

Breaking the Silence – key program information

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About White Ribbon Australia

White Ribbon is the world’s largest movement of men and boys working with women and girls to end men’s violence against women and girls, promote gender equality, respectful relationships, and a new vision of masculinity.

White Ribbon Australia (White Ribbon), as part of this global movement, aims to create an Australian society in which all women can live in safety, free from violence and abuse.

We are Australia’s only national violence prevention organisation specifically engaging men. We work to examine the root causes of gender-based violence, challenge behaviours, and create a cultural shift that leads us to a future without men’s violence against women.

The *Breaking the Silence* Schools Program is one of White Ribbon’s flagship programs providing communities with tools from childhood, through adolescence, and into adulthood.

For more information, see the White Ribbon website (www.whiteribbon.org.au).

Breaking the Silence and primary prevention of men’s violence against women in schools

White Ribbon's *Breaking the Silence* Program is a professional learning initiative for school principals and teachers that provides foundational knowledge, tools and strategies to implement respectful relationships and violence prevention in schools. The Program supports schools to bring about a commitment to stop violence against women. It builds on existing initiatives to strengthen a culture of respect and equality at all levels of the school community – through curriculum, role modelling from staff, policies and procedures, domestic violence education programs and strengthened family and community partnerships.

Program reach

Total number of schools across Australia¹	564
Number of White Ribbon Schools	399
Number of principals and teachers who have participated in Breaking the Silence ²	1,128
Teaching staff reached, through their schools participating in the program	23,520
Students reached, through their schools participating in the program	311,201
Number of students reached who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander ³	17,723 (5.7%)
Number of students reached with a language background other than English ⁴	85,462 (27.5%)

Program goals

The goals of the Breaking the Silence program are to work with school leadership to:

- increase school communities' (teachers, staff, students, parents and carers) awareness of men's violence against women and the causes of this violence, and the key role of schools in primary prevention;
- change school communities' attitudes and behaviours towards men's violence against women and the causes of this violence; and
- equip school communities with strategies for embedding cultures of respect and gender equality in the school, in order to achieve generational change in preventing men's violence against women.

This is working towards the ultimate vision of all teachers, students and communities across Australia working together to drive generational change, towards a future where every child can live free from violence and enjoy respectful and equal relationships.

¹ Includes White Ribbon Schools who completed the program and schools currently participating (2017-18).

² An average of two representatives per school participate in the program.

³ Calculated based on % of Indigenous students per school where data is available. National figures for 2016 show 4.4% of young people 15-24 years identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, in ARACY (2018), *Report Card 2018: The wellbeing of young Australians*.

⁴ Calculated based on % of students per school with a language background other than English where data is available.

A “scaffolding” approach

Breaking the Silence provides the scaffold to embed primary prevention of men’s violence against women within schools and deliver support based on your school and community needs, resources, and context. Rather than simply adding violence prevention to the school curriculum, *Breaking the Silence* provides a framework to embed respectful relationships across the whole of school and strengthen cultures of respect.

This supportive approach helps meet individual school, state/territory, and national requirements. *Breaking the Silence* is designed to:

- Support, build on and integrate with existing school policies, practices and initiatives e.g. Student Health and Wellbeing Policy, School Planning and Milestoning, School Excellence Frameworks.
- Support specific content in the Health and Physical Education learning area of the Australian Curriculum, and support personal and social capability across all learning areas.
- Complement and work in tandem with existing social and emotional wellbeing and respectful relationships programs such as Love Bites, Kids Matter.

