



in Alliance

THE ALLIANCE OF GIRLS' SCHOOLS AUSTRALASIA
PO Box 296, MALVERN, VICTORIA 3144 AUSTRALIA

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in Alliance

*The Alliance of Girls'
Schools Australasia*

Executive Officer:

Edwina Sear

Tel: 03 9813 8916

Fax: 03 9886 9542

President:

Ros Otzen

Korowa AGS, Vic

Executive:

Beth Blackwood
PLC, WA

Lesley Boston
The MacRobertson
Girls' High School, Vic

Nancy Hillier
Annesley College, SA

Stan Klan
Fairholme College, Qld

Suzanne McChesney
Seymour College, SA

Barbara Stone
MLC, NSW



in this issue

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Health and Well-being...

The Problem of Bullying

Smoking, Alcohol & Other Drugs: A Perspective

Creating Listening Spaces

*Junior School girls at
Amesley College
enjoying healthy food*



In Alliance Editorial Deadlines 2001

Volume 20
"The Arts"

Monday 16 July, 2001

Volume 21

"Science & Joint Conference"
Monday 15 October, 2001

Copy on the above topics for the relevant Volumes is welcome and must be submitted to Dr Nancy Hillier at Ammesley College or through

principal@ammesley.sa.edu.au by the above dates.



CORRECTION FROM EDITION 18

The front cover photograph from the last edition of *In Alliance* was reproduced by courtesy of The Advertiser, Adelaide. Photographer was Mark Calleja and the photograph was featured in The Advertiser on 20 February, 2001.

FROM THE EDITOR...

...a focus on health and well-being.



Non est vivere, sed valere vita est.

Life's not just being alive, but being well.

Martial: Epigrammata bk.6, no.70

Perhaps this edition of *In Alliance* should have promoted the image of Australian women over the past century and the increasing successes by women being witnessed in all fields of life. We have, however, been much alerted to this by the events leading up to and surrounding the celebrations for the Centenary of Federation. Our students have been studying and playing out avenues of this celebration. This in itself is a wonderful statement of our national identity. We would particularly like to recognise Monte Sant'Angelo Mercy College, Lowther Hall Anglican Grammar, Firkbank Grammar School and Genazzano College for their high profile involvement in the Federation Celebrations. Though our New Zealand members have not shared this exact history we have moved forward as nations together.

So it is that this issue of *In Alliance* is concentrating on 'Health and Well Being'. We have been fortunate in response to this issue with articles about *The Problem of Bullying*, from Ivanhoe Girls' Grammar School, *Head Hassler meets Mind Master*, from Seymour College, outlining an educational programme promoting positive mental attitudes, *Smoking, Alcohol & Other Drugs: A Perspective*, from Korowa Anglican Girls' School, outlining various research and strategies for coping with these insidious problems, *Creating Listening Spaces*,

from Melbourne Girls' Grammar School – this is fairly self explanatory, *Canteen* from Ipswich Girls' Grammar School, working through the needs of students in the provision of healthy food, *Urban Challenge*, from PLC Perth, which follows the abilities necessary for successful movement in our world today, an insight into body image taken from *Virtually Healthy* a newsletter produced by the Children's Health Development Foundation in South Australia, and an article on *Menopause* to make us aware of sites of information for this problem for our older members.

Our health and well-being are central to our existence. Sadly, it is often not until we are robbed of these elements that we realise their intrinsic value.

Our next edition of *In Alliance* will highlight 'The Arts'. If there are any programmes of interest you are running in your school and would like to share with other members of The Alliance we would like to hear from you. Closing date for copy to me for Edition 20 is 16 July, 2001 so please think about putting pen to paper now.

As we move forward with our new look *In Alliance* we hope you enjoy and benefit from the contents. I wish you all well for the continuing year.

Nancy Hillier, Editor



CONGRATULATIONS HAYLEY EVES

"I hope in 100 years time when Australians gather here once again, that if they are addressed by a female head of state, a female prime minister and a female leader of the opposition, no-one will think it unusual" – strong words from 15 year old Hayley Eves, a year 10 student at Monte Sant'Angelo Mercy College, North Sydney, NSW speaking to an audience of 7000 at the centenary of the Australian Parliament celebrations in Melbourne.

Chosen as a youth envoy by submitting an essay with the topic "What we make it, What you'll make it", Hayley is detailing her experiences (the next highlight is a trip to Alice Springs in September to celebrate Aboriginal Culture through spiritual dance and song) in a Youth Envoy Diary, to be kept in the National Archives in Canberra, not to be opened for 50 years.

Hayley was adopted from Korea when she was five months old, and is proud to be an Australian. She chose the topics for her speech – women's rights, the environment and the republic – because that's what most concerned her and her classmates. Hayley is a remarkable young Asian-Australian woman with a brilliant future ahead – as her father said "Hayley is an enthusiast for life. It's hard to keep her down".

FROM THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER...

...when the success of the whole is dependent on it's parts.



Following the excitement of the Student Leadership Conference, a truly superlative baptism into this position, The Alliance has been bubbling away. On 19 March, 2001 the Executive came together for a 'face-to-face' meeting. We commenced with a dinner on the previous evening, which proved most successful and allowed much interaction prior to the serious business of the meeting the following day. The Agenda set was very lengthy and it was doubted we would work our way through the whole list. But we did! As a result you have all received a letter from Ros Otzen, our President, outlining the significant outcomes of that meeting. I would like to thank Ros Otzen and the members of our Executive for their constant guidance and assistance and their vision for the Alliance.

