

SERVICES AND PROGRAM ENTRY

CATEGORY: Program and Service Award, Mental health promotion/ mental illness prevention

ENTRY TITLE: "Connect, Your Way": a mental health campaign designed with people with lived experience

NAME OF APPLICANT: Monica McInnes and Carolyn Loton

ORGANISATION: Murrumbidgee Primary Health Network and Juntos Marketing

If you live in Australia, the people you interact with daily have likely experienced mental illness at least once in their lifetime. According to the Australian Government's Institute for Health and Welfare, 1 in 5 people have experienced mental health issues in the last 12 months.

In NSW's Murrumbidgee region, known for its agricultural industry, mental health concerns are more likely, with a 10% higher prevalence of diagnosed depression and anxiety compared with the state of New South Wales.

Murrumbidgee Primary Health Network (MPHN) commissioned Juntos Marketing to undertake the development of a new mental campaign, aimed at improving awareness of mental health services, reducing stigma and encouraging help-seeking behaviours for those experiencing mental health issues.

Prior to and during the design and concept development stages, extensive community consultation and co-design stages were undertaken, to ensure the campaign was strongly founded in evidence and community understanding.

Key insights from the consultations and co-design stages included that:

1. Consumers are seeking support on their recovery journey, rather than a 'fix'
2. Consumers are seeking information in a format that empowers them to understand available options and be able to select the right pathways at the right time for them
3. Consumers want a range and diversity of people represented in any communications, so the campaign is relatable
4. Stigma is a significant barrier to seeking help for many people
5. Consumers want to see real people and hear real stories in any campaign

MPHN launched the full Connect, Your Way campaign across the Murrumbidgee area in May - June 2023. Central to the campaign were five local people who shared their story about connecting to help their way. The campaign directed people to a dedicated landing page – www.mphn.org.au/connect – where links to all major resources were provided, along with the full story videos, and other resources. See appendix for campaign collateral.

Independent pre- and post- campaign survey evaluation demonstrated a significant increase in awareness of available services and pathways to assistance at a time of mental health concern.

Summary of evidence supporting submission

1. **Evidence of a significant contribution to the field of mental health on a local, state or national level.**

   This initiative successfully
   1. identified significant gaps in access to services in the local Murrumbidgee area
   2. developed resources and a platform to address the identified gaps
   3. effectively communicated the platform, as demonstrated by increased awareness levels and web page visits

   The key gaps identified for those living in the Murrumbidgee area and experiencing a mental health concern were:
      1. Finding the right service or pathway, and
      2. Feeling empowered to make one's own decisions.

   Background
   In 2017 MPHN developed a co-design-informed mental health campaign aimed at reducing stigma and encouraging help-seeking behaviour. This campaign resulted in increases in awareness and the use of Accessline in the Murrumbidgee area (primary call to action for the campaign), measured independently and at regular intervals. The campaign ran on television, cinema, radio, print and newspaper until 2022, when research suggested an update to the creative execution was required. This image demonstrates the previous campaign on the left, and the new campaign on the right hand side.



   Prior to commencing concept development for new, updated campaign, Juntos Marketing undertook an extensive co-design and community consultation phase. Participants included a wide range of community members as well as professionals working in the space. Community members included representation from identified at risk groups and many had lived experience of a mental health concern.

Identifying the gap
Participants told us that no single solution works for everyone, and individuals want to be empowered to decide for themselves, which options suit them best. This may apply, for example, to the way they access services (such as online, via phone or via face-to-face consultation) or to the service itself. People wanted access to a variety of pathways, formats and sources of information, to empower them to choose when and how to access help.

> *"A resource with a lot of options so that if your GP doesn't work you can call Lifeline or look at this website or, just giving people options. Something that you can look at and think - well that didn't work, where can I go, what can I do?"*

Developing the platform
This initiative, which was firmly founded in community informed insights, resulted in the design and development of a specific web-based portal and resource hub, entitled 'Connect Your Way', with local resources and links (as well as statewide and national support options).



