sequence of operations, and giving prominence to small but important steps that might be overlooked.

Defaults

A default is an outcome that occurs if no action is taken. People are more likely to accept a default because it has lower friction costs. Defaults are 'choice preserving' because they do not rule out one choice or another, they simply make one the default. For example, some countries have an opt out approach to registering for organ donation.

Friction cost

Friction costs are the costs of an action. Friction costs or hassle factors are often small but accumulate to an extent that people may choose not to engage in the task. For example, students starting college often don't apply for scholarships worth tens of thousands of dollars because the friction cost of filling in the paperwork is so high.

Illusion of control

The illusion of control is the tendency for people to overrate their ability to control events. The illusion is often enhanced when people interact with the event they're trying to control. For example, people may overrate their ability to drive to work quickly, especially if they're driving themselves, when in reality their journey is controlled primarily by speed limits and the behaviour of other drivers.

Loss aversion

Loss aversion is the tendency for people to dislike losses more than they like equivalent gains. People prefer to not lose \$10 than win \$10.

Messenger effect

The messenger effect is the tendency to judge the quality of information based on who is sending the message, regardless of the message itself. For example, juries can be influenced by the performance of an actor reading a witness testimony, even though they know the actor has nothing to do with the crime, the trial or the witness.

Optimism bias

Optimism bias is the tendency for people to believe they're more likely to have good fortune relative to other people. Optimism is biased to the extent that people expect good outcomes without working to ensure those outcomes occur.

Plain language principles

By using plain language principles - clear headings, plenty of white space, dot points where possible - we can help to reduce cognitive load and make it more likely that our message will reach its audience.

Planning prompts

Planning prompts show that people are more likely to follow through on an intended action if they formulate an action plan specifying when and how they will complete the task. Planning prompts, such as through a timely text message, can assist people to create these plans.

Reciprocity

Reciprocity is the feeling of obligation to return good actions in kind. Reciprocity often leads people to behave in a way that matches or exceeds how they have been treated. Reciprocity is often embedded in social norms.

Saliency

Saliency is the mental prominence of a fact, object or decision. Saliency is a key driver of decision making because people tend to act based on what's front of mind rather than what's most relevant.

Social norms

Social norms are an unspoken understanding of how group members behave. Norms create a set of tacit rules and expectations that govern group interactions.

Connect with us

The Behavioural Insights Unit works collaboratively across the public sector to deliver projects, trials and interventions that improve outcomes for Victorians.

Contact us if you have a behavioural policy problem and you'd like to work with us at:

behavioural.insights@dpc.vic.gov.au