Patience is a virtue; however when there are plans afoot such as research and a revamped website, we all want to move as quickly as possible. There are, of course, formalities that are required for all such plans and so we are moving through these to reach our goals.

It is important for all members of The Alliance of Girls' Schools Australasia to realise their importance to the whole. As with any organisation, the success of the whole is dependent upon its parts. So it is with AGSA. To contribute to *In Alliance*, to communicate concerns and/or celebrations, to join together for meetings of either a formal or informal nature, is all a part of the importance of the Alliance. As it was with the delegates at the Student Leadership Conference, networking is of utmost importance to us all. There is no state, city or country more important than another. We are all a part of the whole. Now that we are communicating with email, the frequency and informality of such communication will hopefully bring about a closer connection for all of us. Please make sure your correct email address is being used.

A membership list has been included for each school with this mailout of *In Alliance*. We have not, at this stage, reproduced the Membership Directory as there appear to be numbers of schools joining at present. The Executive will review this decision later in the year.

The Joint Conference is moving toward its realisation. We would be most grateful if registrations could be finalised by early June to assist the administration of the conference, so please ignore the final registration date and send your registration in now. I would like to thank Carolyn Anderson and the Steering Group Committee for their tireless work in the preparation for this Conference.

Prior to the Joint Conference we will be holding our Annual General Meeting. Many attendance replies have been received already; however, should yours not have been sent in please follow this up at your earliest convenience. You will have noticed that Stan Klan is stepping down from the Executive and this will leave one place available to be filled on the Executive. There are also two other members of the Executive whose terms are up for renewal. Please note these movements.

Whilst Ros Otzen has been on sabbatical for Term 2, Suzanne McChesney, our Vice-President, has been leading us. I thank her for her guidance and speedy reactions despite distance. When we recall, as we have all been doing lately, a century past, it is truly amazing how simple communication has become with the 21st Century.

Finally, in the compilation of this edition of *In Alliance* I must thank all those who have contributed to this Edition and also Nancy Hillier for her support.

Edwina Sear, Executive Officer

ALLIANCE OF GIRLS' SCHOOLS AUSTRALASIA & THE INTERNATIONAL BOYS' SCHOOL COALITION (AUSTRALIAN HUB)

JOINT CONFERENCE 2001 EQUAL AND DIFFERENT?

*An interesting and thought provoking conference
with a variety of excellent presenters.*

Friday 3 August - Sunday 5 August, 2001

The Southport School, Gold Coast, Queensland

FRI 3 AUGUST	SAT 4 AUGUST	SUN 5 AUGUST
2-4.45 p.m. AGSA Meeting & Registration	Session 1	Chapel
5.00p.m. Welcome	Session 2	Brunch
Drinks	Session 3	Session 4
Conference Dinner	Discussion Forums	Summation
	Dinner at St Hilda's	Optional light lunch

REGISTRATION SHOULD BE MADE BY **FRIDAY 16 JUNE** TO ASSIST WITH ADMINISTRATION FOR THE CONFERENCE
For further details please contact the Executive Officer,
Edwina Sear on Tel: 03 9813 8916 Fax: 9886 9542



Greetings from St Hilda's School at Southport. We look forward to welcoming you all at the seafood buffet on Saturday 4 August as part of the conference. Josie James, Principal.

THE PROBLEM OF BULLYING

...dealing with the behaviour and it's harmful effects.

Bullying in schools remains very much in the news, with an increasing level of awareness among educators and the broader community of the severely damaging effects of bullying. Any school which claims not to have any bullying at all is lacking either honesty or self-knowledge. Schools must have a commitment to work thoughtfully and consistently with all sections of their community to overcome bullying and its harmful effects.

The first step in achieving this is to understand the complexities and subtleties of bullying behaviour. Bullying involves intimidating and frightening behaviour directed by someone perceived as more powerful against someone perceived as less powerful. It may include physical violence, actual or threatened, but in a school situation such as ours it is much more likely to be subtle and involve teasing, put-downs and social exclusion. Regardless of its forms, all bullying is deliberate and intended to hurt. The person doing the bullying may or may not feel guilty about it, but does gain satisfaction from the hurt inflicted. The person who is bullied is made unhappy and can feel isolated and depressed.

Bullying often results in the undermining of self-esteem, confidence and participation, and in the more extreme cases may result in anxiety and apprehension about attending school.

Bullying is therefore too damaging to ignore and it must be prevented.

SURVEYING THE PROBLEM

It is very important for us to have a clear picture of the incidence of bullying at school and the forms it takes. A survey of girls from Years 3 to 12 at Ivanhoe Girls' Grammar School was taken to find out how they perceived the bullying issue.

Various consistent aspects emerged. Most girls felt they had not personally been bullied at school but many were aware of bullying behaviour. More than 80% considered that bullying occurs only infrequently. However, over 10% considered that bullying behaviour occurs regularly. Any forms of physical violence such as hitting or kicking, or threats of physical violence, are reported by the surveys to be extremely rare. The most commonly reported forms of bullying involve teasing, name-calling, hurtful gossip and deliberate social exclusion.