The Program also supports a broader regional and national context of violence prevention initiatives that emphasise the importance of respectful relationships education, including:

- Victorian Department of Education Respectful Relationships Education Program and curriculum, following on from the Royal Commission into Family Violence
- Education Queensland’s Respectful Relationships Education Program, following on from the Not Now, Not Ever report
- Tasmanian Department of Education Respectful Relationships Education Program, as part of the Safe Homes, Safe Families Action Plan
- Western Australia’s Family and Domestic Violence Prevention Strategy to 2022.
- Northern Territory’s Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Reduction Framework 2018-2028.
- New South Wales’s Domestic and Family Violence Prevention and Early Intervention Strategy 2017-2010 and PDHPE curriculum requirements from K-12.
- South Australia’s Women’s Safety Strategy 2011-2022.
- ACT Social and Emotional Learning policies supporting the Education Capital: Leading the Nation Action Plan (2015), the ACT Engaging Schools Framework (2013) and Providing Safe Schools P-12 (2007).

Respectful Relationships initiatives working with young people form a critical component of the Australian Government’s *National Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women and their Children 2010-2022*, and the third National Action Plan includes a commitment to support schools and teachers to deliver age-appropriate and evidence-based respectful relationships education to all schoolchildren. White Ribbon is a key national partner for the National Action Plan.

Evidence-Based Prevention

Breaking the Silence is informed by a health promotion schools framework, the five criteria for best practice as identified in school curricula and the *National Standards for the Primary Prevention of Sexual Assault through Education*. The program meets a key need for schools in implementing respectful relationships education, as identified by the Australian Federal Department of Education and Training: the need for teacher training and support.

The Pilot Phase of *Breaking the Silence* was developed and facilitated by Dr Sue Dyson, Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University, in consultation with an expert Reference Group, ensuring the academic rigor of the model's development and implementation. The Program has been independently evaluated twice since 2010, and adaptations made to the program on the basis of evaluation findings. The program design also draws on learnings from the Our Watch Respectful Relationships Education pilots and evaluation. A third evaluation of the program is currently underway.

For more information, see the schools program website: <https://www.whiteribbon.org.au/breaking-silence-program/>

Program outcomes

We have commissioned a third independent evaluation of Breaking the Silence to identify program impact; this evaluation is taking place throughout 2018 and will continue to bolster the evidence base for Breaking the Silence.

Anecdotal findings from the 2017-18 cohort find that schools undertake the program to promote cultures of respect in their school, and address concerning and disrespectful student behaviour. **Schools report that using Breaking the Silence in their school to promote positive messages around respect, has led to students being kinder to one another and more respectful of teachers**, with older students acting as role models for young students, and students challenging stereotypical and inappropriate language. **A number of schools also reported improved cultures of respect within the staff room, and between parents and school staff.** For example:

- A primary school in Western Sydney undertook the program in order to address disrespectful behaviour that they had noticed on the part of some older male students (Years 5 and 6) to female casual teachers, and on the part of some male parents with the front desk secretary. As a result of the program, one female teacher said to the principal that it was the first year that she had felt comfortable doing playground duty.
- A network of schools in Perth reported that “there has been a dramatic increase in staff, students, parents and community members discussing the purpose and values of White Ribbon Australia. The term “respectful relationships” is frequently used in everyday conversations”.
- A teacher at a primary school in Far-Western Sydney reported that one Year 2 girl in their school had taken the message of respect back to her home, where she felt that her older brother was being mean to both her and her mother. The program had empowered this girl with the language and the strength to call a meeting with her mother and her brother to address this culture of disrespect within her home life. When the teacher asked if this had made a difference, the girl replied ‘well, we’re not perfect, but now we have ground rules and things are much better’.
- A teacher at a school in South Australia said that” *“I have seen how some of the culture of the sports clubs effects the way male students interact and speak with female staff. This is the program we have been looking for. It can be the back bone of our conversations with difficult behaviour. Linking it to our values. It’s a program we can embed in the school and also the community”*.
- A school from Central NSW, from an area with a high prevalence of domestic violence, said that: *‘Our school also saw many positive results from encouraging the value of respectful relationships amongst our students and the program helped them develop a deeper understanding of why it is important to speak up and not be a bystander in certain situations*

regarding domestic violence. Further to this, our students were motivated to participate in various related activities, such as stage 3 students volunteering their lunch breaks to sell cupcakes for a fund raising event'

