



WALK THE TALK:
Our pioneering 'Respectful
Relationships and Consent'
program for young people

IMPACT REPORT – 2023

RESEARCH PARTNER

**SOCIAL
IMPACT
HUB**

**WOMEN'S
COMMUNITY
SHELTERS**

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Women's Community Shelters (WCS) acknowledges the traditional custodians of the many different lands across Australia, including Torres Strait Islander and First Nations people, and pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

As we work to address the pressing issues of domestic and family violence and homelessness, we must recognise the strength and resilience of these communities, who have endured these challenges for generations.

We also acknowledge the ongoing consequences of colonisation, which continue to impact these communities today. WCS stands in solidarity with Torres Strait Islander and First Nations people, and we are committed to working towards a more just and equitable future for all Australians.

We acknowledge the importance of self-determination, and we are committed to listening to and learning from these communities as we work together to create a safer, more inclusive society for women and children escaping homelessness and domestic and family violence.

A message from our CEO, Annabelle Daniel OAM



Domestic and family violence is a 'wicked problem' in Australian society.

A social issue of this magnitude can seem too big for one person to make a difference alone, yet when you break it down into specific actions and explain to people 'this is how your business, school or club can make a difference, and here is something to do', the goodwill and enthusiasm is overwhelming.

It is rare to see glimmers of hope in this field, but our Walk The Talk program is most certainly one of them.

Walk The Talk students learn about respectful relationships, consent and domestic violence, whilst also 'adopting' their local Women's Community Shelter for a year, undertaking practical projects in support of the shelter.

This embeds learning, promotes community engagement, and gives students practical and positive ways to support women and children affected by domestic violence in their community.

The energy, joy and commitment from these students, and the unparalleled expertise of the Walk The Talk team led by Dannielle Miller OAM, generate extraordinary moments every single year.

I commend every school and every student for their engagement in Walk The Talk, and its outcomes as demonstrated in this Social Impact Report. I can't wait to see the program expand further.

Annabelle Daniel OAM
Chief Executive Officer
Women's Community Shelters

A message from our Director of Education and Special Projects, Dannielle Miller OAM

As an educator who has spent over 30 years teaching teens, I've always believed that if engaged in the right way, young people can (and will) change the world.

So, when I first joined the Women's Community Shelter family as a volunteer board director at the Hills Women's Shelter, The Sanctuary back in 2014, I knew I wanted to help make our frontline services redundant.

Walk The Talk aims to bring about generational change.

There's no lecturing or scaremongering. Rather, it's a strength-focused, inclusive program that allows teens to practically apply what they have learned about respectful relationships and consent by adopting their local shelter.

I am inspired by the fact our Walk The Talkers have added almost \$150,000 of value to their communities through goods, donations and volunteering.

But I am equally proud of the teens who have disclosed abuse to their teachers after our session. Of the young woman who got home from school after her day with us and convinced her mother to leave abuse, and seek shelter in our care. And of the Year 10 boys, like our case study Marko, who have become valued allies.

May this program fill you with a sense of pride and possibility too.

Dannielle Miller OAM,
Director of Education
and Special Projects



WOMEN'S COMMUNITY SHELTERS

SUPPORTING WOMEN AND CHILDREN AFFECTED BY DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE AND HOMELESSNESS.

At Women's Community Shelters (WCS) we spend every day working community by community to establish an Australia where women and children are safe, secure, supported and equal.



WALK THE TALK

THE WALK THE TALK STORY

We designed our pioneering program, Walk The Talk, to help break the cycle of gender-based violence using a two-pronged approach.

Firstly, by educating young people and their communities

about domestic and family violence (DFV) and respectful relationships (phase one, the in-school education workshop), and secondly, by encouraging young people to provide practical support to their local community shelters through fundraising, volunteering and awareness raising (phase two, the service learning journey).

Our goal is to help educate teenagers in a meaningful way that moves beyond theory and token gestures and into purposeful informed action, empowering them to be agents of change to create the world they would like to live in.