Very often the most hurtful "put-down" remarks will take the form of unpleasant comments about body shape or other physical features, social or ethnic background, other family members and, particularly with older girls, offensive comments about alleged sexual behaviour. It is quite common for derogatory comments to involve anonymous notes, emails or phone calls. While all of these kinds of hurtful comments are

unacceptable and must not be tolerated, it is important to understand that in the context of bullying behaviour, the remarks are delivered with the deliberate intention of producing a hurt reaction. Psychologically speaking, this hurt reaction is the bullying "pay-off" or reinforcement, and in fact if the comments fail to produce a reaction they are unlikely to be repeated. However, another tack may then be tried, in order to test its effect.

All of these forms of bullying may be terribly damaging, particularly if sustained and directed at an individual over a period of time. However they can also be very subtle and difficult to pin down. The result is that put-down behaviours may occur in a variety of structured class settings, not only in less supervised situations such as recess and lunch-times. For girls who feel teased, rejected, snubbed or isolated the outcome can be a seriously damaging sense of not being "safe" and therefore not being able to confidently function at their best either socially or academically.

Staff, parent and student awareness of the causes, forms and effects of bullying is an important first step in dealing with this significant problem.

WHO DO BULLYING VICTIMS TELL?

Sadly, the answer too often is no-one!

As students grow older they are progressively less likely to tell a parent if they feel bullied at school. They are even less likely to tell a teacher or counsellor.

This situation occurs because students who are being bullied often feel inadequate or embarrassed. They may internalise a sense of worthlessness and lack the confidence to speak about it with anyone, believing that no-one could understand their situation and help them to overcome it.

The reality is that telling someone about bullying always helps.

It is clear that girls who feel they are being bullied are likely to confide in other girls. For this reason we need to raise the awareness of all students about bullying, the importance of telling parents and appropriate staff members, and about the fact that bullying feeds on suffering in silence.

It is important that adults are always sensitive to the possibility of bullying wherever there are signs of social withdrawal or any reluctance to attend and fully participate at school. Asking sensitive

questions and always being ready to listen may bring out a disclosure which otherwise would not be made. When a student is being bullied, speaking about it is the first step to overcoming it.

STUDENT AND STAFF TRAINING TO OVERCOME BULLYING

Year 10 girls may be trained as peer support leaders to work intensively with Year 7 girls. Providing Year 7 girls with a network of



responsible older peers, can encourage them to speak up more readily if they experience any form of bullying.

Peer support leaders need to be trained in knowing when to assist with situations themselves, and when to alert appropriate members of staff to the situation so that the right interventions may be made rapidly. They also require training in understanding confidentiality issues.

Role modelling is in itself significant, because it creates a larger number of students who have a clear understanding of how bullying operates and who role-model compassion, caring and friendship to show that bullying is “not on” and must not be tolerated.

In order to complement the peer support initiative together with on-going mentoring and role-modelling, staff members require specific training in conflict resolution skills, including awareness of bullying issues and supportive intervention strategies.

The longer-term solution to bullying is the building of a wide repertoire of responses to bullying within a caring school environment, where all bullying behaviours are recognised as unacceptable, and where anyone who experiences bullying feels confident to speak up and knows who to turn to.

BULLIES NEED HELP TOO

Those who lead or encourage bullying behaviour often suffer from low self-esteem and seek to raise their own esteem by putting down others whom they perceive as vulnerable. Although bullying is deliberate and brings some pleasure or “pay-off” to the bully in the short term, often bullies feel quite remorseful about the cycle of behaviour they are involved in. Almost always, bullies fail to realise just how seriously damaging their behaviour can be.

Group psycho-dynamics are complex, and often bullies are trapped into repeating behaviours which they do not fully understand, just as some other individuals may find themselves caught in a repeated role as a recipient or victim of bullying.

Breaking the cycle is difficult and requires several elements:

- an overall culture of caring in which bullying is widely recognised as wrong, damaging and unacceptable
- an environment which creates favourable conditions for bullying to be reported
- decisive action to confront and prevent any gross bullying behaviours
- on-going and subtle support to promote resiliency in victims of bullying, eg. building up a stronger base of self-esteem
- counselling of those participating in bullying behaviour so that they can better understand the negative consequences of their behaviour
- on-going, carefully targeted training



for peer supporters and staff members

People who are involved in bullying will often seek to deny that the bullying has occurred or that it was serious. However, it is unusual to encounter anyone who will not respond positively to firm, clear and consistent communication about the necessity to understand and stop bullying behaviour.

While students who are victims of bullying need immediate and decisive protection and relief from it, they may also need longer-term support to build their resiliency and make them less vulnerable to bullying behaviour. It is

never as simple as just “warning the bullies to stop.” Because bullying is so often a very complex behaviour, it can seldom be solved in anything other than a short-term sense unless the response is coherent, sustained and carefully orchestrated.

WHAT CAN PARENTS DO?

Firstly, parents can help by understanding that bullying doesn't occur in a social vacuum. Broader society, the world we inhabit as adults, is permeated by conflict situations and complex power relations. Students are exposed to many role models who tell them that bullying behaviours are OK. The first step for all of us who want to prevent bullying is to show that bullying is not OK and that we will support all efforts to prevent it.

Keep all communication channels as open as you possibly can. If you believe your daughter has experienced bullying at school, ensure that this is reported to one of the many appropriate staff members. The bullying will probably make parents feel very

upset and possibly angry; but try to stay calm, and work with key staff to analyse the situation in all its complexity and work through the necessary sequence of responses.