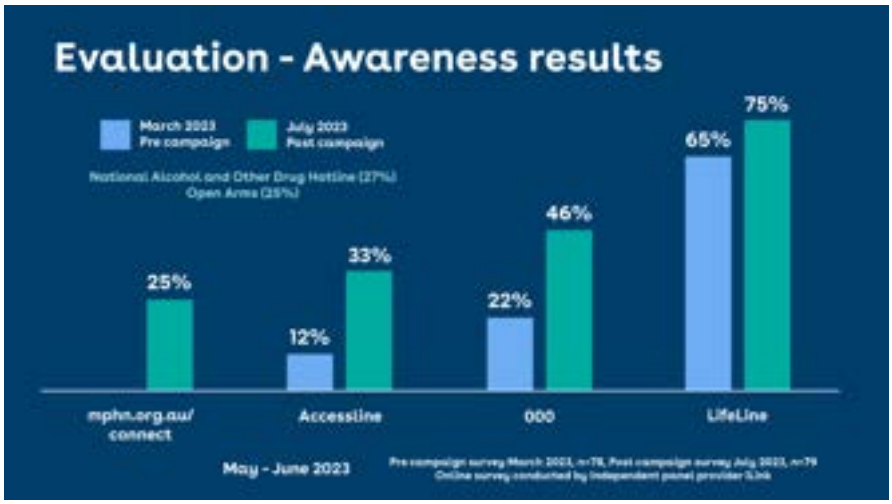
Effectively communicating the platform
Once the 'Connect Your Way' platform was established, we then developed a strong communication and awareness campaign to promote the hub and encourage people to visit the platform at a time of need. The campaign centred on real people and their real stories, as shown below. Full campaign resources can be seen in the appendix)



The campaign was effective in communicating about the platform because it was:

- Authentically informed by, and developed with, people with lived experience
- Embedded local understanding and context in all aspects of the campaign
- Combined the expertise of professional campaign strategy and creative concept design and creative production, with close input from mental health professionals and those with lived experience
- Applied a social marketing campaign framework to ensure a rigorous approach to campaign development and evaluation

Awareness of the platform was measured before and after the campaign, using an independent online panel drawn from the local area (undertaken by iLink, n=78, March 2023 and n=79, July 2023 respectively). The secondary campaign call to action was to contact Accessline (triage line in the Murrumbidgee area). Results demonstrate an increase in awareness of the “Connect your Way” portal and Accessline.



Further, the dedicated Connect Your Way web page experienced approximately 8000 page visits over the course of the campaign in mid 2023.

2. **Evidence of innovation and/or recognised best practice**.

The design, implementation and promotion of this campaign demonstrate evidence of innovation and the use of best practice principles. Examples of this evidence include:

Combining involvement of real, local people with professional production

People in rural communities want to see themselves reflected in the ads and campaigns. Thus local understanding and context were embedded in all aspects of this campaign.

> *"If you have a local member of the community from Darlington Point, a tiny town, whose face is on the posters. That personalises it more and people will think - he's from our town - and that means we've got the access"*

Some of the groups involved in the co-design process felt that previous communication did not effectively include them, for example, representatives of the medical and veterinary fraternity. These professionals are within an identified high risk group and reported seeing colleagues struggling with the stresses of the job and study. Yet they reported that other communication has previously been a barrier as they are more likely to identify with giving care than receiving it for their own health.

> *"They see themselves as in quite a unique situation, so it would likely be seen as not targeted enough. Broad messaging is not going to hit the mark with them."*

Real local people were involved in all aspects of this campaign, from the initial co-design stages, through to featuring as heroes in the videos and television commercial, through to being involved in the launch, thank you events and ongoing local promotion of mental health challenges.

Five local people were featured in the television commercial, video and other campaign assets. They represented specific high risk groups known to experience higher than average mental health concerns.

Scripts for the recordings were developed based on the outcomes of the co-design and consultation phase, and were then further adapted with the individuals featured in the videos, based on the individual participants' stories. This was to ensure authenticity was maintained.



Use of best practice principles

This initiative incorporated best practice principles in the language used and the application of a trauma-informed approach.

Throughout all consultations, design development, production and in the campaign itself, we aimed to use inclusive and non-triggering language as much as possible. All consumer- facing staff underwent specific Mindframe training, to ensure a trauma-informed approach and the use of safe language.

During all consultations and co-design sessions, a trained support person was present and available to offer support for any participants, either during or after the sessions.

We also conducted follow up checks with all participants in the actual campaign. We provided information about where to go for support if needed.

In this way, our participants were not used in a transactional manner, but rather we aimed to support them appropriately.

