

2025

**WALK THE TALK
IMPACT UPDATE**

**WALK
THE
TALK**



EDUCATE, THEN ACTIVATE

www.wcswalkthetalk.org.au

**WOMEN'S
COMMUNITY
SHELTERS**

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

At Women's Community Shelters, we know that education on its own isn't enough.

Young people can understand what respectful relationships look like. They can learn the language of consent. They can recognise abuse when it's explained to them. But what matters is what happens next.

Walk the Talk was created with that in mind. Not just to inform, but to move young people from awareness into action. To give them the confidence to speak up, to support each other, and to play a role in changing the culture around them.

Since 2019, more than 23,000 students have taken part in the program. In 2025 alone, we worked with 6,333 students, with almost all rating the program highly and every single student saying they would recommend it to others. Students have generated over \$290,000 in value to their local communities through volunteer hours, goods and donations.

Those numbers matter. But they're not the whole story.

What stays with us are the moments that sit behind them. The student who realises something in their own life isn't right. The one who knows, for the first time, what to say when a friend confides in them. The classrooms where you can feel the shift as conversations become more honest, more informed, and more respectful.

This work doesn't happen in isolation. It happens in partnership with schools, with teachers, and with local shelters. It's in those relationships that the program really comes to life. A key part of this is Phase 2 of the program, led with care and expertise by our Education Officer, Julia Fleming, where students take what they've learned and bring it to life through action in their own communities.

This report builds on our 2023 Social Impact Report. That report marked an important step forward for the program. Working alongside Social Impact Hub, we established a clear framework for measuring and understanding our impact — not just anecdotally, but with greater consistency and depth.

Over the past two years, we have continued to apply and refine that approach internally. This update draws on that same foundation, offering a focused view of what we are seeing in practice. It demonstrates where the program is having the greatest impact, and how that change is showing up in young people and their communities.

Because ultimately, this work has always been about more than what students know.

It's about what they do with that knowledge.



Dannielle Miller OAM

Director of Education and
Special Projects



WHAT DO STUDENTS THINK OF OUR PROGRAM?

6,333 Students participated in **2025**.

100%



Students would recommend the program to others.

97%

Students rated the program very good/excellent.



“

“This was really empowering to have you explain to us that we have every right to say no and to set boundaries in healthy relationships.”

Female Student

“

“It helped me realise some of my own mistakes in my own life.”

Male Student

HOW DO OUR STUDENTS BECOME AGENTS OF CHANGE?

\$290,000+

Students generated significant value in their local communities through volunteer hours, goods and donations.

11 Shelters

and safe havens supported.



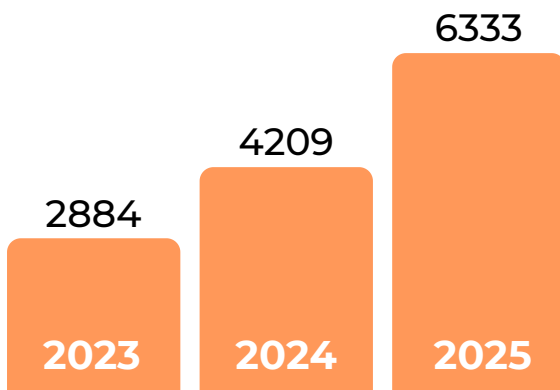
“

“The support of young people in our community goes beyond the tangible benefits that we receive from these partnerships... (it) gives me hope in a new generation of young people determined to break the cycle of violence.”

WCS Shelter Manager

**WOMEN'S
COMMUNITY
SHELTERS**

STUDENTS REACHED BY WALK THE TALK



23,339

Students reached since 2019.



95%

School retention rate.



“

“This program has become an integral part of our educational approach, particularly in addressing sensitive topics such as consent and safe relationships.”