Try to avoid labelling anyone as a victim or a bully. Many students will at some time encounter and be upset by some form of bullying behaviour - and many students will at some time participate in bullying. This may not involve actively participating in bullying but may involve reinforcing it from the sidelines, perhaps by laughing at bullying behaviour or going along with the social exclusion of someone. If at any time it is suggested that your own daughter has played a role in any instance of bullying which is being investigated, try not to be offended by this and actively support the school's efforts to respond to what will almost certainly be a complex situation.

Perhaps, above all, contribute to a whole-school commitment to reduce and eventually eliminate bullying by making it clear that bullying is unacceptable and has to be dealt with.

[We acknowledge and thank Ivanhoe Girls' Grammar School for this article]





URBAN CHALLENGE

...the best learning experience.

An innovation to the Year 9 curriculum at PLC in 2000 saw students spend four days and an evening becoming familiar with, and learning how to survive in the city centres of Perth and Fremantle. The Challenge they were given was to become adept in using various forms of public transport, to navigate around the major parts of the two cities, and to experience the contrast between a city at day as opposed to a city at night. The programme was possible through collaboration with and the support of the Claremont Community Police.

During the day the girls completed a series of inter-disciplinary tasks in both Fremantle and Perth that were not only relevant to their curriculum but also designed to make them aware of facilities, resources and landmarks in the cities. The students travelled in groups of four to such places as the Maritime Museum, the Arts Centre, the Hill in Fremantle (an historical area), cathedrals, shopping centres and the central business district. Staff and parents were strategically placed in both cities to ensure that while the girls were given freedom to move around independently they were within reach of support if needed, having been provided with ID cards and mobile phone numbers of Challenge staff.

Perhaps the most unusual aspect of the week was the opportunity to explore the city at night, known as the 'City after Dark' tour. During the day the centre of Perth is a vibrant business and shopping district which is by and large welcoming and safe, and with a strong sense of community. At night, however, the city can be deserted, alienating and potentially threatening. The aim of the tour was to highlight potential risks in the city of a night, as well as to demonstrate and discuss protective behaviours and strategies that may diminish the risk of personal harm.

The evening tours involve one tutor group of approximately 20 girls at a time wearing casual clothes, not uniforms, travelling into Perth and Northbridge by train with two police officers and two members of PLC staff. Before leaving School the girls are briefed by the police officers on personal safety, particularly the need to stay with a group. This briefing includes strategies for travelling safely at night on public transport - location of video cameras on trains, emergency buttons, waiting under lights at the station, seating oneself near doors, choosing a carriage etc. Once in the city there follows an opportunity to observe and contrast the day and night activities of the central mall area from the relative safety of a McDonald's restaurant. A two-hour walking tour of the city then highlights secure, as well as potentially dangerous, areas. Students are shown the location of



24 hour taxi ranks, as well as 24 hour restaurants that can act as safe houses. A visit to the Police Centre at the central railway station, a mobile police unit in the mall and greetings from on-duty police as the tour moves around the city alerts the girls to the presence, location and support of police at night.

Northbridge is the major restaurant, brothel and nightclub area of Perth and, as such, not a salubrious or safe area to be in alone at night. The tour discusses how to best negotiate a safe passage through this area at night, places that one should definitely avoid and protective behaviours to use in situations where their safety could be threatened. With the security of a police presence the girls are able to personally experience what it is like to be alone in a dark alley at night.

Comments from students participating included:

"It was the best learning experience."

"It gave us responsibility and a sense of making our own decisions."

"I found that I could handle scary situations well."

"I liked the freedom ... of being independent as it is part of growing up."

Freedom is important - the freedom to move around the city safely, freedom to make wise choices, and freedom to be confident and responsible citizens. At PLC we have found that the 'City after Dark' tours are empowering students to enjoy the benefits that a city has to offer in a safe and responsible way.

[We acknowledge and thank Presbyterian Ladies' College, Perth for this article]

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CREATING LISTENING SPACES

...feeling heard, supported and understood.

It is my long held belief that most young people want desperately to have their thoughts, concerns, feelings and passions heard by an older audience. Young people generally seek relationships with older people, and it is our role to help them find a mutually comfortable space in which these relationships can develop – to assist them to feel heard, supported and understood.

Currently there is much talk about resilience and the importance of young people forming real connections in their lives. Here once again I believe that this process takes place naturally when doubts and fears are alleviated.

In order to help the girls at our school find a comfortable “listening space”, we try to be creative! Different girls need different kinds of space. In the last couple of years, we have done a few things that have helped us to build bridges to some of the girls who had previously been quite isolated. The way they have responded has been truly amazing to see.

One of our projects was a book, which we produced, entitled “Crumpled Papers”. This was a chance for girls to put their thoughts and feelings in a public space, in an anonymous way. The following piece from this book, describes well what young people see as their needs in their connections with us...

THE JOURNEY

A path leads into the distance, covered by thickets that block the way. We hesitatingly take those first steps.

Some fall along the way, caught up in the bracken that obstructs the path. Others take short cuts, only to be misled and made to start their journey over.

But there are those who continue on the path. They succeed, not because of their determination, although that helps them, nor their perseverance, which keeps them on the path. They make it by using the walking stick cut from a strong oak. It helps them clear the way, to support them when they falter and is a model of what they want to become.

Some do not use their walking sticks, thinking of them as a crutch. They want to be independent and strong but falter along the way. Most realise the value of the walking stick, even though their pride won't let them admit it.