> *"Thank you also for acknowledging the mental and emotional toll post-recording, that was validating to read. I did need a few days of soothing my nervous system to feel back to my usual self. Nothing to worry about, just a body that has been through a lot and was reminded of it, all natural and healthy coping."*

Additionally, we used best practice principles in literacy when developing the video scripts and written resources. Complex messages and language can be overwhelming. Simple messages are easier to understand and remember in a time of crisis and are more likely to be accessible for those with low literacy levels and for those who speak English as a second (or third or fourth) language.

3. **Evidence of participation of mental health consumers in the planning, implementation and evaluation of mental health service delivery**. Evidence of prioritising increased level of engagement and influence of consumers and where higher level participation such as authentic co-design is highly favoured.

This initiative prioritised participation of mental health consumers through all stages. The inclusion of those with lived experience of mental health challenges was a core pillar and strongly evident from consultation and authentic co-design, to involvement in the implementation and evaluation. The following sections detail the specific participation, roles and contributions made by mental health consumers.

Initial consultation
Consultation involved people in the Murrumbidgee with lived experience of mental health, with a focus on high-risk groups including:

- First Nations people,
- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) people including refugees

- Rurally isolated people
- LGBTQI+
- Veterans
- Tradespeople
- Males
- Medical and veterinarian fraternity
- First responders
- Young people

The consultation process saw input from almost 60 individuals who either represented one of the at-risk population groups above, or represented an organisation supporting people with mental health conditions.

The first round of consultation included an online workshop with the project advisory panel, including mental health clinicians and workers, and people with lived experience. A further six in-depth interviews with key stakeholders and experts representing the medical fraternity, veterinarians, tradespeople, first responders and CALD community were conducted. Finally, we held four focus groups with target populations groups who have a lived mental health experience.

Insights from initial consultations

This round of consultation uncovered the following key insights, which have been framed using consumers' own words:

1. **Support my recovery journey**

   Consumers told us that mental health challenges are often not something to 'fix'. People felt they are often on a journey to recovery or to better managing their condition, so any campaign and communication needed to support this journey.

   > *"I am maintaining my mental health - it is like taking the car in for a service. It is a non-negotiable for me... "*

2. **Empower me with options**

   As noted above (in Question 1) insights from this consultation phase indicated that people living in the Murrumbidgee area were seeking a place to find the right services, in the format and time that best suit them, as individuals.

   Respondents felt that no one single solution works for everyone. They wanted to be empowered to decide for themselves which options suit them best. And

they wanted access to a variety of pathways, formats and sources of information, to choose when and how to access help.

3. **I want to see myself in the campaign**

   Participants with lived experience shared that the campaign should look - and be - relevant to many people from many different communities, backgrounds and experiences.

   They shared with us that the campaign would be more impactful if there were a diverse range of people included in any resources, including people from different cultural backgrounds, ages and walks of life. This would make the campaign more relatable and relevant to a much wider audience.

   This also ties in with the need for the look of the campaign to reflect the local Murrumbidgee area. A campaign that is visibly local was very important because it reinforces that the campaign is relevant - "it is about me, you understand me and you understand my unique circumstances."

   > *"And you know, if it's someone relatable, and I guess someone local as well, they can go, 'Oh, well, you know they've got it. I'm not alone.' "*

4. **Stigma can be a barrier to seeking support**

   As is widely known and recognised in academic literature, stigma remains a barrier for people seeking help. Stigma around mental health challenges and seeking help can discourage people from reaching out. Those participating in our consultations reported that this continues to be their experience as well.

   This was particularly noted among Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities and also among isolated and rural small communities.

   > *"There is a lot of shame and sensitivity around this kind of thing as well, for a lot of the cultural groups."*

   Our participants reported that stigma may discourage people from seeking help. It may also influence the experience that they have when accessing services such as speaking to their GP about mental health.

5. **Real people, real stories**

   Participants felt that involving real people and their real stories in the campaign would make the initiative more relatable and more effective. This aligns with previous work done with Murrumbidgee PHN and Juntos Marketing (on the previous 'Reach Out' mental health campaign). A key insight and campaign message from this previous campaign was that mental health concerns can happen to anyone, and that it is important to continue to encourage and remind people to reach out at a time of crisis.

