

## Step 3:

# Understanding where you are at



### Step 3 includes:

- understanding gender, gender stereotypes and gender-based violence
- understanding the 'gender lens' approach
- performing a school gender equality assessment ([Template B](#))

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Education  
and Training

# Step 3:

## Understanding where you are at

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### What is gender?

While people often think about women and girls when they hear the word *gender*, it is not just about the feminine or females. Nor is it the biological sex of females and males. Gender is the socially learnt roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that any given society considers appropriate for women and men. Gender is what defines femininity and masculinity.<sup>1</sup>

Gender can impact significantly on the power, status and resources we access and control, how we relate to each other and how we make decisions. Power is not only about how much influence we have, as individuals and as groups, over the beliefs or actions of other people or groups. It also relates to our access to and control of opportunities and resources that support us to live comfortable, productive and safe lives.

Gender can strongly influence attitudes and behaviours towards us,<sup>2</sup> and our attitudes and behaviours towards others. Our beliefs about the way girls and boys, women and men are supposed to act are formed in childhood and adolescence. They are also shaped by how we see gender roles and relationships in families and organisations such as schools and by how women and men are portrayed in the media and popular culture.<sup>3</sup>

### What are gender stereotypes and gender-based violence?

The belief that women and men have different roles or characteristics, whether in relationships or society, is known as gender stereotyping. The stereotyped views of femininity and masculinity have been identified as one of the four key drivers of gender-based violence.<sup>4</sup> Research has shown that violence is more common in families and relationships in which men control decision making.<sup>5</sup> In societies where women and men are more equal in their relationships, and where they are not expected to play different roles based on their sex, violence is less prevalent.

### Understanding the 'gender lens' approach

#### What is a 'gender lens'?

A gender lens is a way of seeing difference in the way women and men experience the world and recognising when, where and how this difference occurs.<sup>6</sup> Some people find it useful to think of a gender lens as putting on a pair of glasses. Through one lens, you see the needs and realities of women, and through the other the needs and realities of

Belief in rigid gender stereotypes at the community level is one of the most significant 'predictors' of violence against women.

men.<sup>7</sup> Throughout our lives, our needs and our realities are influenced by various social, cultural, political, biological, educational and economic factors. They are also strongly influenced by community expectations of how women and men should behave and interact and by gender stereotypes.<sup>8</sup>

Difference is not necessarily bad; diversity makes our communities stronger and allows us all to make unique contributions. However, difference can also impact on the power we have within ourselves and in relation to others. It is critical that the 'gender lens' is used not just to see differences in people, but also differences in power and status.

Gender-based violence, whether physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, psychological or economic, is based on the belief that men have the right to control and exert power over women. Men's power over women is evident in our society in the prevalence of violence, rape and sexual assault and discrimination against women. It is also evident in 'glass ceilings' in the workplace, inadequate or prohibitively expensive childcare, political under-representation of women, and women's financial disadvantage such as unequal pay and superannuation.<sup>9</sup>

Failing to apply a gender lens, or relying on our own assumptions when doing so, can reinforce existing inequities and stereotypes and contribute to a society in which men's gender-based violence continues to be perpetrated and excused.

A 'gender lens' is used not just to see differences in people, but also differences in power.

Challenging structures, cultures and messages that support men's power over women is key to preventing gender-based violence.

### Real life example

A female student wore short shorts on a casual clothes day and this distracted some boys in her class. The girl was pulled out of class to be told her clothing was inappropriate and asked to change. There was no discussion with the boys.

**Stereotypes perpetuated by this response:** By speaking only to the girl the idea that boys and men 'can't help it' and that women are responsible for curbing their temptation was perpetuated.

**How the student felt:** *When my school pulled me out of maths class because they thought my clothing was distracting the boys... [they] demonstrated to me that my education is less valuable than that of the boys in my class. The way I felt the day I was pulled out of class, nervous and violated and insubstantial, I wouldn't wish that on anyone.*

## How to use a gender lens

It is helpful to think of a gender lens as a list of questions that we should routinely ask to make sure we are not being 'blind' to harmful gender stereotypes, gender-based discrimination and inequality.

These questions might include:

- How will this policy, action or approach impact on women and men or girls and boys? Will this impact be different for different genders?
- How will the realities of girls and boys impact on their ability to participate in this situation?