Be the walking stick in our life, not to show us the way, but to help us when we falter, to take away the immovable obstruction from our path and to be the person we should become.

(author 16 years, anonymous)

It is vital for all of us to reflect on the limits so often placed on our relationships with young people, and to constantly challenge ways to provide them with the space that they want and need.

*[We acknowledge and thank
Melbourne Girls Grammar for this article]*



***“A path leads into the distance,
covered by thickets that block
the way. We hesitatingly take
those first steps...”***



SMOKING, ALCOHOL & OTHER DRUGS: A PERSPECTIVE

...it clear that a multi-strategy approach is required.

Parents are rightly anxious about their children's response to the many drugs which pervade our society. Recent discussions about appropriate ways to protect young people make it clear that a multi-strategy approach is required.

The good news is that, with proper accurate information, a supportive family and a school environment which makes each student feel she is safe and personally valued, a young person can make mature and sensible decisions about her own health and behaviour. But we do know that young people do experiment, sometimes harmfully.

"Much research indicates that participation in school is a protective factor against problematic drug use and a host of other psycho-social problems. Conversely, low attachment to school, academic failure and behavioural problems are precursors of high-risk behaviours including heavy drug use."

Next Step II, p.4

Valuable resources such as Next Step II assist in educating young people about illicit drugs. This programme is produced by the Centre for Youth Drug Studies of the Australian Drug Foundation. Also available are Get Real and Get Wise produced by the Victorian Department of Education, Employment and Training.

Australian governments have adopted a harm minimisation approach to drug issues. Harm minimisation is defined by the National Drug Strategy as:

"...involving a range of approaches to prevent and reduce drug-related harm, including prevention, early intervention, specialist treatment, supply control, safer drug use and abstinence."

The harm minimisation model can be applied to other health matters such as teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, and underpins a range of health initiatives.

FOUR PERSONAL SAFETY MESSAGES

- We have the right to feel safe and be safe.
- We can take action on every problem.
- We can talk about anything with people we trust.
- We can persist in taking action to improve our safety.

Personal Safety messages should be reinforced across all areas in schools. Girls who are struggling with homework, friendship problems, deciding on a career or working through home difficulties should be assisted in a range of ways, the help being underpinned by these messages.

CIGARETTE SMOKING

Recent evidence indicates that adolescent girls are actually taking up smoking at an increasing rate.

In 2000 a number of Korowa Anglican Girls' School students took part in research involving 249 girls from several independent girls' schools were surveyed in a research project into cigarette smoking,

conducted through the School of Psychology at Deakin University. The project focussed on girls' self-concept, coping skills, their friendship patterns, and their use of cigarettes. The results will be published this year, but the major findings, made available by researcher Danielle Bruce, showed that 50.4% of girls had never smoked. However, 49.6% had smoked a cigarette at some stage to see what it was like, and 15.8% could already be classified as current smokers.

The survey data show that these current smokers see themselves as sociable and probably more daring than other girls. They have a less positive self-concept than the non-smokers, rely on others and engage in more non-productive coping strategies when stressed. They are more likely to see themselves as mean, nasty and unreliable, and to quite like that view of themselves, than non-smokers.

The use of smoking as a non-productive coping strategy is in line with other studies which show that people use smoking to help cope with stress. A non-smoker and her non-smoking friends seem to be more able to cope independently with stress. This highlights the importance of the peer group to young smokers; their peer group may encourage smoking to deal with stress.

Smoking is also used to enhance a girls' reputation among her peers: girls actively choose smoking for this reason. A reputation for not conforming can distinguish a girl from her peers, and some girls see non-conforming as admirable. Current smokers also place higher value on being part of a social group, and work hard to impress their friends and gain support from them. They will go to great lengths to gain a reputation within their peer group.

The connection between sociability and self-concept gives a clear indication of the direction schools should take in educating girls.

- The strengthening of self-concept for each girl, through encouragement and rewarding involvement in school activities with their peer group;
- Teaching girls to help them gain an understanding of how friendship groups can work, and to identify and thus minimise harmful interactions;
- Adopting a strong stance within the school against smoking, by both staff and non-smoking students, especially admired student leaders;
- Modelling healthy group dynamics, both by staff as a group, and through classroom and co-curricular interactions, which stress the value of the individual and the strength of a positive group.

ALCOHOL

Research findings from the 1995 Australian Drug Foundation's Gender and Alcohol project, show that 71% of 15 to 17 year olds had drunk alcohol; half of these had drunk more than twice in the fortnight of the survey, and 28% had drunk three or more times. The proportion of those drinking had fallen since 1998 (77% to 71%) but they were drinking more.

The growth of 'binge drinking' is of real concern. On their last drinking occasion, nearly 20% of teenagers had consumed 10 or more standard drinks. About two thirds of the alcohol was supplied by parents and friends, and most teens (63%) had drunk under adult supervision on the last occasion they drank. Parents consistently underestimated the

"Prohibition or a 'just say no' approach – will work for some people but has proven to be generally ineffective."

amount of alcohol their children drank.

Drinking is a highly social activity, especially for girls, but a large majority of teenagers reported negative events associated with drinking: 68% had witnessed violence, and 68% had to look after friends who had drunk too much. Many young people were getting drunk because they wanted to be drunk. Unwanted sex was a real problem for many girls, who were themselves too drunk to exercise choice, or correctly use protection.