The other major reason that schools participate in Breaking the Silence is to raise awareness of domestic and family violence, which they are aware heavily affects families in their schools, and send the message that this type of violence is not OK. **All schools that participate in the program report increased disclosures from students and/or staff as a result of sending these messages.** This means that schools can then support students and staff who are affected by domestic and family violence to seek help, via appropriate referral pathways. As one principal from a school in Western Sydney put it, 'while it is sad that we have seen the number of referrals rise, it is also positive that students now feel they can speak to us about this and we can help to make a difference.'

- In one school in South Australia working with disadvantaged students, the program resulted in two students being able to disclose that their current situation was unsafe for themselves, and being willing to engage in support services to explore this further, while all students felt they were better able to recognise the different forms of violence, and students showed an increase in understanding of how violence can impact pregnancy.
- The principal of a school in ACT said that "many of our students come to us having experienced significant trauma in their lives. The White Ribbon initiative has given us an important tool to discuss with our students a topic that many of them have had significant exposure to."
- A school in Melbourne reported that "One of the main things that came out of the learning about respectful relationships is that it gave all the students the opportunity to reflect on what happens in their family and perhaps discover that it was not ok. It gave many students the voice to speak out, which was then followed up by teachers and school leaders."

Numerous schools report being overwhelmed by the support they have had from parents in the community for undertaking this important initiative in their schools. They shared positive Facebook page messages and written messages from parents. For example,

- From Western Australia: "...I have just dropped my daughter off as I do every Friday and was greeted by a sign to say you support White Ribbon. I just want to say THANK YOU!!! Thank you for raising awareness, thank you for putting it out front of your school and thank you most of all for bringing it into your school community. I sincerely believe domestic violence is everyone's responsibility and if we can raise awareness in the younger generations we will eventually see a decline in not only the shame of DV but the actual number of incidents that occur..."
- A school in Townsville in Far-North Queensland reported that: 'The program and activity were very well received in the school and community. A man riding past on his bike whilst the school was participating stopped staff members to say "good on us" and that it was such an important messages to get out there.'
- A school in South Australia provided the following quote from a grandparent of a student. The grandparent formed the homicide victim support group in South Australia. "I've wanted to speak to you about White Ribbon and what the school is doing. It's fantastic that the school is on board with this and if it's ok I'm interested in being involved"...
- 'The positive relationship message is so important for even our youngest children' – parent from a primary school in South-Western Sydney where 98% have language backgrounds other than English.

The program also offers opportunities for student leadership. In approximately 50% of schools, White Ribbon initiatives within the school are led by a student leadership team or group of students. In many cases this has allowed students who are passionate about this issue to shine whilst raising awareness of the importance of ending men's violence against women. For example, one student at an all girls' school organised an entire White Ribbon breakfast and White Ribbon Day event the first year in her school. The event was so successful that the following year, she was able to direct a team of students to put on an event that was three times the size and brought together students and their fathers to stand up and speak out to prevent men's violence against women. This student is now the deputy head girl. To better support and capture these incredible efforts, White Ribbon is currently developing a student leadership package.

An independent evaluation of the program conducted by UNSW Gendered Violence Research Network in 2013/2014⁵ found that:

- Schools described improved behaviour amongst their students following program implementation, including positive changes in the interactions between boys and girls
- Schools agreed that students were more likely to stop others who were being unfair or disruptive.
- Schools were more likely to have procedures in place to promote a culture of non-violence.

Preliminary findings from the 2016/2017 internal evaluation of Breaking the Silence reaffirmed the positive social impact of the program and found:

- **100%** of respondents agreed that the Breaking the Silence Schools Program was a valuable professional learning tool.
- **100%** of respondents agreed that the Program has given them foundational knowledge of the issue of men's violence against women.
- **91.95%** of respondents agreed that the Program has enabled them to integrate respectful relationships/violence prevention education through a whole of school approach.