Head Teacher Wellbeing, Girls Independent School

Walk the Talk School since 2020

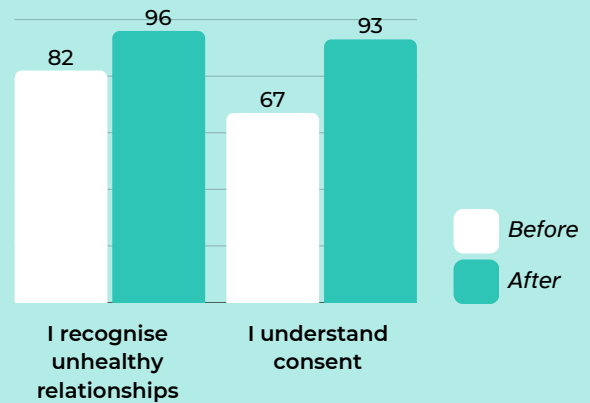


WHAT IS OUR IMPACT ON STUDENTS?

There is a statistically significant impact on all student outcomes 3–6 months after the workshop.

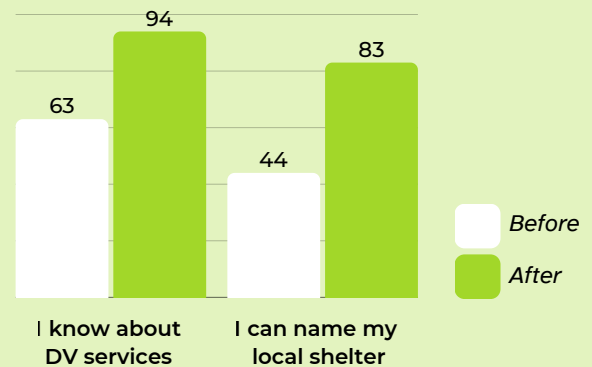
KNOWLEDGE

- ✓ I understand domestic and family violence.
- ✓ I recognise healthy relationships.
- ✓ I recognise unhealthy relationships.
- ✓ I identify harmful gender stereotypes.
- ✓ I understand enthusiastic consent.



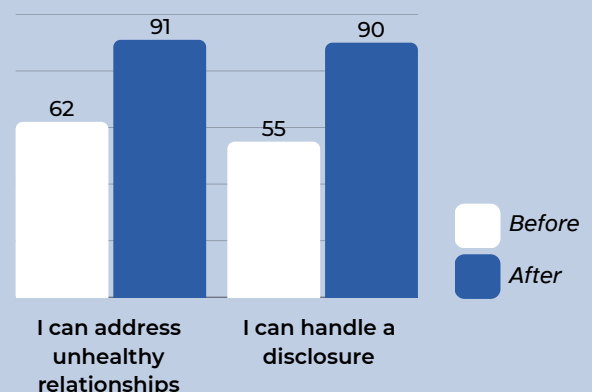
AWARENESS

- ✓ I know about domestic violence support services.
- ✓ I know the name of my local shelter.



CONFIDENCE TO ACT

- ✓ I know what to do in an unhealthy relationship.
- ✓ I know what to do if someone discloses they are in an unhealthy relationship.



STUDENT IMPACT BY GENDER



Boys

Most significant shifts in **awareness and understanding.**

- ✓ I know the name of my local shelter.
- ✓ I know about domestic violence support services.
- ✓ I know what enthusiastic consent is.

“

“Personally I learnt that there is a lot more access and support than I originally thought.”

Male Student

“

“I learnt that consent is freely given, reversible, informed, enthusiastic and specific.”

Male Student



Girls

Most significant shifts in **confidence to act and awareness.**

- ✓ I know what to say or do if I am in an unhealthy relationship.
- ✓ I know what to say or do if someone discloses to me that they are in an unhealthy relationship.
- ✓ I know about support services and the name of my local shelter.

“

“I knew the effects but if someone came up to me and said I’m in this situation I didn’t know what to do. It taught me how to deal with people and comfort them and give them what they need.”

Female Student

66% of all students

Identified that Walk the Talk gave them an opportunity to develop their **LEADERSHIP SKILLS**.

- ✔ Student sign-ups to lead activities **regularly exceed staff expectations.**
- ✔ Teachers report that students who do not normally self-nominate **become leading advocates.**



"It gave us the skills and the confidence and the opportunities to speak out and lead with empathy."

