

# Equal, Safe and Strong

## Gender equity and respectful relationships in secondary schools

### Background

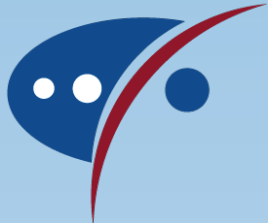
Adolescence is a crucial period when the understanding and concept of respectful, non-violent relationships is formed.<sup>4</sup> Strong evidence suggests primary prevention initiatives such as promoting gender equity<sup>5</sup> and respectful relationships in school settings are essential in addressing violence in family and relationships in the broader community.

Southern Melbourne Primary Care Partnership Family Violence Working Group (SMPCP FVWG) is a voluntary active partnership comprising local government, health and welfare agencies and community organisations. They are committed to planning and working collaboratively to contribute to the primary prevention of family violence across Bayside, Glen Eira, Kingston, Port Phillip, and Stonnington.

The successful partnership is leading a prevention based school pilot project which focuses on increasing students' and teachers' awareness and skill in the prevention of family violence by:

- ☞ Strengthening students' understanding of healthy and respectful relationships
- ☞ Building the capacity of teachers' in supporting students and their peers who are experiencing family violence
- ☞ Fostering stronger and more integrated working relationships between schools and service providers to ensure young people experiencing family violence are supported

Bentleigh  
Secondary College



mentone girls'  
secondary college



### The Project Explores



### Key Features

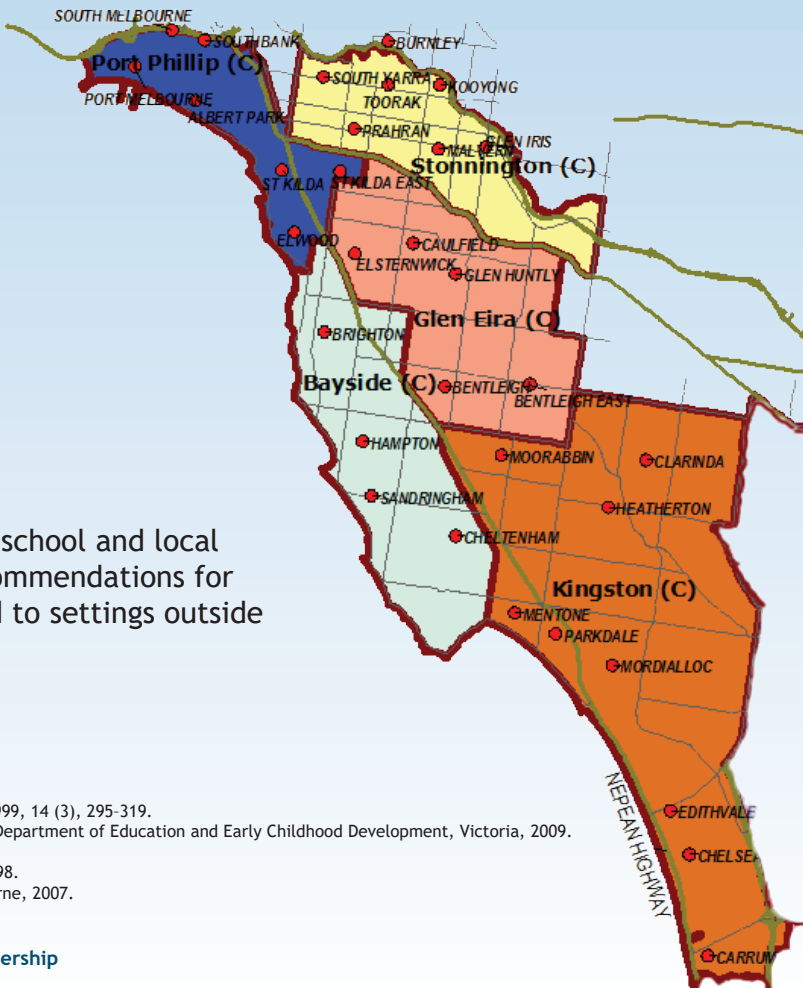
To achieve sustainable behaviour change that is integrated, holistic and strategic, the Project is based on two frameworks: the Whole School approach and Peer Education model.<sup>1, 2, 3</sup>

The key features of the project are:

- ☞ Strong partnership development
- ☞ Integration of violence prevention into school policy
- ☞ Bridging the gaps between schools and response service

### Sustainability

It is anticipated that the project's reach will go beyond identified students to impact the wider school and local communities including families and sporting clubs. The outcome of the project will provide recommendations for future actions in addressing family violence and other health priorities which can be transferred to settings outside the school environment.



#### References

1. D.S. Carter, A Whole of School Approach to Adolescent Peer-Leader Development for Affective Learning in Health-Related Curricula, Research Papers in Education, 1999, 14 (3), 295-319.
2. M. Flood, L. Fergus and M. Heenan, Respectful Relationships Education: Violence Prevention and Respectful Relationships Education in Victorian Secondary Schools, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Victoria, 2009.
3. IUHPE, Achieving Health Promoting Schools: Guidelines for promoting health in schools, International Union for Health Promotion and Education, Paris, 2009.
4. National Campaign against Violence and Crime, Working with Adolescents to Prevent Domestic Violence, NCAVAC Unit, Attorney-General's Department, Canberra, 1998.
5. VicHealth, Preventing Violence Before It Occurs: A Framework and Background Paper to Guide the Primary Prevention of Violence against Women in Victoria, Melbourne, 2007.