

Two workshops benefit students mental health

JUST before the end of term two, Beaufort Secondary College ran a series of mental health sessions for all year levels over three days.

The sessions were run by the organisation "The Man Cave" and "Flourish Girls" where the students were led through a range of activities to give them a safe space to explore issues they are experiencing, and empower them with positive strategies and ways to seek help.

The Man Cave program is aimed at empowering boys to become great men by providing them and their communities with impactful programs, role models and resources.

The sessions involved preventative mental health advice and encourages the boys to improve their emotional intelligence.

The sessions also focused on their strengths, rather than their deficits.

The Man Cave vision is to create a world in which every young man has healthy relationships, reaches his full potential and contributes to his community.

It was particularly positive to hear the excellent feedback from the participants.

Year 10 student, Jet Kerr, was extremely positive when he spoke with the *Advocate*.

"It was really good to hear everyone else's experiences and knowing each other's struggles. The presenters were really easy to relate to and gave us some practical tips on how to manage stress."

Flourish Girls had a similar approach, and they led the girls through a range of exercises designed to create a safe space for them to discuss their experiences, and to feel more connected to their peers.

The Flourish Girls program recognises that girls' self confidence is at an all time low and that girls are feeling more isolated in their communities.

Further to this, the Australian Institute of Health and Wellness reported in 2021 that seventy percent of young people say that the pandemic and the associated response has negatively affected their social connectedness.

Headspace also reported in 2021 that seventy four percent of young people are reporting that their mental health is worse since the outbreak of the pandemic.

Year nine students, Matilda Venes and Annie Kehoe, were very appreciative of the program with Matilda Venes saying it offered a lot of support.

"Flourish Girls was very eye opening for us to know how others are feeling and what they are going through." Annie added "It allowed the girls to open up and be comfortable with their peers. I feel like it made it better by knowing we have a lot of support around us, making it easier for girls to share their experiences," she said.

Beaufort Secondary College teacher, Simone Conroy, said the program was made possible

with support from Pyrenees Shire Council and Grampians Community Health.

"There is a clear need for this type of workshop in our schools. Our young people have experienced major disruptions to their learning and social development with COVID. These programs are about starting the conversation and getting students to understand that the issues they are experiencing are felt by many of their peers."

"The mental health statistics indicate that our young people need additional support, and these programs are about empowering the students with resources, knowledge and services they can access," she said.

More information about The Man Cave and Flourish Girls programs can be found on their websites:

- <https://www.flourishgirl.org>
- <https://themancafe.life>



Year 7 and 8 boys at their Man Cave workshop.



Year 9 and 10 boys enjoyed their workshop.



Year 7 and 8 students getting together at the Flourish Girls workshop.



Year 9 and 10 girls from Beaufort Secondary College.



Year 11 and 12 boys enjoyed their workshop.

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