Male Student



"It's incredibly affirming to know that the students not only enjoyed the session but are also feeling inspired to take meaningful action."

Teacher



"I think that it's not only changed us as a year group but as a school and a community."

Female Student



Teachers are educated and activated.

An important learning in this period is the **impact of the program on teachers and staff members**. We recognise that staff bring their own lived experience into the room.

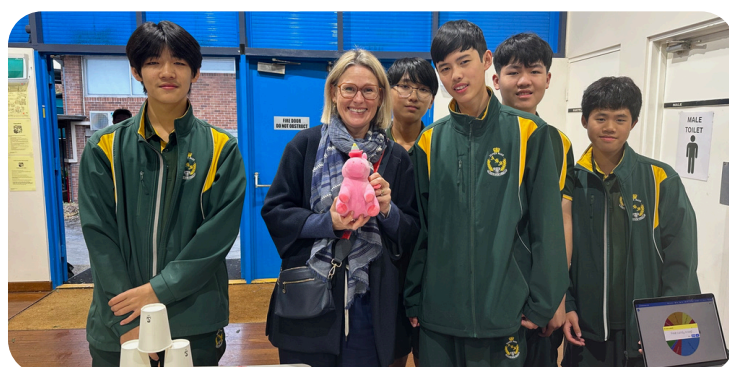
Staff report that being part of the Walk the Talk program has:

Contributed to their understanding of the drivers of DFSV.

Teachers are encouraged to attend the whole workshop if practicable. Those who do, identify the opportunity to develop their capacity to understand DFSV. Teachers recognise the program as best practice.



“I learnt a lot and it was a validating experience.”



The program creates a safe space for staff to process their own experiences.

A teacher from Western Sydney approached our team member to thank us for bringing the program to her school. She said:



“I found it quite confronting because I realised for the first time that some things that happened in my last relationship were actually abuse and I hadn't processed that properly. It's really changed my life hearing you speak.”



“This program isn't just saving our kids, it's saving teachers too.”



“I was quite nervous about supervising this workshop today as I have lived experience, but you were so good at creating a safe space and sharing survivors' stories so respectfully.”

Built their confidence in responding to student disclosures.

After our workshop in October, a teacher in regional NSW shared her own story. She had become homeless at seventeen with a baby due to violence. She told us that hearing our workshop helped her release old shame and see her journey in a new light. She was so grateful to work with the young people at her school to build connections with their local shelter.



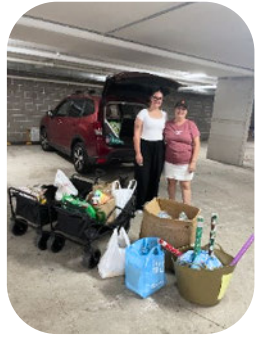
"I now feel more empowered in my role as an educator to further support my students."

Many teachers become powerful advocates for the program and their local shelter.



100% of WCS Safe Havens

recognise the benefits of **'Walk the Talk'** community support.



Shelter staff report positive impacts for shelter staff and clients:

- The additional resources generated.
- The support case workers can offer their clients.
- The positive impact on staff morale knowing their community is supporting their essential work.

Shelter staff have the opportunity to attend student-led events, including:

- A student wellbeing expo hosting local service providers.
- Whole school assemblies.
- School careers sessions to talk about social work as a career.



"The support of young people in our community goes beyond the tangible benefits that we receive from these partnerships. Our case workers benefit from the fact they can offer our clients extra support via these donations and in turn they feel supported in their work. The recognition we receive in the form of heartfelt messages and cards really fuels our work and supports our clients on their journey to recovery by demonstrating that our community is behind them."

Tania Smith,
Shelter Manager,
Parramatta Women's Shelter



*"Every frontline worker deserves to experience an event like this. We're used to the hardcore, never-ending grind on the frontline, but seeing the next generation wield emotional intelligence like that? Honestly, it gave me hope that the patriarchy might finally meet its match." **WCS Case Manager***

**WOMEN'S
COMMUNITY
SHELTERS**

Shelter staff recognise Walk the Talk as best practice education



“I want to highlight how invaluable this education is for the students. We provide a lot of education to the women in shelter around domestic violence and what healthy and unhealthy relationships look like, and interestingly the majority of women we work with all say they wished they had this education as a teenager/young adult. I really believe this education will have such a positive impact on these students’ futures, as I see the impact on women when it’s not taught.”

