October 2010

Working Together

Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence Report

Queensland Government

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1. Foreword

The formation of the Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence (QSAAV) provided an important opportunity for the school sectors to collaborate on how best to respond to the issues of bullying and violence in Queensland schools. As the Chair of QSAAV, I was gratified that all stakeholders entered into the process of collaboration with commitment and have made the best of the opportunity to work together.

The issues facing students, school staff and parents are complex, and the possible responses are varied given the unique characteristics of our schools and general population. There is clearly a common concern about bullying, cyber bullying and violence in schools, and a need for effective responses to support students, parents and schools at the individual school, broader community and systemic policy levels. Much effort is already occurring in schools and school sectors to address the issues, but focused ongoing attention and commitment will be required.

It is also clear that working to prevent incidents and to respond effectively when incidents do occur requires constant effort and vigilance. The prevention of bullying, cyber bullying and violence in schools must engage students and become part of the broader conversation across the community. Schools cannot successfully deal with these issues in isolation. They require the cooperation of the broader community, and QSAAV has produced an evidence-based framework within which this can occur.

This report provides a summary of the information and advice considered by QSAAV during its six-month term, and includes recommendations for consideration by the Minister for Education and Training, the Honourable Geoff Wilson MP. QSAAV has produced a substantial body of work during its short timeframe, which I commend to all Queensland schools.

Given the complexity of the issues facing schools, the work undertaken by QSAAV can only be considered a beginning. I would like to see the resources maintained and promoted to all schools. Finally, I encourage all sectors to maintain the collaborative effort they have commenced through this forum.

Professor Ian O'Connor
Chair, Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence
Vice Chancellor, Griffith University

2. Executive summary

Working Together: Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence Report October 2010 describes the establishment and outcomes achieved by QSAAV from February to September 2010.

Section 3 of this report presents the eight recommendations from QSAAV to the Minister for Education and Training to continue to facilitate effective school-based action against bullying and violence.

Section 4 provides the context for the establishment of QSAAV. In September 2009, the Department of Education and Training engaged Dr Ken Rigby from the University of South Australia to undertake a consultancy to provide current information around research, agendas and initiatives in the area of bullying, to inform the future development of the department's framework, policy, approaches and research. In response to Recommendation 10 in Dr Ken Rigby's report, *Enhancing Responses to Bullying in Queensland Schools,* QSAAV was established in February 2010. The purpose of QSAAV was to provide independent advice to the Minister for Education and Training on effective strategies to respond to issues of bullying and violence in schools.

Section 5 of this report details the establishment and methodology adopted by QSAAV. Based on the Dr Rigby's report and a review of the literature and resources, QSAAV adopted a framework of 10 key elements that underpin effective school-based action against bullying. The 10 elements support schools to respond to bullying, promoting positive school culture, a whole-school definition, a school anti-bullying policy, procedural steps to respond appropriately to bullying incidents, teaching and learning programs, professional development, consultation with students, physical environments, support and engagement with families, and regular review. This framework informed all QSAAV responses to the terms of reference.

Section 6 details how QSAAV satisfied its terms of reference through a range of activities and outcomes. The outcomes are reported against each of the terms of reference, briefly outlined below.

QSAAV Term of Reference 1: Collaborate cross-sectorally to ensure a cohesive and whole of state response to bullying and violence in schools

QSAAV included senior representatives from all schooling sectors and associated stakeholders to facilitate a whole of state cross-sector response to bullying and violence in schools. The endorsement and signing of the *Queensland Schools Declaration Against Bullying and Violence* by all QSAAV members signified a public commitment by all parties to work together. In order to promote the understanding that bullying and violence are community issues, QSAAV produced *Working Together: A starter kit for developing local community alliances against bullying and violence* to support local school communities and a declaration template for schools to adapt to local contexts.

QSAAV Term of Reference 2: Identify evidence-based best practice across Queensland education sectors, nationally and internationally which may be implemented in Queensland schools

A critical review of Australian and international literature and resources to identify the elements of effective school-based action against bullying was the basis for all QSAAV activities and resource development. Expert advice further informed the deliberations of QSAAV members. The *Working Together* suite of resources targeted a range of audiences and topics to provide information about evidence-based best practice in addressing bullying. All resources addressed school responses to bullying, cyber bullying and violence. In addition, a number of specific resources focused on cyber bullying and cyber safety were developed.

The 10 elements of effective school-based action against bullying identified by QSAAV were validated through consultation with students undertaken by Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian on behalf of QSAAV. The *Student Consultation Report: Students' views about bullying* reinforced the importance of a whole-school approach to bullying, cyber bullying and violence which involves all stakeholders, including students.

QSAAV Term of Reference 3: Provide advice on Queensland's response to the report: Enhancing Responses to Bullying in Queensland Schools by Dr Ken Rigby

Dr Rigby's report contained 12 recommendations, all of which were addressed by QSAAV. The establishment of QSAAV as a cross-sector committee, including parent representatives, to provide advice on countering bullying in schools satisfied Recommendation 10 and was the vehicle for developing responses to Dr Rigby's other recommendations.

The *Working Together* suite of resources satisfied Dr Rigby's recommendations concerned with schools' capacity and framework for responding to bullying, specifically, recommendations:

1	a framework for effective responses
2	the need for a definition
3	a clear statement of expectation of student behaviour
4	a school level anti-bullying policy
5	annual reporting by schools
6	formulating steps to achieve a school anti-bullying policy
7 and 12	build staff capacity through professional development
8	an evaluation of school responses
9	promoting school anti-bullying policy
11	case studies as examples for other schools.

The *Action Against Bullying* Education Series, the recording of the series, and the production of *Six Quick Tips for Parents about Bullying* satisfied Dr Rigby's recommendations:

2	the need for a definition
6	formulating steps to achieve a school anti-bullying policy
7 and 12	build staff capacity through professional development.

Dr Rigby's Recommendation 5 regarding annual reporting by schools was met through an agreement to recommend the inclusion of this information in school

annual reports for 2011. This issue has been referred to the committee developing the 2011 School Annual Report Guidelines.

QSAAV Term of Reference 4: Make recommendations about the professional development needs of school staff and graduate teacher training in responding to bullying and violence in schools

The first major initiative of QSAAV was the *Action Against Bullying* Education Series, presented by Dr Michael Carr-Gregg in 10 locations across the state. The series was well attended and positively evaluated, indicating the interest of school staff and their need for information. To meet ongoing professional development needs, the *Action Against Bullying* Education Series will be made available via vodcasts from Term 4, 2010 to end of Term 1, 2011.

Initial work was undertaken to identify the essential components of professional development from literature and research. QSAAV's work on reviewing commercial materials to address bullying, that included a professional development component for school staff, was referred to the national level through the Safe and Supportive School Communities Project, which reports to the Australian Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Senior Officials Committee (AEEYSOC).

The student consultation also highlighted areas which could be usefully explored by schools as professional development topics. For example, one area for staff development noted in the report is the complexity and tension between students' sensitivity about disclosure, their desire for confidentiality, and the need for schools to take action to address the problem.

Work is also continuing on options to provide professional development on cyber bullying and cyber safety.

QSAAV Term of Reference 5: Make recommendations on the most effective ways to collaborate with the Australian Government initiatives in relevant areas

QSAAV engaged with Australian Government initiatives in the areas of bullying and cyber bullying. Information related to several initiatives were incorporated into the *Working Together* suite of materials, and work is continuing to promote the national initiatives in cyber safety. Cyber safety frameworks, including *eSmart Schools* and the *NetSafe Kit* (New Zealand), will be promoted to schools.

QSAAV supported holding a National Day of Action Against Bullying in March 2011. It also initiated a national symposium on bullying in schools, including legislative responses, through the Safe and Supportive Schools Communities Project, with AEEYSOC approval. In addition, the *Avoid the Harm – Stay Calm: Report on the inquiry into the impact of violence on young Australians* released in July 2010 informed some outcomes and recommendations of QSAAV.

Section 7 provides further detail on selected QSAAV actions mentioned above:

1. the *Action Against Bullying* Education Series
2. the *Working Together* suite of resources
3. student consultation
4. initiatives in cyber safety and cyber bullying.

Section 8 of this report provides background information and the rationale for the eight QSAAV recommendations to the Minister for Education and Training.

QSAAV concluded its term in September 2010. A list of QSAAV members is provided in **Appendix 1**, and all QSAAV resources are listed in **Appendix 2.**

3. Recommendations

QSAAV makes the following recommendations to the Minister for Education and Training:

1. Urge all Queensland schools to adopt a cyber safety strategy[1] incorporating:
    - consultation with students, parents and school staff
    - acceptable use agreements for students and school staff
    - clear directions about the use of mobile phones and other electronic equipment by students during school hours
    - regular review of the strategy
    - inclusion of cyber safety within the school's teaching and learning program.
2. Promote and maintain existing resources, and develop additional resources.
3. Commission an external review within 18 months, using an independent anti-bullying expert to assess the progress of Queensland schools in implementing the work of QSAAV.
4. Engage an independent anti-bullying expert to provide ongoing advice to government on issues and policy options as needed.
5. Develop a promotional campaign focused on improving the awareness of parents and students about bullying and cyber bullying.
6. Endorse the annual meeting of representatives from the three schooling sectors and associated stakeholders to continue collaborative action against bullying and violence in Queensland schools.
7. Develop a strategy for communicating with students about the issues of bullying and violence, including the use of social media options.
8. Raise, through the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, national support and effort for the following issues that have been raised in the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth report *Avoid the Harm – Stay Calm: Report on the inquiry into the impact of violence on young Australians*, which are clearly issues facing all jurisdictions:
    - development of nationally recognised high quality online professional development for school staff on bullying, cyber safety and violence
    - a process for the evaluation of anti-bullying and anti-violence programs that assists schools to determine the right program for their school's needs
    - a mechanism for the ongoing identification of high quality research in the areas of bullying and violence to assist all schools in implementing evidence-based practice.

[1] *eSmart Schools* (Alannah & Madeline Foundation, Australia) and the *NetSafe Kit* (New Zealand) are evidence-based examples of cyber safety strategies that schools will be encouraged to consider.

4. Introduction

In recent years, the issues of bullying and violence in Queensland schools have received prominence in the community through the media and through several high profile events. These events have prompted concern about the way in which schools and school authorities are dealing with bullying and violence.

In September 2009, Dr Ken Rigby from the University of South Australia was engaged to undertake a consultancy for the Department of Education and Training (DET). The purpose of the consultancy was 'to provide current information around recent and current research, agendas and initiatives in the bullying landscape to inform the future development of DET frameworks, policy, approaches and resources'.

The consultation period spanned September to December 2009. Materials produced by Dr Rigby during the consultancy are now available to all schools in Queensland through the DET website. These include six workshop presentations, and support materials for school staff about addressing bullying in schools.

On 22 February 2010, Dr Rigby presented a report to the Director-General for Education and Training, *Enhancing Responses to Bullying in Queensland Schools*. This report contained 12 recommendations on the way forward for Queensland schools in responding more effectively to bullying.

Recommendation 10 of Dr Rigby's report promoted the establishment of a cross-sector committee as an effective mechanism to advance work in this complex area, specifically:

> *Ensure that the best advice on countering bullying in schools is continually available to the Department. Following the South Australian model, this could include representatives from the State, Independent and Catholic sectors in a Coalition to Counter Bullying and Violence in Schools. It could also include, as committee members or guests, individuals with relevant research and/or counselling experience in the area, drawing upon academic institutions and other relevant bodies. Parent representation on the committee should also be considered.*

Consistent with this recommendation, on 23 February 2010, the Premier announced the formation of the Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence (QSAAV) to provide advice to the Minister for Education and Training on best practice in dealing with bullying and violence in schools. A key driver for QSAAV's work was the development of an informed response to Dr Rigby's recommendations. At the first meeting of QSAAV on 10 March 2010, the Minister encouraged members to explore national and international evidence-based practice that addressed bullying and violence, and propose practical strategies for schools to implement.

5. The Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence

The Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence (QSAAV) was chaired by Professor Ian O'Connor, Vice Chancellor, Griffith University, and included representatives from state, Catholic and independent schooling sectors, parent groups, principals associations, unions and the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian (the Commission). QSAAV members are listed in Appendix 1.

QSAAV was an important opportunity to develop shared responses to bullying and violence in schools across all sectors and the whole community through its senior representatives from the three Queensland schooling sectors and other stakeholders in the education of children in Queensland. Students were given a voice in QSAAV's deliberations through the student consultation processes conducted by the Commission. The range of perspectives ensured that outcomes would reflect the needs of the whole school community.

QSAAV was thus a unique forum for open debate about issues and the identification of the needs of schools. The focus was on delivering practical outcomes for schools to respond to the issues.

5.1 Terms of reference

Terms of reference were developed to guide the work of QSAAV in providing independent advice to the Minister for Education and Training. The Minister was also clear that QSAAV was to operate formally for a finite period, with a requirement to provide a final report with recommendations for future action.

Terms of reference

The Alliance provides independent advice to the Minister for Education and Training in Queensland on effective strategies to respond to issues of bullying and violence in schools. The terms of reference for the Alliance are to:

- collaborate cross-sectorally to ensure a cohesive and whole of state response to bullying and violence in schools
- identify evidence-based best practice across Queensland educational sectors, nationally and internationally which may be implemented in Queensland schools
- provide advice on Queensland's response to the report: *Enhancing Responses to Bullying in Queensland Schools* by Dr Ken Rigby
- make recommendations about the professional development needs of school staff and graduate teacher training in responding to bullying and violence in schools
- make recommendations on the most effective ways to collaborate with the Australian Government initiatives in relevant areas.

Membership

Membership of the Alliance will include representatives of the following organisations and sectors:

- Queensland Catholic Education Commission

- Independent Schools Queensland
- Nominees of the principal associations (three members)
  - Queensland Secondary Principals' Association
  - Association of Heads of Independent Schools
  - Association of Principals of Catholic Secondary Schools in Australia
- Queensland Council for Parents and Citizens' Associations Inc
- Federation of Parents and Friends Associations of Catholic Schools
- The Queensland Independent Schools Parents' Council
- Nominees of the relevant industrial organisations (three members)
  - Queensland Teachers' Union
  - Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union (Qld Branch)
  - Independent Education Union of Australia
- Education Queensland
- Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian
- Indigenous representative.

Expert guests

The Alliance can invite experts on specific topics to participate in the Alliance as required. This may include recognised academics in a range of fields, practitioners or other parties as determined by the Alliance.

The Alliance will also seek advice from other government departments such as the Queensland Police Service and the Department of Communities (Child Safety Services) as required.

Chair

Appoint an independent chairperson for the Alliance, to be nominated by the Minister for Education and Training.

Subcommittees

The Alliance can form other topic-specific subcommittees as required, for example, a student subcommittee.

Meeting schedule

The Alliance will meet according to the schedule determined by the chair in consultation with the Minister. The Alliance will provide regular advice on progress to the Minister for Education and Training after meetings.

Minutes

Details of the meeting outcomes can be found in the minutes.

QSAAV met according to the schedule determined by the Chair, in consultation with the Minister for Education and Training. Meetings were held on 10 March, 7 April, 14 May, 15 June, 12 July, 16 August and 16 September 2010.

5.2 Methodology

To gain an understanding of the complex challenges of bullying, cyber bullying and violence among students, and to establish a framework for its deliberations, QSAAV employed a range of methods to access contemporary, evidence-based and best practice information.

Literature and resource review

Information was gathered from:

- review of the published literature to identify core elements of practical approaches to dealing with bullying and violence
- review of *Safe to Learn: Embedding anti-bullying work in schools*, which was developed by the United Kingdom's Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) in 2007
- review of Queensland and Australian initiatives
- review of policies, templates and resources currently available in each of the three education sectors.

Workshops

On two occasions, invited experts presented workshops for QSAAV members and others by invitation. In May 2010, adolescent psychologist and cyber bullying expert, Dr Michael Carr-Gregg, presented to the group on cyber bullying. In June, Pro Vice Chancellor (Arts, Education and Law) and Director of the Violence Research and Prevention Program from Griffith University, Professor Paul Mazerolle, presented to QSAAV on youth violence and violence in schools, including prevalence, precursors, prevention, challenges and opportunities. This information was integrated into the QSAAV resources then under development.

Focused deliberations by subcommittees

QSAAV exercised the option to form two topic-specific subcommittees — the Implementation subcommittee and the Best Practice subcommittee. These were the initial vehicles for action, and ensured the groundwork was completed within the time constraints and with the necessary collaboration.

Consultation on materials under development

Out of the review of the literature and existing resources, QSAAV developed a suite of practical resources suitable for Queensland schools. The process of materials development involved comments from QSAAV members, who consulted in their own jurisdictions and organisations, and other stakeholders, such as legal, curriculum and technical advisers.

5.3 QSAAV framework for action

QSAAV was established to achieve practical outcomes, not just to comment on issues or make recommendations regarding principles or processes.

At the outset, QSAAV recognised that many Queensland schools already have comprehensive approaches to preventing and responding to bullying and building

positive school environments, while other schools are still developing their approaches.

QSAAV recognised a particular challenge for schools lay in critically evaluating the wealth of information about strategies and approaches from the large number of anti-bullying and anti-violence programs available. A critical initial decision was to establish a framework to interpret the extensive information. This entailed a distillation of the key principles underpinning best practice. Dr Rigby's report focused on the need for schools to have an effective framework from which to address bullying in schools, including a clear definition of bullying, school expectations of behaviour, and requirements to produce a school anti-bullying policy. Rather than endorse any particular program or approach, QSAAV agreed that a framework could assist schools to make their own well-informed decisions about local responses to bullying and violence.

Based on Dr Rigby's consultancy findings and recommendations, and the review of international and Australian research and resources, QSAAV identified 10 elements of effective school-based action against bullying (see page 13). These 10 elements formed the basis of the framework and checklist for schools to use to review and evaluate their actions.

QSAAV's deliberations also highlighted the need for school-orientated resources, based on these 10 elements, to assist schools. QSAAV commissioned the production of a number of materials and activities, as well as initiating a statewide educational series by Dr Carr-Gregg.

QSAAV was cognisant of other significant work occurring during its term, the first being the consideration by the House Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth of submissions to the inquiry into the impact of violence on young Australians. The report of this inquiry, *Avoid the Harm – Stay Calm*, was publicly released in July 2010. Several issues under consideration overlapped with Dr Rigby's recommendations and the QSAAV terms of reference. Several of the Standing Committee's recommendations related directly to work being considered by QSAAV, particularly in the areas of sharing information with schools about best practice in addressing bullying and violence, and influenced decisions made by QSAAV. A second area of activity noted by QSAAV was the *Cybersafety and Wellbeing Initiative* national cyber safety pilot being conducted by the Alannah and Madeline Foundation.

QSAAV framework: 10 elements of effective school-based action against bullying

1. Create a caring, respectful, inclusive and supportive **school culture**.

2. Establish a **clear whole-school definition** of bullying.

3. Establish a **clear anti-bullying policy** developed in collaboration with staff, students and parents/carers, which addresses all forms of bullying (including cyber bullying).

4. Collaboratively develop **procedural steps to respond appropriately to bullying incidents** that are clearly documented, and define the roles and responsibilities of staff, students and parents/carers.

5. Establish **teaching and learning programs** that promote personal development and address all forms of bullying through the teaching of language skills, social-cognitive abilities, social skills, assertiveness, coping strategies, group mechanisms, motives for bullying and being effective bystanders.

6. Provide **professional development** to assist school staff to understand the anti-bullying policy, implement teaching and learning programs, and provide support for students at high risk times and in high risk settings.

7. **Consult students** regularly to monitor and determine the types of bullying behaviour, and in what school and social contexts bullying (including cyber bullying) occurs.

8. Create **physical environments** in the school and staff supervision practices that limit the incidences of bullying (including cyber bullying).

9. **Support and engage families** by maintaining regular, clear communication and through systematic parent awareness raising and skill building.

10. Establish a process for **regularly reviewing** and celebrating the effectiveness of school policies, programs and procedures.