Feedback from Workshop 1 for the 2017-18 program found that:

- **98%** of participants found the workshops to be useful overall, with 87% strongly agreeing that they were useful.
- **96%** of participants found the materials distributed to be pertinent and useful, with 79% of strongly agreeing that they were useful.
- **96%** of participants said that the facilitators were engaging, with 79% strongly agreeing that they were engaging.

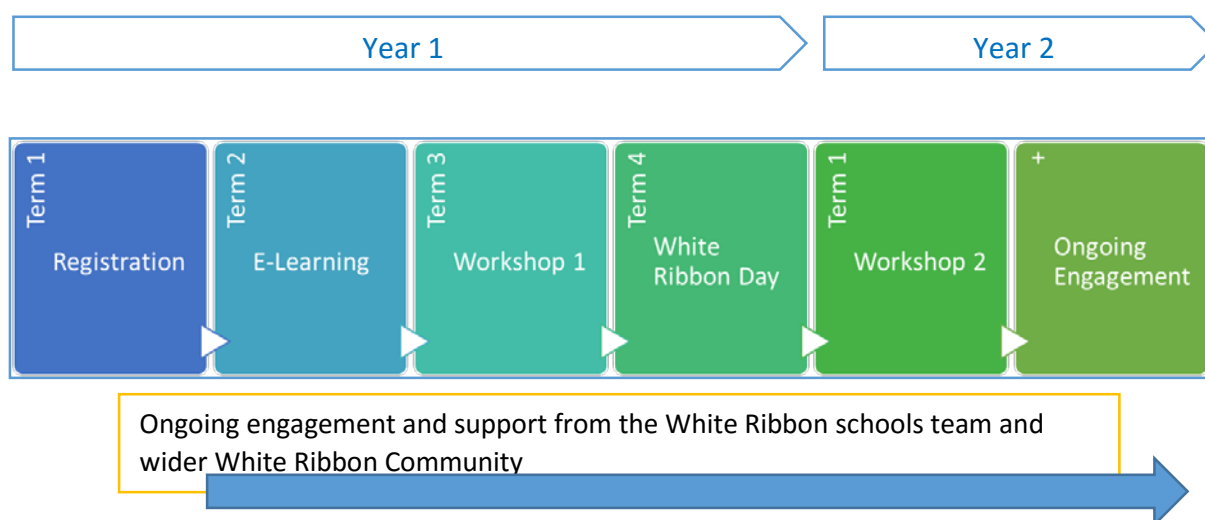
⁵ Breckenridge, J; Browning, L; Wearing, M (2014) *Executive Summary: Breaking the Silence: School-based Primary Prevention of Men's Violence Against Women 2014 Independent Evaluation Report*, Gendered Violence Research Network School of Social Sciences, Arts & Social Sciences UNSW Australia

Breaking the Silence Schools Program overview

Program structure and timeline

The program is open to 2-4 teachers from your school, ideally a senior leadership team who have the motivation and the support to drive cultural change in the school.

The two face-to-face workshops are held in a central location in the same area as your school. (A critical mass of at least 8 schools must sign up to participate in the program, if we are to deliver workshops in your area.)



In order to register and identify the teachers who will participate in the program, please complete an Expression of Interest form through the White Ribbon website. The specific link is: <https://app.etapestry.com/onlineforms/WhiteRibbonFoundation/eoi.html>

Throughout the Program, we will explore ideas for meaningfully embedding *Breaking the Silence* in your specific school and community. As you begin your journey to become a White Ribbon School, you will create the framework for building a more respectful, safer, and more productive school community for students, staff, and parents alike.

