

# 250K AN ALLERGY AWARENESS PROJECT

Vale S<sup>1,2</sup>, Loh R<sup>1,2,3</sup>, Smith J<sup>2</sup>, Aiken J<sup>4</sup>, Salter S<sup>5</sup>, Said M<sup>1,4</sup>.

1. National Allergy Strategy, Sydney, Australia
2. Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy (ASCI), Sydney, Australia
3. Princess Margaret Hospital, Perth, Australia
4. Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia, Sydney, Australia
5. University of Western Australia, Perth, Australia



## 250K – A YOUTH ALLERGY AWARENESS PROJECT BY THE NATIONAL ALLERGY STRATEGY

### ABSTRACT

#### Background

Approximately 250,000 teens and young adults in Australia are living with severe allergy. Teens and young adults are at increased risk of fatal anaphylaxis. This project aimed to engage with young Australians living with severe allergy, to identify education needs and provide appropriate resources.

#### Method

A national online survey of 12-25 year olds living with severe allergy was conducted focussing on allergy management barriers, areas of need, communication and education methods. The survey was promoted via email, social media and allergy clinics. Participants were also recruited using a member-based organisation of students in Australia. Required resources and the design concepts for these resources were developed based on the survey results. Focus group sessions identified the campaign brand. Additional feedback on resource design and content was sought through the establishment of a Youth Advisory Team.

#### Findings

The survey and focus groups identified that teens and young adults want their peers to know about their severe allergies but are reluctant to have the conversation themselves; they minimise the seriousness of their allergies so that they do not draw attention to themselves and are not perceived as 'causing a fuss'; and younger teens face challenges in social contexts as they become more independent. Managing intimate relationships when food allergic was also an area of concern.

Teens and young adults indicated that they needed resources to help them manage their severe allergy; would like the community to understand food allergy better; would like to connect with others managing food allergy; and preferred to access credible information via a website.

#### Conclusion

Resources were developed specifically for teens and young adults managing severe allergy, particularly food allergy. The interactive website (250k.org.au) is styled to engage young people, provides credible, age-appropriate information and allows them to share information via an avatar which they create.

### Key survey findings about young people with allergies

- Reluctant to talk to their peers about their allergies.
- Don't want to be seen as different or draw attention to themselves.
- Minimise the seriousness of their allergy so they don't "cause a fuss".
- Considerable confidence is required to manage their allergies, particularly when it comes to eating out, asking for what they need and carrying their adrenaline autoinjector.
- Face challenges in social contexts as they become more independent of their parents.
- Concerned about managing allergies when in intimate relationships (including kissing or close contact).
- Feel isolated and alone in dealing with their allergies.
- Want their friends to be educated about the seriousness of their allergy, but not by them.