6. QSAAV response to the terms of reference

This section reports the QSAAV outcomes against the terms of reference. Section 7 provides additional detail regarding selected activities.

6.1 QSAAV Term of Reference 1

Collaborate cross-sectorally to ensure a cohesive and whole of state response to bullying and violence in schools

The participation in QSAAV by senior representatives from all schooling sectors and other stakeholders allowed a productive whole-of-state, cross-sector response to bullying and violence in schools. Deliberations were open and constructive and ensured that outcomes achieved through QSAAV would reflect the needs of the whole Queensland school community.

All decisions of QSAAV were directed towards supporting schools to adopt cohesive, consistent and well-informed responses, consistent with the 10 principles outlined in Section 5.

A significant achievement was the development and approval of the *Queensland Schools Declaration Against Bullying and Violence*. At the meeting of QSAAV in May, Dr Carr-Gregg promoted the value of a shared public statement of the commitment of all stakeholders. This was based on the *Kandersteg Declaration Against Bullying in Children and Youth*[2], signed by the participants of the Joint Efforts Against Victimization Conference in Kandersteg, Switzerland in June 2007.

As a public document, the *Queensland Schools Declaration Against Bullying and Violence* symbolises the commitment of all education sectors and key stakeholders to work together to address bullying and violence in schools, providing an important signal to the broader community that bullying and violence are not tolerated in Queensland schools.

All members of QSAAV endorsed the Declaration as an opportunity to publicly announce their commitment to address bullying and violence in schools. The Declaration was signed by all QSAAV members and by the Minister for Education and Training, and will be displayed at Education House. A copy will be given to all signatories.

QSAAV endorsed distribution of the Declaration to all schools, with an accompanying letter from the Minister for Education and Training, encouraging schools to display the Declaration in a prominent location in their school. A template based on the Declaration, which schools can adapt for local use, will be available on the DET website, and will allow individual school communities to produce their own public statement of their commitment to take action against bullying and violence.

To support schools working with their local community, QSAAV produced *Working Together: A starter kit for developing local community alliances against bullying and violence.* The starter kit promotes the understanding that bullying and violence are community issues, and provides background information about forming local community alliances against bullying and violence. In some cases, this collaborative

[2] http://www.kanderstegdeclaration.com/storage/English%20KD.pdf

work among schools is occurring now. A community alliance can be incorporated into existing groups or structures in a local area, or it may be a new group formed for this purpose. The starter kit includes information about the purpose, membership, formation and possible terms of reference of a community alliance, some suggested steps to develop a community alliance, and sample letters and templates.

In recognition of the effectiveness and productiveness of the cross-sector collaboration facilitated by QSAAV, one of its recommendations is to endorse an annual meeting of the representatives from the three schooling sectors and associated stakeholders to continue collaborative action against bullying and violence in Queensland schools (QSAAV Recommendation 6).

6.2 QSAAV Term of Reference 2

Identify evidence-based best practice across Queensland education sectors, nationally and internationally which may be implemented in Queensland schools

Decisions and recommendations made by QSAAV were informed by a critical review of Australian and international research and resources about evidence-based best practice. Expert advice further informed the deliberations of QSAAV members. To this end, two workshops for QSAAV members on bullying (with Dr Michael Carr-Gregg) and youth violence (with Professor Paul Mazerolle) were conducted.

Queensland is a large and diverse state, and this diversity is reflected in the school sector. Rather than endorsing any particular individual programs or approaches, QSAAV believed it was most appropriate to identify the core elements of best practice. (These 10 core elements are summarised on page 13.) These elements were integrated into a number of resources developed by QSAAV to provide a framework and practical information to support schools to achieve high standards.

The first resource produced, *Working Together: A toolkit for effective school based action against bullying*, is a substantial collection of practical information for schools. As recommended by Dr Rigby, it includes a definition of what does, and does not, constitute bullying. The 10 elements of effective school-based action are described, followed by detailed sections with information about each element and suggestions about ways to translate these into local practice. The content includes practical support in the form of checklists, templates and additional resources to ensure schools could easily adapt the framework and the 10 elements of effective action.

The *Working Together* toolkit for schools was endorsed by QSAAV in May 2010, and made available on each sector's website.

Specific aspects of the 10 elements were validated through consultation with students, undertaken on behalf of QSAAV by the Commission. The Commission asked a sample of Year 6 and Year 9 students from five schools for their views about selected elements, and found that their views generally aligned with the research and best practice evidence presented in the toolkit. This bore out the usefulness of the toolkit and the framework it provides for a whole-of-school approach to dealing with student-on-student bullying. The *Student Consultation Report: Students' views about bullying* reinforced the importance of a whole-school approach to dealing with bullying, cyber bullying and violence, which involves all stakeholders, including students. The report made six recommendations, the most important being that

schools give students the opportunity to be involved when developing, implementing and monitoring school-based anti-bullying policy and strategies at the local level.

In September 2010, QSAAV endorsed the report *Student Consultation Report: Students' views about bullying.* It also endorsed making the consultation's supporting materials available on the DET website, as templates for schools to use when consulting with their own student groups.

Achieving high standards in schools and addressing bullying and violence effectively rely on positive engagement with parents. It became evident early in QSAAV's term, particularly through discussions at the Education Series workshops presented by Dr Carr-Gregg, that a significant need existed in supporting parents to work with schools, and supporting schools to engage with parents. Therefore, the next resource developed was *Working Together: A toolkit for parents to address bullying,* providing practical tips for parents on how to support their child should they experience or engage in bullying behaviour. The toolkit also provides information and strategies to assist parents in communicating with school staff should any concerns regarding bullying arise. This document was endorsed by QSAAV in August 2010.

In order to promote evidence-based best practice across Queensland schools, QSAAV identified schools from all three sectors that were addressing bullying and violence in line with best practice guidelines. These schools were invited to present case studies of how they defined and dealt with bullying, and how they engaged students and the wider community, and to identify remaining challenges. These case studies were collated into *Working Together: Good practice in Queensland schools – Case studies of effective school based action against bullying*, which will be made available on the DET website to demonstrate practical responses and strategies already implemented in some schools. QSAAV endorsed the case studies package in September 2010.

A critical challenge for schools in developing an evidence-based response to bullying and violence is extensive misinformation around these topics. Comments on the first resources produced, and comments at the Education Series, indicated that school staff need information and support to understand students' violent behaviour in order to plan more effective responses. To support schools to focus on evidence-based practices, and to critically consider information in the media and elsewhere, the resource *Working Together: Understanding student violence* was developed. This resource explores some of the myths and misconceptions around student violence, and presents a review of the research that firstly demonstrates what does *not* work in preventing student violence, and secondly highlights principles of effective practice.

Taken as a whole, the *Working Together* suite of resources provides schools and the community with comprehensive information about evidence-based best practice which can be implemented in Queensland schools. The emphasis in QSAAV's work was to provide information in a practical format which could be readily adapted to suit each school's local context.

The suite of resources also addressed the recommendations from Dr Rigby's report which concerned schools' capacity and framework for responding to bullying, specifically:

1. a framework for effective responses
2. the need for a definition
3. clear statement of expectation of student behaviour

4	school level anti-bullying policy
5	annual reporting by schools
6	formulating steps to achieve a school anti-bullying policy
7 and 12	build staff capacity through professional development
8	evaluation of school responses
9	promoting school anti-bullying policy
11	case studies as examples for other schools.

The Student Consultation Report complemented the *Working Together* suite of resources by providing students' perspectives.

QSAAV recommends to the Minister these resources be promoted to schools and maintained for currency, and that additional resources also be developed in areas identified by stakeholders and by Dr Carr-Gregg (QSAAV Recommendation 2).

6.3 QSAAV Term of Reference 3

Provide advice on Queensland's response to the report: Enhancing Responses to Bullying in Queensland Schools by Dr Ken Rigby

The establishment of QSAAV as a cross-sector committee, which included parent representatives, satisfied Dr Rigby's Recommendation 10, and provided a vehicle for developing responses to Dr Rigby's all other recommendations. The main vehicle for responding to these recommendations was the development of the *Working Together* suite of resources and the *Action Against Bullying* Education Series, conducted by Dr Carr-Gregg. QSAAV's responses to each of Dr Rigby's recommendations are detailed below.

Rigby Recommendation 1: Help to educate schools about bullying. Provide a broad framework within which an understanding of bullying and how it can be countered and effectively addressed. This should be a framework that accommodates mainstream thinking about bullying and the range of intervention strategies that have been developed in recent years.

Response

QSAAV undertook a number of activities to educate school communities about bullying, including cyber bullying. The development of a framework derived from current research and resources, which articulated the 10 elements of effective school-based action against bullying, was an essential part of assisting schools to understand bullying and how it can be countered.

The framework of 10 elements distilled best practice into practical anti-bullying policy guidelines for schools to use in context. The framework was integrated into the *Working Together* suite of resources, available to all schools on the DET website. The resources focus on practical support and intervention strategies which schools can readily adapt. As well, an extensive list of resources to assist schools is provided.

Responding to cyber bullying presents new and rapidly changing challenges for schools. While the QSAAV framework for responding to

bullying also addressed cyber bullying, additional investigations were made into frameworks specifically developed for schools to respond to cyber bullying. Both *eSmart Schools* (Alannah & Madeline Foundation, Australia) and *NetSafe* (New Zealand) have been examined and will be promoted to schools as evidence-based effective practice.

QSAAV recommends that schools continue to have access to current best practice through promoting and maintaining the resources produced by QSAAV, and developing additional resources (QSAAV Recommendation 2).

In recognition of the need for schools to engage with the wider community to respond effectively, QSAAV recommends a promotional campaign focused on improving the awareness of parents and students about bullying and cyber bullying (QSAAV Recommendation 5).

QSAAV also recommends that all Queensland schools adopt a cyber safety strategy with specified elements (QSAAV Recommendation 1).

Rigby Recommendation 2: Encourage schools to differentiate between 'bullying' and other forms of undesirable interpersonal behaviour, such as random acts of aggression, conflicts between individuals of equal strength or power and the non-malicious exclusion of individuals. The definition of bullying needs to be made clear in order that appropriate action can be taken.

Response

The second element in QSAAV's 10 element framework is *the establishment of a clear whole-school definition of bullying.* The message about the importance of understanding exactly what bullying is, and is not, was integrated into all QSAAV activities and resources. Each of the QSAAV resources focuses on this concept, and definitions are provided of bullying, cyber bullying and interpersonal violence.

In the *Action Against Bullying* Education Series, Dr Carr-Gregg reinforced the importance of a shared definition of bullying, and comments indicated that participants found this clarification helpful in framing their responses to bullying at school. To support the key messages about the importance of a clear definition of bullying shared by all stakeholders conveyed in the *Working Together* toolkits, QSAAV commissioned the development of *Six Quick Tips for Parents about Bullying* series of two to three minute videos. These were presented by Dr Carr-Gregg and made available through YouTube.

Findings from the student consultation suggested that students also find it helpful to be able to differentiate between what is bullying and what is not. However, opinions differed across school groups about the defining elements of bullying and the types of bullying discussed. This reinforced the information in the *Working Together* suite of resources that a clear definition is important for all stakeholders, including students, in order that appropriate action can be taken.

Rigby Recommendation 3: Consistent with the Schoolwide Positive Behaviour Support (SWPBS) require that schools set out the expectations of the school in relation to bullying behaviour and advise students on what steps they can take if they are bullied and what action will be taken by the school if cases of bullying occur.

Due to the state school specific reference to Schoolwide Positive Behaviour Support (SWPBS) in this recommendation, QSAAV agreed at the May 2010 meeting to adapt and respond to this recommendation in the following way:

Rigby Recommendation 3: Require that schools set out the expectations of the school in relation to bullying behaviour and advise students on what steps they can take if they are bullied and what action will be taken by the school if cases of bullying occur.

Response

Several of QSAAV's elements of effective school-based action against bullying directly support schools to meet this recommendation. Specifically, the elements state that schools should establish a clear anti-bullying policy, develop procedural steps to appropriately respond to bullying incidents, and establish teaching and learning programs which support students to deal with bullying. The framework also promotes consultation with students as part of creating and implementing effective whole-school approaches to bullying. The consultation undertaken by the Commission found that the students consulted firmly believed that students must be involved in developing and implementing the school's anti-bullying policy.

The *Working Together* resources provide schools with strategies and materials to implement these elements in their own context. The toolkit for schools provides practical materials and templates to advance these elements, and the case studies provide positive examples of how schools have set out their expectations in relation to bullying behaviour, and how they have responded to bullying incidents.

QSAAV recommends that an external review of the progress of Queensland schools is commissioned within 18 months, which would reveal the progress schools have made in setting out the expectations of schools in relation to bullying behaviour (QSAAV Recommendation 3).

Rigby Recommendation 4: Provide suggestions on what elements or features can usefully be included in a school anti-bullying policy.

Response

QSAAV's third element of effective school-based action is the *establishment of a school anti-bullying policy*. The *Working Together* suite of resources suggests this should be developed in collaboration with staff, students and parents/carers, and should address all forms of

bullying (including cyber bullying). It provides extensive detail of aspects which could be included in an anti-bullying policy. All schools currently have a behaviour policy — these vary across sectors and individual schools — within which the anti-bullying policy may be incorporated. In 2009, state schools were directed to review their responsible behaviour plans for students to ensure a clear statement about bullying was included.

QSAAV recommends that an external review of the progress of Queensland schools is commissioned within 18 months, which would reveal the effectiveness of schools in implementing the ten elements of effective action against bullying (QSAAV Recommendation 3).

Rigby Recommendation 5: As in some other Australian states, such as NSW and SA, require schools to produce an anti-bullying policy which must be reported on each year.

Response

QSAAV supports the requirement for all schools to have an anti-bullying policy, and recognises that for many schools, this may be included in broader whole-school policies and not be a discrete stand-alone policy. QSAAV supports the requirement for all schools to report regularly to their school community on the activities and strategies they have conducted to address bullying. The purpose of this reporting is to engage parents and community members in activities and strategies that address safety and bullying within the school.

As the success of a school anti-bullying policy depends on the understanding and engagement of stakeholders, schools have been encouraged to communicate their anti-bullying policy in a range of ways, including making it available on their website, promoting it through school activities, and establishing a local community alliance against bullying and violence. The Student Consultation Report highlighted the value of methods such as role play to demonstrate and explore bullying scenarios and solutions.

Agreement was reached by all QSAAV representatives to require schools to report on their anti-bullying policies and practice in their annual reports. QSAAV referred this matter to the committee responsible for the 2011 School Annual Report Guidelines for all sectors, recommending a requirement to report on anti-bullying strategies and activities in the school.

Rigby Recommendation 6: Suggest steps that may be taken in the development of such a policy to take advantage of feedback from stakeholders including parents. This would help in bringing about necessary positive and committed support for the implementation of policy.

Response

QSAAV has provided schools with suggested steps to take advantage of the views of stakeholders, including parents and students, in the development of an anti-bullying policy. The ninth element of effective school-based action against bullying is *supporting and engaging families by maintaining regular, clear communication and through systematic parent awareness raising and skill building*. The *Working Together* toolkit for schools provides templates for communicating with parents. QSAAV resources developed specifically for parents also assist schools by providing them with advice on how to engage positively with parents in this challenging area.

The *Student Consultation Report: Students' views about bullying* makes steps to engage students in consultation about bullying and about an anti-bullying policy available to schools. The forms used in the consultation are templates, which can be readily adapted by schools. The Student Consultation Report highlighted that students have different preferences for how they give input. This provides practical support to schools to take advantage of the views of stakeholders, which is important in building support and commitment for the implementation of the policy.

Schools' engagement with students could be supported by a wider communication strategy, which forms the basis of QSAAV's recommendation to develop a strategy for communicating with students about the issues of bullying and violence, including the use of social media options (QSAAV Recommendation 7).

Rigby Recommendation 7: Inform and educate school staff so that they become aware of current thinking and practices in addressing bullying, both proactively through working with students in classrooms and by means of interventions when bullying takes place. To this end encourage the use of PD sessions devoted to training staff, especially in the use of the most appropriate intervention method to fit the case. This would involve promoting the six vodcasts and associated resources on school bullying that Dr Rigby helped to develop in collaboration with Education Queensland for use in Queensland schools during 2010.

Response

QSAAV acknowledged the substantial needs in educating school staff about contemporary thinking and practices in addressing bullying. QSAAV endorsed Dr Rigby's vodcasts, and ensured they were available through the DET website and promoted through each sector.

QSAAV's first major initiative in response to this recommendation was to engage adolescent psychologist and cyber bullying expert, Dr Carr-Gregg, to present the *Action Against Bullying* Education Series in 10 locations throughout Queensland. This series focused on bullying and cyber bullying among students. The comments from participants indicated the content and practical resources were very well received. In recognition of the ongoing need for professional development, the *Action Against Bullying* workshops were recorded and made available on the DET website until April 2011, through an agreement with Dr Carr-Gregg. Avenues to address this need into the future were also investigated and are still under consideration.

Student consultation also highlighted areas which could be usefully explored as professional development topics at the school level, with the report recommending that the professional development of teachers include reference to the insights of students. Students also expressed interest in exploring and practising responses to bullying through the use of drama, accompanied by discussion with teachers and peers.

QSAAV noted with interest the recommendations of the report of the *National Inquiry into the Impact of Violence on Young Australians* that referred to the need to provide education and information to schools about dealing with bullying and violence, and about implementing appropriate evidence-based approaches and programs in schools. QSAAV recommends the Minister for Education and Training advocates support for the recommendations of this report through the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (QSAAV Recommendation 8).

Rigby Recommendation 8: Strongly promote the use of evaluative procedures to discover what has been achieved following interventions in cases.

Response

QSAAV's final element of effective school-based action against bullying is *the establishment of a process for regularly reviewing and celebrating the effectiveness of school policies, programs and procedures*. To this end, a number of steps for evaluating schools' responses were built into the *Working Together* suite of resources and the Student Consultation Report recommendations. This evaluation process included the suggestion that schools celebrate the success of their anti-bullying actions and acknowledge the significant work undertaken by all stakeholders in fostering a safe and supportive school community.

QSAAV recommends that an external review of the progress of Queensland schools in implementing the work of QSAAV is commissioned within 18 months (QSAAV Recommendation 3).

Rigby Recommendation 9: Encourage schools to place their anti-bullying policy on the web, especially for the benefit of parents.

Response

QSAAV's 10 elements of effective school-based action against bullying reinforce the need to engage, and continue to communicate with, parents, including placing the anti-bullying policy on the school's website.

The *Working Together* suite of resources consistently reinforces the importance of developing and ensuring the commitment of all stakeholders to a school anti-bullying policy. Placing this policy on the web is a practical way to ensure all stakeholders, including parents, are aware and engaged with the school's policy.

QSAAV recommends that an external review of the progress of Queensland schools in implementing the work of QSAAV is commissioned within 18 months, which could include an audit of the number of schools adopting this measure (QSAAV Recommendation 3).

Rigby Recommendation 10: Ensure that the best advice on countering bullying in schools is continually available to the Department. Following the South Australian model, this could include representatives from the state, independent and Catholic sectors in a Coalition to Counter Bullying and Violence in Schools. It could also include, as committee members or guests, individuals with relevant research and/or counselling experience in the area, drawing upon academic institutions and other relevant bodies. Parent representation on the committee should also be considered.

Response

QSAAV was established as a cross-sector committee, with representatives from all three schooling sectors and parent representatives. QSAAV then became the vehicle for developing responses to Dr Rigby's other recommendations. A tangible outcome of this committee was the *Queensland Schools Declaration Against Bullying and Violence*, which articulates the commitment of all stakeholders to work together.

QSAAV recommends that an annual meeting of representatives from the three schooling sectors and the associated stakeholders is held to foster ongoing collaborative action against bullying and violence in Queensland schools (QSAAV Recommendation 6).

QSAAV also recommends the engagement of an anti-bullying expert to provide ongoing advice to government on issues and policy options as needed (QSAAV Recommendation 4).

