Evaluating Health Information

Tasmanian young people and health information

Most Tasmanian young people think physical health (68.5%) and mental health (70.4%) are important or very important.[[1]](#footnote-1)

There are many different sources of information and help. The table below shows where young Tasmanians go for help with important issues in their lives.

How to evaluate health information

Many people have difficulty identifying trustworthy health information. Here are some tips to help!

## Source – who said it?

* Find out information about the source. Are they qualified to provide health information?
* On social media, look for verified accounts from qualified sources.
* On websites, check out the About us section for more information.
* Look at web addresses for clues:
  + Australian information: .au
  + Australian government site: .gov.au
  + Australian education institution: .edu.au
  + Australian professional or not for profit organisation: .org.au

## Purpose – why did they say it?

* To inform? To entertain? To make money?
* How might the purpose of the information affect its reliability?
* Beware of bias – has the author been paid or sponsored for their opinion?
* Check the information is not comedy or satire.
* The purpose of information is not always obvious. Is the information #socialmedia #advertisingindisguise?

## Quality – can you trust it?

* Don’t rely on one person’s opinion. Choose information that is based on science and research.
* Check information using sources you know are reliable.
* Beware of miracle claims. If it sounds too good to be true it probably is.
* What information is included, but also what has been left out? Has their personal, political, cultural or religious bias caused them to leave out important information?
* Is the information easy to read?
* Are there spelling, grammar or typographical errors?

## Currency – how recent is it?

* Health information can change with new research.
* Make sure you get the latest facts.
* Look for the phrase ‘last updated’ on websites.

1. Carlisle, E., Fildes, J., Hall, S., Hicking, V., Perrens, B. and Plummer, J. 2018, Youth Survey Report 2018, Mission Australia [↑](#footnote-ref-1)