While indicating a growing sense of helplessness as key role models in influencing their teen's drinking behaviour, parents (95%) did accept responsibility for teaching children safe drinking habits. However, they expressed a need for support and information to assist them with this task.

OTHER DRUGS

Cannabis is the most popular illegal drug used by young people and adults alike. In 1998, 26% of Australians considered it 'acceptable'. Research data suggest that 12-15% of students may be regular users. Most young people's use of cannabis remains 'experimental' and short-term. There is research which demonstrates the potential for significant harm to long-term cannabis users.

Psychoactive drugs – depressants, stimulants and hallucinogens – affect the central nervous system. Some drugs may have multiple effects: Ecstasy is a stimulant and an hallucinogen, while cannabis is a depressant and an hallucinogen. There is potential for harm through the use of all these drugs, and their effects are difficult to predict, depending on the individual, the context of use, and what combination of drugs may have been taken. (Alcohol is the most widely taken psychoactive recreational drug in Australia.) Amphetamines are stimulants, and speed up bodily functions, increasing heart rate, breathing and blood pressure. Cocaine is also a stimulant: according to recent research, 4.3% of Australians reported using cocaine on at least one occasion. Heroin is a depressant, slowing down the central nervous system. The great majority of Victorian school students (97%) have never used cocaine or heroin; the mean age of initiation is about 22 years. LSD is an hallucinogen, and distorts perceptions of reality in time and space. According to recent research, 10% of Australians 14 and over have used an hallucinogen on at least one occasion. After cannabis, hallucinogens and amphetamines were the next most commonly used illegal substances among secondary students. 7% of students reported using this type of drug. Use by older students is more common. Minor tranquillisers such as sleeping pills are depressants. 6.2% of Australians 14 and over have used tranquilliser and sleeping pills. There has been a significant increase in the use of sleeping tablets and sedatives by young people, from 11% of Victorian students in 1992, to 18% in 1995. Steroids are used mostly by elite sportspeople.

THE CURRENT DEBATE

Families across Australia have received a booklet this year designed to assist parents in talking to their children about drugs. As part of the Tough on Drugs national campaign, the Prime Minister Mr Howard, is stressing the important role parents can play in easing Australia's youth and drugs problem. The messages are simple: that family environment does help promote resiliency and that parents can help protect their young people by talking openly about risks associated with use of illegal drugs. Parents may choose to interpret the Government's words as blaming families for the drug problem; they may consider the Prime Minister to be passing the "health promotion and treatment buck" on to families; or they may appreciate the relay of information about drugs and the timely reminder about their role as parents.

At much the same time as the Federal Government is pushing for

family action and using a range of scare tactics, the Victorian Parliament has been hotly debating a whole range of strategies for better coping with what is deemed by many experts a youth health crisis and a threat to Australia's future. The police, the church, medicos, youth workers...expert Victorians are having their say about what ought be done by wider society as well as by families.

In this climate, it is little wonder that parents are anxious about drug use in young people. It is imperative we understand the complexity of the youth drug problem and to be aware of the role families have in helping equip girls to keep safe from harms associated with drug use and abuse.

What works?

- Training in broader personal and social skills such as decision-making, anxiety reduction, communication and assertiveness.
- Provision of accurate and factual information.
- Training in social skills or how to recognise influences and resist them effectively.
- Normative education illustrating that illicit drug use is not the norm.
- Interactive teaching strategies supported by appropriate professional development.
- Anchoring drug education in Health key learning areas.
- Sufficient allocation of time, reinforcement and follow-up.
- Programs occurring in association with media, community and parental response.

What does not work?

- One-off programs.
- Approaches that attempt to scare students out of drug use by exaggerating the danger and presenting misleading information (this can result in the teacher losing credibility with the students).
- Focusing solely on the long-term impact of drug use.
- Brief interventions by external 'drug educators' or ex-users. (This approach may glamorise drug taking or lead to increased interest or experimentation.)
- Knowledge-only (focusing only on provision of information) and affective-only (focusing only on the development of self-esteem, personal growth) programs.
- Prohibition or a 'just say no' approach – will work for some people but has proven to be generally ineffective.

[From Get Wise, p. 19]

RESOURCES

Drug Information Line 131570 Kids Help Line 1800 551 800

Bui, Caroline (2000): *Moving On: drug education for students with special needs*, Melbourne, Australian Drug Foundation 2000

Munro, G & Bellhouse, R (1997): *Next Step: educating young people about illegal drugs*, Melbourne, ADF

Bellhouse, R & Munro, G (2001): *Next Step II*: Melbourne, ADF

Get Real: *A harm minimisation approach to drug education for primary and secondary schools*: Department of Education Victoria 1995

Get Wise: *Working on Illicits in School Education*: DEET, Victoria, 2000

[We acknowledge and thank Korowa Anglican Girls' School for this article]



PROMOTING POSITIVE BODY IMAGE

...high on the agenda.

From the latest edition (19) of 'Virtually Healthy', a newsletter produced by the Children's Health Development Foundation in South Australia, topics of health are covered widely. This newsletter is available online at www.chdf.org.au and from 1 June when a new website will be launched each article from 'Virtually Healthy' will be available separately. It will be possible to instigate a search for a specific topic and download articles pertinent to that topic alone, thus not requiring any edition to be downloaded in its entirety. This is a worthwhile site.