- What are the needs of women, men, girls and boys in this instance?
- Is power shared equally between females and males in this instance? How will this policy, action or approach impact how power is shared?
- How might the policy, activity or approach inadvertently perpetuate or actively work to overcome existing stereotypes and gender inequities? Are there measures in place to address gender inequities and to ensure that girls and boys, women and men have equal opportunities, and are equally valued and respected?<sup>10 11</sup>
- How might your own values, biases and assumptions affect your decisions? Do you have specific beliefs about women's and men's roles in society? Does this impact on your actions and decision making?<sup>12</sup>

When asking these questions consider who you and the Respectful Relationships Education Leadership team within your school represent. Does your team include a diverse range of ages, career stages, genders and cultural backgrounds? Do you have staff who are parents or primary carers? Will some of these policies, action and approaches impact upon those who are not represented? How can this be considered or accounted for during their development?

Creating and maintaining space for safe and honest communication and feedback about gender equality in the school community is necessary to understand how female and male staff, students and parents might perceive and experience policies, actions and approaches.

### Real life example

Upon return to full time work after working part time for a year to care for young children a man is jokingly mocked and asked if he had 'finished breastfeeding yet?'

**Stereotypes perpetuated by this response:** That caring for a child is an inherently female role, and that men who act as shared or primary carers must be 'women', that is they are seen as less 'masculine' than other men.

**Impact:** Criticism, ridicule and rejection are common ways that feminine and masculine norms are reinforced. This 'policing', which often occurs playfully within peer groups, sends a message that it is not acceptable to go outside the norm and that doing so is a threat to an individual's 'status' as a woman or man. This is a strong deterrent to change, both for the individual being 'policed' and those listening, and reinforces rigid gender roles.

## 1. Doing a school gender equality assessment

Doing a school gender equality assessment will allow you and your team to explore how you are promoting gender equality and respectful relationships and areas that you might need to improve on. The school gender equality assessment is strengthened by engaging an expert facilitator – an outside expert who is skilled in applying gender analysis to different systems and processes. This could be someone from your organisation. You may only require an external facilitator for the first year, as over time you will build you and your team’s capacity to self-reflect and assess.

The school gender equality assessment is an important step to take before you develop your implementation plan as it allows you to see what you are already doing well and identify your future priority actions across the six elements of the whole school approach.

The assessment template is designed to assist your school leadership team to assess your current activity on gender equality and to identify gaps in your school’s approach to gender equality and respectful relationships.

It can be used as both a baseline assessment of your school’s current activity and capacity for change, and as a tool to guide planning actions as part of a whole school approach to Respectful Relationships Education in your annual cycle. Gathering baseline data is important because this gives you a point to measure improvement from.

Ensuring that staff feel respected, safe and valued regardless of their gender, with equity of opportunity and outcomes for females and males, is essential to a strong culture of gender equality among staff, and also for promoting and modelling that culture for students. It is important that measures are taken to consult with staff, identify and eliminate conscious and unconscious gender discrimination, and provide equal opportunities for all.

In order for future actions to be owned and implemented effectively it is important that consultation with the wider school community is included. This can be as simple as asking for feedback about which aspects of the approach are working well, or what improvements could potentially be made. It is vital to ensure that the voices of both students and their families are being heard throughout this process. Due to time constraints, the RREIS Pilot program had limited capacity for wider community and student engagement, but recognises this as a key element of the whole school approach.

### Suggested actions

- Read about the gendered lens and discuss with the Respectful Relationships Education leadership team and wider school community.
- Undertake the School Gender Equality Assessment (Template B).
- Ensure that relationships are formed with local women’s organisations and service providers.

## Support resources

- [Template B: School Gender Equality Assessment \(word version\)](#)
- Video: [Let's Change the Story: Violence Against Women in Australia](#)
- Video: [Attitudes to gender equality and violence against women](#)
- [Engaging Men in Gender Initiatives: What Change Agents Need to Know](#)

## Step 3 Checklist

You have completed Step 3 and are ready for [Step 4](#) if you have:

- ✓ Ensured that the Respectful Relationships Education Leadership Team and key staff have a clear understanding of gendered analysis and what it means for school operations.
- ✓ Engaged key staff, including your leadership team, through the [School Gender Equality Assessment \(Template B\)](#).
- ✓ Connected with local women's organisations and potentially engaged with a facilitator to assist in the delivery of [Respectful Relationships Education](#).
- ✓ Ensured that wider consultation on this step has occurred with students and their families.

## Step 4:

### [Planning and Implementing](#)



[Download a Word version of this document here](#)

## Template B: School gender equality assessment

The template is designed as a guide for discussion and reflection among the team leading Respectful Relationships Education in your school. The presence of senior school leadership on this team will ensure that this assessment has the most impact possible.

This template has six sections based on the six elements of the whole school approach:

1. School culture and environment
2. Leadership and commitment
3. Professional learning strategy
4. Teaching and learning
5. Community partnerships
6. Support for students and staff.

