



## **GENDER EQUITY POLICY**

Approved by School Council December 2017

### **Purpose**

Bentleigh 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.

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

Bentleigh 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, women and men are subject to gendered stereotypes and expectations contribute to gender inequality by assigning unequal value, status and power to women and men. These expectations are reinforced by structures, systems, norms and cultures that often privilege the knowledge, rights perspectives and skills of one gender over another.

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. Research suggests gender equality is one of the key factors driving the prevalence of gender-based violence. This is defined as a pattern of behavior used by one person to gain and maintain power and control over another. Violence is defined as physical violence, emotional/verbal abuse, sexual abuse, financial/economic control, mental/psychological abuse and cultural/identity control.

Bentleigh Secondary College recognises that schools are vital spaces in our community to promote gender equality and prevent violence. Every policy, practice and activity has the potential to reinforce or challenge gender stereotypes and gendered inequality.

### **Our commitments**

Bentleigh Secondary College, as an educational institution and an employer, is committed to promoting gender equality and to ensuring equality of opportunity and outcomes for all staff and students.

Gender equality 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 and therefore often requires gender specific programs and policies to end existing inequalities.

Bentleigh Secondary College 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 Bentleigh Secondary College all students and staff are responsible for promoting gender equality 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 women and men
- perpetuates harmful gender stereotypes
- condones violence against others

For example: unacceptable behaviour includes accessing or sharing sexist or discriminator 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, and victim blaming when discussing gender-based violence.

Promoting gender equality and modelling respectful relationships is just as important for staff as it is for students. Bentleigh Secondary College 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 equality in school leadership, ensuring processes and policies are free of bias, and supporting all staff to balance work and family commitments.

For example: Commitments include actively supporting and /or mentoring staff, reviewing recruitment and professional processes to eliminate unconscious gender bias, facilitating flexible work arrangements and family leave in line with department guidelines, and providing private breastfeeding facilities.

Bentleigh Secondary College 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.

### **EVALUATION**

*Review annually, with recommended changes being presented to College Council*