

Respectful relationships a responsibility for all

Jim Miles, Executive Director, Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd

Respectful relationships are not only at the core of Catholic values and teachings, but are a necessary element of a proper functioning society.

The Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV) offers its full support and commends the courage of all current and former students who have spoken out about their experiences in recent days. The confronting examples of harmful, disrespectful and, in many cases, abusive sexual contact between students, shared online and in the media, cannot be ignored.

Developing young people who respect each other's fundamental rights is central to our aims as a Catholic education system. Catholic schools utilise a range of programs, including the respectful relationships program, to help form appropriate interpersonal behaviours and respectful attitudes among the student cohort, as enshrined in gospel values.

However, recent days have shown that much more needs to be done to ensure the safety of our young people. But we cannot do it alone.

All of us, from parents to school teachers and leaders, to system and sector leaders, must work together to do all we can to address this issue and prevent future harm to any young person.

In recognising parents as the first educators of their children, the CECV will work through schools and with parent bodies to better understand what motivates, condones or permits abusive behaviours and to consider opportunities to support education programs in this crucial area of student safety.

Critically, we must empower the young people in our care to participate in what must become an ongoing conversation on the efficacy of existing school respectful relationships programs, and the priority they are given in schools and among school communities.

All Catholic schools take these matters extremely seriously and will work with their students, parents and local communities to consider the most appropriate responses for their local context.

The CECV is also committed to ongoing engagement with expert organisations and the state government to ensure our Catholic sector programs and responses in Victoria represent best practice. Our young people deserve nothing less.

Media contact: Gerard Delaney on 0413 274 176 or gdelaney@macs.vic.edu.au