Figure 1: The Whole School approach



*Adapted from Building Respectful Relationships: Stepping Out against Gender-based Violence, Department of Education and Training (2014).*

Each section has an introduction and then a series of statements for you to answer 'yes' or 'no'. While you're discussing each statement jot down in the comment section any comments, concerns or actions you would like to undertake to address the needs or gaps identified.

Remember, this template is not designed to externally assess your performance; it helps you to highlight conscious and unconscious gender bias and identify areas that may need to be strengthened.

Before starting here are some things to consider:

- Having a facilitator or critical friend with expertise in gender equality, in particular in the workplace, will support and strengthen the process. We recommend you contact your local women's health organisation who can direct you to an experienced facilitator in your region.
- While this can be used any time of year, it may be best to schedule this early in Term 4 so that it can feed directly into your planning for the coming year.
- You can work through this template in total or you can select aspects to work through at different stages or with different teams of staff.
- Step 4: Planning and Implementing contains a template for an implementation plan which connects to this activity. It might be useful to read the implementation plan before starting your school gender equality assessment.

## **1. School culture and environment**

This section includes assessing:

- school ethos, vision and values
- internal and external communications
- school environment and facilities.

### **Introduction**

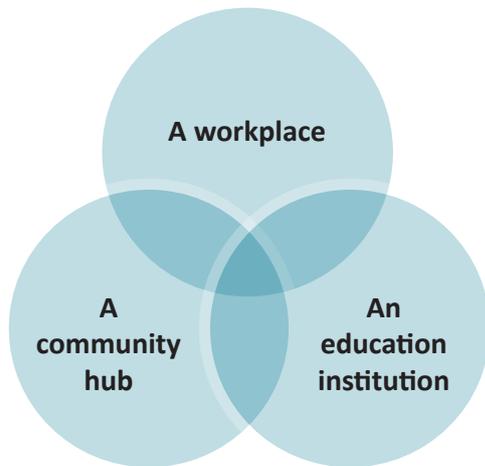
Schools are more than a place for young people to learn. The school is an important hub in the community and has the opportunity to lead, influence and contribute to healthy community culture. It is also a workplace where all staff deserve to feel respected, safe and valued.

A school culture that clearly shows commitment to gender equality and respectful relationships is essential to creating a supportive environment to prevent gender-based violence. Commitment to these values, demonstrated by staff and students alike, is essential for developing and maintaining school structures, policies and procedures that promote equality and respect. The positive messages of Respectful Relationships Education can be supported and amplified by regular conversations, commitments and actions so that respect and equality are modelled throughout the school community.

As a school you will already be required to have certain policies in place, most likely set by your department of education. Embedding a culture of gender equality means going beyond these requirements to ensure commitments to promote respectful attitudes, norms, behaviours and practices are also embedded in school policies and procedures – beyond just the minimum.

Figure 2: Our school is...

**Our school is:**



It is particularly important to recognise the culture, structures and supports that exist in the school as a workplace. Inequality and discrimination exist everywhere in our society – including schools and communities – and need to be challenged wherever we see them. Equality of opportunities and outcomes for female and male employees is essential to ensuring a strong culture of gender equality in your school and to promoting and modelling that culture for students.

For Respectful Relationships Education, you will need to consult with staff, identify and eliminate conscious and unconscious gender discrimination, and provide equal opportunities for all. Part of this work includes recognising that gender-based violence and harassment is prevalent in our society and working to ensure this is recognised in the workplace and your school. This is important because workplaces are such influential parts of our lives and because:

- violence, even when occurring in private, can impact on the wellbeing of those who experience, witnesses and perpetrate it
- the school has a legal responsibility as an employer to create a safe work environment
- workplace cultures that promote wellbeing, respect and equality are more productive.<sup>13</sup>

### School ethos, vision and values

Commitment to these values, demonstrated by staff and students alike, is essential for supporting the development and maintenance of school structures, policies and procedures that promote equality and respect.

School ethos, vision and values	Yes	No	Comments to consider in developing actions
1.1 Our school values statement includes a focus on gender equality and respectful relationships among all members of the school community.			
1.2 We have mechanisms in place to ensure that our staff and students model school values on gender equality and respectful relationships.			
1.3 Our School Strategic Plan includes at least one goal (and associated targets and key improvement strategies) that focus on increasing gender equality and supporting respectful relationships relevant to both staff and students.			

### Internal and external communications

Communication materials that present information on gender, respect and gender-based violence in an informative and simple way can have a positive impact on parent and community engagement as well as contribute to shifting negative attitudes on equality, gender and violence. It is also important to ensure that all school communication materials promote diversity, equality and respect and do not reinforce gender roles and stereotypes.