Featuring real people and personal stories was seen as an opportunity to challenge assumptions about mental illness. Including a diverse range of people and stories, particularly those from CALD communities was seen as a way to be more effective.

> *[A range of personal stories are] "...a lot more inclusive towards everybody…If you can, [use] a different story for every picture."*

The inclusion of a farmer was seen as very important and relevant to the wider Murrumbidgee community.

> *"That's really good because I feel like there is still that stigma. And who's going to look after the farm because [for] a lot of people…Who's going to look after the farm or [there is] work I've got to keep going."*



Co-design and further consultations

These themes guided the development of three campaign storyboards for testing in the second round of consultations, which included another advisory panel workshop, and 12 in-depth interviews with selected focus group participants. Again, participants had lived experience and represented the high-risk groups noted above. Feedback gathered shaped the final campaign.

MPHN launched the full Connect, Your Way campaign across the Murrumbidgee area in May and June 2023. Central to the campaign were five local storytellers who shared their story about connecting to help, in their own way. It directed the community to a dedicated landing page – www.mphn.org.au/connect – where links to all major resources were provided, along with the full story videos, and other resources. See appendix for further examples of the campaign collateral.

4. **Evidence of partnerships and linkages with all key stakeholders**

This campaign was developed in partnership with a range of local mental health providers, most notably the Murrumbidgee Mental Health, Alcohol and Drug Alliance (The Alliance). The Alliance is a formal arrangement between leading partners in services for people with mental health and drug and alcohol problems in the Murrumbidgee region.

Members of the Alliance include representatives from the Murrumbidgee Local Health District, the Murrumbidgee Primary Health Netwok, local not-for-profit groups such as Flourish, Wellways and other providers such as Headspace.

The Alliance was involved at all key stages in the development of this campaign, from the initial planning stages onwards including a formative workshop with Alliance members prior to the first co-design and consultation phase. Further input from Alliance members was sought at all key decision points in the campaign development.

During the campaign development, other health professionals such as general practitioners and veterinarians, provided input and perspectives, both as health providers and as members of these professions that have a higher than average risk of experiencing mental health concerns.

Other stakeholders from the wider community were also involved in helping to launch and share the campaign. This included representation from a range of local Wagga and Murrumbidgee community groups, and representation from The NSW Mental Health Commission.

5. **Verification of effectiveness**

In order to understand the campaign effectiveness, pre and post campaign evaluations was conducted using an independent online research panel (n=75 in March 2023 and n=75 in July 2023 respectively).

Awareness of the primary call to action, (visiting mphn.org.au/connect) increased from zero before the campaign to 25% of respondents being aware in the post-campaign survey. Awareness of the secondary call to action, to phone Accessline, increased from 13% (pre-campaign) to 33% (post-campaign).

The dedicated landing page has received approximately 8,000 web visits since launching in May 2023.

.

Conclusion

The incidence of diagnosed depression and anxiety is significantly higher in the Murrumbidgee region, compared to the rest of New South Wales.

To address this ongoing concern, the Murrumbidgee Primary Health Network (MPHN) commissioned the development of a new a mental health awareness campaign aimed at reducing stigma and encouraging help seeking behaviour.

Community perspectives were gathered to inform the development of a new campaign, which was called "Connect, Your Way." The co-design and consultations, involving a range of people with a lived mental health experience, included four co-design workshops and 18 in-depth interviews. Professionals working in the sector were also closely involved in and consulted during all stages of the development.

This research-informed campaign was enriched with lived experiences and featured real local stories of individuals navigating mental health challenges. This approach aimed to make the campaign relatable and reduce stigma. To improve the pathway from awareness to action, a dedicated website landing page was created to guide diverse audiences to suitable mental health resources and support services.

The campaign ran from May to June 2023 television, radio, print, cinema, buses, washrooms, social media, and digital mediums. Pre and post-campaign evaluation research showed an increase in awareness of between 10 and 25 percent for mental health support services and strong initial recognition of the newly introduced MPHN Connect website (www.mphn.org.au/connect).