Marion Batchelor, Shelter Manager

Camden Women’s Shelter



“I loved the whole program. The presenter absolutely amazed me. Charismatic and relatable. It was so great to hear the topics that we work with on a daily basis explained. You rock. This was absolutely amazing.”

Case Manager

Great Lakes Women’s Shelter

CASE STUDIES

A Community Partnership:

Camden Council and Camden High Schools walk the talk in partnership with [Camden Women’s Shelter](#).

As part of a council youth-led project inspired by Walk the Talk and funded through a NSW community grant, we are currently working with three schools in the Camden area on the ‘Lead the Way’ initiative which is funding youth-led community projects to **address DFSV in the Camden LGA**.

The WCS team is providing expert consultation and guidance for student projects and students have designed and installed a mural at Julia Reserve community centre, designed wraps for council rubbish trucks, developed online resources and merchandise to help educate young people and connect them with local community service providers.



CASE STUDY

A Community United: **Catherine McAuley, Westmead builds a whole community of understanding and support for Parramatta Women's Shelter.**

Joining the program in 2025 after supporting **Parramatta Women's Shelter** in previous years, Catherine McAuley students set a new gold standard for walking the talk. They focused their activities in Term 2, involving every Year 10 student.



They channelled their enthusiasm into so many initiatives that it was hard to keep up with their weekly activities. Students built awareness about DFV through video presentations and the installation of a school mural. They ran weekly fundraising efforts including delicious bake sales and creative stalls showcasing hand-made goods. They involved the whole school in community building activities like a sleep out and a

lip sync competition and they collected much needed items, like cleaning products and pantry items, to keep our Parramatta shelter running. Our superstar shelter staff visited the school several times to give students a deeper insight into their work, including speaking to students considering social work at tertiary level.

School staff were also incredibly generous, running a drive themselves and deciding to replace their annual Christmas gift exchange with a collection of vouchers donated to the shelter.

Through a combination of gift cards and financial donations, students and staff raised over \$15,000.



We cannot thank the Catherine McAuley community enough for their support.



CASE STUDY

Building a Regional Community: Expanding Walk the Talk to support Margaret House in Young, NSW.

In 2025 we activated a regional Walk the Talk pilot in partnership with Margaret House, the only specialist domestic violence service in the area operated through Young Crisis Accommodation Centre (YCAC).



From the outset, we approached this project as partners in change, prioritising a deep understanding of the local context and how best to support a shelter outside the WCS network.

Following consultation with the Margaret House board, YCAC case workers, the local police liaison officer and the youth worker at Hilltops Council we were delighted that all five available school places were filled within three days, demonstrating strong demand for high quality education in this space.

Workshops delivered across three local schools demonstrated the program's impact and relevance in a regional setting. The feedback we received from staff, students and the shelter underscored the critical need to support regional communities to build understanding of DFV and community partnerships to support women and children in need.

We were excited to see the enthusiasm and commitment from participating schools to support Margaret House. They mobilised to join the 'Paint the Hilltops purple' event in November with an impressive variety of activities that raised money and awareness.

This successful pilot will continue in 2026. We are grateful to The Profield Foundation for their support in bringing this vital program to a region of significant and ongoing need.



"Thanks to you all for your enthusiasm and commitment to this program. We are privileged to be a part of it."

**Anna Hayes, President of the Board
Margaret House**





“As someone on the front line of service delivery for domestic violence and sexual assault I can honestly say that the program was the best of its kind that I’ve seen delivered in this area. As a small rural community we often miss out on receiving the delivery of such vital programs. I could feel the shift in the room from the start of the day to when the session wrapped up and the young people were buzzing! They were coming up to me to ask questions about our refuge and how they can contribute, it was so heartwarming. There were tears, laughter and hugs but most importantly a feeling of connection.”