Quoting from Edition 19 (not yet online):

"Positive body image is central to emotional well being, self-esteem and confidence. Poor body image is associated with low self-esteem, depression, poor eating habits, unhealthy weight loss practices and the development of eating disorders. Poor body image has also been identified as a barrier to participation in physical activity, particularly in women. With growing community concern about body image, promoting healthy body image is now high on the agenda of a range of health professionals, teachers, sports people and counsellors working with young people in various settings." (Peter Wooller, CHDF)

In an article titled *Community Concern about body image and obesity Opposing forces?* we read:

"In the media we read about how Australians are challenging the Americans as one of the fattest countries in the world. At the same time I hear of 5 and 6 year old girls saying 'I'm fat' when clearly they are not. The hairdresser tells me of her friend who chose not to breastfeed to avoid sagging breasts, and workers with young offenders report that weight loss is one reason that keeps young girls on illicit drugs.

The concurrent rise in the number of people being overweight or obese, together with body discontent, represents a dilemma for many health and education professionals and the public.

'Should we be encouraging people to accept themselves when we are all getting so

fat?!' How can we negotiate this apparent great divide between Body Image (BI) and Body Mass Index (BMI)?" (Thea O'Connor, former Director of Body Image and Health Inc (Victoria))

And from another article covering body image: *Children's body image - It starts sooner than you think!*

"A great deal of research has shown that many adult women and adolescent girls are unhappy with their body size and shape. In particular, they think that they are too fat and strive to be thinner, so much so that

weight has been described as 'a normative discontent' for females in our society. As a response, many women and girls diet, and these high levels of body dissatisfaction and dieting are thought to contribute to the incidence of the clinical eating disorders of anorexia and bulimia nervosa.

When does it start?

Not surprisingly, much of the research attention and many of the interventions have targeted adolescent girls, for whom appearance becomes a crucial aspect of their self-esteem. However, it is clear that for many girls the drive for thinness is well established before puberty. Increasingly research has documented body dissatisfaction and even dieting in girls as young as 8, 9 and 10 years of age. So the question arises as to when does it start?

...What we found was that 6 and 7 year old girls rated their ideal figure as significantly thinner than their current figure, in a way that 5 year old girls, and boys of all ages did not. Although the study was small and requires replication, this suggests that a desire to be thinner emerges at a very young age in girls, at around age 6." (Marika Tiggemann, PhD, Associate Professor in Psychology, Flinders University).

[We wish to acknowledge and thank Peter Wooller at the Children's Health Development Foundation for allowing us to reproduce the above segments from 'Virtually Healthy' and recommend this publication to AGSA members]

"A health promoting school approach provides the framework for addressing the many influences on body image."

(Wooller, P. Virtually Healthy, p.1)

CANTEEN - UPPING THE

... a central place for

At the beginning of 2001, our school took our first step into a new venture. With students from Years 1 to 12, and a sprawling campus, we have agonised during the last few years, over the issue of the school canteen. Our canteen was established at a time when there were fewer than 700 students and their needs were simpler. As a Health Promoting School we were also conscious of the need to provide 'healthy' food to girls whose tastes vary as widely as their interests.

The answer for us was to break new ground at our school. We moved our canteen to the dining room, once inhabited only by our boarding students. Our catering manager and her kitchen staff took over the running of the canteen and we decided to open for breakfast, morning tea and lunch.

When developing the menu for the school canteen, our catering manager, who is a qualified nutritionist, chose to walk the fine line between food that is healthy and food that is appealing to girls from Years 1 to 12, and boys from Years 1 to 4. Most food items sold in the canteen are made on the premises. Each day, the students can choose from a Special of the Day, such as chicken and rice, chicken burgers, fried rice, pasta, nachos or baked potato wedges. Fresh salads and filled rolls, pita bread pizzas, homemade sausage rolls, quiches, pies (with the Heart Tick of Approval), and fresh fruit salad are available on a daily basis. In addition, for a treat, the students can choose a cookie, butterfly cake or slice which has been baked on the premises. We do not sell soft drink, but have opted for fruit juice, flavoured mineral water and flavoured milk. There are a limited range of ice blocks and some chocolates.

Breakfast offers a menu of cereal and fresh fruit, toast, scrambled eggs, or baked beans or bacon and eggs. The menu varies each day and has proven to be popular with students who have early morning sports training, or travel long distances by bus. Some of our parents have taken the opportunity to come and have breakfast with their children. Morning tea will vary each day, but most items are made on the premises.

We have provided the students with a range of healthy options, while retaining some items which may not fit strictly into the health promoting guidelines. Our students are very positive about the new canteen and the menu. They appreciate the wide choice and have commented on the healthy alternatives that are available to them. As we have noted with our boarding students, over the last years, the girls are aware of the importance of healthy eating and the benefits to be gained from a diet which includes fruit, vegetables and lean meat. While our boarding students enjoy a lamb or pork roast, they ask for pasta and stir fries to be kept on the boarding house menu.

THE STANDARDS

the whole school community.



Like most schools, we have found it difficult to fill our parent roster for the canteen. We have continued to ask for parent assistance in the canteen this year, but we can be more flexible about the time period and the types of duties they can take on. Some of our parents will come for a day and they can be asked to assist with the making of rolls or fruit salad. Some of the parents will come in at lunch time and assist at the counters. We appreciate their assistance and the parents have the chance to spend some time with their daughter or son. Their feedback on the canteen has been positive and they like the flexibility offered to them in tasks to be done.

