



Recently all St John's Park High School staff had the opportunity to listen to Celia Lashlie. Celia is from New Zealand. She has been a prison warden and an inspector of prisons, but her most important work for educators has been the "Good

Man Project" carried out in public High Schools across New Zealand.

She provided some important and interesting insights into how to raise boys to be good men.

I have reproduced below an article from the NZ Herald that was published at the time of the release of the "Good Man Project" findings. Her work is well worth reading. I hope you find the article illuminating.

"Growing boys into good men"

Eugene Bingham

Celia Lashlie.

He communicates in monosyllabic grunts, rarely washes, and walks stooped as if the world rests on his shoulders. Despite your best

intentions, he strays into temptation - fast cars, alcohol, sex. You wonder where the impish little boy you once knew has gone, and how on earth he's going to turn out to be a good man.

If the world of teenage boys is totally different to the rest of ours, then Celia Lashlie is an invader. She's proudly feminist, a former women's prison manager, and yet she's been delving into the heads of teenage boys.

But despite having worked on the project for four years and writing a book on it, she'll protest if you suggest she has been the leader. What she will admit is that it took a woman to see what she has in the "Good Man Project", which began in



September 2001 when Nelson College Headmaster Salvi Gargiulo invited Lashlie to the Heads of Boys' Schools Conference.

The project aimed to discover what it meant to be a good man, and how best to guide boys through adolescence to reach that ideal. To achieve it, Lashlie talked with 180 classes of boys ranging from Years 7 to 13.

The experience left her sure she never wants to stand before another class, but it also gave her an insight into teenage boys, and an appreciation of men.

"I'm saddened by the negating of men that occurs and while I'm very clear that I'm a feminist, I do worry about the ongoing effects of the feminist revolution. One is the perception we've left with girls that they can do everything, and two is that we're in danger of some of our boys automatically assuming they're second-class citizens."

For a feminist warrior, Lashlie seems to be going out of her way to agitate the sisterhood. The book, "He'll Be OK - Growing Gorgeous Boys Into Good Men", has a controversial message for mothers, one many do not want to hear.

"I've written the book to tell mothers to step back," says Lashlie.

She believes that boys cross the "bridge of adolescence" between Years 9 to 13, and that during that time, mothers need to take a less direct role in their sons' lives - to get off the bridge.

"It's not about mothers abandoning their sons," she writes. "It's about them accepting that for a time they will walk beside the bridge of adolescence rather than on it, or if they can't quite manage



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to stay off the bridge, that they at least commit to walking on one side."

Mothers need to understand that they do not need to nurture their teenage sons, and nor do their sons want to be nurtured.

"That's the part she will struggle with most," says Lashlie. "For him to get where he needs to go, he needs to have that space where he feels his mother isn't following him around. What he does know with unerring certainty is that, should he have a rough patch, he has only to turn and she's there."

The message has been the cause of strong reaction around the country.

At one meeting a group of mothers voted to refuse to get off the bridge. "I said, 'Okay, I'll build you a clip-on lane, but get off the bloody middle.'"

Clear boundaries need to be set, but a boy needs to feel free.

"Unless you let him go, he's not going to be okay. The more you hold on to him at that stage, the more extreme his behaviour is going to have to be to get you to let go."

Doing his ironing, washing, and making his lunch may make Mum feel good, but it's not helping the son.

Fathers, meanwhile, should definitely be on the bridge, even if that just means taking five minutes each day to talk to their son, ask how his day was, show an interest.

"The sad thing about Dads was that they thought they had to be something different. They don't - they just have to be who they are. They're just Dad - it's enough."

For solo mothers, Lashlie says it is important they recognise the need for their sons to have time with men. She is not saying there needs to be a male in the house, just that there should be someone for the boy to be around from time to time.

"Some of them won't have anybody, but most will

From: On Behalf Of Viv White, Big Picture Education Australia
Sent: Thursday, 11 November 2010 2:48 PM
To: French, Sue
Subject: For your Newsletter

Dear Colleagues at St John's Park High School,

We write to thank you and your staff and students for the wonderful welcome to your school. The catering has been superb, the front office and ICT team professional and supportive of all our requests. Your hospitality group are a fine group of young people who are working well towards a good Certificate and all of the students have been friendly and well mannered.

Thanks too to the leadership team who have worked with us on our Big Picture work. We all look forward to learning with all of our friends and continuing to learn with all of our friends.

Warm regards
Viv White CEO BP&A
Bruce Kiloh Chair BP&A

have a grandfather, uncle, males in the father's family."

The "Good Man Project" has been drawn from her own intuition. Her conclusions about what needs to be done, she says, are not rocket science or revolution.

"We've come to the mess we're in because our relationships with one another have dropped away and we've become focused on outputs and ticking boxes and in a way what I've found is part of that picture. We need to stop and connect with each other as human beings again."

Celia Lashlie's advice to parents of boys

- * Recognise their desire to live in the moment, their inability and/or unwillingness to plan their lives.
- * Never underestimate the power of peer pressure or horizontal learning for adolescent boys.
- * The central issue is getting mothers off the bridge of adolescence and fathers onto it.
- * Boys like clear boundaries. They have to be able to see and/or feel the consequences of doing or not doing something before it becomes real enough to matter and to motivate them.