Since the Walk The Talk program launched in 2019, over 12,000 students have participated in our school workshops and have supported our work through a significant number of awareness and fundraising activities. We wholeheartedly thank them for their participation and support.

We would also like to extend our thanks to all the other volunteers, as well as donors and organisations that have worked with us, supporting our efforts over the past year.

Our successes could not have been achieved without you.

Developed in line with the NSW Department of Education respectful relationships curriculum for Year 9 and Year 10 students.

OUR IMPACT JOURNEY SO FAR

In 2023, the team at Walk The Talk made a commitment to improve the way we measure our impact. We could see the transformative impact we were having on young people, but we wanted to be able to demonstrate it, empirically and independently.

SOCIAL IMPACT HUB

We engaged the Social Impact Hub (SIH) to help us achieve this, and this report is the first step in this impact journey.

It contains the findings of surveys, interviews and other data designed by SIH, collected by Walk The Talk (WTT), and reviewed by SIH.

We will continue to refine our measurement and evaluation practices to ensure that Walk The Talk is built on evidence, is well targeted to those needing our support, and is genuinely delivering on impact.

IMPACT SURVEY METHODOLOGY

In 2023 we surveyed key stakeholders to assess the impact of Walk The Talk on community knowledge and capacity to practice and support respectful relationships and civic participation and provide additional resources for our shelter network. **Our approach:**

Students:

- ▶ **Phase 1:** 2700+ Students completed an in-person survey designed by the workshop providers, Enlighten Education, directly after in-school workshop.
- ▶ **Phase 2:** 200+ Students completed an online survey designed by Social Impact Hub 3-6 months after the opportunity for service-learning.
- ▶ Two long-form qualitative interviews via phone completed by Social Impact Hub.

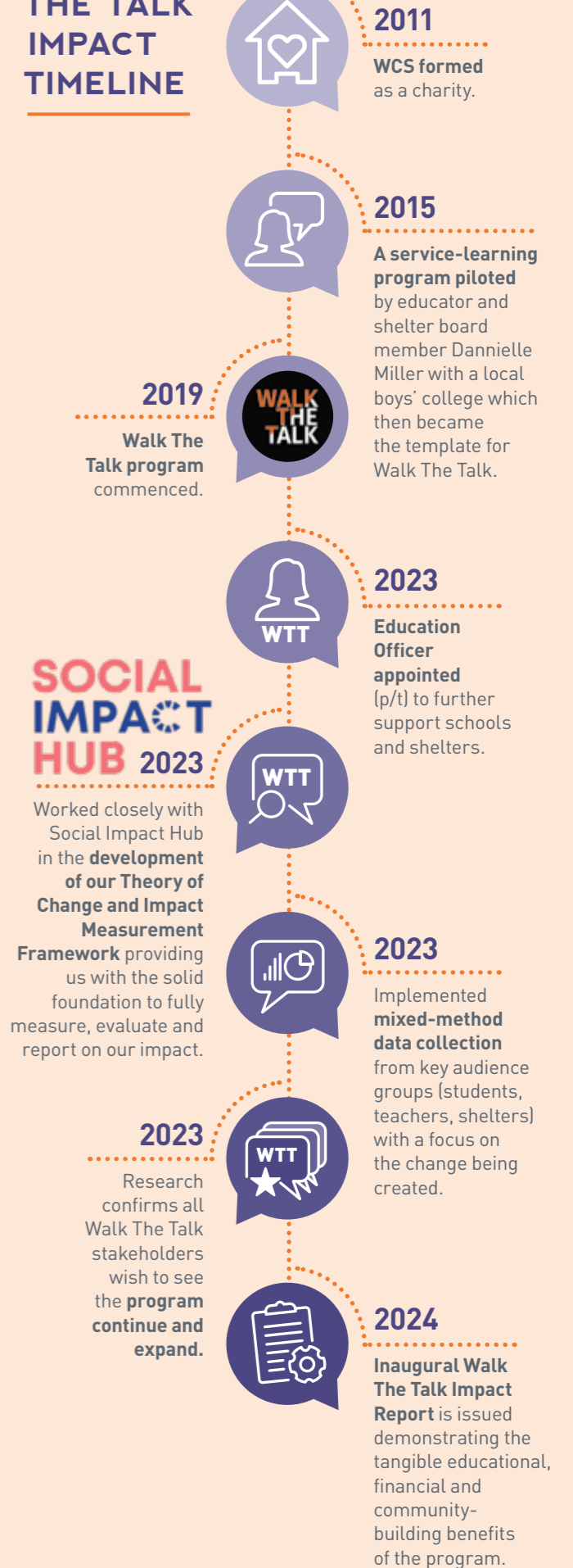
Teachers:

- ▶ Seven long-form qualitative interviews in person or zoom/phone, questions designed by Social Impact Hub, interviews completed by WTT, transcripts reviewed by Social Impact Hub.
- ▶ 2 x NSW Govt Co-Ed, 1 x Girls' Catholic, 1 x Boys' Catholic, 3 x Co-Ed Private.

Shelters:

- ▶ 5 long-form qualitative interviews in person or zoom/phone interviews completed by WTT, transcripts reviewed by Social Impact Hub.

OUR WALK THE TALK IMPACT TIMELINE



THE PROBLEM STATEMENT UNDERPINNING WALK THE TALK

THE ISSUE

DFV is a wicked problem often portrayed as intractable and daunting. In Australia, one in four (23%) women and one in fourteen (7.3%) men have experienced violence by an intimate partner since the age of 15.

(Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] 2023).

Statistics for **adolescents aged 18-19** are shockingly even higher, with recent research revealing that in the previous year:

- ▶ Around **three in 10** reported at least one experience of intimate partner violence.
- ▶ **One in eight** experienced emotional abuse.
- ▶ **One in 10** experienced physical violence.
- ▶ **One in 12** experienced sexual abuse.

Sexual abuse was more prevalent among females aged 18-19 years than males of the same age. *(Australian Institute of Family Studies [AIFS], Growing Up in Australia, 2023)*



We are committed to helping break the cycle of violence through education and community involvement.

OUR SOLUTION

To eradicate DFV we believe a generational change in community attitudes is required. We believe there is a strong need for respectful relationships education.

By intervening early, educating high school students about respectful relationships, consent and DFV as well as giving students an opportunity to practically support their local shelter, we believe we will make a measurable contribution to changing community attitudes to DFV.



As part of our impact journey we have succinctly articulated our overarching hypothesis for change, in essence, detailing what we will do to achieve our desired impact.



THE WALK THE TALK OVERARCHING HYPOTHESIS FOR CHANGE



IF WE...

Educate high school students about respectful relationships, consent and domestic and family violence (DFV) as well as connect them with their local women's shelter



BY...

Facilitating a half-day workshop for a year group and supporting schools to run a year-long local service learning project supporting their local shelter



WE CAN...

Enhance students' and teachers' knowledge of respectful relationships and enhance their capacity to act in response to DFV



AND WE CAN...

Bring a sense of hope and additional resources to the local shelters



SO THAT...

We achieve a generational change in paradigm on DFV, community by community

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE HAPPENS TO TEENS TOO

WOMEN'S COMMUNITY SHELTERS

3 IN 10 18-19 year olds have experienced **INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE** in the previous year.

10% Experienced **PHYSICAL VIOLENCE**

12% Experienced **EMOTIONAL ABUSE**

8% Experienced **SEXUAL ABUSE**

RESEARCH TELLS US

Recently conducted research (ANROWS, 2023) found **early and consistent intervention in education settings** is a **crucial step to help end the cycle of gender-based violence.**

THE WALK THE TALK THEORY OF CHANGE

By clearly articulating the audiences we serve, and describing the required interventions we will implement, our Theory of Change lays out the outcomes and impact we are relentlessly working to achieve.



WTT THEORY OF CHANGE

VISION FOR CHANGE We build knowledge and capacity of high school students to practice respectful relationships.

