

REPORT: Hands with a Voice

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Last year the Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues (CMYI) ran a program called 'Voices of Young Australians'. The program included some in-school training sessions, before the students from about seven different schools came together for an 'Intensive Training Week.' The week was based on fighting racism and discrimination, and we came up with some project ideas to complete in our different communities. One of which was a 'school charter' which evolved into **Hands with a Voice**.

Five Year 10 students from Sunbury College decided to take what they'd learnt back to school and do something about discrimination there. Kasen, Siobhan, Macleod, Sharni and Michael (the School Charter Planning Group) organised to run an anti-discrimination session as part of the Year 8 Pathways Classes. This session was based on educating the other students about discrimination, and simply making them think about the problems others face. The School Charter Planning Group split into pairs to run the sessions, which included some fun activities and required the Year 8 students to come up with a class 'rule' that they thought would make the school community a more inclusive environment. The rules were:

1. Everyone to treat each other with respect and accept people for who they are regardless of race, colour, gender etc.
2. Include people that you think are being left out and accept people for who they are.
3. We are all in this together.
4. Don't be rrrracist.
5. Everyone should be treated equally no matter what they look like or what they believe in.
6. Don't bully people coz of their race, color or religion - treat everyone fairly!
7. Treat everyone evenly, let them be who they want to be.
8. Treat everyone equally and respect their beliefs. Don't judge anyone by the way they look.
9. Try and understand it from their point of view.
10. Respect the feelings of others if you want yours to be respected.
11. If you've got nothing nice to say don't say it at all.
12. Put yourself in their shoes.

On the 28th of May, all the Year 8 students showed their commitment to making a change in their school, by placing their handprints on a wall, creating a mural and proving hands really can have a voice. Six of the rules that the classes developed were also painted on the wall as a constant reminder of what the hands mean. They even got local newspapers to cover the story and the school community are very impressed with the colourful and very meaningful project. The rules will now be put onto posters to put around the school to remind everyone of the *Hands with a Voice* mural and the anti-discrimination message it has.

Overall it was a great success, the Planning Group really enjoyed passing on some wisdom and already the school community is starting to see benefits.