Communications	Yes	No	Comments to consider in developing actions
1.4 We produce and disseminate material relevant to both staff and students which indicates our commitment to gender equality and respectful relationships.			
1.5 We regularly review our communications materials (including our school website, school newsletter, orientation, enrolment and parent information materials) to ensure they do not unconsciously promote gender inequality or gender stereotypes or use language that promotes inequality or stereotypes.			
1.6 We provide practical information to staff and students and skill them to take bystander action, promote gender equality and support victims of sexism, harassment, discrimination or gender-based violence.			
1.7 We look for opportunities to promote messages and themes of gender equality and respect in extracurricular activities and school events such as sporting events, carnivals, school musicals, school discos and formals and we ensure extracurricular activities do not promote negative gender stereotypes.			
1.8 We have communication materials visible in the school for staff and students and the broader school community indicating our commitment to gender equality and respectful relationships.			
1.9 We prohibit material being placed or distributed in our school that is sexist, discriminatory or which stereotypes women or men.			

### School environment and facilities

The workplace environment reflects your school’s commitment to gender equality to prevent gender-based violence and communicates to employees, the school community and the public that your school is committed to gender equality. It is important to consider the messages shared in the school environment and to ensure that facilities are appropriate to the needs of women and men.

Environment and facilities	Yes	No	Comments to consider in developing actions
1.10 We produce and disseminate material relevant to both staff and students which indicates our commitment to gender equality and respectful relationships.			
1.11 We offer or are able to refer to childcare facilities for our staff.			
1.12 Women have access to appropriate private breastfeeding facilities at our school, including storage and equipment cleaning facilities for expressing milk.			

## 2. Leadership and commitment

This section includes assessing:

- governance and leadership
- planning, monitoring and coordination
- school policies and procedures.

### Introduction

The commitment of your school's leadership is essential to the success of Respectful Relationships Education in your school.

Effective strategies to promote gender equality and respectful relationships among staff and students require a whole school approach. To successfully implement systems, policies and procedures to promote gender equality and respectful relationships through a whole school approach, your school leadership team and other senior staff must actively promote this work, as well as providing support to ensure that all school staff can help create a safe, equitable and respectful school environment.

Good engagement comes from communicating with your staff and students on this issue. It is best if your commitment to respectful relationships is displayed publicly (see [Template A](#)) and is visible through varied communication channels. Communication materials can help staff and the public become aware of your school's commitment to creating school culture which promotes gender equality and respectful relationships.

Communication materials that present information on gender, respect and violence against women in an informative and accessible way can have a positive impact on parent and community engagement as well as contribute to changing negative attitudes on equality, gender and violence.

## Governance and leadership

Effective strategies to promote gender equality and respectful relationships among staff and students require a whole school approach. To successfully implement systems, policies and procedures to ensure these activities are successful, it is imperative that the school leadership team and other senior staff actively promote this work and provide support to ensure that all school staff create a safe, equitable and respectful school environment.

Governance and leadership	Yes	No	Comments to consider in developing actions
2.1 Our school leaders demonstrate the skills and confidence required to plan and embed a whole school approach to gender equality and respectful relationships.			
2.2 Our school allocates financial and staffing resources to the promotion of gender equality and respectful relationships.			
2.3 Our school leaders take responsibility for planning and implementing activities to promote gender equality and respectful relationships.			
2.4 Our school leaders, including the principal, actively promote gender equality and respectful relationships and regularly express commitment to these issues.			
2.5 Our school has a process for the early identification of staff with leadership potential which addresses the specific barriers women face in becoming leaders.			

### Planning, monitoring and coordination

Having systems for planning and monitoring helps ensure that activities to promote gender equality and prevent gender-based violence are carefully designed and align with best practice and government policy. These systems and procedures also help ensure implementation of key actions is supported through regular feedback about achievements and areas for development.

Planning, monitoring and coordination	Yes	No	Comments to consider in developing actions
2.6 We allocate a senior member of staff responsibility to ensure that activities on gender equality and respectful relationships are coordinated in our school.			
2.7 We ensure data and information we collect is disaggregated by gender to support our school to better understand how we need to address gender equality.			
2.8 We conduct regular surveys with staff, students and families on safety, gender equality, respectful relationships, discrimination and harassment.			
2.9 We incorporate key issues and actions identified using surveys or this assessment tool annually into our school planning process.			

### School policies and procedures

Effective activity to promote gender equality to prevent gender-based violence is assisted by policies and procedures which support and guide the work of the school, staff and students. Schools are required by state and federal equal opportunity and antidiscrimination legislation to have particular policies in place. However, embedding a culture of gender equality means going beyond these requirements to ensure schools commit to promoting respectful attitudes, norms, behaviours and practices through their policies and procedures.