Rigby Recommendation 11: Evaluate and report upon the effectiveness of a small sample of selected Queensland schools in reducing the prevalence of bullying following the introduction of specific anti-bullying programs.

Response

QSAAV invited a number of schools across the three schooling sectors to provide case studies on how they had effectively reduced the prevalence of bullying through their anti-bullying approaches. These case studies were collated and presented in a *Working Together* booklet according to the themes of whole school, restorative practices, and social and emotional learning approaches. Links to commercial programs used in the case studies were provided to further assist schools to plan their own response to bullying.

QSAAV recommends the commissioning of an external review to assess the progress of Queensland schools in implementing the work of QSAAV within 18 months. This will include evaluating the effectiveness of Queensland schools in reducing the prevalence of bullying following the implementation of the 10 elements of effective action against bullying (QSAAV Recommendation 3).

Rigby Recommendation 12: Urge the Minister for Education and Training to review what is included on addressing bullying in schools in mandatory professional programs for practising teachers and make recommendations on what is to be covered.

Response

QSAAV has investigated a number of avenues to contribute to sustainable professional development programs for practising teachers. Letters regarding options for including information about dealing with student bullying and violence are to be sent to the Queensland Deans of Education Forum and the Queensland College of Teachers.

Substantial professional development material on bullying and cyber safety has been provided through QSAAV activities, including the *Working Together* suite and the *Action Against Bullying* Education Series, which would form the basis for recommendations on what is to be covered in future professional development programs. Options for ongoing provision, for example, online access, are under investigation.

QSAAV recommends that the Minister raise, through the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, national support and effort for the following issues that have been raised in the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth report *Avoid the Harm – Stay Calm: Report on the inquiry into the impact of violence on young Australians*, which are clearly issues facing all jurisdictions:

- development of nationally recognised high quality online

professional development for school staff on bullying, cyber safety and violence
- a process for the evaluation of anti-bullying and anti-violence programs that assists schools to determine the right program for their school's needs
- a mechanism for the ongoing identification of high quality research in the areas of bullying and violence to assist all schools in implementing evidence-based practice.
(QSAAV Recommendation 8)

QSAAV actions and outcomes thus provide a comprehensive response to Dr Rigby's report*: Enhancing Responses to Bullying in Queensland Schools.* QSAAV recommendations provide direction for the Queensland Government's continuing attention and commitment to addressing the complex issues of bullying and violence.

6.4 QSAAV Term of Reference 4

Make recommendations about the professional development needs of school staff and graduate teacher training in responding to bullying and violence in schools

QSAAV recognised the professional development needs of school staff and graduate teachers in responding to bullying and violence.

The first major initiative of QSAAV was the *Action Against Bullying* Education Series presented by Dr Carr-Gregg in 10 locations across the state. The series was well attended and positively evaluated, indicating the interest of school staff and their need for information in this area.

The series attracted over 3000 school leaders, school staff and parents. Comments from the sessions indicate they have been highly valued, with 97 per cent of participants agreeing or strongly agreeing the sessions increased their knowledge of bullying and cyber bullying, and their role in responding to bullying. It has also highlighted the need for school staff to have access to up-to-date and practical information about dealing with bullying and how to support students affected by it.

Interactions with school leaders during the series indicate that most (but not all) school principals and other senior staff are very aware of the issue of bullying, its occurrence in their schools, and their responsibility to provide a system for their school community to report and take action where appropriate. During the sessions, school staff regularly requested additional information on how to talk with a student who has experienced bullying, how to respond to a child who has engaged in bullying behaviour, and how to work with parents to address issues of bullying. Parents' questions focused around their own child's needs, and how to work with the school to address bullying.

To meet the ongoing needs in the area of professional development, the *Action Against Bullying* Education Series is to be made available via vodcasts during Term 4, 2010 and continuing until the end of Term 1, 2011.

In the student consultation, students commented about teachers' skills and knowledge in dealing with bullying, specifically:

- Students perceived that teachers do not always know what is happening and do not always respond in a way that is helpful to the students involved.
- Students want to be able to report their concerns, but expect confidentiality and discretion, and wish to avoid any actions which may make the bullying worse or incur further embarrassment for the student.

The Student Consultation Report made recommendations about professional development for school staff, which takes these views into account.

Other options for the provision of professional development were also investigated. QSAAV undertook substantial work reviewing the essential components of professional development from literature and research. Subsequently, this work on capacity building of school staff and graduate teacher training to address bullying was referred to the national level through the Safe and Supportive School Communities Project.

The *Avoid the Harm – Stay Calm: Report on the inquiry into the impact of violence on young Australians*, released in July 2010, also informed the outcomes and recommendations of QSAAV. A significant focus of work by QSAAV was a professional development framework for addressing bullying and violence in schools (to include program reviews and links to existing professional development opportunities). QSAAV considered that issues and opportunities in this area were contained in the recommendations of the *Avoid the Harm – Stay Calm* report, particularly:

- *Avoid the Harm – Stay Calm Recommendation 8*
  The Committee recommends that the Australian Government conduct an audit of existing initiatives and programs that aim to address youth violence. The audit should detail the outcomes of any assessments or evaluations, and provide commentary on the rigor of evaluation.
  Further, the Committee recommends that the audit findings be made publicly available (para 5.25).
- *Avoid the Harm – Stay Calm Recommendation 9*
  The Committee recommends that the Australian Government, in consultation with state and territory governments and other key stakeholders, identify and establish an appropriate mechanism to support the development of a strong evidence-base through ongoing, systematic and rigorous evaluation of anti-violence interventions and programs.
  A clearinghouse for the dissemination of information to policy makers and other interested parties should be an integral part of the considerations (para 5.27).

QSAAV recommends that the Minister raise, through the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, national support and effort for the following issues that have been raised in the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth report *Avoid the Harm – Stay Calm: Report on the inquiry into the impact of violence on young Australians*, which are clearly issues facing all jurisdictions:

- development of nationally recognised high quality online professional development for school staff on bullying, cyber safety and violence
- a process for the evaluation of anti-bullying and anti-violence programs that assists schools to determine the right program for their school's needs

- a mechanism for the ongoing identification of high quality research in the areas of bullying and violence to assist all schools in implementing evidence-based practice.
  (QSAAV Recommendation 8)

Professional development for school staff was also a key aspect of QSAAV's recommendation that schools adopt a cyber safety strategy incorporating a sequence of steps recommended in a number of established frameworks, for example, the *NetSafe* framework (QSAAV Recommendation 1).

Change is very rapid in the area of cyber safety, and schools need support to stay abreast of these changes and emerging challenges. Information to support the professional development of school staff and graduate teachers will be updated on the DET website as part of QSAAV's recommendation to promote and maintain existing resources, and develop additional resources (QSAAV Recommendation 2).

Work to provide input into graduate teacher training is ongoing, with meetings planned with the Queensland Deans of Education Forum and the Queensland College of Teachers.

6.5 QSAAV Term of Reference 5

Make recommendations on the most effective ways to collaborate with the Australian Government initiatives in relevant areas

A number of Australian Government initiatives in cyber bullying and cyber safety were underway concurrently with QSAAV's term, several of which were directly relevant to its deliberations. QSAAV investigated these initiatives, and endorsed various actions and mechanisms to effectively collaborate on and promote these initiatives.

National Safe Schools Framework

QSAAV used content and links from the *National Safe Schools Framework* of the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) in its resource development. The Framework was under review during QSAAV's term, so content from the previous version was used.

Cyber safety frameworks for schools: eSmart Schools (Australia) and NetSafe (NZ)

The *Cybersafety and Wellbeing Initiative* national cyber safety pilot was funded by DEEWR and conducted by the Alannah and Madeline Foundation[3] (A&MF). Twenty-seven Queensland schools, including 15 state schools, were among the 164 Australian schools taking part in the pilot. The pilot tested a model, known as *eSmart Schools*, developed by the A&MF in collaboration with the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University, for teaching students about the safe and responsible use of communication technologies. *eSmart Schools* is a guiding framework to help schools implement cultures of caring and respect, as well as increase technology and cyber safety skills of teachers and students. It also provides a system to drive implementation of school policies and strategies; schools track and report on their progress in providing a safe and supportive learning environment for their students. QSAAV followed the establishment of the pilot with interest, and was keen to

[3] Alannah and Madeline Foundation website: http://www.amf.org.au/Cybersafety/

promote *eSmart Schools* to Queensland schools should the evaluation of the pilot study be positive. However, the report of the pilot study was not released by the time of QSAAV's final meeting.

A second approach was investigated by QSAAV after the delays with the release of the *eSmart Schools* pilot study. The *NetSafe Kit* was developed in New Zealand by NetSafe[4], an independent, non-profit organisation promoting confident, safe and responsible use of cyber space. The *NetSafe Kit* for schools sets out a comprehensive program of cyber safety for schools based on three core components:

- an infrastructure of policies, procedures and use agreements
- an effective electronic security system
- a comprehensive cyber safety education program.

The 15 points below, derived from the *NetSafe Kit*, provide a framework for how schools could implement a cyber safety strategy:

1. Establish a cyber safety team within each school.
2. Undertake a cyber safety stocktake to determine the cyber footprint of students and staff.
3. Implement a technical cyber safety and security system.
4. Create a cyber safety policy.
5. Create acceptable use agreement for students and school staff.
6. Endorse the cyber safety policy through the school board, council or similar.
7. Consult with staff about the policy and use agreement.
8. Consult with students and parents about the policy and use agreement.
9. Require staff to sign the acceptable use agreement.
10. Require students to sign the acceptable use agreement.
11. Provide training in the policy and cyber safety for all stakeholders.
12. Integrate cyber safety into the curriculum.
13. Ensure students and parent sign an acceptable use agreement on enrolment.
14. Ensure new teachers sign an acceptable use agreement on engagement with the school.
15. Review the policy and acceptable use agreement annually.

Internet safety training for parents, carers and teachers – ThinkUKnow Australia

ThinkUKnow is an internet safety program delivering interactive training to parents, carers and teachers through primary and secondary schools across Australia, using a network of accredited trainers. *ThinkUKnow* was created by the UK Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Centre. *ThinkUKnow Australia* was developed by the Australian Federal Police (AFP) and Microsoft Australia. The materials available through *ThinkUKnow* were promoted in all QSAAV resources.

Other cyber safety initiatives at national level

QSAAV was aware of other cyber safety initiatives at the national level including:

- the federal Department of Broadband, Communication and the Digital Economy commissioning of research under the government's Cyber Safety Plan, which will include cyber bullying

[4] Netsafe New Zealand http://www.netsafe.org.nz/

- Australian Communications and Media Authority *Outreach Cyber Safety* program, which provides professional development to teachers and parent awareness sessions, available in Queensland.

QSAAV endorsed the establishment of a single point of information for Queensland schools through the DET website for information about the national initiatives in this area. Information about the Australian initiatives (as well as an adaptation of the *NetSafe Kit*) will be included on this web page, still under development at the conclusion of QSAAV's term.

QSAAV has thus endorsed work still underway at the conclusion of its term, which will engage with and promote national initiatives in cyber safety currently being undertaken by the Australian Government, including the *eSmart Schools* pilot study and the *ThinkUKnow* research. This work will be developed in consultation with other sections of DET, particularly eLearning.

Other activities at the national level

In May 2010, QSAAV recommended, through the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, support for the National Day of Action Against Bullying in March 2011.

QSAAV also initiated a national symposium on bullying in schools, including legislative responses, through the Safe and Supportive Schools Communities Project, with AEEYSOC support.

Finally, QSAAV remained alert to the implications of activities taking place in other jurisdictions, such as the findings of the NSW Coronial Inquiry into a student death associated bullying in June 2010. QSAAV members discussed the implications from this coronial inquiry for Queensland schools, and identified issues which would warrant further consideration by the proposed national symposium.

7. QSAAV responses and significant activities

This section provides further detail of selected QSAAV activities:

1. *Action Against Bullying* Education Series
2. *Working Together* suite of resources
3. student consultation
4. initiatives in cyber safety and cyber bullying.

7.1 *Action Against Bullying* Education Series

The *Action Against Bullying* Education Series addressed several of QSAAV's terms of reference, particularly related to collaborating across the sectors, identifying evidence-based best practice, and addressing the professional development needs of school staff in responding to bullying, cyber bullying and violence in schools.

The *Action Against Bullying* Education Series was delivered by one of Australia's most highly regarded adolescent psychologists, Dr Michael Carr-Gregg. The sessions were provided free of charge and delivered in 10 locations across Queensland: Cairns, Townsville, Mackay, Toowoomba, Brisbane (two), the Sunshine Coast, Gold Coast, Mt Isa and Rockhampton. At each location a school leaders' breakfast, school staff workshop and evening session for parents were held.

The Education Series attracted over 3000 school leaders, school staff and parents. Comments from the sessions indicate they have been highly valued, with 97 per cent of participants agreeing or strongly agreeing the sessions increased their knowledge of bullying and cyber bullying, and their role in responding to bullying. It has also highlighted the ongoing need for school staff to have access to up-to-date and practical information about dealing with bullying and how to support students affected by bullying.

Interactions with school leaders during the series indicate that most (but not all) school principals and other senior staff are very aware of the issue of bullying, its occurrence in their schools, and their responsibility to provide a system for their school community to report and take action where appropriate. During the sessions, school staff regularly requested additional information on how to talk with a student who has experienced bullying, how to respond to a child who has engaged in bullying behaviour, and how to work with parents to address issues of bullying. Parents' questions focused around their own child's needs, and how to work with the school to address bullying.

Comments by participants

Parents:

- *Seeing and hearing actual consequences of bullying really hit home.*
- *Invaluable information; an eye opener.*
- *Very practical resources that can be implemented.*
- *Very entertaining and informative.*
- *Entertaining, well paced BUT the best was the info that leads to thought provoking issues.*
- *Fantastic speaker – very knowledgeable.*

- *The honesty in the way it was presented; real life examples are great for understanding.*
- *Please organise more of these; great series.*

School leaders:

- *The material was confronting and challenging for us as schools to ensure we do something — walk the walk NOT talk the talk.*
- *Need more on special schools.*
- *Very user friendly and not 'preachy'.*
- *Wonderful quality information.*
- *Every person needs to hear.*
- *Thank you for providing the opportunity for several of us from our school to attend. This is a great professional development opportunity.*
- *Very tailored to audience; interactive nature; speaker knew content very well.*
- *Michael Carr-Gregg is a dynamic presenter who ensured his presentation was easy to understand and gave us great suggestions.*

School staff:

- *Current resources provided to take away information about bullying especially legalities for staff were fantastic.*
- *Very clear and easy to understand presenter. Great program. Excellent!! Well worth attending.*
- *The whole session was awesome.*
- *Fantastic presentation; will lead into a restructure of our social skills program and anti-bullying programs.*
- *Exceeded my expectations.*
- *Engaging, well paced, up to date, good back up with resources which are accessible.*
- *This needs to be rolled out to all teachers. Thanks.*
- *The presenter's enthusiasm and passion for this subject and his extensive knowledge base.*
- *I am feeling very empowered to take action after this. Thank you.*
- *Extremely informative and entertaining. Full of useful/practical information.*

It is evident from the above comments that Dr Carr-Gregg's personal and practical approach was highly valued by participants.

The series attracted media attention in all locations where sessions were held. This provided an excellent opportunity to promote anti-bullying and anti-violence work being undertaken by QSAAV.

Subsequent to the series concluding in August, regular requests have been received by the QSAAV Secretariat for access to Dr Carr-Gregg's materials, and requests for additional materials on the topic. Dr Carr-Gregg agreed for the *Action Against Bullying* Education Series to be made available on the DET website. The series will be available during Term 4, 2010 to the end of Term 1, 2011 through a registration process.

Based on his expertise and his interactions with those attending the series, Dr Carr-Gregg suggested a number of areas for future development including:

- resources specifically for parents on dealing with bullying (leading to the parent toolkit)
- community announcements as an effective method of social marketing
- short video clips to go on the web for parents and school staff, which he could present (with six videos for parents subsequently made)
- work to encourage schools' development of school cyber safety policy
- information on managing bullying with regard to the specific needs of students, for example, students with disabilities.

The *Action Against Bullying* Education Series included extensive content on cyber bullying and cyber safety. Participants in all sessions raised questions specifically on cyber bullying, indicating the significant need and interest in this area. Dr Carr-Gregg recommended to QSAAV that schools develop a clear statement detailing their response to cyber bullying. With regard to cyber safety, Dr Carr-Gregg suggested a consistent approach by schools, including:

- establishing a cyber safety team
- creating a cyber safety policy, including appropriate behaviour and use agreements
- including cyber safety within the school's teaching and learning program.

The *Action Against Bullying* Education Series highlighted the following issues or needs:

- communicating to the wider community that bullying is a community (not just a school) issue; social marketing and community announcements could reach this wider group
- the ongoing need for professional development and support for school staff in dealing with bullying
- additional materials, particularly for teachers, about how to deal with children who have been bullied, and bullying of children with a disability (as one key group of children who are frequently bullied).

These needs were addressed through QSAAV recommendations.

7.2 *Working Together* suite of resources

The provision of a suite of practical resources to support Queensland schools to undertake effective school-based action against bullying satisfied QSAAV's first two terms of reference. These related to collaborating across the sectors to ensure a cohesive response, which is evidence-based, derived from best practice literature, and readily implemented to achieve high standards of behaviour in schools.

The *Working Together* suite of materials provides schools and parents with the basic information and links to additional resources to develop an effective whole-school approach to responding to incidents of bullying. All resources are available on the website at http://education.qld.gov.au/studentservices/behaviour/qsaav/index.html

Working Together: A toolkit for effective school based action against bullying

This toolkit provides Queensland schools with an ever-evolving collection of practical strategies to address student-on-student bullying in all its forms. The process of developing the toolkit commenced with a review of current publications and research

to distil the best work occurring across the world to address bullying in schools. Much of this research was sourced within Australia, drawing on the work of Professor Donna Cross, Dr Ken Rigby, and the *National Safe Schools Framework*. The *Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence Study* (2009) conducted by Professor Cross and colleagues is a significant piece of Australian research that informed many aspects of the toolkit. QSAAV also secured a licence to use the *Safe to Learn* resources from the Department for Children, Schools and Families in the United Kingdom.

Topics addressed in the toolkit for schools include:

- What is bullying?
- What bullying isn't
- What do we know about students who bully?
- What roles can students play in bullying behaviour?
- What does effective school based action look like?
- How to create and implement effective whole-school approaches to bullying
- Elements of effective school based action against bullying
- Further information about specific types of bullying
- Sample information sheets, survey forms, policies
- Additional resources

The section on *Elements of effective school based action against bullying* provides school leaders and school staff with practical ideas to strengthen their schools' approach to dealing with bullying. In recognition of the emerging challenges of cyber bullying and promoting appropriate behaviour and safety online to students, parents and staff, both the *Working Together* toolkit for schools and the toolkit for parents (below) included specific sections on cyber bullying. The additional resources sections of each booklet also featured extensive links to further information and resources. Support to parents and teachers (and others) regarding cyber safety is an area of extensive activity across a number of jurisdictions, and the provision of links to these existing resources was an efficient and effective way to support schools and parents.

It is intended that the resource be maintained and provide school communities with up-to-date and useful evidence-based ideas on how to tackle this complex issue.

Working Together: A toolkit for parents to address bullying

The toolkit for parents provides practical tips on how to support their child should they experience or engage in bullying behaviour. It also provides information and strategies to assist parents in communicating with school staff should any concerns regarding bullying arise. The parents' toolkit grew out of the questions asked by parents during the first session of the *Action Against Bullying* Education Series, which indicated a substantial need for information by parents about how schools deal with this issue, and how working together with the school is important for a positive outcome. The toolkit recognises that parents make decisions in the best interests of their own child, and aims to support them in this process.

Topics addressed in the toolkit for parents include:

- What is bullying?
- What is not bullying?

