

CASTLEMAINE SECONDARY COLLEGE LGBTQIA+ INCLUSION CASE STUDY

Background

Victorian school communities, parents and teachers have identified a need for greater support state-wide for LGBTQIA+ students, who are statistically at higher risks of bullying and suicide. The Victorian Government encourages and supports a number of programs to foster a safe schooling environment that is supportive and inclusive of LGBTQIA+ students.

As the only state secondary school in the Mount Alexander Shire, Castlemaine Secondary College (CSC) holds a unique potential and responsibility to provide intersectional, gender and sexuality inclusive educational and social safe spaces for their students. This project builds upon previous work such as the “Let’s Get Proud” case study that advocated for LGBTQIA+ community and capacity building within CSC.

What we did

Our objective was to build increased engagement with CSC Pride Crew, events, and LGBTQIA+ safe spaces from both CSC students and community partners.

We did this by facilitating a Working Group at CSC, with the Principal, the leading teachers of the Pride Crew, the Wellbeing Faculty, and the Dhelkaya Health LGBTQIA+ Wellbeing Officer. The Working Group developed a **strategic plan** for the following year to co-design the Pride Crew and other inclusive events, in addition to a number of actions and events for the year. A list of actions was also formulated for the following five years, and a list of possible community partners were identified.



Objectives

Collaborate on a vision and comprehensive strategy of LGBTQIA+ inclusion at CSC

Identify community partnership opportunities and LGBTQIA+ community event engagement

Increase CSC LGBTQIA+ visibility and champion

CSC LGBTQIA+ student community inclusion

Collaborate on a five-year action proposal to share with potential stakeholders



Comprehensive strategy

Studies of schools with effective inclusivity programs have determined five key elements for a successful and vibrant inclusive school community: education, policy, collaboration, school climate, and curriculum. These key areas have been incorporated into the five-year vision for CSC.

Policy:

In collaboration with the Victorian Department of Education Safe Schools Program, CSC will publish a commitment statement, identify actions, outcomes and commit to regular evaluations.

Collaboration:

Through events, guest speakers, trainings, and mentorship programs, community and organisation collaboration opportunities will be identified. Input and partnership will be sought through presenting to local networks.

Curriculum:

CSC curriculum will incorporate diversity and intersectional learning, with support for teacher implementation, allowing the school to apply an intersectional lens in their classes.

Educators:

CSC teachers will complete training through the Safe Schools program and other providers to better support LGBTQIA+ students.

School climate:

Climate will be improved through the Pride Crew re-structure. The possibility of a “parents of queer kids” working group will be investigated and implemented if beneficial. Additionally, LGBTQIA+ visibility events and guest speakers will be embedded in the school timetable.



Challenges/Learnings

A significant challenge to targeted, sustainable LGBTQIA+ inclusion programs and activities is the limitation of teacher time and availability. Many teachers and members of well-being staff are juggling multiple time commitments, and LGBTQIA+ inclusion does not currently sit with any member of staff as a prioritised role.

Additionally, a challenge and a learning was that while CSC is a member of the Victorian Department of Education Safe Schools Program, the required paperwork and activities to be part of the program had not been completed. This presents an opportunity for CSC to become more involved and incorporate Safe Schools and LGBTQIA+ inclusion planning.

Another challenge was coordinating time for all members of the focus group to meet, due to the time constraints of the school term. These challenges will have ongoing effects on the implementation of this plan.