School policies and procedures	Yes	No	Comments to consider in developing actions
2.10 We have a gender equality and/or equal opportunity policy and procedure for staff and students.			
2.11 We have a sexual harassment policy and procedure, including a clearly articulated complaints process, for staff and students.			
2.12 We include a statement on preventing gender-based violence in our equal opportunity or gender equality policy.			
2.13 We have procedures to respond effectively to staff and students who have witnessed, experienced or perpetrated gender-based violence (physical, verbal, emotional or technological). This includes disclosures that are not within mandatory reporting requirements.			
2.14 Our Student Engagement Policy includes a clear statement about our commitment to promoting gender equality and respectful relationships.			
2.15 Our Staff Code of Conduct includes a clear statement that all employees and students will be treated with dignity and respect regardless of their sex, gender identity, socioeconomic status, cultural background, sexual orientation or level of ability.			
2.16 Our policies are accessible, visible, disseminated and regularly promoted to staff and students.			
2.17 We provide training to staff on relevant policies when updated and as part of the induction process.			

### 3. Professional learning strategy

This section includes assessing:

- professional development and capacity building.

#### Introduction

Teachers and other school staff are focused on the wellbeing and social development of their students. This is one of the many reasons that they are best placed to lead Respectful Relationships Education and deliver Respectful Relationships curriculum. However evaluations have shown that even the most experienced teachers can feel uncomfortable discussing gender, sex and power without professional learning and ongoing support and advice.

In order to design, implement, monitor and evaluate activity to promote gender equality and prevent gender-based violence, a skilled, committed and supported workforce is required. Professional development is critical to ensuring that schools can develop this capacity within their workforce. As such, staff who deliver Respectful Relationships curriculum will need to be supported through ongoing professional learning, peer support (including communities of practice) and connections to specialist support services.

An effective whole school approach to Respectful Relationships Education requires the engagement of all staff in the school, and must extend beyond the classroom to further support gender analysis as part of your school's operations. It is vital that all staff receive adequate professional learning that develops their awareness and skills to respond to disclosures of gender-based violence and integrate gender equality into the curriculum across all key learning areas, alongside a leadership-focused professional learning strategy for key staff including the principal and the leadership team.

Review the issues below to help plan professional learning and development for your staff and to ensure that they also promote gender equality and actively encourage women's leadership.

#### Ensuring the safety of your staff and students

We know that gender-based violence is prevalent and that for young people and adults alike being supported appropriately when disclosing an experience of violence can have a significant impact on their wellbeing and recovery. Often people will choose to disclose their experience of violence to someone they trust and feel they can confide in. In the school environment this may not always be a designated wellbeing staff member or teacher who is trained to deliver Respectful Relationships curriculum.

In line with the 'do no harm' approach to primary prevention, all staff should receive professional learning on appropriately responding to disclosures of violence or discrimination and be made aware of processes to refer students and fellow staff for further support. In developing internal policies and processes for responding to disclosures, individual schools should be guided by department of education policies and professional guidance and supported by the expertise of local specialist services.

Professional development and capacity building	Yes	No	Comments to consider in developing actions
3.1 We have mechanisms in place to ensure that staff have adequate support and supervision when undertaking activities to promote gender equality and respectful relationships including supporting disclosures from staff, students and the wider community.			
3.2 Our relevant teaching staff are trained to deliver Respectful Relationships curriculum to students.			
3.3 Our staff professional learning development strategy is regularly reviewed to ensure female and male staff have equal access to and participate equally in all professional development.			
3.4 Our staff receive adequate training on responding to and referring to disclosures and incidents of violence from staff and students, aligned with school policies and procedures.			
3.5 Our leadership staff receive training on their roles and responsibility to promote gender equality and respectful relationships through their leadership roles.			

## 4. Teaching and learning

This section includes assessing:

- teaching and learning practices.

### Introduction

Respectful Relationships curriculum, the activity that happens in the classroom and is student focused, is a core part of any whole school approach to Respectful Relationships Education. Evidence-based curriculum resources that focus on the links between gender, power and violence will support students to develop the skills, knowledge and attitudes to engage in respectful relationships and to reject attitudes or behaviours that support gender-based violence and gender stereotypes.

Quality Respectful Relationships education should consist of multiple sessions delivered by trained educators. For example, [Building Respectful Relationships: Stepping Out against Gender-based Violence](#) recommends trained teachers deliver eight sessions per year in Year 8 and 9 and six sessions in Year 10.

As well as the Respectful Relationships curriculum, a whole school approach to Respectful Relationships Education should promote gender equality and respect across all learning areas. This will also support the capability and confidence of all teachers to engage students in understanding and discussing gender inequality as it relates to their learning area.