We increase civic participation and generate additional resources for local community shelters.

We work towards an Australia where women and children are safe, secure, supported and equal.



KEY THINGS TO KNOW

IMPACT MEASUREMENT

In 2023, in partnerships with Social Impact Hub we surveyed 212 students, seven teachers and five local shelter staff to assess the impact of Walk The Talk against our targeted outcomes, and we are proud to report the research findings on the following pages.

SOCIAL IMPACT HUB

SUMMARY OF IMPACT

- ▶ **Workshops** run at **19 schools**.
- ▶ **2,846 students** participated in workshops.
- ▶ **Supported seven** of WCS' nine shelters.
- ▶ **\$149,887** – Total value delivered to Australian community (volunteering plus goods/donations).
- ▶ **74% of all schools** who ran the phase one in-school workshop **went on to complete phase two** and engaged with **ongoing opportunities to support their local shelter** post workshop.
- ▶ **100% of teachers interviewed recommend Walk The Talk** recognising the **benefit to their school community in building community understanding of respectful relationships** and the issues surrounding domestic violence.
- ▶ **100% of teachers interviewed** shared that **students disclosed incidences of relationship abuse** after the program ran.
- ▶ **100% of shelters interviewed** recognised the **long-term benefit of enhanced community connection** and ability to call on **support**.

WORKSHOPS RUN AT **19** SCHOOLS 


2,846 STUDENTS PARTICIPATED IN WORKSHOPS 

 **7** OF WCS' NINE SHELTERS SUPPORTED

 **\$149,887** TOTAL VALUE DELIVERED TO AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITY (volunteering plus goods/donations)

 **100%** OF TEACHERS INTERVIEWED RECOMMEND WALK THE TALK

recognising the **benefit to their school community in building community understanding of respectful relationships** & the issues surrounding domestic violence

100% OF TEACHERS INTERVIEWED SHARED THAT STUDENTS DISCLOSED INCIDENCES OF **relationship abuse** after the program ran 

 **100%** OF SHELTERS INTERVIEWED RECOGNISED THE LONG-TERM BENEFIT OF **enhanced community connection and the ability to call on support** 

STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

- ▶ Enhance knowledge of students and teachers about respectful relationships and DFV.
- ▶ Enhance capacity of students and teachers to act in response to instances and/or disclosure of DFV.
- ▶ Provide leadership opportunities to students.

OUR YEAR IN ACHIEVEMENTS

SCHOOLS

- ▶ **Half-day student workshops** (phase one) ran in **19 schools**.
- ▶ **74%** of all schools engaged with ongoing opportunities to support their local shelter post workshop (phase two).

STUDENTS

More than 2,500 students participated in workshops and immediately following:

- ▶ **100%** of all students recognised the value of what they learned and consistently identified enhanced knowledge of consent, healthy and unhealthy relationships, relationship abuse and ways to support self and others.

3-6 MONTHS AFTER COMPLETING THE WORKSHOP, OF SURVEYED STUDENTS:

- ▶ **83%** knew the signs of a healthy relationship.
- ▶ **76%** knew what enthusiastic consent meant.
- ▶ **71%** would reach out to domestic and family violence services if they needed to.
- ▶ **63%** knew more about gender stereotypes.
- ▶ **Meaningful opportunities** (such as enhancement of leadership skills or empowerment of students to become change makers) **were generated for 62% of students** with 35% of these students proactively nominating themselves into Walk The Talk leadership teams.



After 3-6 months, 2 out of 3 surveyed students retained high levels of understanding of our key messages.

