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# RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS AND GENDER EQUALITY POLICY

INCORPORATING CHILD SAFE MINISTERIAL ORRDER 870 STANDARDS 6 AND 7

## TO BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH:

- **WSC STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND WELLBEING POLICY**
  - **WSC INCLUSION POLICY**
  - **WSC SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>RATIONALE</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>GOALS</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>GUIDELINES</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>SCHOOL CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>TEACHING AND LEARNING</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>RESPONSIBILITIES</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>RELEVANT POLICIES AND GUIDANCE</b>	<b>4</b>

## RATIONALE

Wellington Secondary College is committed to creating a school community where all staff and students are equally respected and valued and enjoy equity of both opportunity and outcomes. Wellington Secondary College recognises that gender inequality has the potential to limit and impact negatively on the safety, education, employment, family lives and opportunities of staff and students, particularly women and girls, in the immediate and long term.

Under the Equal Opportunity Act 2010 all organisations have a positive duty to take proactive steps to prevent discriminatory practices. Wellington Secondary College recognises the prevalence and impact of gender-based discrimination and harassment, and is committed to building a school culture that challenges the stereotypes, power differences and social norms that foster gender inequity.

Wellington Secondary College recognises that gender inequality is both structural and individual; this means it is not only the result of individual attitudes and actions, but also of biases in structures, systems, policies and processes throughout our community. Girls and boys, men and women are subject to gendered stereotypes and expectations about how they should behave, think and act. These gendered stereotypes and expectations contribute to gender inequality by assigning unequal value, status and power to men and women. These expectations are reinforced by structures, systems, norms and cultures that often privilege the knowledge, rights, perspectives and skills of males over females.

Gender inequality can be both a cause and a consequence of direct and indirect discrimination. This discrimination is sometimes the result of unconscious bias which is when our behaviours, choices and practices are shaped by underlying assumptions and attitudes without us realising. Gender inequality is evident throughout our society, and research suggests it is one of the key factors that drive the prevalence of violence against women.

WSC recognises that schools are vital spaces in our community to promote gender equality and prevent violence against women. Every policy, practice and activity has the potential to reinforce or challenge gender stereotypes and gendered inequities. On behalf of the whole school community, the Principal, the School Council and the Student Representative Council support this policy.

## GOALS

WSC is committed to promoting gender equity as an educational institution, as a community structure and as an employer, and to ensuring equality of opportunity and outcomes for all staff and students.

## GUIDELINES

Gender Equity refers to fairness and justice in the distribution of rights, responsibilities and resources between women and men according to their respective needs. WSC will ensure that all staff, students and school policies, procedures, systems and structures actively promote gender equality and seek to expose and redress gender inequities.

## SCHOOL CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

At WSC all students and staff are responsible for promoting gender equity and modelling respectful relationships. All staff and students will be held accountable if they use language and/or demonstrate behaviour that:

- promotes unequal power relations between men and women
- perpetuates harmful gender stereotypes,
- condones violence against women

For example: accessing or sharing sexist or discriminatory materials at school, during school hours or using school property, using sexist, stereotyping or discriminatory language, dismissing acts of gender-based violence as trivial, making jokes that rely on gender stereotypes victim blaming when discussing gender-based violence etc.

Promoting gender equity and modelling respectful relationships is just as important for staff as it is for students. WSC will work to ensure all staff feel respected, safe and valued in the workplace, and will take proactive measures to prevent and eliminate gender discrimination and provide equal opportunities for all staff. This will include promoting gender equity in school leadership, ensuring processes and policies and processes are free of bias, and supporting all staff to balance work and family commitments.

For example: actively supporting and/or mentoring female staff, reviewing recruitment and professional processes to eliminate unconscious gender bias, facilitating flexible work arrangements and family leave in line with DET guidelines, providing private breastfeeding facilities, etc. WSC will support staff who experience domestic/family violence or sexual assault including by making reasonable efforts to grant appropriate leave, adjust work assignments or accommodate requests for flexible work hours.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

WSC will ensure adequate support and professional development is provided to staff across various key learning areas to select, review and deliver curriculum that:

- represents the range of experience, knowledge, skills and aspirations of girls and women, boys and men;
- provides opportunities for students to understand, identify and challenge gender inequality, harassment, discrimination, gender stereotypes and violence against women

For example: Implementing best practice curriculum which addresses the underlying causes of violence against women, ensuring gender is considered in curriculum review processes across all key learning areas. Behaviour is affected by the culture and environment in which it occurs. To promote gender equity it is important to recognise the way that gender stereotypes can influence what is seen as acceptable behaviour for both boys and girls, and the impact this can have on both student behaviour and the ways behaviour is managed.

For example: male students displaying particular behaviours as a means of proving/asserting their masculinity, teachers dismissing problem behaviours as normal/natural for either gender, using gendered insults as a means of motivating behaviour change - i.e. 'Do you want to gossip like a bunch of girls or just get this done!'/ 'Just be a man, get it together and move on'

Many subtle forms of gender-based discrimination, harassment or violence can be invisible, normalised or seen as acceptable.

The Wellington Inclusive School Policy Suite:

- clearly sets out and models expected behaviours for students and staff;
- recognises how gendered social dynamics and norms can influence student behaviour;

- gives staff tools to engage student(s) in challenging gender stereotypes;
- gives staff tools to identify and respond to dominating or disruptive behaviours so they do not inhibit the learning of other students.

## RESPONSIBILITIES

The principal of WSC is accountable for implementation of this policy. The principal of may appoint a coordinator to support implementation of this policy.

This policy will be reviewed regularly by the Principal, Assistant Principal's, Equal Opportunity Coordinator or sub-committee of School Council and ratified by the School Council.

All members of the school community have a responsibility to respect and promote the rights of others as per the Beliefs and Behaviours Value statement.

WSC encourages all members of the school community to take appropriate bystander action to intervene safely and respectfully when they see or hear about sexist language, sex discrimination, sexual harassment or a potentially violent situation within the school community.

## COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Complaints procedures exist to provide an avenue to address unacceptable behaviour. These procedures are outlined in the WSC Inclusion Policy, WSC Staff Code of Conduct and WSC Sexual Harassment Policy.

Any member of the school community who raises an issue of gender inequity will not be victimised or otherwise unfairly treated or disadvantaged. All complaints of victimisation will be taken seriously, investigated and acted upon as quickly as possible.

## OTHER RELEVANT POLICIES AND GUIDANCE

- WSC Inclusion and Diversity Policy
- WSC Sexual Harassment Policy
- WSC Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy
- WSC Staff Code of Conduct
- WSC Bullying Prevention Policy
- DET: Sexual Harassment Policy
- DET: Building Respectful and Safe Schools
- DET: Managing Diversity and Inclusive Workplaces
- DET: Flexible Work in Victorian Government Schools

This policy was last updated in March 2020 and will be reviewed annually.