We have been able to establish a friendly and relaxed atmosphere in the canteen. Staff will come in and make their purchases and often the students will stand in front of the counter and ponder over the choices available to them. As Principal, I find the canteen an ideal venue for spending some time with the students. They are quite comfortable in speaking with me about a range of topics and all the staff are happy to lend a hand behind the counter when we have a rush of hungry students. My greatest pleasure is seeing our Mothers come and have lunch with their children.

We have taken one step and in the next months, there will be further refining of the menu. Eventually, we would like to establish an outdoor eating area for the staff and students. Our aim has been to make the canteen a central place for the school community where we can all purchase a healthy lunch and relax, even for a short period. We believe that such an environment benefits the well being of us all.

[We acknowledge and thank Ipswich Girls' Grammar School for this article]

AND IN THE MISTS OF TIME...

...discussing menopause.

As *In Alliance* reaches a wide range of people and ages, this Health and Well Being edition seemed an appropriate time to introduce a topic which is becoming increasingly important as the *post war baby boomers* move into their midlife zone. Due to this population wave and population growth generally, Australia has a greater number of women in, or approaching, menopause than ever before. The teaching profession is heavily weighted with women and so information on this topic is vital. One organisation which deals with women's health is the Jean Hailes Foundation. This foundation has a website (<http://www.jeanhailes.org.au>).

To quote from that website. "Dr Jean Hailes was a pioneer in women's health in Australia. In 1974 she established the first clinic in Australia dedicated to the management of menopause. Following Jean's death in 1988, her colleagues and friends established a foundation to honour her memory.

The Jean Hailes Foundation, a registered charity, was established in Victoria in 1991 providing an important service for the community. It is now regarded throughout Australia as a leader in the education, clinical care and research in women's health."

Some quotations from press releases from this organisation follow:

"Women spend about one third of their lives post menopausal but as life span increases so does the time spent in the post menopausal state. Health implications are varied with increased cardiovascular events, cancers, decreased libido and even hip fractures." (*Testosterone Patch Study*, Davis S, 24 August 2000)

"...although women usually glean information about menopause from women's magazines, they really want to spend time talking to their doctors about their health at this time of life. Education and Development Officer with the RACGP's Victorian Faculty, Dr Pam Montgomery, suggests at this stage of life women may be dealing with difficulties with a partner, demanding adolescents and ageing parents. (*Boosting rural women's health*, The Jean Hailes Foundation, June 2000)

"As many women approach mid-life they

can experience not only physiological changes associated with menopause, but also changes in relationships and their role in the family, body image and their purpose in life. For some women over 40 these changes can result in symptoms of depression, anxiety and lowered self-esteem." (*Women 40 plus neglect basic diet and health needs, experts warn*, Associate Professor Susan Davis, Research Director of the Jean Hailes Foundation)

Though this may appear to be a promotion, it is not the intention. It is hoped that by alerting readers to this organization, other avenues of information on this important topic will be sought out. Here are a few to start you off:

Women's Health Victoria
(Freecall 1800 133 321);

The Australasian Menopause Society
(www.menopause.org.au) - this site has a wide range of books, journals, educational courses and articles on this subject.

Women's Health Queensland Wide Inc
(www.womhealth.org.au)

Health Insite - Information resource supplied the Commonwealth government
(www.healthinsite.gov.au)

Mid-Life & Menopause Support Group, based in Subiaco, Western Australia
(www.span.com.au)

NSW Health (<http://mhcs.health.nsw.gov.au>)

Tasmanian Women's Health Network
(www.tased.edu.au/tasonline/twhn/twhn.htm)

Monash Faculty of Medicine Health Promotion
(<http://www.med.monash.edu.au/general-practice/healthpromotion//links.html>)
Monash University's Health Promotion Unit offers a factsheet on menopause.

The Australian Department of Health and Aged Care (www.health.gov.au) or to access Government Health for each state go to (www.gov.au) and select your state.

For New Zealand the XTRA website has a multitude of areas including one for health issues which covers this and other topics - <http://www.xtra.co.nz/health>

The North American Menopause Society
(<http://www.menopause.org>)

"Australia has a greater number of women in, or approaching, menopause than ever before."



HEAD HASSLER MEETS MIND MASTER

...developing positive mental attitudes and habits.

The emotional health and well being of students is the focus of a program introduced by Seymour College, Adelaide this year. School Counsellor, Helen Fuller is introducing Junior School students to the puppet characters Head Hassler and Mind Master as part of the Health/Personal Development Curriculum.

You can do it! Education provides a new framework for students, teachers and parents to develop positive mental attitudes and habits which help students to achieve their full potential, and to be successful both in study and in life. Program Achieve is a complete set of lessons designed for children at different ages and levels of maturity. The lessons build confidence and self esteem in students and promote positive outcomes through the development of sound habits of thinking. Further, the lessons develop students' resilience by preparing them to cope with the pressures of the academic curriculum. Teachers are offered training in behaviour specific feedback to complement the lessons. There is also a parent component called Compass, which increases the benefit to families. The program thus establishes a link between school and home.

[We acknowledge and thank Seymour College for this article]



Seymour College School Counsellor Helen Fuller discussing Head Hassler and Mind Master with a junior student.



COLOUR AND MOVEMENT POSSUMS!

Students from Lowther Hall Anglican Grammar School, dressed as mini Dame Ednas and her entourage of show dancers, represented the City Of Moonee Valley in *Our Nation on Parade* on Sunday May 6.

Photo courtesy *The Australian*