From our students:

*"The best part was learning **how to spot signs of an unhealthy relationship** so we know what to do when we see it. I learned how to give consent, how to achieve healthy relationships, unhealthy relationships and different statistics about domestic abuse. Stereotypes about teenage boys are not true (we can stand up against violence against women)."*

*"I thought today was excellent. I learned more about consent, how to use your voice, to speak up for what is right, **sexism is not a joke** and always do what we love doing."*

*"I learnt so much about **different types of violence and abuse** and the horrifying statistics about violence towards women which was very eye opening. The part about how important the conversation around consent is was very necessary for people our age to hear. I learnt to be kinder to myself and my friends and peers and to check in with them."*

*"As I survivor of sexual assault, I really appreciate that you spoke about this abuse and how respectful you were. I learnt to stand up for myself and others, **that I am not alone**, and that people go through the same things that I do."*

TEACHERS

Of the interviewed teachers

- ▶ **100%** recommend Walk The Talk recognising the benefit to their school community in building community understanding of respectful relationships and the issues surrounding domestic violence.
- ▶ All identify the importance of real-world service-learning opportunities.

STUDENTS LEADING CHANGE

“The leadership group this year have been amazing and so **motivated** to do great things.”

“Many students who **don’t usually put themselves forward** nominated to join (the leadership) team.”

“It has been such a wonderful community builder for our school. It’s all been these girls, they have led everything. They had the ideas and then they just ran with it. The events really **brought the year groups together** and has formed bonds that were not there before.”

“The fact that we are a boys’ school and we are supporting a community service for women is so powerful. It really has a profound impact for our boys. They end up really promoting International Women’s Day and they go on to play a big brother role when they are in Year 11/12 and they talk to younger students about what they got from their participation. It has a lasting impact.”



From our teachers:

“Even though we have school protocols, Walk The Talk has helped me when students have disclosed to me. Rather than feeling panicked or out of control, or that it was something that I couldn’t do anything about, **I felt like I could reassure the student that I would keep them safe**, and I knew that there would be steps and there were things that were in place for them.”

“We have a lot of **breakthroughs** with the boys’ understanding of relationships – the kids always come out buzzing after the workshop.”

“This program is **invaluable**. There is nothing that you can say in a lesson situation that will ever give them something as real as contributing to a women’s shelter where women in our community really need that support.”

LOCAL SHELTERS

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

- ▶ Generate additional community support and resources for local shelters.
- ▶ Boost morale of staff and shelter residents.

OUR YEAR IN ACHIEVEMENTS

- ▶ **Seven of our nine** WCS shelters supported.
- ▶ Participating schools **raised over \$27,000** in cash and donated goods and services to support their local shelters.
- ▶ Students contributed an estimated **6,561 supporter hours** to shelters, equating to an estimated **\$122,887** in value.
- ▶ **Four shelters** recruited **new volunteers**.
- ▶ One shelter recruited **a new board member**.
- ▶ **Ongoing connection** between shelters and schools was generated that would otherwise be challenging to initiate and maintain.

From our shelter staff:

“What I particularly love about the program is reading the kids feedback... the insights from these students are **inspiring**, I read them all every time you send them through because it’s just so uplifting.”

“It is a way to really become **embedded in your community** at a young person’s level.”

“It **builds community awareness** of the issues and our work which is a great thing.”

“For our clients, it really helps them to identify that there are other **people in the community that care** and that are working towards change for them on top of the direct service that they’re getting.”



Community fundraising activities run by the students and schools in 2023 included market days, bake sales, fete days, sports events, International Women’s Day activities, pizza fundraisers, goods drives, Christmas drives and art supplies baskets.



LOCAL COMMUNITIES

The Walk The Talk program is designed to have demonstrable positive impact on long-term outcomes supporting the WCS mission and engaging with the local community is a critical component of program.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVE

- ▶ Increase civic participation in order to raise awareness, funds and trust in community organisations.