- What do we know about children who get bullied?
- What do we know about children and young people who bully?
- What roles can children and young people play in bullying?
- How do I know if my child is being bullied?
- What can I do if my child is being bullied?
- How can I work with the school?
- How can I help my child?
- How can I protect my child from the harms of cyber bulling?
- What if it is my child who is bullying?
- How can I find out what the school is doing to deal with bullying?
- Further information about specific types of bullying

A series of six short videos entitled *Six Quick Tips for Parents about Bullying* was developed based on the content in the toolkit. These videos were presented by Dr Carr-Gregg and made available to parents via YouTube. The final video focused on identifying signs that a child is being cyber bullied, and provided advice for parents on making cyber safety decisions.

Working Together: A starter kit for developing local community alliances against bullying and violence

The starter kit provides schools and their communities with background information to support them to form local community alliances against bullying and violence. It incorporates and promotes the *Queensland Schools Declaration Against Bullying and Violence*, which was signed by the Minister for Education and Training and members of QSAAV as a public statement of commitments.

A community alliance is one way for local communities, including all educational sectors and other relevant local organisations, to make a public commitment to work together to prevent bullying and violence in their schools. In some cases, this collaborative work among schools is occurring now. A community alliance can be incorporated into existing groups or structures in a local area, or it may be a new group formed for this purpose. The starter kit includes information about the purpose, membership, formation and possible terms of reference of a community alliance, some suggested steps to develop a community alliance, and sample letters and templates. An electronic template of the Declaration is available for schools to create their own public statement related to their local community alliance.

Working Together: Good practice in Queensland schools – Case studies of effective school based action against bullying

The collection of case studies provides examples of good local practice in Queensland state, independent and Catholic schools. These case studies are provided to assist schools in determining their own local action to address bullying; they represent concerted effort and dedication by the schools profiled. The case studies do not identify the schools to ensure a focus on the good practice of the schools, rather than the schools themselves. They have been grouped according to the three themes of: whole school, restorative practices, and social and emotional learning approaches. Hyperlinks to commercial programs used in the case studies have been provided to further assist schools to plan their own response to bullying.

Working Together: Understanding student violence in schools

This booklet provides schools with information to assist them to understand the complexity of youth violence, as well as the latest thinking about best practice in managing student violence in schools. It also provides a list of resources for further information. Topics addressed in the booklet include:

- Defining youth violence and student violence
- Some myths and facts about student violence
- Why is there such hype around student violence in schools?
- Characteristics of students who perpetrate violence in schools
- Schools' influence on student violence
- Ways to think about student violence and schools
- What doesn't work in preventing student violence
- Principles of effective violence prevention approaches
- Building school culture to prevent student violence
- Resources and references

It is intended that the *Working Together* suite of resources be maintained to provide school communities with up-to-date and practical evidence-based ideas on how to tackle the complex issues of bullying and violence.

7.3 Student consultation

Student consultation was identified as one of the 10 elements of effective school-based action against bullying.

The QSAAV Secretariat initially consulted with the Commissioner for Children and Young People and Child Guardian, and referred the issue of student consultation to the Implementation subcommittee to further student consultation as one of QSAAV's activities. The subcommittee considered the appropriateness of various consultation methods: formal methods, including large one-off events, focus groups, surveys, online forums, reference committees and peer consultations.

There was initial interest in the notion of a large one-off event but this was subsequently discounted, as it requires substantial lead time, intensive planning and resources, and limits participation to a small group of students and age groups. While a summit could be a great 'visioning' and exploratory exercise, it may not provide significant new information and may be seen as a 'talkfest'.

An online forum was also discounted after considerable exploration. Online forums require time to develop and promote, and human resources to moderate discussion and analyse the qualitative data collection. However, online forums may be a valuable monitoring mechanism once QSAAV resources are available in the schools. Other mechanisms, such as polls or surveys, were considered to be suitable adjuncts to more participative consultation activities taking place at the school level, otherwise probably limited to a sample selection of schools.

Negative aspects of student consultation were also considered, particularly if consultation is poorly or inappropriately done. The risk to decision-making is ineffective policy guidelines and implementation processes. The risks to students include loss of confidence in the participation process and non-compliance with anti-bullying policies and practices. Consultation may also magnify the risk for students

who are vulnerable to bullying or violence. School staff would need to be alert and responsive to this risk during and after consultation.

On behalf of QSAAV, a student consultation process was conducted by the Commission. The Commission reviewed existing processes and models of student consultation throughout Australia, and provided a comprehensive summary of student consultation on bullying and cyber bullying. The findings strongly suggested that students want to have a say in how to combat bullying and violence, and want their views taken seriously. The findings also provided some direction as to the ways young people can be heard. This document will be available on the QSAAV website as a valuable resource for schools considering undertaking their own consultation with students.

The QSAAV consultation involved 63 students in Years 6 and 9 from five Queensland schools, who participated in eight face-to-face focus groups about bullying in schools. The primary purposes of the consultation were:

- to test specific elements of the best practice toolkit developed by QSAAV to assist schools to take action against bullying
- to determine if, and how, students want to be involved in developing and implementing anti-bullying policy.

A secondary purpose was to model and document a student consultation process that schools could adopt. Resources from this process are available as appendices to the final report from the Commission, and will be posted on the DET website.

The three elements of the *Working Together* toolkit for schools which provided the focus for student consultation were:

- establishing a whole-of-school definition of bullying
- the collaborative development of an anti-bullying policy
- processes for reporting and responding.

The Commission presented its findings in *Student Consultation Report: Students' views about bullying*. The findings indicated that students considered each of the elements they were asked about to be important. However, from the students' perspective, the crux of the matter is putting an end to the bullying without making their situation worse. Students see themselves as major stakeholders, whose input into every stage of policy development and implementation will add value to the decision-making process, ensure greater student ownership of the problem and solutions, and produce better outcomes. They also want to have a say in the communication methods used, and suggested that students should play an active part in delivering the anti-bullying message at the school level in creative ways, such as drama and role play.

The students also expressed views on other content covered in the *Working Together* toolkit for schools. In particular, their views support the call for respectful and inclusive school cultures, programs that develop students' emotional resilience, school staff with skills to respond appropriately to students' bullying concerns, and parental awareness of the schools' approach to managing bullying.

The consultation confirmed that students are apprehensive about telling parents when they are bullied, particularly as they get older. A major concern of students is that parents can unintentionally make their situation worse. This finding underscored

the need for awareness raising among parents about bullying, and documenting parental responsibility and reporting processes in the school's anti-bullying policy, as recommended in the *Working Together* materials.

Students pointed out specific areas of concern which could be explored as professional development topics at the school level, and the report recommended that professional development of school staff include reference to the insights of students. The report recommended topics including:

- the recognition and management of latent and emerging behaviours which do not manifest as bullying
- exploration of the tensions between students' sensitivity about disclosure, their desire for confidentiality, and the need to take action to address the problem.

Overall, the views of the students aligned with the research and best practice evidence presented in the toolkit. Their views bore out the usefulness of the toolkit and the framework it provides for a whole-of-school approach to dealing with student-on-student bullying. Indeed the students' comments strongly suggested that they wanted to see a clear and consistent whole-of-school approach, rather than ad hoc responses.

The report concluded with a series of recommendations for schools:

1. Queensland schools give all students the opportunity to be involved when developing, implementing and monitoring school-based anti-bullying policy and strategies at the local level.
2. The Student Consultation Report be made available to Queensland schools to complement the *Working Together* products, and to demonstrate the insights and ideas to be gained by involving students.
3. The *Working Together* section on the professional development of teachers includes references to the insights of students. In addition, the list of development topics should include:
    - the recognition and management of latent and emerging behaviours which do not fully manifest as bullying
    - exploration of the tensions between students' sensitivity about disclosure, their desire for confidentiality, and the need to take action to address the problem.
4. The insights of students be included in products developed by the sectors to inform parents about bullying and how to respond to bullying concerns which arise at school.
5. Queensland schools create opportunities for students to safely recognise, explore and practise responses to bullying. Opportunities should include the use of drama to demonstrate relevant scenarios and solutions, accompanied by discussion with teachers and peers.
6. Schools collect local data and information from students to assist in the development of tailored school-based approaches to bullying, and enable the school to internally evaluate the effectiveness of those approaches over time.

QSAAV endorsed the report, including the recommendations and making it available on the DET website.

7.4 Initiatives in cyber safety and cyber bullying

Cyber bullying and cyber safety issues were addressed in a number of investigations and activities undertaken by QSAAV. All resources addressed cyber bullying as a method of bullying, and as a specific issue. Some specific resources were also developed.

The following activities have commenced, but at the time of writing of this report are not completed.

QSAAV was interested in examining the *eSmart Schools* framework if its pilot study was favourable; unfortunately, this was not available publicly by the end of QSAAV's term. Another option investigated was *NetSafe* New Zealand. *NetSafe*'s cyber bullying information and advice for teachers and principals is part of a free resource for New Zealand schools. Negotiations are currently underway regarding the customising of this framework for the Queensland context.

QSAAV recommends that schools adopt a cyber safety strategy incorporating a sequence of steps recommended in a number of established frameworks. The 15 points below, derived from the *NetSafe Kit*[5], provide an example of how schools could implement a cyber safety strategy:

1. Establish a cyber safety team within each school.
2. Undertake a cyber safety stocktake to determine the cyber footprint of students and staff.
3. Implement a technical cyber safety and security systems.
4. Create a cyber safety policy.
5. Create acceptable use agreement for students and school staff.
6. Ensure endorsement of the cyber safety policy endorsement through the school board, council or similar.
7. Consult with staff about the policy and use agreement.
8. Consult with students and parents about the policy and use agreement.
9. Require staff to sign the acceptable use agreement.
10. Require students to sign the acceptable use agreement.
11. Provide training in the policy and cyber safety for all stakeholders.
12. Integrate cyber safety into the curriculum.
13. Ensure students and parent sign an acceptable use agreement on enrolment.
14. Ensure new teachers sign an acceptable use agreement on engagement with the school.
15. Review the policy and acceptable use agreement annually.

Change is very rapid in the area of cyber safety, and schools need support to stay abreast of these changes and emerging challenges. Information will be available on the DET website to provide a single point of access to information/links from numerous government and commercial sites. QSAAV also investigated and endorsed making the Red Help Button developed by the Australian Government's Department of Broadband, Communication and the Digital Economy readily available for students on the DET website. The Red Help Button had not been released at the conclusion of QSAAV's term.

[5] NetSafe http://www.netsafe.org.nz/

8. Endorsements and recommendations

QSAAV completed its term in September 2010, having responded to the terms of reference established by the Minister. QSAAV endorsed and promoted many actions during its term. Several recommendations were derived from the deliberations of the group, as well as advice from Dr Carr-Gregg and information related to other initiatives.

QSAAV endorsed a number of actions as part of responding to Dr Rigby's report:

- the release of Dr Ken Rigby's resources and vodcasts to Queensland schools
- a letter from the Minister for Education and Training to the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs regarding the anti-bullying activities in Queensland and proposing a National Day of Action against Bullying
- a proposal for a national symposium on bullying in schools, including legislative responses, through the Safe and Supportive Schools Communities Project, endorsed by AEEYSOC
- the *Queensland Schools Declaration Against Bullying and Violence,* signed by all stakeholders
- a cross-sector agreement for annual reporting related to anti-bullying and anti-violence activities. QSAAAV agreed to recommend that the committee which writes the School Annual Reporting Guidelines considers the addition to the guidelines of the following agreed words requiring descriptive information on *the social climate of the school, including pastoral care programs and strategies to respond to bullying*
- the establishment of a single point of information for Queensland schools through the DET website for information about national initiatives in this area. The *eSmart Schools* and *ThinkUKnow Australia* information (as well as an adaptation of the *NetSafe Kit*) will be included on this web page, still under development at the conclusion of QSAAV's term. This will provide access to cyber safety information and guidelines for school cyber safety policy development.

QSAAV recommends the following actions to the Minister for Education and Training.

QSAAV Recommendation 1: Urge all Queensland schools to adopt a cyber safety strategy[6] incorporating the following elements:

- ***consultation with students, parents and school staff***
- ***acceptable use agreements for students and school staff***
- ***clear directions about the use of mobile phones and other electronic equipment by students during school hours***
- ***regular review of the strategy***
- ***inclusion of cyber safety within the school's teaching and learning program.***

QSAAV undertook an investigation of options for a cyber safety framework for Queensland schools. QSAAV would like to see all schools adopting a cyber safety

[6] *eSmart Schools* (Alannah & Madeline Foundation, Australia) and the *Netsafe Kit* (New Zealand) are evidence-based examples of cyber safety strategies that schools will be encouraged to consider.

strategy incorporating a sequence of steps recommended in a number of established frameworks. As detailed previously, investigation of existing frameworks is ongoing

QSAAV Recommendation 2: Promote and maintain existing resources, and develop additional resources.

A substantial body of work has been produced by QSAAV to assist Queensland schools to implement evidence-based best practice to address bullying and violence. These resources represent a substantial investment and should be promoted actively to schools, maintained for currency and practical use, and complemented by additional resources as indicated by QSAAV's investigations and recommendations by Dr Carr-Gregg. Some additional resources being considered include additional support materials for parents, content specific to Indigenous students' needs, and more information about students with disabilities.

QSAAV Recommendation 3: Commission an external review within 18 months using an independent anti-bullying expert to assess the progress of Queensland schools in implementing the work of QSAAV.

At the conclusion of QSAAV's term on 16 September, many materials and suggested actions were only newly available to schools. An 18-month period would allow sufficient time to gauge schools' uptake of the guidelines and practices promoted in the materials.

QSAAV Recommendation 4: Engage an independent anti-bullying expert to provide ongoing advice to government on issues and policy options as needed.

The complexity of both interpersonal relationships and child development, as well as the constant evolution of communication technology, means that bullying and cyber bullying will continue to present challenges to schools. Ongoing advice to government from an anti-bullying expert would inform policy and procedural decisions as new issues emerge. Clear protocols about the role and brief of an anti-bullying expert would need to be developed.

QSAAV Recommendation 5: Develop a promotional campaign focused on improving the awareness of parents and students about bullying and cyber bullying.

Dr Carr-Gregg's education series for school staff and parents featured extensive examples of promotional campaigns from overseas which focused on improving community awareness of bullying and cyber bullying. At the conclusion of the education series, Dr Carr-Gregg recommended a broad promotional campaign to increase understanding that bullying and violence are community issues which require a community response. A number of options, including television advertisements, iPhone applications, posters and postcards, are being investigated as part of a possible promotional campaign.

QSAAV Recommendation 6: Endorse the annual meeting of representatives from the three schooling sectors and the associated stakeholders to continue collaborative action against bullying and violence in Queensland schools.

While QSAAV's term was determined from the outset to be limited to six months, members agree there would be considerable benefit in their

maintaining contact to keep up the momentum established during 2010. Options were canvassed, including an annual meeting and referring QSAAV's agenda to another forum, and members agreed they would like the opportunity to meet on an annual basis to continue collaborative action.

QSAAV Recommendation 7: Develop a strategy for communicating with students about the issues of bullying and violence, including the use of social media options.

QSAAV discussed the issue of student consultation extensively, exploring a range of options and noting the pros and cons of each option. Face-to-face and online models were considered, with cost and the difficulty of ensuring representativeness of students' views identified as two major impediments to adopting consultation at a system level. Investigations in other jurisdictions (for example, school student consultation about bullying undertaken in Western Australia by Edith Cowan University) did not provide suitable models to adopt in Queensland. A restricted-access online forum using existing Learning Place platforms may overcome these issues, but would be limited to state schools. The representatives from the Commission particularly highlighted the risks of the perception of tokenism and lack of clear objectives in engaging with children and young people at a state level. The student consultation process undertaken by the Commission focused instead on providing a model for schools to communicate effectively with students at the local level to inform local responses to the issues of bullying and violence. More investigations are warranted in this area.

QSAAV Recommendation 8: Raise, through the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, national support and effort for the following issues which have been raised in the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth report Avoid the Harm – Stay Calm: Report on the inquiry into the impact of violence on young Australians, which are clearly issues facing all jurisdictions:

- ***development of nationally recognised high quality online professional development for school staff on bullying, cyber safety and violence***
- ***a process for the evaluation of anti-bullying and anti-violence programs that assists schools to determine the right program for their school's needs***
- ***a mechanism for the ongoing identification of high quality research in the areas of bullying and violence to assist all schools in implementing evidence-based practice.***

Under Term of Reference 4, QSAAV undertook substantial work reviewing the essential components of professional development from literature and research. Subsequently, it was decided that work on capacity building of school staff and graduate teacher training to address bullying would be more productively referred to the national level through the Safe and Supportive School Communities project. Late in QSAAV's term, *Avoid the Harm – Stay Calm* was released containing a number of recommendations which related directly to professional development and providing critical reviews of programs. A national initiative in this area would provide an effective platform for these activities, and QSAAV was keen to see support for the *Avoid the Harm – Stay Calm* recommendations through an appropriate channel.

Appendix 1: QSAAV membership

Organisation	Representative
Griffith University	Ian O'Connor, Chair
Education Queensland	Dave Manttan (March–July) Patrea Walton (August–September) Lyn McKenzie
Independent Schools Queensland	David Robertson
Queensland Catholic Education Commission	Mike Byrne
Queensland Council for Parents and Citizens' Associations Inc	Margaret Black (March–August) Peter Levett (August–September) Dianne Loddon (September)
The Queensland Independent Schools Parents Council	Fleur Creed
Federation of Parents and Friends Associations of Catholic Schools	Carmel Nash
Queensland Secondary Principals' Association	Norm Fuller
Association of Heads of Independent Schools Australia (Qld)	Christopher Daunt Watney
Association of Principals of Catholic Secondary Schools in Australia	Gerald Crooks
Queensland Teachers' Union	Steve Ryan
Queensland Independent Education Union	Miriam Dunn
Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union (Qld Branch)	Kerry Tomlinson
Indigenous representative	Stephen Foster
Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian	Elizabeth Fraser

Appendix 2: QSAAV resources

QSAAV produced numerous print, video and online resources. All resources are available at:
http://education.qld.gov.au/studentservices/behaviour/qsaav/index.html

Queensland Schools Declaration Against Bullying and Violence

Working Together: A toolkit for effective school based action against bullying

Working Together: A toolkit for parents to address bullying

Working Together: A starter kit for developing local community alliances against bullying and violence

Working Together: Good practice in Queensland schools – Case studies of effective school based action against bullying

Working Together: Understanding student violence in schools

Student Consultation Report: Students' views about bullying

Six Quick Tips for Parents About Bullying webisodes on YouTube

Action Against Bullying Education Series vodcasts

Queensland Schools Declaration Against Bullying and Violence

The Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence (QSAAV) recognises the innovation and commitment of Queensland schools in promoting positive behaviour and providing safe environments for learning, and endorses the position that effective responses require the engagement of the community beyond the school gates.

Our commitment

- We strive to ensure all students are able to learn and work in an environment where they feel safe and are free from bullying and/or violence.
- We seek every opportunity to encourage school staff, parents and students to work together to develop the knowledge, understanding and skills that support learning, positive behaviour and constructive social relationships.
- We implement policies and strategies guided by current research on effective approaches to the prevention of bullying and violence.
- We use our role in the community to raise awareness that bullying of and violence toward children and young people are issues for the whole community and require a community response.

Geoff Wilson
Minister for Education and Training
Queensland Government

Professor Ian O'Connor (Chair)
Vice Chancellor, Griffith University

Julie Grantham
Director-General
Department of Education and Training

David Robertson
Executive Director
Independent Schools Queensland

Mike Byrne
Executive Director
Queensland Catholic Education Commission

Margaret Black
President
Queensland Council of Parents and Citizens' Associations Inc

Fleur Creed
Executive Officer
Queensland Independent Schools Parents Council

Carmel Nash
Executive Officer
Federation of Parents and Friends Associations of Catholic Schools

Norm Fuller
President
Queensland Secondary Principals' Association
State Sector Principal Nominee Inc

Christopher Daunt Watney
Association of Heads of Independent Schools Australia (Queensland)

Gerald Crooks
Principal
St James' College
Catholic Sector Principal Nominee

Steve Ryan
President
Queensland Teachers' Union

Andrew Elphinstone
President
Queensland Independent Education Union

Kerry Tomlinson
Secretary
Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union (Qld)

Stephen Foster
Assistant Principal
Tagai State College
Indigenous Representative

Elizabeth Fraser
Commissioner
Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian

Working Together

A toolkit for effective school based action against bullying

Current 16 September 2010

An initiative of the Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence

Queensland Government

On 23 February 2010 the Premier announced the formation of the *Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence* (the Alliance) to provide advice on best practice measures to address bullying and violence in Queensland schools to the Minister for Education and Training, the Honourable Geoff Wilson MP.

