



PEACEFUL SCHOOLS PROGRAM PILOT SCHOOL OVERVIEW

St Joseph's Secondary College, Echuca

AN ORGANIC BRIGIDINE IMPLEMENTATION

St. Joseph's is a Catholic co-educational secondary college in Echuca, northern Victoria. It was established in 1886 with an emphasis on 'a dynamic welcoming hope filled' school culture which promotes equity and maximises the potential of all students. It has a significant koori student population and a farming community, some of whom have suffered great hardship through recent drought. The school's emphasis on social justice, human rights and altruism resonates well with the values of the CASSE Peaceful Schools Program (PSP). Staff and selected students visit a Timorese community twice yearly to assist them with their needs.

Glenn Roberts, who is a senior teacher and key member of the school's Leadership and Wellbeing Teams, is also the dedicated CASSE Team Leader. He works with an impressive staff team, comprising school Social Worker, Jo Giudice, and teacher, Jordan Grant. There were concerns about bullying across the school initially and the priority in the first year of implementation was to expose staff and the student team to extensive footage and information about the aetiology and mental health issues around bullying.

The CASSE student team was chosen from years 10-12 for their leadership qualities, maturity, influence and unique skills. Glenn facilitated an intuitive process, encouraging his team to mentalise about bullying and power dynamics and effective ways to intervene with these, prior to designing their plans for implementing the CASSE Peaceful Schools model across the school community. The Student Team began their role by promoting individual responsibility for developing a Peaceful School Community through Gandhi's powerful maxim of "Be the change". They then launched a highly successful innovative Anti- Swearing campaign, highlighting the covert violence implicit in swearing at others.

The student team was invited to present at the first CASSE Student Day event in 2012 to all of the CASSE schools and staff. The other students were impressed and inspired by the presentation and it gave some the direction and motivation to take the next step in their own schools. They are the eldest group in the pilot program and therefore role models to the other schools' student teams.

St. Joseph's student team also created a powerful DVD where students and staff in their school held up placards to indicate whether they had bullied, been bullied, felt safe or unsafe at school. One of their students was the recipient of CASSE's inaugural Nelson Mandela Award for her courageous disclosure about her previous role as a victimizer and her outstanding transformation, with Glenn's and Staff support, into a caring 'Upstander' who is now highly regarded by her peers. This moving achievement also reflects a core value of CASSE's PSP, which is of giving second and third chances - that is, helping others to change through encouragement and consequences rather than responding with punitive and retaliatory measures.

APPLICATION OF MENTALISATION – A CORE FEATURE OF ST JOSEPH'S APPROACH AND CASSE'S PSP MODEL

Helping others to change through empathic understanding and recognition that everyone has a "place" in our school communities is premised on the fundamental skill of mentalisation - as seen in successful negotiations on a micro group/community level, functional corporations and in peace negotiations where conflict and war has resulted in countless casualties.

This resource and further information about Creating A Safe Supportive Environment is available to download at www.casse.org.au.