

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2022

BREAK THE BIAS

*"Imagine a gender equal world.
A world free of bias, stereotypes, and discrimination."*

EREA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE – 8 MARCH 2022

Dear Colleagues,

On this International Women's Day, I offer best wishes and thanks to all women who work in, volunteer, and make active contributions to Edmund Rice schools across the country.

I acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples of Australia, particularly First Nations' women. We owe a debt to First Nations' women for their great commitment, and contribution to, education. They provide immense wisdom and positive influence to all.

Imagine a gender equal world.

A world free of bias, stereotypes, and discrimination.

A world that is diverse, equitable, and inclusive.

A world where difference is valued and celebrated.

Together we can forge women's equality.

Collectively we can all **#BreakTheBias**.

These words come from the 2022 International Women's Day theme. My understanding of the approach to this year's theme is the emphasis that lies with each one of us, individually, to make a difference to the inclusion, equity, quality, and opportunity for

women. In other words, we have a responsibility through our actions and words each day to break the bias. Equally importantly, my experience suggests, that it is what we do not say and do not do that either accepts or challenges bias.

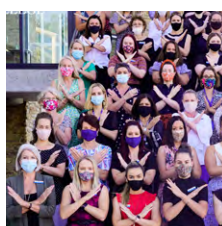
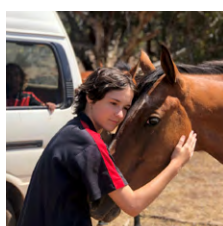
There has been much recent debate in the media about discrimination and inclusion of women in Australian society, and particularly in our schools. How women are treated, how women feel silenced and maligned has been the cause of much discussion.

The valuing and celebration of women is still very much an area for us to grow and improve in terms of education. How we educate, and what we educate our students about, is what will change attitudes and behaviours that characterise our relationships with women, and how women feel valued and celebrated. Given the vast majority of our student enrolment in Edmund Rice schools

is young men, it behoves us to proactively develop and implement programs, rituals and learning experiences that span the formal curriculum as well as the co-curriculum. These efforts must speak to



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respectful relationships and consent (on a variety of levels including sexual consent). We must do all we possibly can as educators to promote in them, values, attitudes and words and actions that align with our broader Catholic purpose. That is, to work in partnership with families to promote the dignity of each human person, afforded them through their birthright, and confirmed as Christians who treat all with respect.

We all hold this responsibility whether we are teachers, support staff or volunteers in our schools. It is our collective task to raise men of good character and virtue. It is equally our responsibility to provide the modelling to both young women and men that sees women in positions of power and influence, who are leaders as well as workers in our schools.

In EREA, we are addressing this by increasing the number of women in key leadership roles. We are blessed with the abundant and wise senior leadership of women at Council, Board and National Executive level; however, we can continue to do more at National Office level, and with our schools, and we will.

Breaking bias and smashing stereotypes moves beyond the appointment of women to key roles, and to meeting targets. At a fundamental level, it is about the inherent valuing of women. Until we can do this universally, then we will need to continue to spell it out through campaigns and education in schools and in homes.

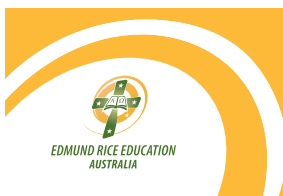
I offer my thanks to all women who work and volunteer in our schools; for the role modelling you provide, for the contribution you make to shaping and influencing the lives of those we serve, and for making a difference in the lives of the young people, and the colleagues with whom you work.

Some of the finest leaders I have met, tell me their inspiration and mentor has been a key woman in their professional lives. I count myself among that group.

Happy International Women's Day to all, and may we work diligently, individually and collectively, to call out bias, to challenge it, and to eradicate it.

Dr Craig Wattam

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