Teaching and learning – not only the formal curriculum, but how it is implemented and by whom – is a core part of a whole school approach. Regularly reviewing curriculum materials, teaching allocation and practices to ensure they promote equality and respect will ensure that messages students receive as part of the formal curriculum are reinforced through teaching practices and in other areas of the classroom.

Teaching and learning	Yes	No	Comments to consider in developing actions
4.1 Our staff use language that is equitable and respectful and does not unconsciously promote gender stereotypes or gender inequality.			
4.2 Our school regularly reviews curriculum content across key learning areas to ensure equal representation of the range of experiences, knowledge, skills and aspirations of females and males.			
4.3 Our school ensures that teacher allocation (classes or subjects) actively promotes gender equality and challenges gender stereotypes.			
4.4 Our school uses evidence-based curriculum that promotes gender equality and the prevention of gender-based violence.			
4.5 Our school challenges disruptive and dominating student behaviour in a framework that understands gender equality. For example, a male student is not allowed to misbehave through excuses such as 'boys will be boys'.			

## 5. Community partnerships

This section includes assessing:

- school community partnerships.

### Introduction

Respectful Relationships Education is most effective when members of the school community are supportive and hear and deliver consistent messages about gender equality and respectful relationships in all aspects of their life. As such, a core part of the whole school approach is engaging the wider community, including response and specialist community organisations and families.

Strong relationships with members of your school community, including families and local women's organisations, will support you in promoting gender equality and supporting any staff, student or community member that discloses experiences of violence. Ensuring that families are partners in learning and are equipped to support the messages you give your students will have a positive impact on activities designed to promote equality and respect.

### Responding to disclosures of gender-based violence

As Respectful Relationships Education increases the awareness of what constitutes gender-based violence and creates safe spaces for discussion of these issues, it commonly results in staff and students disclosing, perhaps for the first time, their own experiences of gender-based violence, whether as a victim/survivor or perpetrator. While this may seem alarming or concerning, it is a sign that you're on the right track with your Respectful Relationships Education approach. It is important to ensure that, if and when this happens, you and your school can do all they can to support the individual.

Strengthening your links and partnerships with your local services and organisations that respond to gender-based violence, and ensuring that this information is known by all students and staff, sends a clear message about how seriously your school takes the primary prevention of gender-based violence by ensuring that everyone is aware of your local response services. It is important to also ensure that the Respectful Relationships Education leadership team has regular contact and meetings with these organisations. You will find more about support for staff and student in the following section.

### Engaging families and carers

Families and carers should be recognised as key partners in Respectful Relationships Education and equipped to model respectful relationships and provide messages about gender, violence and gender equality that are consistent with what students are hearing at school. It is important for each school to determine what messages the families and carers in their school community will connect with to ensure Respectful Relationships Education is supported.

For some schools, this will consist of providing information to families and carers about Respectful Relationships Education and how it forms part of core personal development curriculum and is linked to national or state curriculum. For other schools, it may include hosting information nights, consulting representative councils or advisory groups or sharing information with families and carers through existing communication platforms.

Given families and carers are engaged in other settings in the community, such as workplaces, sporting clubs, local government and health services, linking in with other community organisations can support the delivery of key Respectful Relationships Education messages to families and carers.

**Reinforcing messages in the community**

Given families, teachers and young people play many diverse roles in the community, it is important that schools connect and work collaboratively with multiple organisations and groups. There is strong community support for preventing gender-based violence. Connecting with organisations in your community working on this complex issue can be a great way for students, parents and staff to hear respectful relationships messages. This may mean supporting the campaigns and activities of local government, working alongside sporting clubs and community organisations or engaging directly with primary prevention and gender equality specialists to ensure your staff have the support they need to promote gender equality in and out of the classroom.

School community partnerships	Yes	No	Comments to consider in developing actions
5.1 We provide all members of our school community including families, the school council and community partners with information on their role in supporting our approach to gender equality and respectful relationships.			
5.2 We undertake joint activities focused on gender equality and respectful relationships with other organisations in the wider school community including other local schools, sports clubs, youth services, local governments or community health centres.			
5.3 We actively facilitate and promote staff participation in events focusing on preventing gender-based violence and promoting gender equality.			
5.4 We engage families as active supporters of gender equality and violence prevention in our school, where possible.			

## 6. Support for staff and students

This section includes assessing:

- support for staff and students.

### Introduction

Schools have an established duty of care to support students and staff experiencing violence. To ensure the safety and wellbeing of staff and students, it is essential you and your school understand the prevalence of gender-based violence and the high likelihood that members of your school community may experience, witness or perpetrate it. While the focus of Respectful Relationships Education is on primary prevention, as part of a duty of care and a 'do no harm' principle you will need to consider how to respond to disclosures of violence.