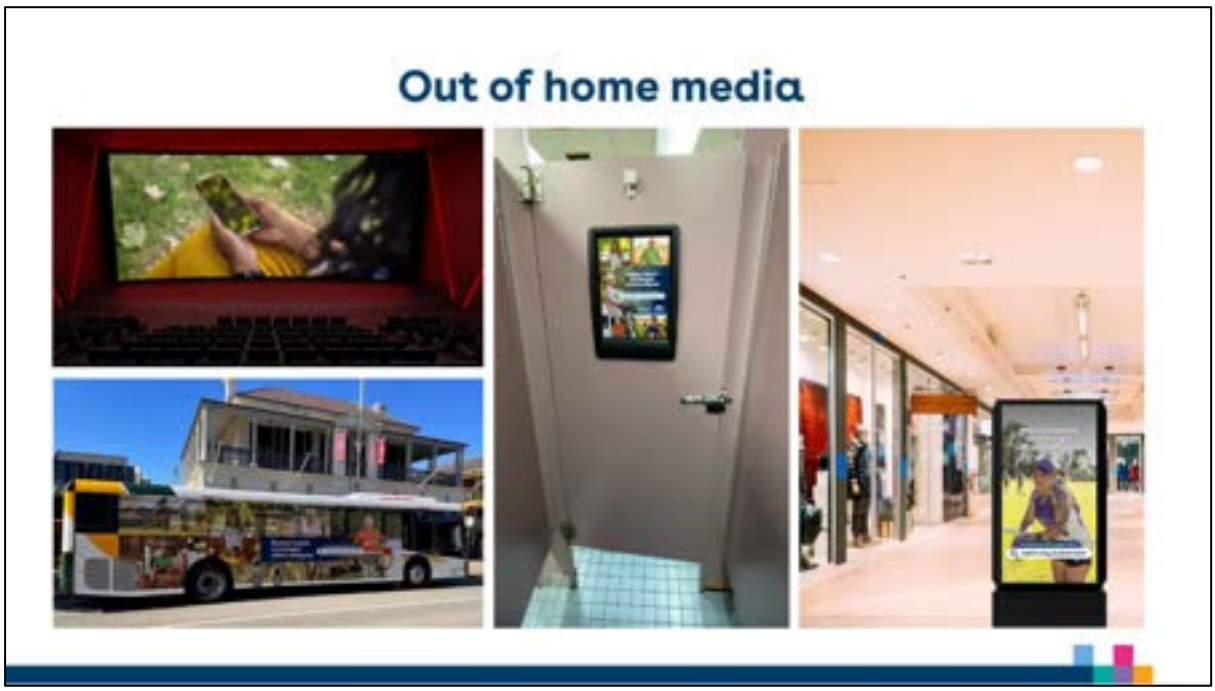
The campaign demonstrates the importance of engagement and involvement of community members with lived experience, who reflect the wide diversity of the community itself.

Appendix of Support Material

Links to other documents or websites may only be included in the Appendix/Supporting Material Section (2xA4 Pages) and are not to be included anywhere else in the submission. Links to other documents or websites in the main submission will not be considered by the judges.

