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Prevention and education critical in ending violence against women: Jesuit Social Services

The implementation of adequately funded prevention and education services are vital in fostering safe and respectful relationships, and ultimately working towards the goal of ending violence against women, says Jesuit Social Services.

“We applaud the strength and courage of 2021 Australian of the Year Grace Tame and Brittany Higgins, who today delivered powerful addresses to the National Press Club about the type of systemic change required to create an Australia where women can reach their potential and live their lives free of harassment, abuse and violence,” says Jesuit Social Services CEO Julie Edwards.

“As Ms Tame stated, prevention and education must be a critical part of improving outcomes both now and for Australia’s next generation of leaders. Violence against women and sexual assault are problems that impact all parts of our society. Adequately funded and effective prevention and education efforts, including in our schools and with community leaders, can help us reduce and prevent violence against women and give all Australians the opportunity to thrive.”

Ms Edwards says that respectful relationships education should be provided at all schools, and that teachers, sports coaches, youth workers and other community leaders who work with boys must be equipped with the language and skills they need to create positive change around issues of respect.

Jesuit Social Services’ The Men’s Project supports boys and men to live respectful, accountable and fulfilling lives free from violence and other harmful behaviour with the goal of fostering good men, respectful relationships and safe communities.

“An important part of our work is understanding the attitudes and behaviours of young Australian men, and the impact they have on not only their interpersonal relationships but also on the health and wellbeing of young men themselves,” says Ms Edwards.

“Through our *Man Box* reports we’ve found that two thirds of young men said that since they were a boy they had been told a ‘real man’ behaves in a certain way. Critically, we’ve found that young men who personally endorse a rigid view of traditional masculine stereotypes are more likely to commit acts of sexual harassment, consider suicide, perform acts of violence and bullying and experience poorer mental health than young men who don’t subscribe to those beliefs.

“Adherence to rigid ideas about masculinity has extremely damaging consequences for women and children as well as young men themselves.

“The Men’s Project’s Modelling Respect and Equality (MoRE) program works with community members and leaders to help them recognise and challenge problematic attitudes and behaviours. By building the capacity of people who work with boys and men every day, we can all work together to support our next generation of men to lead healthy, fulfilling and positive lives.

“These efforts are critical in reducing and preventing violence and helping all Australians to flourish.”

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