The Program consists of the following components:

- **eLearning (Term 2)**
Completion of a 1-1 ½ hour eLearning to gain foundational knowledge of the issue of men's violence against women and best practice standards for implementing *Breaking the Silence* in your school.
- **Initial preparation/planning (Term 2)**
You will have access to resources and tools to aid your preparation in the lead up to Workshop 1. These are designed to help you to identify needs and opportunities in your school and community, and are found in the Online Library, to which you gain access upon registration for the program.

Participating schools are required to complete the '*Checkpoints for Schools*' self-auditing tool. This will support you to identify implementation priorities, track progress and facilitate continuous improvement. It will also inform the evaluation and evidence base of the *Breaking the Silence* Program.

Preparation can be incorporated into existing communications with your staff team and school community, and facilitated through discussion in the Online Forum.

- **Workshop 1 (Term 2)**

Workshop 1 will deepen your understanding of the issue of men's violence against women. You will explore and develop ideas to strengthen a culture of respect and embed prevention in your school community, and be given practical ideas for where to start as well as what you can do across policy, curriculum, professional learning, and student engagement in your school.

- **White Ribbon Day (25 November)**

Schools can utilise the White Ribbon Campaign as a key platform to raise awareness and engage the community. You can register your school's event to celebrate White Ribbon Day (25 November) on the White Ribbon website. Schools will receive support from the White Ribbon Team, including event materials, tips, and promotional assistance.

- **Workshop 2 (Term 1)**

Workshop 2 provides an opportunity to reflect on school implementation and activities, and share learning among participants, as well as to celebrate the work of your school and others. You will be asked to give a short presentation of your experiences of implementing *Breaking the Silence* at your school and lessons learnt. You will then explore future directions for continuing the journey of culture change within your school and community.

- **Online Library**

The Online Library is a central hub for *Breaking the Silence* participants to access Program materials and best practice resources developed both by White Ribbon schools and organisations working to promote respectful relationships across Australia and beyond. We regularly update the online library so that resources are up-to-date, meaning that it should provide ongoing support as you continue your growth as a White Ribbon School.

- **Online Forum**

The Online Forum provides access to a network of participating schools across the country, and support from the White Ribbon Schools Team. The Forum enables you to share learning, discuss challenges, receive updates, promote activities, and highlight achievements and success stories.

- **Evaluation**

Breaking the Silence participants, staff, and students will complete evaluation surveys and tools to strengthen the Program's evidence base and help measure attitudinal and behavioural changes in your school. In particular, schools will utilise the '*Checkpoints for Schools*' self-auditing tool to identify implementation priorities, track progress, and facilitate continuous improvement.

- **Ongoing engagement and resource development**

White Ribbon have developed resources specifically for schools taking part in the Program to assist implementation and meet schools' needs.

The White Ribbon Schools Team will be in regular communication to support you and your school community, including through offering school visits, webinars, phone calls. Keep in touch via the Online Forum, quarterly newsletter, and communication in between workshops.

Implementation

The *Breaking the Silence* Program acknowledges that each school and community is different. As such, implementation should be tailored to the context and needs of your school. As a supportive framework, *Breaking the Silence* will enable you to build on and integrate with initiatives already underway.

Strengthening your school's culture of respect requires a whole of school approach.

A whole of school approach means that the commitment to respectful relationships and preventing men's violence against women is reflected by your school's culture. Embedding a culture of respectful relationships requires a multidimensional, multipronged approach across four overlapping domains:



White Ribbon Schools Team and Breaking the Silence facilitators

White Ribbon Australia has a team of two program officers, one program manager and one senior facilitation and engagement adviser who support schools to undertake *Breaking the Silence*. The schools team is contactable by email and phone and will be in touch with your school on a regular basis to offer phone calls and support. We can be contacted at schools@whiteribbon.org.au and 02 9045 8430.

In addition, White Ribbon is supported to deliver the program by a team of current and former principals who have all implemented *Breaking the Silence* in their schools. These facilitators co-present the workshops, and provide other kinds of mentoring and ad hoc support as their time allows. We have a growing pool of facilitators who currently come from New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, and West Australia.