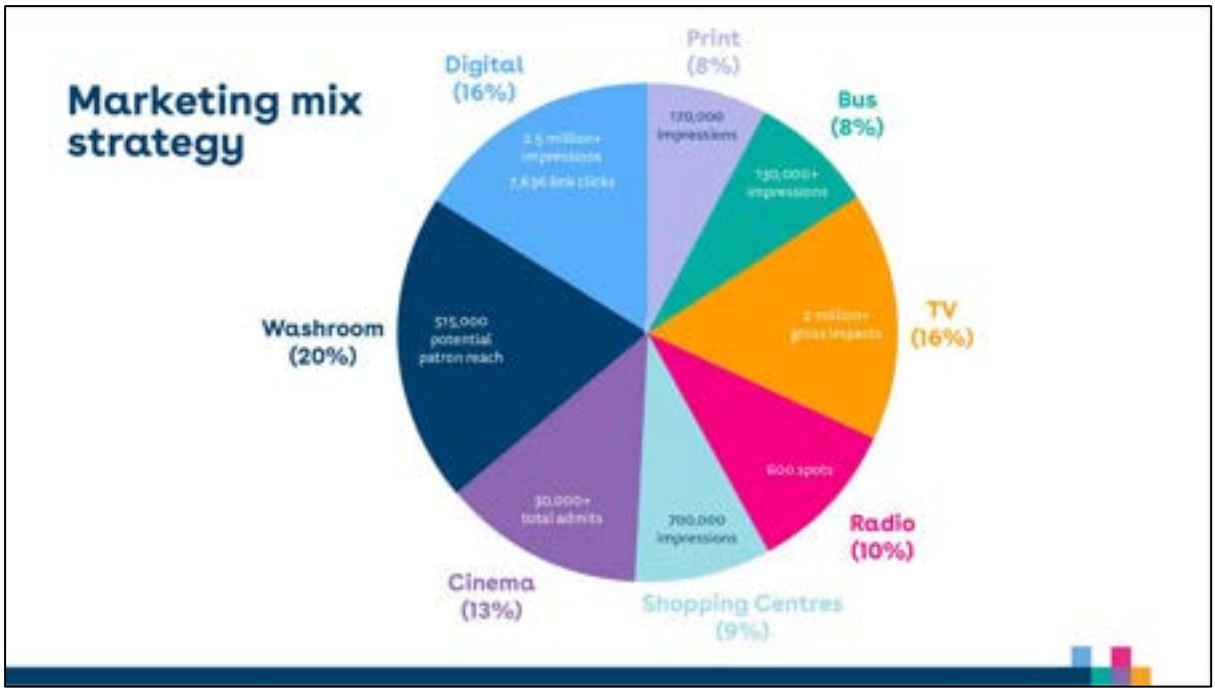
CAMPAIGN RESOURCES







SUMMARY OF MEDIA USED IN CAMPAIGN



CAMPAIGN VIDEOS



Link to Stina’s story (1 min 30 secs): https://youtu.be/TJkiJtVNxOg



Link to Auntie Isabel’s story (1 min 45 secs): https://youtu.be/EAs9rhMqtgE



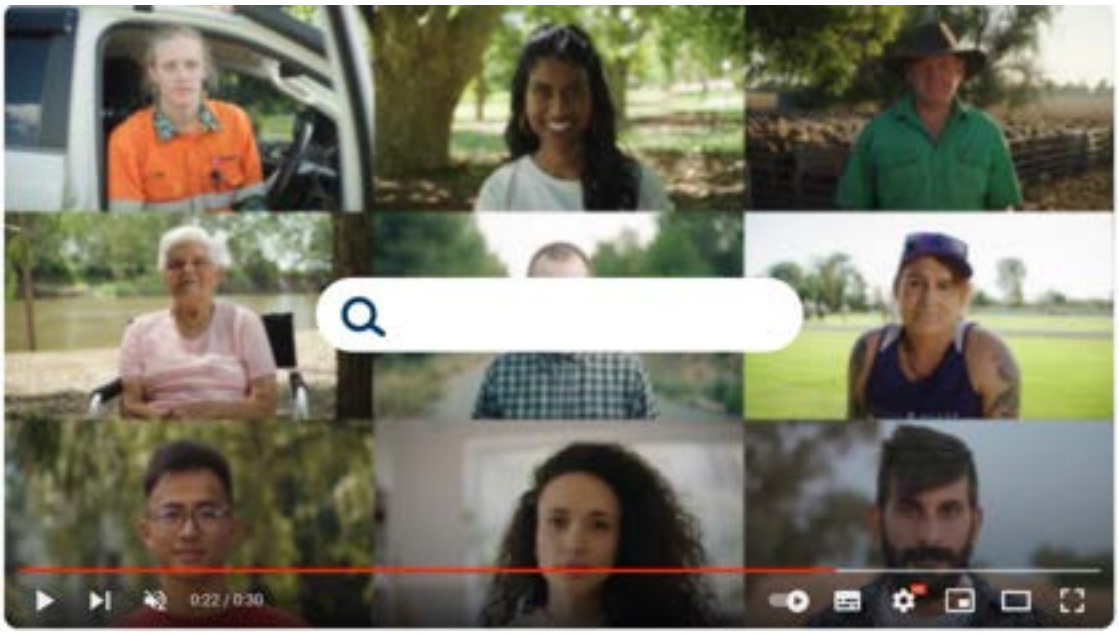
Link to Bruce’s story (1min45sec): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lzgyaqu07Lc



Link to Owen’s story (20 secs): https://youtu.be/ibRG__96AKc



Link to Holly's story(1min 50 secs): https://youtu.be/AZNl9JrWErc



Link to overall campaign video (30 seconds):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FS6qKX2L7Bg