

**CREATING**



**RESPECTFUL**



**RELATIONSHIPS**



**CITY IN THE  
COMMUNITY**



**LA TROBE  
UNIVERSITY**

# EXECUTIVE

# SUMMARY

The Man Up - Creating Respectful Relationships program, delivered by City in The Community (CiTC) was funded through the Federal Government Safer Communities Fund.

Curriculum aligned and co-written by Relationships Australia, the program was evaluated by Dr Pam Kappelides from La Trobe University, aimed to challenge harmful masculinity stereotypes, promote gender equality, and encourage healthy, respectful relationships among participants in both classroom and sports settings. This evaluation focused on measuring the extent to which the program's goals were met, examining participant experiences and assessing the long-term impact of the program across different environments, including schools and sports clubs.

Sport, particularly football, is used as a tool to engage young people in discussions

about gender equality and healthy relationships. Football is traditionally seen as reinforcing hyper-masculine behaviours, but the Man Up program leverages its influence to promote positive masculinity. The program uses respected figures, such as MCFC players and young leaders, to model healthier behaviours, helping participants apply lessons learned from a sporting environment to their personal lives. The Man Up program promotes healthy relationships built on respect, trust and open communication. Educational interventions have been shown to reduce the acceptance of gender-based violence and improve relationship skills, particularly among young men. This program encourages participants to reflect on how masculinity impacts their behaviour in relationships, contributing to more positive dynamics.

Building resilience, the ability to cope with adversity, is a key focus of the Man Up program. The program fosters emotional intelligence, encouraging participants to express vulnerability and seek support. Research supports the idea that resilience-building programs, particularly those that challenge harmful masculine norms, help reduce risky behaviours and promote emotional health.

A qualitative research approach was employed to evaluate the program's impact on participants' attitudes towards gender equality, relationships and resilience. Data collection included semi-structured interviews, focus groups and participant observations. The study involved 55 participants, including students, teachers and program facilitators, from a range of primary and secondary schools.

## TEACHER

**“ THERE'S LESS PRESSURE NOW TO ALWAYS ACT TOUGH. THE BOYS IN PARTICULAR ARE MORE COMFORTABLE TALKING ABOUT THEIR FEELINGS, AND IT'S CREATED A STRONGER SENSE OF WELLBEING IN THE CLASSROOM.”**

1

## SHIFT IN MASCULINE ATTITUDES

Participants reported feeling more comfortable expressing emotions and challenging toxic masculinity.

2

## POSITIVE PEER INFLUENCE

Peers played a significant role in reinforcing the program's messages, especially in school and sports settings.

3

## IMPROVED RELATIONSHIPS

Participants demonstrated better communication and respect in school, home and team environments.

The Man Up - Creating Respectful Relationships program successfully promoted respectful behaviours, gender equality and emotional resilience among participants. While challenges remain in sustaining long-term behavioural changes, the program has positively impacted classroom and sports environments. Ongoing support and tailored interventions are recommended to ensure the program's long-term success and wider adoption.

## STUDENT

"I LIKED THE PROGRAM BECAUSE WE PLAYED SOCCER BUT DIDN'T THINK THE OTHER STUFF WAS GOOD BECAUSE MY FAMILY HAS STRICT RULES ABOUT WHAT GIRLS AND BOYS CAN DO."

## TEACHER

"I'VE SEEN A REAL CHANGE IN HOW SOME OF THE STUDENTS HANDLE STRESS. THEY'RE MORE LIKELY TO COME AND TALK TO ME WHEN THEY'RE FEELING OVERWHELMED, RATHER THAN JUST SHUTTING DOWN."



# STUDENT

# TEACHER

**“THE PROGRAM HAS REALLY BROUGHT THE CLASS TOGETHER. THERE’S MORE EMPATHY AND UNDERSTANDING, AND STUDENTS ARE MORE WILLING TO SPEAK UP WHEN THEY SEE SOMETHING WRONG. I HOPE THIS CONTINUES BEYOND THE NEXT FEW WEEKS.”**

**“BEFORE, I’D GET ANGRY AND SHUT PEOPLE OUT. NOW, I TRY TO TALK THINGS THROUGH AND LISTEN TO THEIR SIDE.”**

**“WE’VE ALWAYS BEEN COMPETITIVE, BUT NOW IT’S LESS ABOUT WINNING AND ABOUT BEING A BETTER TEAM AND SUPPORTIVE, NOT MEAN.”**

**STUDENT**



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