



What Schools are Doing: Schools in the Eastern Metropolitan Region

Four schools in the **Eastern Metropolitan Region** are currently working with **The Gay and Lesbian Youth Project** to implement whole school approaches to dealing with homophobia and supporting **SSAY**. A government school and a catholic school have written about what they are doing to deal with the issue.

Upper Yarra Secondary College, a semi-rural government school in **Yarra Junction in the Yarra Valley**, has been committed to addressing the issue of homophobia in their school since 2001. A professional development session for welfare staff was implemented, to raise awareness of the issues same sex attracted (SSA) students face, and provide strategies to support them and to address homophobia.

In 2002, the school expressed enthusiasm to tackle the issue further with the support of the Gay and Lesbian Youth Project Worker (Shelley Walker). In October, Shelley did a presentation to a number of key staff at the school, including the Principal and Assistant Principal about current national research for SSAY, policies that support the need for schools to respond to the issue, and what a school would need to do to address the issue.

On the first day back at school this year, Shelley ran an information session for all staff that again included info about the experiences of SSA students and what the school needs to do to address the issue. A questionnaire was distributed to staff to get feedback about how they view the issue of homophobia in the school and to get a sense of their commitment to learning more about how to support SSA students and ensure the school is safe and supportive of all students. The feedback was extremely positive in that it showed a real enthusiasm from many staff to be involved in the process of striving for cultural change within the school.

A working group is being set up in the school that will meet on a regular basis to ensure strategies are implemented. Strategies will include anti-harassment and anti-bullying policy development, developing inclusive curriculum, professional development for staff, and ensuring that the whole school community is involved.

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