OUR YEAR IN ACHIEVEMENTS

The spill-over effect of Walk The Talk extending into the broader community has been documented over the year:

- ▶ **100% of shelters** interviewed recognised the **long-term benefit** of enhanced community connection and ability to call on support.
- ▶ Students have joined community events **helping to raise awareness.**
- ▶ Individual students have gone on to do **personal projects** for the shelters.
- ▶ Friends and family members of Walk The Talk students and teachers have made **donations and volunteered time.**
- ▶ Community partners (local clubs) have made **financial and in-kind donations** as a result of Walk The Talk.
- ▶ **100% of teachers** interviewed shared that **students disclosed incidences of relationship abuse** after the program ran.
- ▶ **In two cases, families have been referred** to Women's Community Shelters for support.
- ▶ **Four Walk The Talk students** after graduating school have approached two shelters to enquire about **social work degrees and work experience.**
- ▶ **Three shelters** have recruited **volunteers.**
- ▶ One shelter has **recruited a board member.**
- ▶ Walk The Talk enables shelters to **engage on multiple levels with their communities.**



*“[The program] 100% **deepened our community connections** especially as one of the younger shelters and so to be able to have that program and to bring community awareness around a new shelter in the Parramatta area, that is what Walk The Talk has really helped with.”*

*“It has definitely deepened our community connection, it is not only the charitable donations that they provide, we have **direct advocates as young people in the community now.** It's changing Penrith's response to domestic and family violence, not just the charity that is given but the awareness.”*

*“(Schools and teachers have) got a place **where they can come to us for action,** and it's connected off the back of those really important respectful relationships conversations and obviously the success that you're all having in presenting to the students.”*

*“It makes our caseworkers job easier because there's a **pool of community support to tap into,** to be able to meet those needs. And we can tap into those communities for one off things.”*

CASE STUDY ONE: INTRODUCING WCS YOUTH ADVOCATE, ARIANA LEVY

Ariana Levy was WCS' inaugural Walk The Talk student winner back in 2019 having experienced one of our workshops with all of her grade when she was in Year 9. As a winner, her experience and insights were reported on in Australia's most-read Sunday magazine, Stellar Magazine (see below) and after four years of continued passionate support for WCS and her local community shelter, the Haven, Ariana is now one of two WCS Youth Advocates.

LEARNING TO PUT WORDS INTO ACTION

stellar//how i make it work

How I learnt to put words into action

Year 9 student Ariana Levy thought a workshop run at her school on domestic violence would be boring. But partnering with the local women's shelter would change her in very real ways

When I first started high school, my mum began volunteering for our local women's refuge.

I became interested in the issue of domestic violence then, and I wrote my speech for English on why I wished all women and kids felt safe in their own homes. But it really wasn't until this year when my school grade all became actively involved in the Walk The Talk program, which centres on respectful relationships, that my understanding of the issue deepened.

I stepped up to help do something about supporting women and children in crisis.

We started the year doing a special training day as a year group and I just loved it. You'd expect a talk on how we could best work towards eliminating domestic violence to be boring, or perhaps scary. But it was so engaging and hopeful. And

everything felt suddenly real – here was an opportunity for us all to not just talk about issues that matter to us, but to act.

A few of us decided we'd start with an Easter egg sale to help raise funds for our refuge, The Haven [in Penrith, NSW], and we made \$600. This was very motivating. We then put together a week of activities to raise money and awareness for the refuge later in the year. We did everything from hosting handball competitions, to running art exhibitions, to holding cake stalls. Our goal was to raise \$500, but we smashed it and raised \$1200.

The whole experience was really unifying, too, because everyone stepped up to walk the talk; so many boys baked cakes, which was really encouraging. Working towards a common goal

brought us closer as a grade, because we were banding together to shift outcomes for women and kids in need. One of the most positive results was that the boys also started treating us more respectfully; they seemed to grow up a lot.

I became so passionate about this cause that I began volunteering outside of school at fundraisers The Haven held. I helped organise a picnic day for the families.

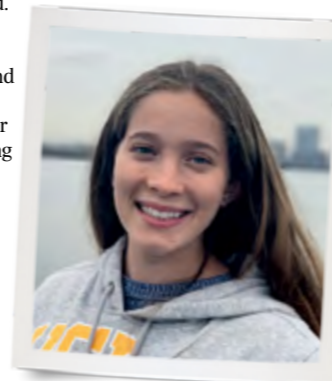
That event was such an eye-opener; when I met these women and kids who were

being sheltered, they looked just like any of the other people in my life. That experience really showed me that domestic violence can happen to anyone, anywhere.