The Alliance is independently chaired by Professor Ian O'Connor and includes representatives from:

- Education Queensland
- Queensland Catholic Education Commission
- Independent Schools Union
- Queensland Council for Parents and Citizens Association
- Federations of Parents and Friends Associations of Catholic Schools
- Queensland Independent School Parents Council
- Queensland Teachers Union
- Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union
- Queensland Independent Education Union
- Catholic sector principals
- State sector principals
- Independent sector principals
- Indigenous education representative
- Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian.

On the 14 May 2010, the Alliance endorsed the release of *Working Together: A toolkit for effective school based action against bullying.*

The Queensland Department of Education Training acknowledges that components of *"Safe to Learn"* have been used, under license, from the *United Kingdom*, *Department for Children, Schools and Families guidance. (2007) Safe to Learn: embedding anti-bullying work in schools.* Many of the structural elements have been drawn from the UK guideline, however the elements of effective school based action against bullying and associated content has been developed from the cited research.

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Introduction

The Queensland Government has been working hard to address the increasingly complex issue of bullying, cyber bullying and violence in schools.

In September 2009, the Queensland Government engaged Dr Ken Rigby, nationally and internationally renowned expert and published author on bullying to undertake a consultancy to provide current information on research and initiatives in the area of bullying to inform the future work of the Department of Education and Training.

Dr Rigby's report, *Enhancing Responses to Bullying in Queensland Schools* delivered 12 recommendations shaping the way forward for Queensland schools. Consistent with recommendation 10 of Dr Rigby's report was the formation of the *Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence (the Alliance)*.

The role of the Alliance, as outlined in its Terms of Reference, is to provide the Queensland Government with independent advice on strategies to address issues of bullying and violence in all state and non-state schools throughout Queensland and importantly oversee the response to all of Dr Rigby's recommendations. One specific task of the Alliance is to *"identify evidence-based best practice across Queensland education sectors, nationally and internationally, which may be implemented in Queensland schools."*

A key aspect of Dr Rigby's advice was that schools require an effective framework from which to address bullying in schools. In response to this advice, the Alliance agreed to the development of a toolkit based on national and international best practice to assist schools to take action against bullying – the *Working Together* toolkit.

The process of developing the toolkit commenced with a review of current publications and research to distil the best work occurring across the world to address bullying in schools. Much of this research was sourced from within Australia, drawing on the work of Professor Donna Cross, Dr Ken Rigby and the reviews of the National Safe Schools Framework. The *Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence Study* conducted by Professor Donna Cross and colleagues is a significant piece of Australian research that has informed many aspects of the toolkit, with many of the findings of the research being relevant to all forms of bullying.

The Alliance also identified a "ready to go" resource from the United Kingdom. The *Safe to Learn* resource appeared to have all the components of evidence based practice to address bullying in schools (Department for Children, Schools and Families Guidance (DCSF), 2007). The licence for this resource was obtained and it was used as a starting point for the toolkit. In order to ground the toolkit firmly within the Australian context a review of Australian research and resources was conducted to identify the *ten elements of effective school based action against bullying.* These elements form the structure for the remainder of the document.

The *Working Together* toolkit is complemented by other *Working Together* resources which can be found at: http://education.qld.gov.au/studentservices/behaviour/qsaav/index.html

Purpose of the toolkit

The purpose of the *Working Together* toolkit is to provide Queensland schools with an ever-evolving collection of practical strategies to address student-on-student bullying in all its forms. It is recognised that many Queensland schools already have well developed, comprehensive approaches to bullying and building positive school environments, and some schools are still developing their approaches. It is hoped the toolkit provides school leaders, teachers, specialists and teacher-aides alike, practical ideas to strengthen their schools' approach to bullying – wherever they are on the journey.

Just as the nature of bullying is ever-changing and responsive to the environment, this toolkit will continue to expand and provide school communities with useful evidence-based ideas on how to tackle this complex issue.

What is bullying?

In 2009, the Queensland Government engaged bullying expert Dr Ken Rigby to undertake a consultancy for the Department of Education and Training to provide current information about research and initiatives in the area of bullying in order to inform the future work in Queensland schools. Dr Rigby (Rigby, 2010) defines bullying in the following way:

"Bullying is a systematic and repeated abuse of power. In general bullying may be defined as:

- *dominating or hurting someone*
- *unfair action by the perpetrator(s) and an imbalance of power*
- *a lack of adequate defence by the target and feelings of oppression and humiliation."*

Bullying can take many forms. The *National Centre Against Bullying* identifies five kinds of bullying:

1. **Physical bullying**

   This is when a person (or group of people) uses physical actions to bully, such as hitting, poking, tripping or pushing.

   Repeatedly and intentionally damaging someone's belongings is also physical bullying.

2. **Verbal bullying**

   Repeated or systematic name calling, insults, homophobic or racist remarks and verbal abuse.

3. **Covert bullying**

   Such as lying about someone, spreading rumours, playing a nasty joke that make the person feel humiliated or powerless, mimicking or deliberately excluding someone.

4. **Psychological bullying**

   For example, threatening, manipulating or stalking someone.

5. **Cyber bullying**

   Using technology, such as email, mobile phones, chat rooms, social networking sites to bully verbally, socially or psychologically.

The issue of cyber bullying has received a great deal of interest recently and has been the focus of a number of research and review processes, such as the *Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence Study* (Cross, D., Shaw, T., Hearn, L., Epstein, M., Monks, H., Lester, L., & Thomas, L., 2009) and the *Review of the National Safe Schools Framework* (McGrath, 2005).

In a report commissioned by the Victorian Department of Education and Training (Bernard & Milne, 2008) the main forms of cyber bullying are identified as:

- **Flaming**: online fights using electronic messages with angry or vulgar messages
- **Harassment**: repeatedly sending nasty, mean or insulting messages
- **Denigration**: Posting or sending gossip or rumours about a person to damage his/her reputation or friendships
- **Outing**: sharing someone's secrets or embarrassing information or images online
- **Exclusion**: Intentionally and cruelly excluding someone from an online group
- **Cyber stalking**: repeated, intense harassment and denigration that includes threats or creates significant fear.

Within the *Safe to Learn* (DCSF, 2007) resource it is identified that students can be bullied for a variety of reasons. Specific types of bullying may relate to:

- race, religion or culture
- appearance or health conditions
- sexual orientation
- home and family circumstances
- learning needs or disabilities
- gender or sexual bullying.

Just as bullying can take many different forms, it can also occur between students, staff and parents/carers. While these instances of bullying are serious and need to be addressed, the focus of this toolkit is on actions to address bullying among students.

What behaviours are not bullying

While it is important to understand and define what bullying is, it is also important to be clear to the school community, what behaviours are NOT bullying. Dr Rigby (2010) identifies that for some people the term 'bullying' is a highly emotive term and its use may lead to an over-reaction.

The *National Centre Against Bullying* acknowledges that while the following behaviours are often upsetting to those involved, they do not constitute bullying:

- mutual arguments and disagreements (where there is no power imbalance)

- not liking someone or a single acts of social rejection
- one-off acts of meanness or spite
- isolated incidents of aggression, intimidation or violence.

While these behaviours would not be considered bullying (because they do not involve deliberate and repeated harm and a power imbalance) they need to be addressed in the same way as other inappropriate student behaviours.

What do we know about students who bully?

The research shows that students who bully are not necessarily the physically dominant student with self esteem issues. McNamara (1997) identifies students who bully as often:

- popular
- having good leadership skills
- not malicious in their intent
- thoughtless in their actions.

In the *Action Against Bullying* Education Series, Dr Michael Carr-Gregg identified other characteristics of bullies, for example they often have:

- high energy
- good verbal skills and an ability to talk themselves out of trouble
- a high estimation of their own ability
- an ability to manipulate individuals or groups
- an enjoyment of conflict and aggression
- a delight in getting their own way
- the appearance of being popular but often disliked.

What roles can students play in bullying behaviour?

Not all students play a clear role as either the student who is bullying or the student who is being bullied. Students may take on different roles in different circumstances (for example a student who is being bullied in one context, may do the bullying in another or a student who acts as a bystander may

intervene and act as a protector if the ring-leader is not around). The *Safe to Learn* (DCFS, 2007) publication identifies the different roles as:

- **Ring Leader:** students who through their social power can direct bullying activity.
- **Associates:** students who actively join in the bullying (sometimes because they are afraid of the ring-leader).
- **Reinforcers:** students who give positive feedback to the student doing the bullying, for example through comments, by smiling or laughing.
- **Outsiders/Bystanders:** students remain silent or watch and therefore appear to condone the bullying behaviour or who want to keep themselves safe by not drawing attention to themselves out of fear of the bully.
- **Defenders:** students who try to intervene to stop the bullying or comfort students who experience bullying.

What does effective school based action look like?

The *Safe to Learn* resource developed in the United Kingdom provides a description of what effective school based action looks like for all members of a school community (DCFS, 2007). This description, provided below, sets the standard for what schools should aim to achieve through their action against bullying.

Students who experience bullying report they

- are heard
- know how to report bullying and get help
- are confident in the school's ability to deal with the bullying
- are helped to feel safe again
- are helped to rebuild confidence and resilience
- know how they can get support from others.

Students who bully

- are held to account for their behaviour and the harm they have caused through appropriate disciplinary measures and learning programs
- are taught to behave in ways that do not cause harm in the future because they have developed their social and emotional skills and knowledge about the effects of their behaviour
- are supported to learn how they can take steps to repair the harm they have caused.

The school community

- is aware of the activities and strategies the school uses to prevent and respond to bullying
- is engaged in developing and reviewing the actions taken by the school to address bullying
- celebrates the success of the school’s approach to bullying and promoting safety
- understands the role they play and the actions they can take in preventing and responding to bullying.

School leaders, teachers and other school staff

- develop whole school policies that meet the expectations of their school community and school sector
- promote a positive school culture where bullying is not tolerated and cannot flourish
- continually develop school practice based on knowledge and evidence of what works
- know how to respond to reports of bullying
- regularly review their actions to address bullying
- use teaching and learning opportunities to address bullying
- ensure supports are in place to prevent and respond to bullying
- have addressed environmental issues and promoted safe play and learning areas and are constantly vigilant in their supervision of students
- participate in relevant professional development, and are clear about their roles and responsibilities in preventing and responding to bullying
- gather useful information about the effectiveness of the actions to address bullying, and these data are used for monitoring and evaluation
- work in partnership with parents/carers, other schools and community partners to promote safe communities.

Parents/carers report they

- know the school does not tolerate bullying
- are aware of procedures to use if they are concerned their child is being bullied or does not feel safe to learn, including the school's complaints procedure
- have confidence the school will take any complaint about bullying seriously, investigate/resolve as necessary and will deal with the bullying in a way that protects their child
- are aware of ways in which they can support the school’s action against bullying
- know how they can support their child if affected by bullying.

How to create and implement effective whole-school approaches to bullying

It is recommended schools use the *Elements of effective school based action against bullying* as a framework to develop their whole school approach for addressing bullying. The elements provide a checklist for schools to use to review and evaluate their action.

The *Elements of effective school based action against bullying* have been identified from national and international research and program reviews.

Elements of effective school based action against bullying

1. Create a caring, respectful, inclusive and supportive **school culture**.[1,2]

2. Establish a **clear whole school definition** of bullying.[3,4]

3. Establish a **clear anti-bullying policy** developed in collaboration with staff, students and parents/carers, which addresses all forms of bullying (including cyber bullying). [3,4]

4. Collaboratively develop **procedural steps to respond appropriately to bullying incidents** that are clearly documented and define the roles and responsibilities of staff, students and parents/carers. [3,4]

5. Establish **teaching and learning programs** that promote personal development and address all forms of bullying through the teaching of language skills, social-cognitive abilities, social skills, assertiveness, coping strategies, group mechanisms, motives for bullying and being effective bystanders. [1,3,4,5,6]

6. Provide **professional development** to assist school staff to understand the anti-bullying policy, implement teaching and learning programs, and to provide support for students at high risk times and in high risk settings. [3, 7]

7. **Consult students** regularly to monitor and determine the types of bullying behaviour and in what school and social contexts bullying (including cyber bullying) occurs.[3,7,8]

8. Create **physical environments** in the school and staff supervision practices that limit the incidences of bullying (including cyber bullying).[2,3, 7]

9. **Support and engage families** by maintaining regular, clear communication and through systematic parent awareness raising and skill building.[2,3,4,5,7]

10. Establish a process for **regularly reviewing** and celebrating the effectiveness of school policies, programs and procedures. [2,7,8,9]

Elements of effective school based action against bullying

1. Create a caring, respectful, inclusive and supportive **school culture**

Effective school leadership is critical to the creation of a positive school culture. School leaders who create a caring, respectful, inclusive and supportive school culture which secures whole-school community support for a range of strategies lay strong foundations for effective school based action against bullying (Cross, D., Shaw, T., Pearce, N., Erceg, E., Waters, S., Pintabona, Y., & Hall, M., 2007).

The *Summary Report of the Outcomes from the National Safe Schools Framework Best Practice Grants Programme* (McGrath, 2005) reported schools that included a focus on developing a positive school ethos and culture, particularly through the development of values such as respect, compassion, support and acceptance of difference found this to be effective. Some schools reported the use of 'restorative practices' acted as a catalyst for the improvement of school ethos and student behaviours consistent with compassion and fairness.

The report also found that *"Secondary schools that used peer support structures and student leadership programmes as a means of empowering students found that these provide a very effective process for improving school cultures and climates"* (McGrath, 2005).

The *Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence Study* found the perception of the school's culture regarding bullying was highly significant both for those who are bullied and those who bully others. Students in schools that scored poorly on school culture measures had in an increased risk of both bullying and being bullied (Cross etal., 2009).

For many schools the pastoral care provides an effective framework to foster a positive school ethos based on care and respect for others.

A positive school culture can be supported and demonstrated by school leaders through a public commitment or statement. School leaders may choose to sign up to the Kandersteg Declaration as a way to communicate to their school community their commitment to address bullying. The Kandersteg Declaration is pledge of long term commitment and determination to promote healthy relationships and prevent bullying and victimisation in children and youth that resulted from the *Joint Efforts Against Victimization Conference* held in Kandersteg, Switzerland in 2007. Individual schools are able to sign up to the declaration.

Alternatively schools, or local school Alliances, may choose to develop their own accord that publicly declares the actions they will take to build a safe school community. (See the References section on page 63 of the toolkit for a link for more information regarding the Kandersteg Declaration).

2. Establish a clear whole school **definition of bullying**

The Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence (QSAAV) has adopted Dr Rigby's definition of bullying and based on this, schools should involve the whole school community (teachers, student and parent body) in the development of a definition of bullying for their school community. A school's definition should identify that:

- bullying is repeated behaviour
- involves a power imbalance, and
- takes many forms (Rigby, 2010).

Schools may choose to incorporate within their definition some specific types of bullying behaviours that are particularly relevant to their school community.

The *Safe to Learn* resource identifies bullying as (but not limited to): name-calling; taunting; mocking; making offensive comments; kicking; hitting; pushing; taking belongings; inappropriate text messaging and emailing; sending offensive or degrading images by phone or via the internet; producing offensive graffiti; gossiping; excluding people from groups; spreading hurtful and untruthful rumours. Although sometimes occurring between two individuals in isolation, it quite often takes place in the presence of others ((DCFS, 2007).

Schools should ensure their definition of bullying is based on research, knowledge of behaviour within their school and is understood and supported by all members of the school community – students, staff and parents/carers.

3. Establish a clear **anti-bullying policy** developed in collaboration with staff, students and parents/carers, which addresses all forms of bullying (including cyber bullying)

The anti-bullying policy should contain a statement that clearly identifies the school's stance and action for the areas identified in *Elements of effective school based action against bullying*. (See page 49 of the Resources section of the toolkit for a template that may be used to structure an anti-bullying policy).

In developing their anti-bullying policy schools should engage with all members of the school community, particularly students and parents/carers. Dr Michael Carr-Gregg and Dr Donna Cross identify that engaging students in the process of policy development, particularly as it relates to cyber bullying is a critical factor in ensuring its successful implementation.

Anti-bullying policies may be developed as part of the process of developing the school's wider behaviour policy, incorporating measures to promote good behaviour. In state schools these include policies such as the school's *Responsible Behaviour Plan for Students* and the Code of School Behaviour. In non-state schools the policy context may vary across sectors and individual schools.

Communicating the policy

The success of a school's anti-bullying policy is largely dependent on how well it is communicated and understood within the school community. The policy may be used, in a similar way to the Kandersteg Declaration, to communicate and celebrate the school's commitment to the safety of all students.

The school's policy should be reinforced to the school community throughout the year. The *National Centre Against Bullying* suggests that at the commencement of the school year it is good practice for the principal to write to parents/carers reminding them of the school's anti-bullying policy and associated responsibilities.

Other opportunities to promote the schools bullying policy throughout the school year may include:

- a designated day of action against bullying
- school assemblies to raise awareness of the school's anti-bullying policy and develop students' emotional literacy
- using student specific communications (seek input from students on the most relevant means)
- references and articles in the school newsletter

- placing the policy on the school’s website.

4. Collaboratively develop **procedural steps to appropriately respond to bullying incidents** that are clearly documented and clearly define the roles and responsibilities of staff, students and parents/carers

The first step to ensuring schools respond appropriately to bullying incidents is to implement clear and effective systems that students and parents/carers can use to report bullying behaviour. These systems must then be supported by a school staff that is aware of reporting procedures.

The *Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence Study (ACBPS)* found that students who had been covertly bullied sought help from their friends most often, closely followed by seeking help from their parents/carers. The study found students also sought help from a teacher or staff member. A third of males and 23% of females did not ask anyone for help (Cross etal., 2009).

This highlights the need for all members of the school community (students, parents/carers and staff) to be involved in the development of appropriate reporting methods that are accessible and that students and parents/carers have confidence in.

Student reporting methods

A range of methods may be used by schools to encourage students to report bullying. In the *Action Against Bullying* Education Series, Dr Michael Carr-Gregg suggested a number of innovative strategies to increase avenues for reporting. These include:

- **Electronic bully boxes** – an email address well known among students that enables them to confidentially report bullying

- **Secret ballot techniques** – where at the commencement of the school year students are provided with a survey (often including a map of the school) to identify who and where they may have experienced bullying

- **Consumer satisfaction surveys** – such as the school opinion surveys that seek general responses about safety and wellbeing of students.

The *Safe to Learn* resource identifies that reporting systems are of value when students:

- have confidence their concerns will be treated promptly and seriously, and that action will be taken which will not make their situation worse

- can access reporting routes easily

- know who will deal with their concerns, and have trust both in them and the systems which the school uses

- are aware that malicious reporting relating to students or staff will be taken seriously and could incur a disciplinary measure (DCFS, 2007).

Parent/carer reporting methods

During the *Action Against Bullying* Education Series, Dr Michael Carr-Gregg emphasised the importance of parental reporting to ensure schools are aware of and can respond appropriately to incidents of bullying.

The *Safe to Learn* resource identifies that parental reporting methods are most effective when:

- all staff (including office staff and other support staff) are familiar with and have been trained in the school's systems and understand the steps to be taken

- all staff are sensitive to the emotional needs of parents/carers making contact with the school about incidents of bullying

- parents/carers have confidence staff will take the concern seriously and act promptly in a way that improves the situation for their child

- staff take action according to agreed timelines and report progress to parents/carers

- parents/carers are clear about how to take further action if they do not feel that their concern has been properly addressed (DCFS, 2007).

