

At the start of 2017, Overnewton College became a lead school in the Victorian Government’s Respectful Relationships initiative. More than 1000 lead and partner schools across Victoria have been charged with supporting school leaders, teachers and communities to promote and model respect and equality, and to teach our children how to build healthy relationships, resilience and confidence.

The Royal Commission into Family Violence identified the critical role that schools have in creating a culture of respect to change the story of family violence for future generations. As such, respectful relationships education became a core component of the Victorian Curriculum from Prep to Year 12, and is being implemented in all government and Catholic schools, as well as many independent schools.

Being a lead school in an area that possesses one of the highest incidences of family violence in Victoria, the College knew that it could make a significant impact by working with both the Overnewton community and the broader local community. A working group of parents and staff was established and, from there, a college-wide gender audit was conducted and an action plan was developed focusing on six key areas – leadership and commitment, school culture and environment, professional learning, teaching and learning, community partnerships and support for students and staff.

To date, we have focused on three of the six key areas. Considerable professional learning for staff has occurred for the College Leadership Team and the College Board, detailing the rationale for the program,



the curriculum and its implementation. Regular articles in the College newsletter, Whispers, have also kept parents abreast of the latest developments.

A Community Forum was held in March 2018 featuring the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, the Honourable Natalie Hutchins, author Jamila Rizvi, members of Victoria Police, Our Watch and the Anglican Church. Hosted by Libbi Gorr, the evening provided a valuable opportunity to educate members of the College and wider local community about family violence in the Brimbank and surrounding areas, allowing attendees the opportunity to ask questions and provide further information about the initiative and local support services.

Future efforts will focus on encouraging greater student voice, embedding the curriculum and developing community partnerships with local organisations, to build a culture of gender equality and respect with a view to eliminating gender-based violence.

Tim Jezard
Head of Student Services