It is important to consider the impact gender-based violence can have on the workplace. Violence, even when occurring in private, can impact the wellbeing of those who experience, witness and perpetrate it, and the school has a legal responsibility as an employer to create a safe work environment.<sup>14</sup>

It is vital that school leaders feel confident in their ability to respond appropriately, safely and effectively to disclosures and have the connections they need to refer staff and students where necessary. This means having clear policies and procedures in place that include legislative and departmental responsibilities and respond to best practice knowledge from specialist services.

You can do this by developing strong relationships with organisations in your community that specialise in responding to gender-based violence, as well as department of education staff who can support you to understand local referral networks and systems and to develop policies and procedures for your school that genuinely support the person disclosing.

Support for staff and students	Yes	No	Comments to consider in developing actions
6.1 We have partnerships with local community organisations with expertise in gender equality and violence prevention.			
6.2 We have partnerships with local community organisations with expertise in responding to gender-based violence.			
6.3 We have sought relevant support from gender and family violence organisations for technical advice, input into policies and procedures on response and referral and training opportunities for all staff on responding to violence and gender equality as needed.			
6.4 We are confident that we have clear and well understood policies and protocols on how staff should respond to disclosures from staff and students.			
6.5 We are confident that our staff feel capable and competent to respond to disclosures from staff and students.			

# Glossary

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**A bystander** is someone who sees or hears about an act of sexism, harassment, discrimination or any other form of inappropriate behaviour. People who witness inappropriate behaviour, but aren't involved in an incident (either as an instigator or a target), are increasingly recognised as having the potential to be powerful allies in challenging sexist or discriminatory behaviours and attitudes.

**Drivers** are the underlying causes that are required to create the necessary conditions in which violence against women occurs. They relate to the particular structures, norms and practices arising from gender inequality in public and private life, but which must always be considered in the context of other forms of social discrimination and disadvantage.

**Domestic violence** refers to acts of violence that occur in domestic settings between two people who are, or were, in an intimate relationship. It includes physical, sexual, emotional, psychological and financial abuse.<sup>4</sup> See also family violence.

**Emotional/psychological violence** can include a range of controlling behaviours such as control of finances, isolation from family and friends, continual humiliation, threats against children or being threatened with injury or death.<sup>5</sup>

**Family violence** is a broader term than domestic violence, as it refers not only to violence between intimate partners but also to violence between family members.<sup>6</sup> This includes for example, elder abuse and adolescent violence against parents. Family violence includes violent or threatening behaviour, or any other form of behaviour that coerces or controls a family member or causes that family member to be fearful.<sup>7</sup> In Indigenous communities, family violence is often the preferred term as it encapsulates the broader issue of violence within extended families, kinship networks and community relationships, as well as intergenerational issues.<sup>8</sup>

**Gender** refers to the socially learnt roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that any given society considers appropriate for men and women; gender defines masculinity and femininity.<sup>9</sup> Gender expectations vary between cultures and can change over time.<sup>10</sup>

**Gender-based violence** is usually used to explain violence against women, referring to violence that is specifically 'directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately'. However it is also useful to explain other forms of violence, in recognition that rigid, binary and hierarchical constructions of gender, sex and sexuality are also a driver of violence against people whose experience and/or identity does not conform to such binary definitions, including members of the lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgender, queer and intersex communities.<sup>11</sup> In Respectful Relationships Education, the term gender-based violence is often used as it is considered to better encompass the experiences of girls and young women than 'domestic violence' or 'violence against women'. The term encompasses the various forms of violence that girls and young women experience, such as dating violence, sexting and revenge porn, and is also inclusive and extends to violence experienced by the lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgender, queer and intersex communities.

**Gender equality**<sup>12</sup> involves equality of opportunity and equality of results. It includes the redistribution of resources and responsibilities between women and men and the transformation of the underlying causes and structures of gender inequality to achieve substantive equality. It is about recognising diversity and disadvantage to ensure equal outcomes for all<sup>13</sup> and therefore often requires women-specific programs and policies to end existing inequalities.

**Gender equity** refers to fairness and justice in the distribution of rights, responsibilities and resources between women and men according to their respective needs.

**Gender identity** is a person's deeply held internal and individual sense of their gender<sup>14</sup> in how they define themselves in relation to masculine and feminine characteristics.

**Gender inequality** is the unequal distribution of power, resources, opportunity and value afforded to women and men in a society due to prevailing gendered norms and structures.

**Gender roles** are the functions and responsibilities<sup>15</sup> expected to be fulfilled by women and men, girls and boys within a given society.