Intervention strategies

Dr Ken Rigby identifies a number of intervention strategies that may be effective in responding to bullying incidents. In cases of serious bullying, careful investigation may need to be undertaken, leading to planned or systematic treatment involving the bully or bullies and in some cases, others such as the target of the bullying, bystanders and parents/carers.

Schools may choose to use multiple approaches depending on the incident or adopt one approach across the school. Depending on the approach or range of approaches selected schools will need to ensure staff receive training so they are competent in the use of the chosen approach.

The nature of the bullying incidents will help to determine which method is most appropriate, as should school policy and the availability of school resources, particularly access to trained practitioners.

Schools will also need to assess the most appropriate method for the students involved, taking into account individual needs such as language, stage of development and disability.

The intervention strategies identified by Dr Rigby are:

1. The traditional disciplinary approach

Disciplinary measures must be applied fairly, proportionately and consistently and taking account of any reasonable adjustments students may require and the needs of vulnerable children.

Disciplinary measures have three main purposes:

- to impress on perpetrators that what they have done is unacceptable
- to deter them from repeating that behaviour
- to signal to other students the behaviour is unacceptable and deter them from doing it.

Disciplinary measures for bullying are intended to hold students who bully to account for their behaviour, and ensure they accept the harm they have caused and to learn from it. Disciplinary measures may also provide (as appropriate) an opportunity for the student to put right the harm they have caused.

Schools must also ensure that the needs of the student who has experienced bullying are addressed. It is not advisable to force them into situations where they have to face their bullies in isolation.

The consequences of bullying should reflect the seriousness of the incident. However, schools should not take covert or cyber bullying less seriously than physical bullying. In reviewing disciplinary measures, schools must take due care to ensure they address bullying behaviours in a way which does not lead to escalation and which gives the best chance that bullying will not be repeated.

When other strategies and disciplinary measures do not resolve the problem, the school leadership team may be required to apply disciplinary absence measures, as appropriate (Rigby, 2010a).

2. Strengthening the target

This approach to dealing with cases of bullying aims to assist students who have been the target of bullying to cope more effectively in interactions with the bully or bullies. Students who are being targeted are advised or trained to become less vulnerable, for example, by learning to act more assertively. Students who have been bullied may be taught a technique known as fogging. This involves openly acknowledging that the bully may actually believe the negative things he or she is saying and refusing to be disturbed or intimidated. It can be effective in some cases of one-to-one bullying but is limited to bullying that is verbal (Rigby, 2010a).

The *Bully Prevention in Positive Behaviour Support* program contains lesson plans and strategies for working with students who have been targeted by bullying. These lesson plans contain a ‘checking in’

process for following up with students to check on their progress and whether the bullying and negative impact has decreased (Ross, Horner, & Stiller, B., 2009).

3. Mediation

According to this approach, students in conflict are invited to work with a trained teacher or peer-mediator, to find a mutually acceptable way of resolving their problem. It requires a readiness by the parties involved in the bullying to agree to meet and seek a solution, facilitated, but not imposed, by a neutral practitioner. Its application is severely limited to cases in which both the bully and target of the bullying are genuinely interested in mediation and the practitioner can remain neutral. Often those who bully are not motivated to seek mediation and it is difficult to remain neutral when the bullying is seen as completely unjustified, as it normally is (Rigby, 2010a).

The use of this method is not recommended for students with limited social skills or difficulties in receptive or expressive language (such as English as a Second Language students or students with disabilities).

4. Restorative practice

The use of restorative approaches in schools has proven effective in many schools. The aim of these approaches is to work with students rather than doing things to them or for them. Such approaches are underpinned by the principle of restorative justice whereby the student causing harm is held to account for his/her behaviour. This means:

- accepting responsibility for the harm caused to the individual being bullied
- accepting responsibility for the harm caused to others (e.g. staff, friends or family)
- recognising the need to take action to begin to repair the harm caused
- all those involved agreeing to a range of actions, which will be monitored over an agreed period of time.

There is a range of restorative approaches, from informal meetings with students where they can talk through their issues in a structured way, to, at the most formal end, a restorative conference with an independent facilitator. Restorative approaches can be effective when the requisite time and resources are invested, but it is important they are used in conjunction with, not in place of, disciplinary measures (Rigby, 2010a).

5. The support group method

This is a non-punitive approach that involves the students who have been identified as bullying being confronted at a group meeting with vivid evidence of the target's distress. Those present also include a number of students who are supportive of the target. The target is not present. The students are required to say what they will do to improve the situation for the target. The outcome is carefully monitored. This approach is seen as appropriate for non-violent, non-criminal forms of bullying. It does not, however, take into account any provocation that may have occurred to precipitate the bullying and the need, in some cases, for changes in behaviour on the part of both parties (Rigby, 2010a).

6. The method of shared concern

This is also a non-punitive approach. It involves first working with the suspected bullies and with the target, in one-to-one meetings. When progress has been made, a meeting is held with the suspected bullies as a group to plan how the problem might be resolved. Subsequently they are joined by the target and an agreed solution is negotiated. Although this approach can be time-consuming, outcomes are overwhelmingly positive and it is uniquely appropriate for dealing with cases of group bullying in which the target has behaved provocatively; this occurs in about 20 per cent of cases. Violent or criminal behaviour is normally not handled using this approach (Rigby, 2010a).

As stated earlier, school leaders need to be aware of the social and emotional skills of the teacher/s and support staff involved in dealing with the bullying incident, to ensure they are appropriately skilled in the chosen intervention strategy.

Follow up to actions

The nature of bullying, particularly among adolescents, means that unless the students involved in the bullying incident and the interventions applied are monitored over time they may only have a short term impact.

It is recommended that two or three months after a bullying incident, schools seek formal feedback from parents/carers and the student to check whether the intervention has prevented any further bullying form occurring. This can be done through a simple interview with the students involved, or the school could engage the parents/carers using a standard review letter to gather judgements on their satisfaction with how the bullying was dealt with. The *Safe to Learn* resource (DCFS, 2007) provides a sample review letter that schools can use to seek this formal feedback from parents/carers. (A copy of this letter is included on page 44 of Resources section).

If the response indicates the bullying has not stopped or the student does not feel safe, further intervention is required.

The information collected through this process can be used to inform the review of the anti-bullying policy, assists to reinforce the change in behaviour for the bully and provides assurance to the school community that this issue is being taken seriously.

5. Establish **teaching and learning programs** that promote personal development and address all forms of bullying through the teaching of language skills, social skills, assertiveness, coping strategies, group mechanisms, motives for bullying and being effective bystanders

The most effective way of addressing bullying through the curriculum is to create effective learning environments in which:

- the contribution of all students is valued
- all students can feel secure and are able to contribute appropriately
- stereotypical views are challenged, and students learn to appreciate and view positively differences in others whether arising from race, culture, gender, sexuality, ability or disability
- students learn to take responsibility for their actions and behaviour both in school and in the wider community
- all forms of bullying and violence are challenged
- students are supported to develop their social and emotional skills (DCFS, 2007).

Teachers can use class time to raise awareness of bullying, for example by discussing issues of diversity and cyber safety, and also teaching the social and emotional skills that have proven effective in enhancing students' ability to manage their interactions with others while at the same rime reducing the risk of bullying. Some classroom management practices and learning experiences my provide opportunities for students to learn about and develop social and emotional skills applicable to enhancing interactions with others, for example group work based on ground rules.

While there may be opportunities to address bullying through a number of subject areas such as English and Drama, this issue is best addressed through Health and Physical Education, particularly through comprehensive programs to promote personal development.

The *Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence Study* (Cross etal., 2009) found that students should be provided opportunities to learn about group mechanisms and motives for covert bullying, as well as opportunities to develop their social skills and social problem solving, including ways to be an effective bystander.

"Ideally this learning would mobilise student bystanders to take action when they observe covert bullying (as well as overt bullying) and increase the resilience of students who are bullied covertly" (Cross etal, 2009).

Schools must consider the developmental stage of students when addressing these issues within the curriculum – not all topics are appropriate to all phases of schooling. It is recommended that these components are embedded within personal development programs.

The curriculum includes all the planned learning activities, explicit and implicit, which a school promotes. When reviewing their curriculum schools may find it useful to consider:

- the responsibilities of all curriculum team leaders in addressing diversity and tackling prejudice that may give rise to bullying in their curriculum area

- specific curriculum areas such as Health and Physical Education and Study of Society and Environment

- how assemblies and class time can be used as teaching opportunities for anti-bullying principles and practices.

The *Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Framework* enables schools to seek information regarding the delivery of social and emotional wellbeing programs that promote respectful relationships among children and adults. The Framework is accompanied by an overview of commercially available Social and Emotional Learning programs that address the core social and emotional competencies: self awareness, social awareness, self management, responsible decision making and relationship skills.

One of the major outcomes of the *National Centre Against Bullying* national conference was that bullying behaviour peaks at particular transition times at school. For example bullying behaviour increases when students transition from primary school to high school. This indicates a need for support, particularly around the development of social skills and coping strategies in the years prior to transition.

Students should be provided with opportunities to develop the breadth and depth of their knowledge as well as the skills that enable them to enhance their personal development, manage themselves and others in social contexts. Such knowledge and skills should be specifically relevant to students' development and phase of learning (such as early year, middle or senior schooling). It is recommended that schools develop their programs using the Queensland Studies Authority Essential Learnings.

6. Provide **professional development** to assist school staff to understand the anti-bullying policy, implement teaching and learning programs, and to provide support for students at high risk times and in high risk settings

Schools should ensure that staff are provided with professional development to enable the full implementation of their anti-bullying policy. Professional development should cover familiarity of the policy, teaching and learning programs that build social and emotional learning of students, methods of reporting and appropriate intervention strategies and support for students affected by bullying.

The *Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence Study* (ACBPS) found the majority of teachers felt staff at their school needed more training to effectively deal with covert bullying incidents and to address covert bullying (including cyber bullying) within the curriculum (Cross etal, 2009).

> *"The ACBPS data suggest that teachers, who lack training to understand the effects of covert bullying are less able to recognise it, often consider it less serious or problematic, have less empathy for children who are covertly bullied and are less likely to intervene to prevent or manage this behaviour. This inaction on the part of teachers results in students believing that teachers condone this behaviour."*

The ACBPS results suggest that schools should focus on providing professional development for staff to develop their understanding on how to effectively address covert bullying. The ACBPS recommends professional development is provided to enhance student transition and reduce the subsequent bullying, particularly covert bullying, which continues to increase following transition form primary to high school (Cross etal, 2009).

Relevant topics for professional development include, but are not limited to:

- developing an understanding of the school's anti-bullying policy
- understanding bullying behaviour (including covert and cyber bullying)
- understanding the environment of bullying, particularly developments in the cyber world and the impact on cyber bullying
- understanding child and adolescent development and the impact on bullying behaviour

- understanding the increased prevalence of bullying during transition periods and ways to address this

- development of social and emotional learning through the curriculum (such as social skills, communication skills, assertiveness, decision-making, relationship formation, conflict resolution, coping strategies

- developing skills in the specific interventions to address bullying

- exploring opportunities to engage parents/carers in conversation regarding bullying.

Induction

Schools must ensure all members of the school staff (including casual, temporary and itinerant staff) receive comprehensive induction support. In planning induction programs, schools must clearly communicate the standard of behaviour expected of students to enable them to learn, and act to pre-empt and deal with inappropriate behaviour in the context of the behaviour policy of the school.

Schools should ensure throughout the induction program that the anti-bullying policy of the school is clearly outlined. This needs to apply for all teachers or other staff working within the school and as part of any school activities, such as camps, sporting events and excursions (DCFS, 2007).

7. **Consult students regularly** to monitor and determine the types of bullying behaviour and assist in the development of appropriate school based approaches

It is important to listen to students, encourage their participation and seriously consider their views when developing, implementing and monitoring school based approaches to preventing and responding to bullying.

Schools need to build skills in gathering information and data on the views and experiences of students, particularly in monitoring the occurrence, types and context of bullying behaviour. This data enables the school to develop an understanding of the patterns of bullying occurring and to involve students in developing tailored responses. This is particularly important when designing protective strategies and responses to cyber bullying, where the students will frequently have a greater understanding of the technology and social networking functions than teachers and parents/carers.

Approaches that facilitate the 'student voice' promote open and honest reporting when dealing with issues of bullying.

In engaging students, schools need to ensure they have developed strategies that:

- demonstrate respect for views
- enable honest debate while maintaining safe boundaries
- engage with marginalised students as well as those who often have a voice
- use communication medium that students are comfortable with.

There are several ways schools may engage students in discussion regarding the development of an anti-bullying policy and procedures to manage bullying (DCFS, 2007). These include:

- focus groups and face-to-face discussions with small groups of children and young people
- within the curriculum (eg. students could propose actions to address bullying)
- interactive websites and other social media (eg. online surveys, emails)
- art, posters, drama, DVDs and interactive activities

- representation of children and young people on advisory boards and involvement in youth forums.

The Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian is developing further guidelines, ideas and case examples of ways to encourage student participation. When available these will be added to the Resources section of the toolkit.

8. Create **physical environments** in the school and staff supervision practices that limit the incidences of bullying (including cyber bullying)

Gathering information and data on the views and experiences of students, staff and parents/carers about bullying will enable the school to develop an understanding of the patterns of bullying behaviours occurring within the school and bullying that occurs outside school but has implications when students return to school.

There are a number of audit tools currently available to assist schools to assess their physical environment schools. (See page 60 of the Resources section for a list of available audit tools). Alternatively schools can use existing data that has already been collected on incidents that have occurred throughout the school or may choose to engage students, parents and staff through existing forums to gain input into the nature of bullying concerns throughout the school.

The *Schoolwide Positive Behaviour Support (SWPBS)* program helps schools to create positive learning environments by developing proactive whole-school systems to define, teach, and support appropriate student behaviours. An important component of SWPBS is the collection of data to inform future work.

The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) has developed a *Student technology audit* that provides a quick and effective tool for schools to establish how their students use computers and other technologies. Gaining an understanding of how students use technology will help school staff to develop appropriate intervention and education programs. Identifying the types and level of technology use may also be a useful conversation starter for addressing cyber safety issues.

The *Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence Study* found that covert bullying takes place predominantly during break times and in the classroom. Nearly two thirds of students who were bullied covertly said this occurred during break times and nearly half said it occurred in the classroom. Covert bullying was less likely to occur travelling to and from school (Cross etal., 2009).

Schools can use existing data to identify how the physical and cyber environment of the school impacts on bullying behaviour. Aspects to review may include:

- staff supervision patterns in the playground, school buildings and on public transport
- the physical design of the school building(s), including addressing 'blind spots' where bullying could take place
- designation of 'quiet-play' areas in playgrounds or short term safe rooms for use at break times (DCFS, 2007)

- web filtering programs and student web accessing patterns

It is recommended schools focus their attention on key times and locations where bullying is more prevalent, and that they work with students to establish when and where those times and locations are.

The Australian Government has published a *Schooling Issues Digest: the Impact of School Infrastructure on Student Outcomes and Behaviour* that provides brief reports that assess links between building design, school facilities and their impact on student learning and behaviour.

It is also recommenced that schools work with students and parents/carers to discuss acceptable use of technology policies focusing on the use of mobile phones, social networking sites and websites. Schools should work with parents/carers to ensure they are aware of concerns related to cyber safety and the availability web filtering programs. ACMA provides examples of *Acceptable Use policies* currently used in South Australian schools.

9. **Support and engage families** by maintaining regular, clear communication and through systematic parent awareness raising and skill building

It is important for schools to work with their parent body to ensure they are aware of the school's stance on bullying. It is recommended that schools actively engage their parent representative body (ie Parents/carers and Citizen's association or Parents/carers and Friends association) to develop a strategy for communication with parents/carers.

Regular communication should be made with parents/carers to ensure they are aware of what to do if their child is involved in a bullying incident. Parents/carers should also be engaged to support the work the school is doing to address bullying. This is particularly important in the area of cyber bullying, which occurs in the home environment as well as the school.

It is recommended that schools support parents/carers of students who experience bullying as they play a key role in supporting their child with the development of coping strategies and assertiveness skills. Parents/carers of those students bullying may also have a range of emotional needs, and may need time and support in developing a balanced view of what is happening and appreciating their role in helping their child to learn about the consequences of his or her actions. Schools may need to engage assistance and support of the guidance officer, school counsellor or outside agencies to support the needs of students and their families.

For more information on ways to develop sustainable, collaborative and productive family, community and school relationships for a more satisfying educational experiences visit the *Family-School & Community Partnerships Bureau* website on http://www.familyschool.org.au/.

10. Establish a process for **regularly reviewing and celebrating** the effectiveness of school policies, programs and procedures

It is recommended schools regularly review their anti-bullying policy. A checklist for schools to monitor their activities against the ten *Elements of effective school based action against bullying* is provided in the Resources and References section of the toolkit.

Dr Ken Rigby (2010b) in his report *Enhancing Responses to Bullying in Queensland Schools* identified evaluation of bullying approaches as a major challenge for schools. Dr Rigby recommends that schools systematically follow up on bullying incidents they have responded to in order to examine what works best for different cases. (See page 62 of the Resources section to access Dr Rigby's vodcast on this issue).

Gathering information and data on the views and experiences of students, staff and parents/carers will enable the school to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy and associated actions. Schools are encouraged to monitor the progress of their actions and establish systems to help analyse the effectiveness of their policy.

Some suggested questions to address in evaluating the policy are:

- Do the data and views of the school community gathered show that we have achieved what we set out to do?
- What have we learned about how to use anti-bullying strategies in the school?
- What is our next priority in taking action against bullying and how will we go about it (DCFS, 2007)?

Celebrating success

It is important for schools to celebrate the success of their anti-bullying actions. It is recommended that schools discuss with the parent body, students and staff suitable ways to celebrate their hard work in fostering a safe and supportive school community.

Working Together

Resources and references

Further information about specific types of bullying

The following information on the types of bullying is from the *Safe to Learn* resource (DCFS, 2007).

Bullying related to race, religion or culture

Some surveys and focus groups have found that a high proportion of bullied students have experienced racist or faith-based bullying. Recent political and social issues also appear to have been a factor in bullying and harassment.

Bullying related to appearance or health conditions

Those with health or visible medical conditions, such as eczema, may be more likely than their peers to become targets for bullying behaviour. Perceived physical limitations, such as size and weight, and other body image issues, can result in bullying.

Bullying related to sexual orientation

Evidence of homophobic bullying suggests that students and young people who are gay or lesbian (or perceived to be) face a higher risk of marginalisation than their peers. Homophobic bullying is perhaps the form of bullying least likely to be self-reported, since disclosure carries risks not associated with other forms of bullying. The student may not want to report bullying if it means 'coming out' to teachers and parents/carers before they are ready to.

Bullying related to different home or family circumstances

Students may be made vulnerable to bullying by the fact that they provide care to someone in their family with an illness, disability, mental health or substance abuse problem. Young carers may be taking on practical and emotional caring responsibilities that would normally be expected of an adult. Research has highlighted the difficulties young carers face, including risks of ill-health, stress and tiredness, especially when they care through the night. Many feel bullied or isolated.

Some students are heavily influenced by their communities or homes where bullying and abuse may be common. Some bullying at school may arise from trauma or instability at home relating to issues of domestic violence or bereavement, or from the experience of being part of a refugee family. Siblings of vulnerable students may themselves be the subject of bullying by association.

Bullying related to students with disabilities

Research shows that students with disabilities are more at risk of being bullied than their peers.

Students with disabilities, whether in mainstream or special schools, do not always have the levels of social confidence and competence, and the robust friendship bonds, which can protect against bullying. All schools should ensure that a whole-school approach is taken to deal with bullying related to students with disabilities, and that it is specifically covered in anti-bullying policies.

Where students with disabilities are themselves found to be bullying, schools should apply the same standards of behaviour as the rest of the school community, having made the reasonable adjustments necessary.