I also feel like I have a stronger sense of my own self-worth as a result of this year. I know what a healthy relationship should look and feel like. I can explain to

my friends that if they don't feel safe and valued, they can share their concerns and get support. There's no shame in speaking up. There's no shame in asking for help.

Having been announced the inaugural Walk The Talk winner, I would say to any young person who is concerned about an issue, to take that worry and channel it into being part of the solution. What you're doing to help might seem like a little thing, but these small acts will build into bigger things – into life-changing things. I think programs like this will bring about generational change; my classmates might all go on to live lives free of violence. That's something worth working towards. ★ *Walk The Talk is run by Women's Community Shelters; womenscommunityshelters.org.au.*



Youth advocacy, championing the cause

Since her award and media article in 2019, four years later Ariana has continued her support for women and families in crisis, supporting her local shelter, The Haven, with both practical tasks and fundraising.

“My passion has always been to provide help to people in the community. It gives me such a strong sense of purpose”. So when she was asked to be one of two WCS Youth Advocates she clearly said yes. “I was so honoured to even be considered.”

Ariana, now 19 and in Year 2 of her Law and Psychology degree, sees her role as WCS Youth Advocate as having two key focuses. The first is to reach a critical audience that's difficult to reach – young people – through her own platforms, raising awareness of gender-based violence and the support WCS provides that includes shifting generational change in community attitudes.

Additionally, she also recognises the importance of her supporting fundraising initiatives and hopes to one day lead her own major fundraiser for the cause.

We wholeheartedly thank Ariana for her passion for gender equity, we are very proud to have her as part of our team, playing such an important role in youth advocacy.

Ariana's Stellar Magazine Article, November 2019. Reproduced with thanks to Stellar/News Corp.

CASE STUDY TWO: MARKO SLANKAMENAC

(Completed the Walk The Talk program when in Year 10, 2023)

When you chat with Marko Slankamenac from Oakhill College 10 months after he completed phase one of Walk The Talk (the in-school education workshop), what strikes you is how eloquent and passionate he is on the subject of DFV and how Walk The Talk has driven his understanding, spurring him into enterprising action.



Marko (far left) and his classmates with the iPads they donated to their local shelter, The Sanctuary.

Marko describes his personal Walk The Talk journey as “an impassioned and powerful experience that greatly transcends any normal school extracurricular activity”. He talks about how it delivers on a greater purpose.

He describes it as a student-led movement, one that inspires him and his fellow students to build on the knowledge and skills learnt in their initial workshop. “It encourages young people to endeavour to engender female empowerment and achieve a gender-equal society.”

“At a certain point, you understand that you are contributing to something greater than yourself, appreciating the powerful significance of your actions.”

A profoundly defining event for Marko and his fellow students that built on their initial Walk The Talk school workshop was attending the ‘Hills Say No to Domestic Violence’ meeting at Castle Hill RSL.

This local community event, also attended by the police force and domestic violence survivors, provided a raw and intimate insight into the ordeals endured by female survivors of domestic violence in the local community.

Moved by these emotional stories of victimised women, Marko and his Year 10 team that includes Umar Chowdhury and Zander Cheng, have been busy finding resourceful ways of fundraising that have, to date, resulted in over \$3,000 of funds raised, allowing them to purchase and gift much needed iPads to their local shelter, The Sanctuary, at Christmas time.

Not only can they see such tangible benefits stemming from their efforts but they also recognise how their volunteering has strengthened the ties between their college and the wider community.

Marko and his team have not stopped there. During the recent December school holidays they have been busy working on a Walk The Talk-branded digital platform that brings together social media and merchandise-retailing to extend the youth awareness and fundraising capabilities of their actions, ultimately building a creative, innovative charity system that drives traction for the movement they are now so engaged to support.

“We, as a collective, recognise the urgent need for change, especially within our generation, who are tasked with shaping the future.”



 www.wcswalkthetalk.org.au

 walkthetalk@womenscommunityshelters.org.au  (02) 9539 6859