

School kids drawing a positive future for gender equality

Victorian school children as young as five are using their artistic flair to challenge gender stereotypes, as part of a global campaign to end gender-based violence.

With the support of local councils and community organisations, [Women's Health in the South East](#) (WHISE) is leading [16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence](#) in the Southern Metropolitan Region, working with schools in the area.

"Almost two women a week are killed at the hands of their current or ex-partner. This is unacceptable," says Ms Megan Bugden, Health Promotion Coordinator from WHISE.

"All Australians, regardless of their sex and gender identity, deserve a future free from violence and that's exactly what we hope to achieve by being part of this campaign and giving a voice to the next generation."

Together with *Communities for Children Frankston*, WHISE worked with Frankston-based schools to discuss gender stereotypes and the importance of questioning them. Students were then asked to draw pictures that they thought would challenge these ideas.

Research shows that to prevent gender-based violence, we need to challenge gender stereotypes – that is, assumptions made about people based on whether they are male or female. For example, women are expected to do unpaid housework and childrearing, while men are expected to work full-time.

"Challenging gender stereotypes is such an important step in creating and promoting positive, equal and respectful relationships and making sure that our children are able to be the best versions of themselves," says Ms Bugden.

"We've been amazed at the work produced by the students. The drawings are delightful, honest and refreshing, and we're so proud to be showcasing them on coffee cups, posters, social media and postcards during the campaign."

[Karingal Primary School](#) Principal, Ms Karen Luff was enthusiastic about taking part in the campaign and saw it as an opportunity to support the messages around gender equality.

"The students' participation in the art workshop and the creation of their unique drawings was a wonderful way to highlight and promote equal and respectful relationships and normalise equality," says Ms Luff.

16 Days commences on 25 November, the [International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women](#), and concludes on 10 December, [Human Rights Day](#). The campaign raises awareness of the many issues that women face across the world, highlighting a different issue on each of the 16 days, including the trafficking of women and girls, women with disabilities and women in management roles.

Gender-based violence is a term used to explain violence that disproportionately affects women. Violence against women is a serious issue in Australia with one in three women experiencing violence at some point in their lifetime.

Supported by the State Government's campaign, [Victoria Against Violence](#), WHISE hopes that we can all take something from the drawings and learn from children to make a positive impact on gender-based violence and gender equality.