Bullying related to students with mental health conditions

Children and young people with mental health concerns may not always have the confidence, coping strategies and peer networks to protect themselves against bullying. Children and young people with mental health concerns such as depression may be particularly susceptible to the effects of bullying due to their tendency to internalise the negative effects and blame themselves for the bullying behaviour.

Sexist or sexual bullying

Sexist and sexual bullying affects both genders. Boys may be targets as well as girls, and both sexes may be targets of their own sex. Sexual bullying may be characterised by name-calling, comments and overt 'looks' about appearance, attractiveness and emerging puberty. In addition, uninvited touching, innuendos and propositions, pornographic imagery or graffiti may be used.

Students identifying as transgender or experiencing gender dysphoria (feeling that they belong to another gender or who do not conform with the gender role prescribed to them) can also be targeted by bullies.

Other methods of bullying

Cyber bullying

Cyber bullying is a 'method' of bullying, rather than a 'type' of bullying. It includes bullying via text message, instant-messenger services and social networking sites, email and images or videos posted on the internet or spread via mobile phone. It can take the form of any of the previously discussed types of bullying, i.e. technology can be used to bully for reasons of race, religion, sexuality, disability, etc.

Sample information sheet for students

What is bullying?

Bullying is when someone feels hurt or upset because of the things another person or group is doing to them over and over again.

Bullying is not when one person calls another person a name once, or hits a person once. It is when that behaviour happens a number of times.

Bullying can happen anywhere and can involve both staff and students. It can happen at school, in the community and online.

What should you do if you are being bullied?

If you are being bullied:

- stay calm
- tell the bully to stop
- move away from situation
- talk to someone you trust about what has happened, for example a parent/carer, teacher or friend, and get them to help you to take the right steps to stop the bullying

  When talking about what has happened make sure you tell them:

    - What the person/s has been doing?
    - Who has been involved?
    - Where have the incident/s occurred?
    - Who else has seen the bullying behaviour?
    - How often has it happened?
    - What have you already done about it?
- keep on talking until someone listens to you and the bullying stops
- don’t blame yourself for what is happening.

What should I do if I see someone being bullied?

If you see someone being bullied (or witness it online), keep safe and choose your response to match the situation:

- speak up and let the person doing the bullying know that what they are doing is bullying
- refuse to join in with the bullying and walk away
- help the student who is being bullied to ask for help
- ask a teacher or support person for help
- report what happened
- use some of the links on the next page to help you find more information about bullying.

When bullying occurs, staff at the school may:

- teach students how to cooperate and “get on” with others
- work out a behaviour plan or playground plan for some students, to keep everyone safe
- teach students about conflict and bullying
- run programs that help students become more confident
- run anti-bullying workshops
- have special meetings to work things out with the involved students
- have students complete classroom tasks about bullying in school subjects. Give detentions, suspensions or exclusions to students who bully others.

What can I do if I feel the school is not dealing with the bullying?

- talk to your parents/carers
- make an appointment to meet with a teacher, Guidance Officer or school principal
- ask a parent to email or phone a teacher
- ask a parent to contact your local district office or school board. They will try to work with you and the school to try and solve the problem.

Where can I get more information about bullying?

Kids Helpline: a free, private and confidential, 24-hour telephone and online counselling service for young people aged between 5 - 25 years. http://www.kidshelp.com.au/

Act Smart Be Safe: a gateway for parents/carers, students, teachers and the community to access information to help improve youth safety. http://education.qld.gov.au/actsmartbesafe/

Alannah and Madeline Foundation: a national charity protecting children from violence and its devastating effects. http://www.amf.org.au/AboutUs/

Bullying. No way!: an online resource providing information for parents/carers, students and educators. http://www.bullyingnoway.com.au/who/default.shtml

KidsMatter: a school based framework that aims to improve the mental health and wellbeing of children. http://www.kidsmatter.edu.au/

ReachOut: an online resource that assists young people by providing information to improve understanding of the issues that relate to mental health and wellbeing. Reach Out also has information on how young people can get the best help from services, as well as opportunities to connect with other young people. http://au.reachout.com

National Centre Against Bullying**:** a peak body working to advise and inform the Australian community on the issue of childhood bullying and the creation of safe schools and communities, including the issue of cyber safety. http://www.ncab.org.au/

[Schools are encouraged to include local school, district, sector and/or parent body contact details]

[insert school name] does not tolerate bullying.

- Discuss with your child some immediate strategies. Make a plan to deal with the bullying. Encourage them to:
    - talk with the teacher
    - walk away
    - use other strategies to diffuse the situation (see ‘fogging’ technique in intervention strategies section)
    - firmly say “No!”

- Become familiar with the school’s anti-bullying policy. Copies can be obtained from the school or school website.
- Contact the school to check that your child has spoken to someone about the problem and arrange a meeting to find out what the school will do to address the situation.
- Be clear about what you expect the school to do to help your child.
- Use some of the additional internet resources listed below to assist you and your child to learn more about bullying and prevention.

What will the school do?

In situations where bullying occurs, staff at the school may:

- apply disciplinary consequences
- assist students to develop more appropriate social skills
- implement a behaviour management plan or playground plan for individual students
- explicitly teach about conflict and bullying
- implement resilience and anti- bullying programs
- conduct mediation sessions
- address bullying in their curriculum.

The school will not give you any of the personal details of other students involved. They will not give you any details of consequences given to other students involved because of privacy requirements.

What can I do if I feel the school is not addressing the bullying appropriately?

- make an appointment to meet with the school principal
- contact your local district office or appropriate school sector/parent representative body. They will endeavour to work with you and the school to try and solve the problem.

Where can I get more information about bullying?

Act Smart Be Safe: a gateway for parents/carers, students, teachers and the community to access information to help improve youth safety. http://education.qld.gov.au/actsmartbesafe/

Alannah and Madeline Foundation: a national charity protecting children from violence and its devastating effects. http://www.amf.org.au/AboutUs/

Bullying. No way!: an online resource providing information for parents/carers, students and educators. http://www.bullyingnoway.com.au/who/default.shtml

KidsMatter: a school based framework that aims to improve the mental health and wellbeing of children. http://www.kidsmatter.edu.au/

ReachOut: an online resource that assists young people by providing information to improve understanding of the issues that relate to mental health and wellbeing. Reach Out also has information on how young people can get the best help from services, as well as opportunities to connect with other young people. http://au.reachout.com

National Centre Against Bullying**:** a peak body working to advise and inform the Australian community on the issue of childhood bullying and the creation of safe schools and communities, including the issue of cyber safety. http://www.ncab.org.au/

[insert school name] does not tolerate bullying.

Satisfaction survey for parents/carers

The following satisfaction survey letter is from the *Safe to Learn* resource (DCFS, 2007) and schools may choose to send this to parents/carers two months after a bullying incident has taken occurred seek feedback on their satisfaction with the school's processes and the outcome for their child. This letter should not be used if there is an ongoing complaints procedure.

[insert name of school]

Dear Parent/Carer

Two months ago your child was the subject of bullying behaviour. I am writing to seek your views on how well the school dealt with the problem. We will use this information confidentially within the school to inform our review of policy and practice. The individual details will not have any wider use unless we ask for, and you give, your specific permission.

1. How easy was it for your child/you to report the bullying? (circle one)

1	2	3	4	5
(1=not easy)				(5=very easy)

Comment if we could improve:

2. How satisfied are you with what we did to make your child feel safe? (circle one)

1	2	3	4	5
(1=not satisfied)				(5=very satisfied)

Comment if we could improve:

3. How satisfied are you with the support your child has had since the bullying incident from the school? (circle one)

1	2	3	4	5
(1=not satisfied)				(5=very satisfied)

Comment if we could improve:

4. Overall how satisfied are you with the way in which this school deals with bullying incidents? (circle one)

1 2 3 4 5

(1=not satisfied) (5=very satisfied)

Comment if we could improve:

Thank you for your assistance in completing this feedback form. We will use this information to think about what we do to address bullying, and make our school one where students and parents/carers are confident that we are honest about problems which happen, confident that we do not tolerate bullying behaviour and that our school staff support children.

Yours sincerely
Principal

Sample anti-bullying information sheet for school staff

What is bullying?

Bullying is a systematic and repeated abuse of power. It:

- is a desire to dominate or hurt someone
- involves unfair action by the perpetrator(s) and an imbalance of power
- occurs when the target cannot provide an adequate defence and feels oppressed and humiliated

(Rigby, K 2010, Addressing Bullying in Queensland Schools: Vodcast 1, DET, Brisbane).

It can occur at any age, across cultures, genders and socioeconomic groups. It can happen in the playground, toilet areas, to and from school or in the classroom.

Cyber bullying refers to bullying using technologies such as the internet and mobile phones to threaten, humiliate, intimidate and/or control others. Cyber bullying can occur anywhere and at any time.

Why do schools need to take bullying seriously?

Young people, who are involved in bullying behaviour, either as a bully or as a target, are at higher risk of behavioural, emotional and academic problems. Targets of bullying are more likely than their peers to truant from school and are at increased risk of underachieving.

Ongoing bullying can seriously harm the health and wellbeing of the bullied person and the negative effects may be ongoing.

What can schools do?

Provide strong leadership to the school community
Effective responses to behaviour issues, including bullying, requires strong leadership to communicate that bullying behaviour will not be tolerated.

Develop consistent practices for dealing with bullying, across whole school
A school wide approach to address bullying is essential. The school's anti-bullying policy should strongly reflect the school community's commitment to addressing bullying issues. It should include:

- an agreed definition of bullying
- processes for reporting bullying incidents for staff and students
- support strategies for individuals who experience bullying
- appropriate behavioural support and consequences for those students who behave inappropriately
- preventative strategies

- processes for recording bullying incidents
- review processes.

Address bullying across the school curriculum

Encourage teachers to work with students to explicitly teach strategies to deal with bullying and to ensure students understand:

- the nature of bullying
- the school anti-bullying procedures
- the harm caused by bullying
- reporting procedures.

Enhance the awareness of the schools anti-bullying policy and processes by displaying behavioural expectations in the classroom and school environment.

Teachers can address the deeper issues associated with bullying behaviour through the curriculum.

Students should be provided with opportunities to develop the breadth and depth of their knowledge as well as the skills that enable them to enhance their personal development, manage themselves and others in social contexts. For examples opportunities to learn about group mechanisms and motives for covert bullying, as well as opportunities to develop their social skills and social problem solving, including ways to be an effective bystander.

For example students may be provided with opportunities to:

- Analyse and criticise contemporary media – particularly popular youth magazines, television programs and music videos – that portray society as homogeneous.
- Question contemporary media content, including advertising for the images, beliefs, values and messages being promoted.
- Explore the idea of attractiveness and the 'perfect look' in relation to differing cultural, historical and social perspectives including the role of gender, race, class and power relations.

Such knowledge and skills should be specifically relevant to students' development phase of learning. It is recommended that schools develop their programs using the Queensland Studies Authority Essential Leanings.

Engage parents/carers and the school community

- Contact parents/carers of students involved in bullying incidents immediately.
- Involve parents/carers in the development of school wide procedures to address bullying.
- Include bullying information in newsletters, on the school website or in other regular communication.

Need more information?

The following links may be of assistance:

Act Smart Be Safe: a gateway for parents/carers, students, teachers and the community to access information to help improve youth safety. http://education.qld.gov.au/actsmartbesafe/

Alannah and Madeline Foundation: a national charity protecting children from violence and its devastating effects. http://www.amf.org.au/AboutUs/

Bullying. No way!: an online resource providing information for parents/carers, students and educators. http://www.bullyingnoway.com.au/who/default.shtml

Kids Helpline: a free, private and confidential, 24-hour telephone and online counselling service for young people aged between 5 - 25 years. http://www.kidshelp.com.au/

KidsMatter: a school based framework that aims to improve the mental health and wellbeing of children. http://www.kidsmatter.edu.au/

ReachOut: an online resource that assists young people by providing information to improve understanding of the issues that relate to mental health and wellbeing. Reach Out also has information on how young people can get the best help from services, as well as opportunities to connect with other young people. http://au.reachout.com

National Centre Against Bullying: works to advise and inform the Australian community on the issue of childhood bullying and the creation of safe schools and communities, including the issue of cyber-safety. http://www.ncab.org.au/about/

National Safe Schools Framework: incorporates existing good practice and provides an agreed national approach to help schools and their communities address issues of bullying, harassment, violence, child abuse and neglect.
http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/school_education/publications_resources/profiles/national_safe_schools_framework.htm

Sample anti-bullying policy

Rationale

All schools in Queensland are committed to taking action to protect students from bullying and to respond appropriately when bullying does occur.

School community beliefs about bullying

It is important that students, staff and parents/carers have a shared understanding of what bullying is, how it impacts on people and how bullying is responded to at <school name>

Educational Programs

It is important that students, staff and parents/carers understand what bullying is, how it impacts on people and how bullying is responded to at <school name>. At <school name> we use the following educational strategies:

- Xx
- Xx
- Xx

Prevention Programs

Effective social skills and positive relationships act to prevent bullying. At <school name> we promote effective social skills and positive relationships by:

- Xx
- Xx
- Xx

Responses to bullying

Reports of bullying will be investigated and acted upon. Responses to bullying might include support for targets of bullying and perpetrators and/or disciplinary measures.

At <school name> we support targets and perpetrators by:

- Xx
- Xx
- Xx

At <school name> the consequences for bullying might include the following:

- Xx
- Xx
- Xx

Reporting and monitoring bullying

At <school name> reports of bullying are taken seriously. Students and parents/carers may report bullying in the following ways:

- Xx
- Xx
- Xx

Reports of bullying will be collated and monitored to inform the school community about the extent of bullying and to identify particular areas of concern for future action.

Some related resources

School Wide Positive Behaviour Support
www.learningplace.com.au/deliver/content.asp?pid=24668

Alannah and Madeline Foundation
http://www.amf.org.au/AboutUs/

BOUNCE BACK!
http://www.bounceback.com.au/

FRIENDS for Life
www.friendsinfo.net/index.html

Friendly Schools and Families Program
http://www.friendlyschools.com.au/about.php

Kids Helpline
http://www.kidshelp.com.au/

KidsMatter
http://www.kidsmatter.edu.au

MindMatters
http://www.mindmatters.edu.au/default.asp

ReachOut
http://au.reachout.com

National Centre Against Bullying
http://www.ncab.org.au/about/

National Safe Schools Framework
http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/school_education/publications_resources/profiles/national_safe_schools_framework.htm

You Can Do It!
www.youcandoit.com.au

School self evaluation checklist

Element	Not implemented	Being developed	Partially implemented	Fully implemented	Action required	Timeframe
1. A caring, respectful, inclusive and supportive school culture.						
2. A clear whole school definition of bullying.						
3. A clear anti-bullying policy developed in collaboration with staff, students and parents/carers, which addresses all forms of bullying (including cyber bullying).						
4. Procedural steps to appropriately respond to bullying incidents (for both the target and the bully) are clearly documented and clearly define the roles and responsibilities of staff, students and parents/carers.						
5. Teaching and learning programs promote Health and Physical Education and personal development and address all forms of bullying through the teaching of language skills, social skills, assertiveness, coping strategies, group mechanisms, motives for bullying and being effective bystanders.						

Element	Not implemented	Being developed	Partially implemented	Fully implemented	Action required	Timeframe
6. Professional development to assist school staff to understand the anti-bullying policy, implement teaching and learning programs, and to provide support for students.						
7. Students consulted regularly to monitor and determine the types of bullying behaviour and in what school and social contexts bullying occurs.						
8. Physical environments in the school and staff supervision practices that limit the incidences of bullying (including cyber bullying).						
9. Families supported and engaged through regular, clear communication and systematic parent awareness raising and skill building.						
10. Processes regularly reviewed and effectiveness of school policies, programs and procedures celebrated.						

Additional resources – programs

There are many resources available, both Australian and international, to support schools. Schools should be selective to ensure suitability to each individual school context. The list below outlines resources that schools may use to assist in the implementation of their policies.

Alannah and Madeline Foundation: a national charity protecting children from violence and its devastating effects. The Foundation promotes the Better Buddies initiative designed to help older children to care for younger children and create friendly and caring primary school communities where bullying is consequently reduced.
http://www.amf.org.au/AboutUs/

BOUNCE BACK!: a classroom resiliency program written by Helen McGrath and Toni Noble. It is a collection of practical classroom strategies to help young people cope with the complexity of their everyday lives and learn to 'bounce back' when they experience sadness, difficulties, frustrations and hard times.
http://www.bounceback.com.au/

***FRIENDS for Life*:** a program for use in schools to prevent anxiety and depression and build resilience. It is aimed at children aged between 7 and 11 years.
www.friendsinfo.net/index.html

Friendly Schools and Families Program: provides a description of individual, group, family and school community level actions to address and prevent bullying in its social context. The program assists with the design, development, implementation, dissemination and evaluation of a social skill building and comprehensive anti-bullying program. It was developed by Dr Donna Cross and co-workers at Edith Cowan University.
http://www.friendlyschools.com.au/about.php

Kids Helpline: a free, private and confidential, 24-hour telephone and online counselling service specifically for young people aged between 5 and 25 years.
http://www.kidshelp.com.au/

KidsMatter: a school based framework that aims to improve the mental health and wellbeing of children, reduce mental health problems and achieve greater support for children experiencing mental health difficulties and their families.
http://www.kidsmatter.edu.au

MindMatters: a resource and professional development program supporting Australian secondary schools in promoting and protecting the health, social and emotional wellbeing of all the members of school communities.
http://www.mindmatters.edu.au/default.asp

ReachOut: an online resource that assists young people by providing information to improve understanding of the issues that relate to mental health and wellbeing. Reach Out also has information on how young people can get the best help from services, as well as opportunities to connect with other young people. http://au.reachout.com

National Centre Against Bullying: a peak body working to advise and inform the Australian community on the issue of childhood bullying and the creation of safe schools and communities, including the issue of cyber safety.
http://www.ncab.org.au/about/

National Safe Schools Framework: developed by the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs. It incorporates existing good practice and provides an agreed national approach to help schools and their communities address issues of bullying, harassment, violence, child abuse and neglect. It is a collaborative effort by the Australian Government, State and Territory governments, non-government school authorities and other key stakeholders. It presents a way of achieving a shared vision of physical and emotional safety and wellbeing for all students in all Australian schools.
http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/school_education/publications_resources/profiles/national_safe_schools_framework.htm

Responsible Behaviour Plan for Students: an initiative of DET which outlines how state schools are to provide positive support for students in order to facilitate learning and responsible behaviour. Schools are required to set out clearly the expectations they have regarding student behaviour and to provide support for students according to their degree of need; for example, some may need to be especially targeted and others may require intensive support.
http://education.qld.gov.au/studentservices/behaviour/bm-plans.html

Rock and Water Program: founded by the Dutch educationalist, Feerk Ykema, is designed to help young people interact and communicate more confidently with others. It makes use of physical exercises that are constantly linked to the acquisition of mental and physical skills. It claims to assist boys and girls to become aware of purpose and motivation in their lives.
http://www.yapa.org.au/youthwork/stories/rockandwater.php

You Can Do It!: a program delivered through a school curriculum to help students set achievable goals and enjoy life. It emphasises the need to have positive thoughts in order to change negative feelings and behaviours. The program covers eight areas: confidence, effort and persistence, happenings, self-acceptance, goal setting, time management and organisation, making friends and handling conflict.
www.youcandoit.com.au

Working Together Suite of Resources developed by QSAAV

The Working Together: A toolkit for effective school based action against bullying is complemented by other Working Together resources which can be found at:
http://education.qld.gov.au/studentservices/behaviour/qsaav/index.html

- *Queensland Schools Declaration Against Bullying and Violence*
- *Working Together: A toolkit for parents to address bullying*
- *Working Together: A starter kit for developing local community alliances against bullying and violence*
- *Working Together: Good practice in Queensland schools – Case studies of effective school based action against bullying*
- *Working Together: Understanding student violence in schools*
- *Student Consultation Report: Students' views about bullying*

Additional resources – background reading

The following list of selected readings has been compiled by Dr Ken Rigby during his consultancy for the Department of Education and Training.

