

# Solving the Jigsaw

Changing the Culture of **Violence**,  
Building a Culture of **Well-being**

## A child's journey from violence to wellbeing

### Putting back the pieces

Solving the Jigsaw is an early-intervention and prevention program that begins where society has failed: it believes that children have the right to be safe and to feel safe.

Violence of any nature, in other words, is not acceptable.

By changing a culture of violence into a culture of wellbeing, Jigsaw helps students in primary and secondary schools deal with brutality and bullying.

They learn to feel safe and to develop trust. They learn to deal with their problems, and how to talk about their lives, their feelings and what matters to them.

Jigsaw bridges the worlds of home and school, promoting the belief that a child's self-esteem and wellbeing are raised when they feel safe, valued and connected. It strengthens their resilience and encourages them to make positive choices about their future.

Jigsaw gives children not only a voice, but also a place in which they can feel comfortable talking, reflecting and considering their lives.

This is how kids, with a little guidance, can solve the jigsaw called life.

A trained facilitator, with the help of the classroom teacher, conducts one-hour weekly sessions over a 20 or 40 week program, for whole classes or for those who are considered at risk.

The facilitator plays a vital role. They set and maintain boundaries, guide the group through choices, reinforcing a clear stance against bullying and violence, and helping the children explore a range of options.

They ensure that every child is listened to and is able to explore his or her concerns. Classmates offer their ideas and support and strategies, and along the way learn problem-solving skills and communication techniques.

As a result the kids gain confidence and certainty about what is important in relationships, such as communication, the ability to deal with conflict, and the importance of love and respect.

There are several elements of Jigsaw that make it unique in its concept and delivery.

The program identifies bullying as a form of violence linked to violence in wider society. The approach allows for exploration, open discussion and education on the elements that perpetuate bullying and violence: secrecy and the misuse of power.

It encourages children who are being bullied to describe the effects of the experience to the child who is bullying them, and offers follow-up support to individual children, their families and school staff.

Solving the Jigsaw believes that bullying is best managed in a group setting. Behaviours are learned in groups and reinforced by group dynamics, therefore should be addressed and changed by the group.

The program does not apportion blame, thus validating the stories of children who have been bullied, and allowing for those using bullying and violence to accept responsibility for their behaviour and to be supported in making changes.



## The need for Jigsaw

In the absence of a universally accepted definition, Solving the Jigsaw describes bullying and violence as 'a misuse of power that intentionally hurts, controls, silences and belittles another person or persons'.

The raw figures show the extent of the damage.

One Australian child in six is bullied every week.

Children who are bullied have higher levels of stress, anxiety, depression, illness and thoughts of suicide.

Former bullies are four times more likely to take part in serious crime, and more likely to drop out of school and use drugs and alcohol.

By the age of 20, 60 per cent of bullies will have a criminal record.

The statistics on domestic violence and its effects on children are equally disturbing.

More than half a million teenagers in Australia are living with violence in the home

Up to 25 per cent of young people aged between 12 and 20 have witnessed parental violence against their mother or stepmother.

Solving the Jigsaw program is designed to act as an early intervention-and-recovery program for children who are experiencing these issues, or might be confronted by them. The students are all in the age group in which early-intervention and prevention programs are likely to have significant short- and long-term benefits.

At the same time, community concern about the impact of bullying on students is increasing. The isolation and exclusion that often accompanies being a victim of bullying denies children company, friendship and social interaction, and can cause them to feel helpless, inadequate and unable to form strong relationships.

## Creating the Jigsaw

Solving the Jigsaw was developed by EASE, a domestic violence support service based in Bendigo, in response to the devastating statistic that 25 per cent of children and young people in Australia witness violence in their homes.

Its beginnings in Bendigo were not accidental. The city is in the Loddon-Campaspe region, where communities experience high levels of domestic violence, bullying, suicide, and alcohol and substance abuse.

From the start, the program's target group has included children and young people in rural and remote towns identified as being disadvantaged.

Jigsaw was launched in two schools in Bendigo in 1997 and, following a positive response, was introduced to 26 schools over the following two years. By 2003, 43 schools were running the program.

Since then, Jigsaw has grown to include more than 80 schools and 20,000 children. Importantly, 650 teachers have taken part in comprehensive training programs.

## Training the facilitator

Jigsaw also runs nationally accredited professional development days for teachers, facilitator training courses, and information sessions for parents.

The program offers six professional development days over 12 months that give teachers additional skills in the classroom. Those who wish to become facilitators must attend a further 12 months of training.

The training modules provide practical, experiential training in the program's approach to working with children and young people and the school community.

They cover a whole school approach to violence and bullying; awkward conversations with kids; conflict within the school community; facilitating respect, valuing diversity, encouraging discussion, and maintaining confidentiality; creating a caring and nurturing classroom and school; and exploring feelings and emotions in the classroom.

Once Jigsaw facilitators have completed their training, they return to school with high-level skills that are an invaluable resource, to both the school community and the wider community

## Funding the program

Over the years a number of philanthropic trusts have contributed to the success of Solving the Jigsaw. Today the program is funded by the R. E. Ross Trust, Portland House Foundation, Ian Potter Foundation, Helen Macpherson Smith Trust and F. J. Foundation. Individual schools also contribute to program costs.

## Further information

To find out more about Solving the Jigsaw, telephone (03) 5430 3000, email [info@solvingthejigsaw.org.au](mailto:info@solvingthejigsaw.org.au), or go to [www.solvingthejigsaw.org.au](http://www.solvingthejigsaw.org.au).

