



# Gender Equality Policy

## Introduction

**Frankston Heights Primary School** is committed to creating a school community where all staff and students are equally respected and valued and enjoy equity of both opportunity and outcomes.

**Frankston Heights Primary School** recognises that gender inequality has the potential to limit and impact negatively on the safety, education, employment, family lives and opportunities of staff and students, particularly women and girls, in the immediate and long term.

Under the *Victorian Equal Opportunity Act 2010* all organisations have a *positive duty* to take proactive steps to prevent discriminatory practices.<sup>1</sup> **Frankston Heights Primary School** recognises the prevalence and impact of gender-based discrimination and harassment, and is committed to building a school culture that challenges the stereotypes, power differences and social norms that foster gender inequality.

**Frankston Heights Primary School** recognises that gender inequality is both structural and individual; this means it is not only the result of individual attitudes and actions, but also of biases in structures, systems, policies and processes throughout our community.

Girls and boys, women and men are subject to gendered stereotypes and expectations about how they should behave, think and act. These gendered stereotypes and expectations contribute to gender inequality by assigning unequal value, status and power to women and men. These expectations are reinforced by structures, systems, norms and cultures that often privilege the knowledge, rights, perspectives and skills of males over females.

Gender inequality can be both a cause and a consequence of direct and indirect discrimination. This discrimination is sometimes the result of unconscious bias which is when our behaviours, choices and practices are shaped by underlying assumptions and attitudes without us realising. Gender inequality is evident throughout our society, and research suggests it is one of the key factors driving the prevalence of gender-based violence.<sup>2</sup>

**Frankston Heights Primary School** recognises that schools are vital spaces in our community to promote gender equality and prevent violence against women. Every policy, practice and activity has the potential to reinforce or challenge gender stereotypes and gendered inequality.

On behalf of the whole school community, the principal, the School Council and the Student Representative Council support this policy. Our commitments

**Frankston Heights Primary School**, as an education institution and an employer, is committed to promoting gender equality and to ensuring equality of opportunity and outcomes for all staff and students.

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<sup>1</sup> Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (2011) *Positive duty: Know your responsibilities*, <http://www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au/index.php/our-resources-and-publications/know-your-responsibilities-brochures/item/133-positive-duty-know-your-responsibilities-aug-2011>.

<sup>2</sup> Our Watch, ANROWS and VicHealth (2015) *Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia*, Our Watch, Melbourne.

**Gender equality** involves equality of opportunity and equality of results. It includes the redistribution of resources and responsibilities between women and men and the transformation of the underlying causes and structures of gender inequality to achieve substantive equality. It is about recognising diversity and disadvantage to ensure equal outcomes for all and therefore often requires women-specific programs and policies to end existing inequalities.

**Frankston Heights Primary School** will ensure that all staff, students and school policies, procedures, systems and structures actively promote gender equality and seek to expose and redress gender inequities.

### **School culture and environment**

At **Frankston Heights Primary School**, all students and staff are responsible for promoting gender equality and modelling respectful relationships. All staff and students will be held accountable if they use language and/or demonstrate behaviour that:

- promotes unequal power relations between women and men
- perpetuates harmful gender stereotypes
- condones violence against women.

**For example:** Unacceptable behaviour includes accessing or sharing sexist or discriminatory materials at school, during school hours or using school property, using sexist, stereotyping or discriminatory language, dismissing acts of gender-based violence as trivial, making jokes that rely on gender stereotypes, and victim blaming when discussing gender-based violence.

Promoting gender equality and modelling respectful relationships is just as important for staff as it is for students.

**Frankston Heights Primary School** will work to ensure all staff feel respected, safe and valued in the workplace, and will take proactive measures to prevent and eliminate gender discrimination and provide equal opportunities for all staff. This will include promoting gender equality in school leadership, ensuring processes and policies are free of bias, and supporting all staff to balance work and family commitments.

**For example:** Commitments include actively supporting and/or mentoring female staff, reviewing recruitment and professional processes to eliminate unconscious gender bias, facilitating flexible work arrangements and family leave in line with department guidelines, and providing private breastfeeding facilities.

**Frankston Heights Primary School** will support staff who experience domestic/family violence or sexual assault including by making reasonable efforts to grant appropriate leave, adjust work assignments or accommodate requests for flexible work hours.