

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

Substantiated findings

1. The Youth Worker (**Presenter**) who gave the Diversity and Inclusion presentation at the Parkdale Secondary College on 21 April 2021 to Year 11 students:
 - 1.1 gave a trigger warning at the start of the program, communicating that if anyone was uncomfortable or uncertain they could leave at any time;
 - 1.2 during a brief part of the presentation on intersectionality as part of a planned activity, made a request to a group of students, asking the white, straight males from Christian influenced households to stand up. She also preceded this request with the words, "if you are comfortable";
 - 1.3 approximately 25% of the student cohort attending the presentation stood up in response to the Presenter's request. The Presenter then informed the students that, "you belong to a group that holds the most privilege in this world";
 - 1.4 following the comment about holding the most privilege, some of the standing students started to clap;
 - 1.5 after some of the standing students clapped, the Presenter made a further comment along the lines, "no, that's not what we're doing here. The problem with having the most privilege is you're also the biggest oppressor". This statement was not scripted or planned by the Presenter but was a spontaneous off the cuff remark made in response to the students clapping;
 - 1.6 the standing activity lasted for between 40 and 60 seconds, in the context of a presentation that was for between 40 and 50 minutes duration;
 - 1.7 the Presenter engaged in the standing activity with students for the purpose of providing a visual representation to the whole audience, demonstrating the percentage of students who are historically represented in the foundations of Australian culture. This was not intended to shame the students who stood up, to make them feel uncomfortable or to be malicious in any way. However, the decision to engage in the activity was unwise and represented an error of judgement, given that it highlighted a particular group of students and had ready potential to expose them to feelings of guilt and/or shaming by others. This was turned into a significant error of judgement by the Presenter's unscripted off the cuff response to the student's clapping, in which she suggested that they were from a group that held the most privilege and that this also meant the group was the biggest oppressor. These comments greatly increased the potential for negative consequences for the students standing. The

Presenter now understands that the students in question may have felt vulnerable;

- 1.8 no one other than the presenter knew about the proposed standing activity that she was planning to engage in with the students, before it took place during the presentation. Consequently, the Parkdale Secondary College is not responsible in any way for, nor did it endorse the standing activity and subsequent comments made to the standing students;
- 1.9 the feedback from School staff who were interviewed was that, apart from the brief standing activity, the remainder of the presentation was positive and valuable for the students. The messaging had however become lost with the ensuing publicity about the standing activity.

Recommendations

The negative consequences arising from the Diversity and Inclusion Presentation at Parkdale Secondary College arose out of a significant error of judgement by the Presenter in making the unscripted off the cuff remarks to the group of students that they held the most privilege and that this also meant the group was the biggest oppressor. This was coupled with engaging in the standing activity itself, which was unwise and an error of judgement. This was not intended to shame the students who stood up, to make them feel uncomfortable or to be malicious in any way. The activity itself represented only a tiny portion of the presentation. A repeat of these issues can be readily avoided in the future by adopting the following changes to the manner in which presentations by Youth Workers from the Youth Services Department at Council are put together and run:

1. An appropriate system of supervision and checking be put in place. Currently, the system appears to only apply to the creation of presentations on new topics but not to the development of variations of existing presentations, as they evolve. This includes not only the content of the presentation but also the nature of any activities proposed as part of it;
2. A list of guiding principles for presentations and activities should be prepared, in the form of a checklist. This can be used by presenters and their supervisors in the future, following the creation/amendment of presentations and activities, as a quality control to consider whether each aspect of the program satisfies these guiding principles. The principles could include:
 - (a) treating all individuals with respect;
 - (b) being tolerant of everyone's views, beliefs and values;
 - (c) refraining from singling out any particular group of individuals based on an attribute under equal opportunity legislation (such as gender, race, religion, gender identity, etc.); and
 - (d) avoiding the use of jargon or complex words. If there is still a desire to use such language then it should first be checked with the school whether the audience will comprehend and positively receive the language;

3. With any future presentation to be given, consider the issues that might arise from the program being given, particularly where it is known that there is a wide variety of strongly held varying community opinions on the matters to be discussed. Particular care should be taken with the design of these programs; and
4. Working from a script for each presentation is another means of keeping quality control in place and preventing variations. The Youth Work Co-ordinator has indicated that generally they do work from scripts for these presentations. However, she added that the three staff who provide presentations have differing approaches, with one liking to work off a script, the presenter who gave the subject presentation preferring to work off a loose structure and dot points and the third presenter doing a mix of both. If recommendations 1, 2 and 3 above are adopted, then this option becomes less significant if there is a desire not to stifle creativity amongst the presenters. However, even here there is still merit in developing a script for the more controversial issues dealt with during the presentation, to ensure consistent messaging and quality control.