Kerri Palmer, Manager
YCAC



“It was a powerful testimony, a brilliant, engaging presentation that had students absolutely engaged. The awareness of abusive behaviours was nothing less than incredible. It was an incredible day.”

Head of Wellbeing,
Cootamundra High School



WALK THE TALK AWARDS



This year Dannielle Miller OAM, Director of Education for WCS and the WTT team welcomed 15 schools and over 100 students to NSW Parliament House to celebrate the significant achievements of the young change-makers at the **Walk the Talk Awards 2025**. It was an uplifting evening of hope and inspiration.

We were honoured to welcome Dr. Hannah Tonkin, NSW Women's Safety Commissioner and Prof. Steve Roberts, Professor of Sociology at Monash University and internationally recognised expert on masculinities, gender equality and youth engagement. Both spoke passionately about the program and the role of community in addressing DFSV.



"It's the model of learning and action that makes Walk the Talk so transformative. The other thing that really stands out to me about this programme is the way that it connects prevention of domestic and family violence to frontline service delivery. That's really important and it's unique."

Dr. Hannah Tonkin,
NSW Women's Safety Commissioner
Speaking at the 2025 WTT awards



Professor Steve Roberts shared an account of his personal experience. It resonated deeply with our audience and clearly demonstrated the impact of the work our Walk the Talk champions are doing to support their community:

"So I'm telling you all this because I want you to know that the work that you're doing through... Walk the Talk, matters so deeply to women and their children. The conversations that you are having, the projects that you're involved in, the respect that you're practising, this is not an abstract idea. These are life-saving and life-changing, and it probably doesn't always feel like that."

Steve Roberts,
Professor of Sociology at Monash University
Speaking at the 2025 WTT awards



Each award-winning team of young people highlighted the important role they were able to take in challenging violence and creating a brighter future.



“Attending the Walk the Talk Awards served as a powerful reminder that young people are not only capable of contributing to social progress, but are already actively helping shape a more compassionate and equitable future.”

School Newsletter



“We learnt how valuable it is to support our local women’s shelter and get involved... and it is crucial to do it because it makes a huge difference.

Student



We’d like to thank our generous donors who have provided vital support for the program in 2025:

- The Ronald Geoffrey Arnott Foundation for their major three-year funding commitment.
- The Adolf Basser Trust for supporting program expansion.
- The Profield Foundation for funding our innovative regional pilot.
- The Hunt Family Community Foundation and Camden Council’s Lead the Way project supporting the Camden area.



**For more information please contact:
Julia Fleming, Education Officer
julia@womenscommunityshelters.org.au**

A message from the CEO of Women's Community Shelters, **Annabelle Daniel OAM**

Walk the Talk represents what the future of domestic and family violence prevention must look like. It brings together schools, communities, charities and young people in a way that builds not only awareness, but action. At Women's Community Shelters, we see every day the devastating impact of violence, but through this program we also see something equally powerful, hope. Hope that this is a solvable problem. Hope that by equipping young people with the language, confidence and practical tools to recognise and respond to unhealthy relationships, we are building a generation capable of creating lasting change. Walk the Talk shows us that we do not need to wait until harm occurs to act. We can build the knowledge, empathy and courage to step in early, and to support one another in real and meaningful ways.

Looking ahead, Women's Community Shelters is committed to expanding this work as a core pillar of our education and advocacy efforts. Our vision is to grow Walk the Talk across Australia, strengthening its reach and deepening its impact so that more young people are empowered as leaders in prevention within their own communities. By continuing to invest in education alongside frontline services, we are building capacity at every level of society, ensuring that individuals, schools and communities are better equipped to respond to domestic and family violence. The impact we are already seeing is extraordinary, but it is only the beginning. With continued collaboration and support, we believe this model has the potential to create a safer, more equal future for all.



Annabelle Daniel OAM

CEO, Women's Community Shelters

Left to right:

Annabelle Daniel,
WCS CEO

Dannielle Miller,
WCS Director of Education

Julia Fleming,
WCS Education Officer