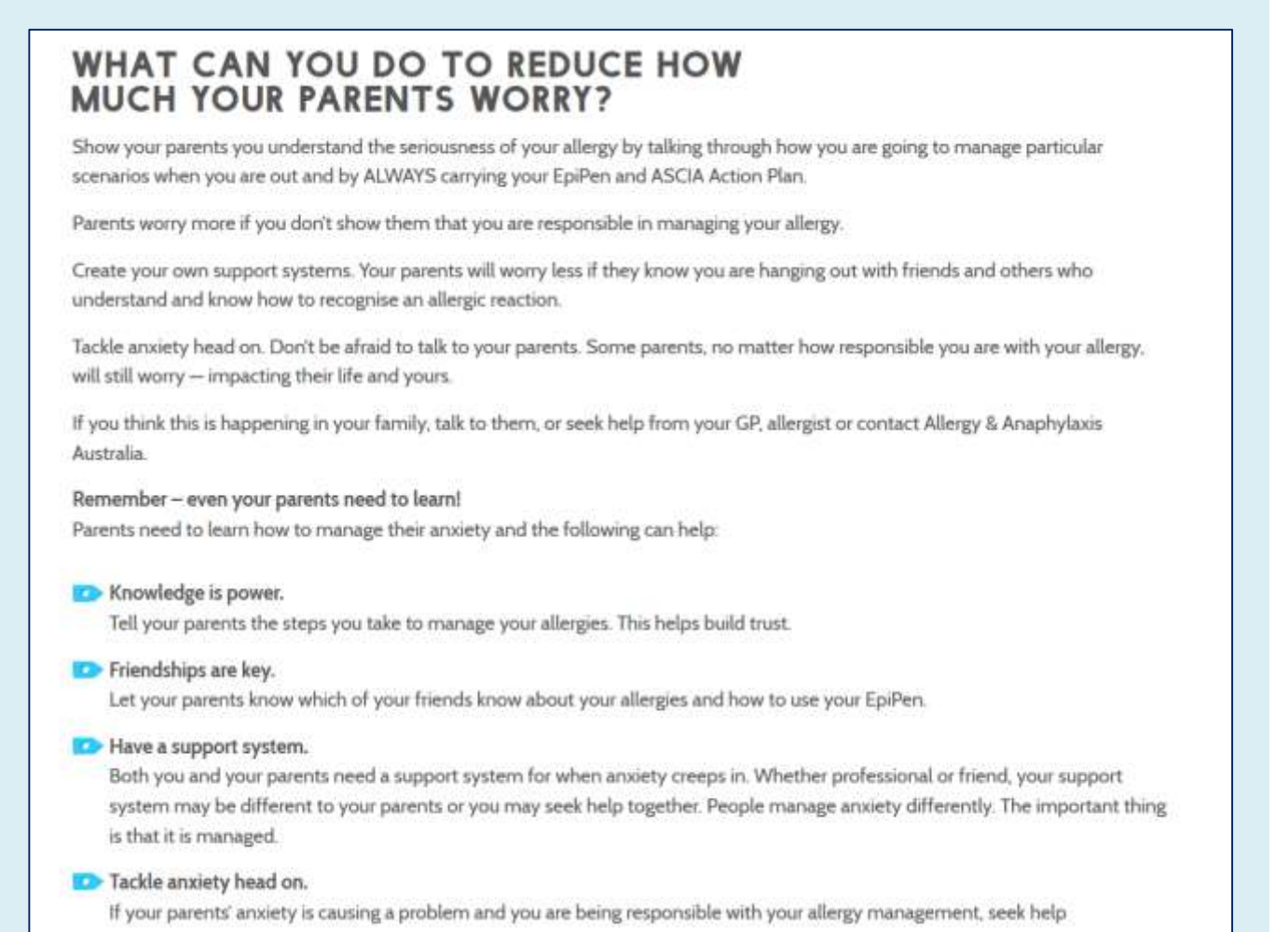
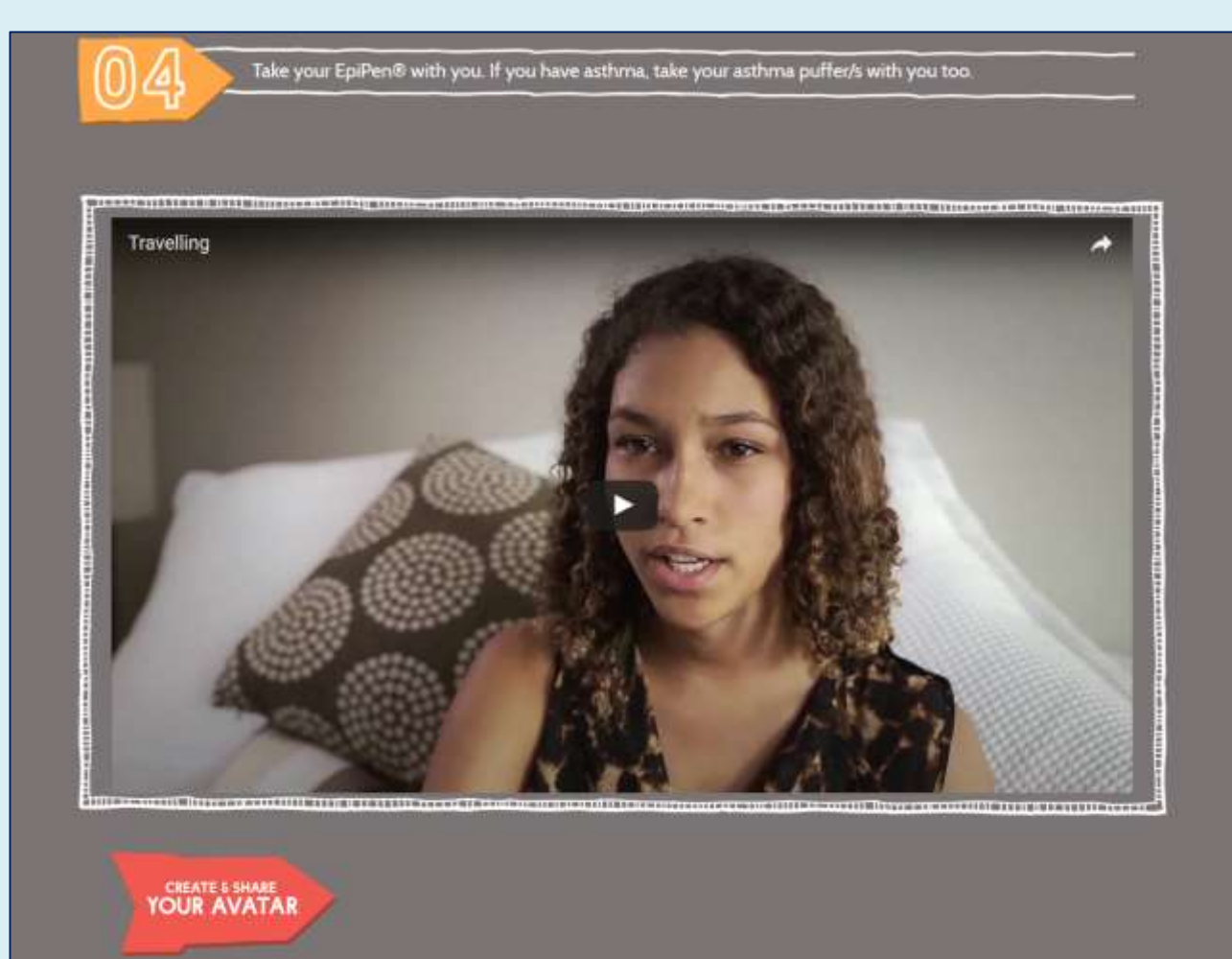
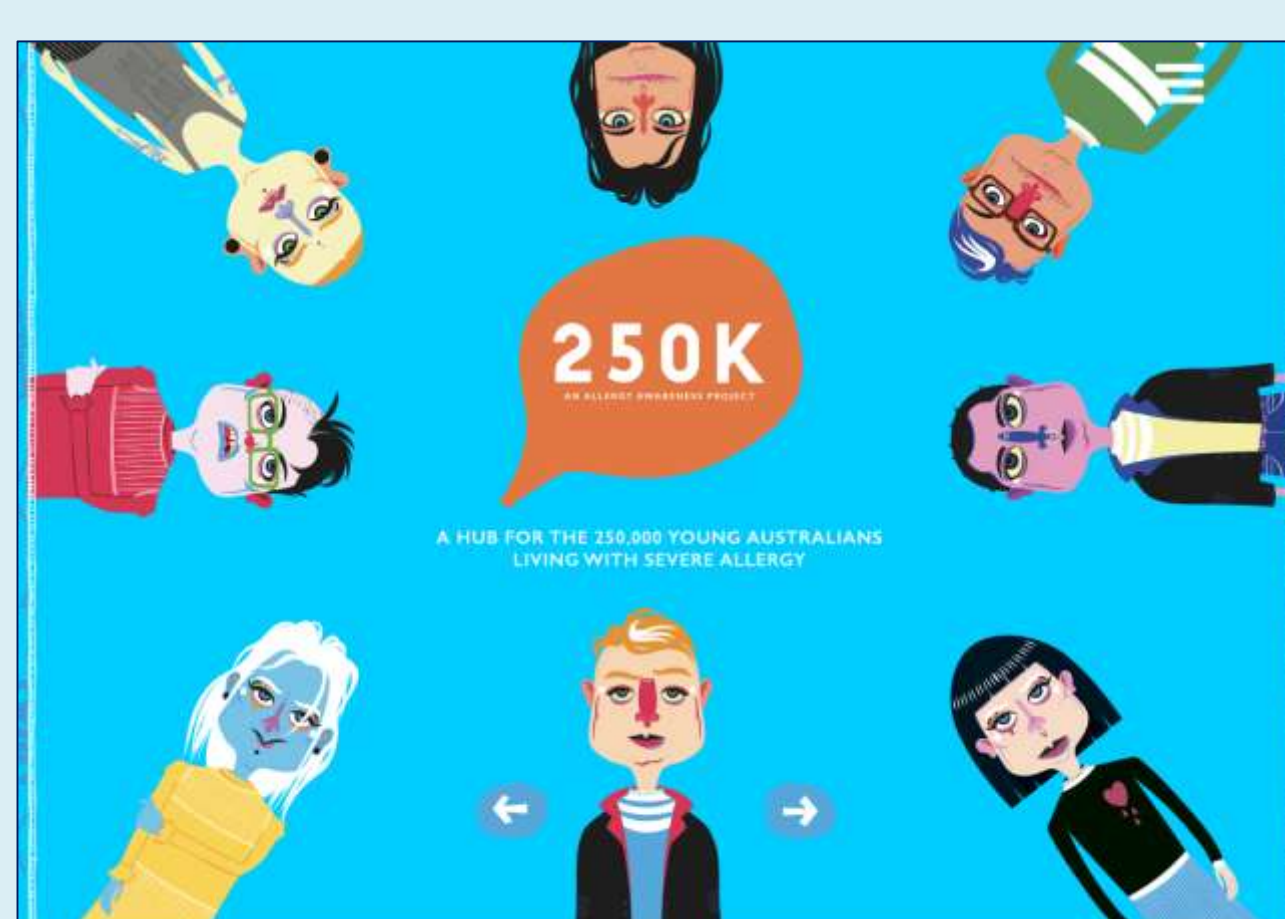


### Focus groups

- Focus groups and interviews were held in Perth and Sydney.
- Young people wanted "somewhere" to obtain credible information and share information.
- Four brand concepts developed and website content were discussed.
- Favoured design concept was 250K to reflect 250,000 young Australians living with severe allergy.

### Website design

- Designed to be quirky and engaging by using characters and avatars.
- Six young people were interviewed - they created their own avatar that tell their story via avatar animations on the website.
- App-like functioning to optimise access on mobile phone or tablet.
- Information provided is evidence-based and provides links to other credible information.
- Allows young people to share information with friends – they can create their own avatar and share information, videos, animations or their own message via social media in a non confrontational manner.
- Provides young people with the opportunity to share information anonymously via surveys. The survey results are displayed on the website.



250K - an allergy awareness project supported by



national allergy strategy



This project was funded by the Australian government.

[www.250k.org.au](http://www.250k.org.au)

Further information: [sandra@allergy.org.au](mailto:sandra@allergy.org.au)



National Allergy Strategy Youth Advisory Team – a group of young people aged 11-22 who have helped us to develop the 250K resources.