**Gender stereotyping** is a form of sexism. Gender stereotypes are simplistic assumptions about the behaviours, attributes, skills, differences and roles of women and men. These attributes are often perceived as natural or innate but are more often the result of women and men being socialised in different ways. Gender stereotypes can be positive, for example 'women are naturally caring and nurturing' or negative, for example 'men can't communicate their emotions very well', but they are usually incorrect and based on generalised assumptions about how we believe people will act, what people are good at or what people will like and dislike, simply because of their gender.

**Gender transformative approaches** move beyond 'gender blind' or 'gender specific' approaches to encourage critical awareness of, and explicitly challenge, harmful gender roles, practices and norms, and shift the unequal distribution of power and resources between women and men.

**Gendered drivers** are the specific elements or expressions of gender inequality that are most strongly linked to violence against women. They relate to the particular structures, norms and practices arising from gender inequality in public and private life. The gendered drivers are the underlying causes required to create the necessary conditions in which violence against women occurs. They must always be considered in the context of other forms of social discrimination and disadvantage.

**Gendered norms** consist of a set of dominant beliefs and rules of conduct which are determined by a society or social group in relation to the types of roles, interests, behaviours and contributions expected from girls and boys, women and men.

**Gendered practices** are the everyday practices, processes and behaviours undertaken at an individual/relationship level, organisational/institutional and societal level that reinforce and perpetuate gendered norms and structures.

**Gendered structures** are the laws and systemic mechanisms that organise and reinforce an unequal distribution of economic, social and political power and resources between women and men.

**Intimate partner violence** is any behaviour by a man or a woman within an intimate relationship (including current or past marriages, domestic partnerships, familial relations, or people who share accommodation) that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm to those in the relationship. This is the most common form of violence against women.<sup>16</sup>

**Respectful relationships** refer to relationships among intimate, romantic or dating partners characterised by non-violence, equality, mutual respect and consideration and trust.

**Respectful Relationships Education** is the holistic approach to school based, primary prevention of gender based violence. It uses the education system as a catalyst for generational and cultural change by engaging schools as both education institutions and as workplaces, to comprehensively address the drivers of gender based violence and to create a future free from such violence.

**Settings** are environments in which people live, work, learn, socialise and play.

**Sex** refers to the biological and physical characteristics used to define humans as female or male.

**Sex discrimination** occurs when a person is treated less favourably than a person of the opposite sex would be treated in the same or similar circumstances. Direct discrimination (for example women and men doing the same job but receiving different pay) and indirect discrimination (for example a policy requirement that all managers must work full time) are both illegal in Australia.

**Sexism** is discrimination based on gender, and the attitudes, stereotypes and cultural elements that promote this discrimination.<sup>17</sup>

**Sexual harassment** is unwelcome or unwanted conduct of a sexual nature, which could be expected to make a person feel offended, humiliated or intimidated. Sexual harassment can be obvious or subtle, direct or indirect, physical or verbal, repeated or one off, and can be perpetrated by both women and men against people of the same or opposite sex. Men are most likely to perpetrate sexual harassment against both women and other men, and women are most likely to be the victims of sexual harassment.

**Sexual violence** is sexual activity that happens where consent is not obtained or freely given. It occurs any time a person is forced, coerced or manipulated into any unwanted sexual activity, such as touching, sexual harassment and intimidation, forced marriage, trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, sexual assault and rape.

**Social norms** are rules of conduct and models of behaviour expected by a society or social group. They are grounded in the customs, traditions and value systems that develop over time in a society or social group.<sup>18</sup>

**Socio-ecological model** is a feature of public health and is used to demonstrate how violence is a product of multiple, interacting components and social factors.<sup>19</sup> The model conceptualises how the

drivers of violence manifest across the personal, community and social level and illustrates the value of implementing multiple mutually-reinforcing strategies across these levels.

**Violence against women** is any act of gender-based violence that causes or could cause physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of harm or coercion, in public or in private life.<sup>20</sup> This definition encompasses all forms of violence that women experience, including physical, sexual, emotional, cultural/spiritual, financial and others, that are gender-based. See also gender-based violence.

**Violence prevention** refers in Respectful Relationships Education to the primary prevention of gender-based violence. Primary prevention focuses on stopping gender-based violence before it occurs, rather than intervening once an incident has already happened. Primary prevention involves working with whole communities to address the attitudes, behaviours, norms and practices that drive gender-based violence.

**Whole School approach** refers in Respectful Relationships Education to providing students with multiple exposure to key messages across the curriculum and in different areas of the school and community. It involves engaging not just students, but school staff and the wider school community in the process of cultural change. For example, school staff, including non-teaching staff, might undergo professional learning and development around the drivers of gender-based violence and their role in prevention.

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