Olweus, D. (1993). *Bullying at school.* Cambridge:Blackwell

McGrath, H., and Noble, T. (Eds) (2005). *Bullying Solutions* Sydney: Pearsons Education.

Rigby, K. (2007, revised, updated). *Bullying in schools and what to do about it*: Camberwell, ACER.

Rigby, K. (2002). *New perspectives on bullying.* London: Jessica Kingsley. Available from Footprints, Sydney.

Smith, P.K. and Sharp, S. (Eds) (1994). *School Bullying: insights and perspectives*. London: Routledge

Smith, P.K et al (Eds) (1999). *The Nature of School Bullying: A cross-national Perspective*. London: Routledge.

Books on approaches to addressing bullying

Lewers, R. and Murphy, E. (2000). *The Hidden Hurt..*Ballarat: Wizard Books Pty Ltd.

Rigby, K. (2003). *Stop the bullying: a handbook for schools (Revised edition)* Melbourne: ACER. Ph. 03 98577447 or (free call, interstate: 1800 338402).

Rigby, K. and Thomas, E.B (2010, in press). *How schools counter bullying: policies and procedures in selected Australian schools.* Melbourne: ACER.

Rigby, K (2003). *Bullying among young children: a guide for teachers and carers.* Canberra: Australian Government Attorney General's Department.

Sharp, S. and Smith, P.K. (Eds). (1994). *Tackling Bullying in your school: a practical handbook for teachers.* London, Routledge.

Suckling, A. and Temple, C. (2001) *Bullying: a whole school approach*. Melbourne: ACER.

Audit tools

Friendly Schools Friendly Families **physical environment audit tools**
http://www.friendlyschools.com.au/survey/Sample-questions.pdf
http://www.friendlyschools.com.au/materials/whole-school/physical-environment.php#samples
http://www.friendlyschools.com.au/materials/whole-school/physical-environment.php#physical

MindMatters **staff survey**
http://www.mindmatters.edu.au/verve/_resources/Staff_survey_Full_version.pdf

Bullying. No Way**! Key elements**
http://www.bullyingnoway.com.au/resources/nssfp/Six_key_elements_to_guide_the_process.doc

The Australian Communications and Media Authority Smart Technology Audit
http://www.cybersmart.gov.au/Schools/Cybersafety%20policies%20and%20procedures/National%20or%20state%20and%20territory%20policies/South%20australian%20cybersafety%20policies.aspx

Books on aspects of bullying in schools

Strategies for responding to bullying incidents

Renn, S., Van Velsen, J., Matheison, P., Dennis, K., Langley, J. (2009). *The bullying intervention toolkit.* Queenscliff, Victoria: Inyahead Press.

Rigby, K. (2010, in press). *Bullying Interventions in schools: Six basic approaches*. Camberwell: ACER.

Promoting target assertiveness and self-esteem

Elliott, Michelle (1998). *Bullying*. London: Hodder Children's Books.

Romain, T. (1997). *Bullies are a pain in the brain*. Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing Co.

Stones, R. (1993). *Don't pick on me*. :Markham, ON::Pembroke

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  - Vodcast 2 - Addressing bullying in schools
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Working Together

A toolkit for parents to address bullying

Current 16 September 2010

An initiative of the Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence

Queensland Government

On 23 February 2010 the Premier announced the formation of the *Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence* (the Alliance) to provide advice on best practice measures to address bullying and violence in Queensland schools to the Minister for Education and Training, the Honourable Geoff Wilson MP.

The Alliance is independently chaired by Professor Ian O'Connor (Griffith University) and includes representatives from:

- Education Queensland
- Queensland Catholic Education Commission
- Independent Schools Queensland
- Queensland Council for Parents and Citizens Association
- Federation of Parents and Friends Associations of Catholic Schools
- Queensland Independent Schools Parents Council
- Queensland Teachers Union
- Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union
- Queensland Independent Education Union
- Catholic sector principals
- State sector principals
- Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia (Queensland)
- Indigenous education representative
- Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian.

In August 2010, the Alliance endorsed the release of *Working Together: A toolkit for parents to address bullying.*

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Introduction

The Queensland Government has been working hard to address the increasingly complex issues of bullying, cyber bullying and violence in schools. Working together with parents* is critical for success.

Working Together: A toolkit for parents to address bullying provides parents with practical tips on how to support their children should they experience or engage in bullying behaviour. The toolkit also provides parents with information and strategies to assist them in communicating with school staff should any concerns regarding bullying arise.

Parents make decisions in the best interest of their own child. The *Working Together* toolkit aims to support parents in this process.

The toolkit is part of a package of materials developed by the *Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence (the Alliance).* The role of the Alliance is to provide the Queensland Government with independent advice on strategies to address issues of bullying and violence in all state and non-state schools throughout Queensland. One specific task of the Alliance is to identify evidence-based best practice across Queensland education sectors, nationally and internationally, which may be implemented in Queensland schools.

A key achievement of the Alliance has been the development of an effective framework which is based on national and international best practice to assist schools to take action against bullying. *Working Together*: *A toolkit for effective school based action against bullying* is available at http://education.qld.gov.au/studentservices/behaviour/qsaav/index.html

* Throughout the toolkit the term *parents* is used. In these instances *parents* refers to *parents/carers*.

What is bullying?

There is no universally accepted definition of bullying. It is important to have a clear understanding of exactly what bullying is, to deal with it effectively. Some behaviours which may be distressing to your child, such as mutual arguments, would not be considered as bullying. Bullying has certain features which make it different from other types of violence or abuse. According to Dr Ken Rigby, an expert in studying bullying:

"Bullying is a systematic and repeated abuse of power. In general bullying may be defined as:

- *dominating or hurting someone*
- *unfair action by the perpetrator(s) and an imbalance of power*
- *a lack of adequate defence by the target and feelings of oppression and humiliation."*

Bullying can take many forms. The *National Centre Against Bullying* identifies five types of bullying:

1. **Physical bullying**: This is when a person (or group of people) uses physical actions to bully, such as hitting, poking, tripping or pushing. Repeatedly and intentionally damaging someone's belongings is also physical bullying.

2. **Verbal bullying**: Repeated or systematic name calling, insults, homophobic or racist remarks and verbal abuse. This is the most common form of bullying.

3. **Social (covert) bullying**: Indirect actions, such as lying about someone, spreading rumours, playing a nasty joke that make the person feel humiliated or powerless, mimicking or deliberately excluding someone.

4. **Psychological bullying**: For example, threatening, manipulating or stalking someone.

5. **Cyber bullying**: This is a method of bullying using technology, such as email, mobile phones, chat rooms and social networking sites to bully verbally, socially or psychologically.

The *Safe to Learn* (DCSF, 2007) resource developed in the United Kingdom identified that students can be bullied for a variety of reasons. Specific types of bullying may relate to:

- race, religion or culture
- appearance or health conditions
- sexual orientation, gender or sexuality
- home and family circumstances
- learning needs, disabilities or being gifted.

Just as bullying can take many different forms, it can also occur in different relationships: student to student, staff to students, and amongst staff, students and parents/carers. Although each of these instances of bullying is serious and needs to be addressed, the focus of this toolkit is on actions parents can take to respond to bullying behaviour amongst students.

Bullying can happen anywhere, in any school, travelling to and from school, in community playgrounds and shopping centres, and in cyber space (which may mean at home as well).

Many parents are particularly concerned about cyber bullying which is a method of bullying using technology such as the internet and mobile phones. According to Bernard and Milne (2008) the main forms of cyber bullying are:

- **Flaming**: online fights using electronic communication with angry or vulgar messages
- **Harassment**: repeatedly sending nasty, mean or insulting messages
- **Denigration**: posting or sending gossip or rumours about a person to damage his/her reputation or friendships
- **Outing**: sharing someone's secrets or embarrassing information or images online
- **Exclusion**: Intentionally and cruelly excluding someone from an online group
- **Cyber stalking**: repeated, intense harassment and denigration that includes threats or creates significant fear.

What is not bullying?

While it is important to understand and define what bullying is, it is also important to be clear which behaviours are NOT bullying. For some people, 'bullying' is a highly emotive term and its use may lead to a strong reaction (Rigby, 2010).

The *National Centre Against Bullying* acknowledges that while the following behaviours are often upsetting to those involved, they do NOT constitute bullying:

- social bantering with minor insults and jokes
- mutual arguments and disagreements (where there is no power imbalance)
- not liking someone or a single act of social rejection
- one-off acts of meanness or spite
- isolated incidents of aggression, intimidation or violence.

While these behaviours would not be considered bullying because they do not involve deliberate and repeated harm and a power imbalance, they need to be addressed in the same way as other inappropriate student behaviours. If parents are concerned about these behaviours, they should contact their child's teacher or principal.

What do we know about children who get bullied?

Parents often ask why their child is being bullied. Some reasons are apparent – the child may stand out as different (e.g. in their physical appearance or behaviour), and in the students' world where fitting in is very important, this can make them a target. Some reasons are not so apparent, and relate to social skills and the way some children relate to others (Field, 2007). Children who get bullied:

- react to the bullies; bullies need to know they have upset or frightened the other child
- show the bully they are sensitive about some things; let the bully know their vulnerabilities
- may have body language or posture that sends a message they think they will be picked on; they appear as a victim
- may not know how to stand up for themselves in a friendly assertive way
- may not have a clear idea of how to be friends or what they want from a friendship, and put up with the negative attention of bullying rather than being left out altogether
- may not have a group of supportive friends to help protect them.

Understanding why some children get bullied is important because this can suggest to parents what they can do to help their child. Some ideas and strategies for parents are provided starting on page 17.

What do we know about children and young people who bully?

Bullies come in two main kinds:

- the rare but truly malicious bully who enjoys hurting and upsetting others
- the much more common power-playing bully who does not realise that his or her behaviour is as hurtful or damaging as it is.

These different kinds of bullies need different responses (Field, 2007).

Although the stereotype is the tough bully, the research on the different types of bullying shows that children who bully are not necessarily the physically dominant child with self esteem issues. McNamara & McNamara (1997) suggested that many students who bully others verbally and socially are:

- popular in their own groups
- having leadership skills
- not malicious in their intent
- thoughtless in their actions.

Other characteristics of bullies can include:

- high energy
- good verbal skills and an ability to talk themselves out of trouble
- a high estimation of their own ability
- an ability to manipulate individuals or groups
- an enjoyment of conflict and aggression
- a delight in getting their own way
- the appearance of being popular but are actually often disliked.

Of course, bullies can have difficulties with health, schoolwork and self-esteem. They may themselves be emotionally neglected, bullied, abused or experience violence. They may have personal, social and interpersonal difficulties; difficulty expressing empathy, dealing with their emotions and with conflict (Field, 2007).

What roles can children and young people play in bullying?

Not all children play a clear role as either the child who is bullying or the child who is being bullied. Children may take on different roles in different circumstances. A child who is being bullied in one context may do the bullying in another, or a child who acts as a bystander may intervene and act as a protector if the ring leader is not around. The *Safe to Learn* document identifies these different roles as:

- **Ring Leader**: children who through their social power can direct bullying activity
- **Associates**: children who actively join in the bullying (sometimes because they are afraid of the ring-leader)
- **Reinforcers**: children who give positive feedback to the child doing the bullying, for example through comments, by smiling or laughing
- **Outsiders/Bystanders**: children who remain silent or watch and therefore appear to condone the bullying behaviour or who want to keep themselves safe by not drawing attention to themselves out of fear of the bully
- **Defenders**: children who try to intervene to stop the bullying or comfort children who experience bullying

How do I know if my child is being bullied?

Research suggests that very few children tell anyone about being bullied. They may not tell anyone because they feel weak or ashamed, are frightened they may only make things worse, or think there is nothing that can be done. The first that some parents hear about their child being bullied is when the school contacts them about the issue. Sometimes children put up with bullying for a long time and only tell their parents when it has become overwhelming.

Some signs your child is being bullied may be:

- not wanting to go to school
- finding excuses for not going to school, e.g. feeling sick or being sick
- wanting to go to school a different way, e.g. changing the route, or being driven instead of catching a bus
- being very tense, tearful and unhappy before or after school
- talking about hating school or other children
- having bruises or scratches
- damage to or loss of personal belongings
- showing problems with sleeping, e.g. not sleeping, nightmares, bedwetting
- not having any friends
- refusing to talk about what happens at school
- being upset or secretive when receiving text messages, checking emails or social networking sites.

If you suspect your child is being bullied, find an uninterrupted time to ask your child about school and directly ask about bullying or about other children being mean to them. Realise it may be difficult for your child to tell you the details. If your child remains reluctant to talk to you, it may be a good idea to discuss your concerns with the class teacher or principal.

Of course, sometimes children do tell their parents they are being bullied. Parents' careful questions, listening and supportive responses are a very important part of successfully dealing with bullying. Try to keep communication calm and open or you might deter your child from talking to you.

What can I do if my child is being bullied?

Parents and siblings can feel very upset when a child is affected by school bullying. Parents may feel anger, fear, shame, confusion, frustration, embarrassment and powerlessness, and may need to draw on their own networks to deal with their own emotions and for support during the process.

Parents will consider what they know about their child and the details of the situation to make decisions in their own child's best interest. The way children relate to each other is complex and the bullying situation can change regularly or unexpectedly. The following are some general strategies to try.

Talk to your child in a calm and supportive manner focused on finding a solution to the problem. Discuss with your child some immediate strategies to deal with the bullying. If your child is experiencing verbal or physical bullying, and has not already tried these, encourage your child:

- to walk away
- to try to act unimpressed or unaffected
- to use other strategies to diffuse the situation (e.g. agreeing in an offhand way with the bully when they say offensive or negative things – known as fogging)
- to say 'No!' firmly
- to talk to the teacher or other staff, e.g. school guidance officer or chaplain.

Do not advise your child to fight with the other child (as distinct from defending themselves from a physical attack.) This can escalate the situation, and your child may be observed and reprimanded for their part in a fight.

If your child is being bullied through electronic media, you can manage the access to the technology itself as well as encouraging your child to use the strategies listed on page 20.

Let your child know you will be contacting the school. Sometimes children don't want their parents to become involved or fear the consequences when the bully finds out. Field (2007) suggests that if a child is very resistant to bringing the issue up at school, parents might consider giving them a short period of a week or so to see if they can improve the situation with the strategies above. However, parents should insist they will be contacting the school if the bullying continues.

No single response will solve bullying. A variety of responses and working at several levels is necessary to stop it. You can help your child by:

- working effectively with the school staff (see page 13)
- helping your child to develop personal strategies to deal with bullying (see page 17).

How can I work with the school?

1. Gather information about the bullying

Before contacting the school, gather as much information as you can about the bullying by talking with your child. The list of questions below adapted from Evelyn Field's book (see the Resources page) may help you to organise your information. Change the wording of the questions to suit the age of your child.

- Who does the bullying, and who else is involved (including their Year levels)?
- What does the bully do: tease, physically hurt, exclude your child, send mean text messages, etc?
- Why does your child think the bully does this?
- What might lead up to the bullying: what does your child do?
- How often does the bullying happen?
- Where does the bullying happen (if necessary use a map of the school and surrounds)?
- What does your child say and do when bullied?
- Which other students witness the bullying: who are they and what do they do?
- Has your child reported it to teachers or other staff at the school previously, and what happened?
- Who else is bullied by these children?
- What is happening at school that might be contributing to the bullying happening?

When you have the information you need, think about what you would like the school to do before you contact them.

Also decide if you would like to bring a support person with you to meetings with the school staff. If you want to bring a friend, make it clear to the person that their role is to support you, and it is important that everyone stays calm and focused on achieving a good outcome for your child.

2. Meet with the school staff

Make a meeting with your child's teacher to discuss your concerns. Parents can have an advocate with them for support. At the meeting talk about when, where and how the bullying is happening. The school may have additional or different information than that provided by your child.

It is understandable that parents may feel concerned, anxious or upset about their child being bullied at school. However, it is important to try to stay calm in meetings with school staff. Remember:

- don't talk angrily, shout or yell – it will not help you or your child
- don't talk to other parents about the other child/children involved – this may inflame the situation
- if you are not satisfied with the way the situation is being handled by school staff, arrange another meeting to discuss the problem with the principal or their supervisor.

At the meeting, you may be able to agree on a plan of the actions you and the school staff will take to ensure the immediate safety of your child, and to deal with the bullying in the long term. Part of the plan should be a date for a follow-up meeting to check the agreed actions and to discuss changes to your child's situation. If you can't agree on an approach, organise a follow up meeting and seek advice or support such as mediation to help you achieve a positive outcome.

Ask the school staff to put the plan in writing. The information that could be covered in a plan of action includes:

- names and contact details of all the people involved
- any general background information you wish to note
- aims of the plan
- what each of the people involved will do: actions by parents, school staff and the student
- any remaining issues yet to discussed or resolved
- how the school and parents will communicate, and how often
- a date for review of the plan and who is responsible for setting up this review meeting.

If the other child involved in the bullying attends another school, working through your school's principal and staff is the best way to contact the staff from the other school. Negotiating an agreed plan may take more time in this situation and involve more meetings, so your school's principal has an important role to play in this situation.

3. What sort of things will I be expected to do?

As a parent, your role in working with the school includes:

- focusing on your child
- encouraging your child to try the agreed strategies at school and reinforcing them at home
- keeping communication with the school open and regular

- seeking further help from outside school if needed for your child, such as counselling

- employing cyber safety measures at home, such as web filters, agreed usage times, parental lock outs. See suggested websites on page 27 for free and effective web filtering programs.

4. What sorts of things can I expect the school to do?

Schools can use a range of strategies to deal with bullying. The nature of the bullying incidents will help to determine which method is most appropriate. These include:

- **Physical/supervisory responses**: altering the physical environment where possible to reduce places where bullying can happen, to enhance teachers' ability to supervise students throughout the day or arranging increased supervision of students at certain times or in certain locations.

- **Restricting access to technology at school**: schools work with students and parents to establish acceptable use of technology, focusing on the use of mobile phone, social networking sites and websites.

- **Teaching and learning programs**: these promote personal development and address all forms of bullying through the teaching of communication skills, social skills, assertiveness, coping strategies, group behaviour, understanding the motives for bullying and being effective bystanders. These may be additional programs or an ongoing part of the curriculum.

- **Disciplinary measures**: action and consequences for the behaviour to impress on bullies that what they have done is unacceptable; deter them from repeating that behaviour, and signal to other students that the behaviour is unacceptable.

- **Mediation**: students in conflict are invited to work with a trained teacher or peer-mediator to find a mutually acceptable way of resolving their problem.

- **Counselling**: guidance officer or counsellor support for the student to help them to deal with the bullying; this could include various methods of working in groups with a skilled facilitator.

- **Restructure of classes**: removing the students from regular contact with each other; using temporary or long-term flexible learning arrangements.

One thing obvious in the research is that simply 'coming down hard' on a student who bullies does not resolve the situation in many cases (Bernard & Milne, 2008). It can make it even harder for adults to help these students to change their behaviour.

5. Why can't the school tell me more about the consequences for the bully?

Parents are expected to focus on helping their own child. School staff will deal with the student who is bullying, which will include meeting and discussing the issue with that student's parents, and implementing consequences for the bullying. School staff are able to tell you generally the range of

behaviour management strategies and discipline measures that may be applied. They will also tell you how your child appears to be responding at school and when your child reports concerns to them.

The school cannot provide personal information about other students due to privacy laws. Schools are also unable to provide specific information about disciplinary measures as each incident must be assessed on an ongoing and case-by-case basis to take the individual students into consideration.

6. What if I am not happy with the school's response and still have concern about my child's safety?

If you still have concerns about your child's safety, arrange to meet with the school staff again and identify what it is that you want the school to do that has not happened.

The school will respect that you will make whatever personal decisions necessary to be satisfied that your child is safe.

If you have done all you can to work with the school and you are still concerned about your child's safety, you may wish to write to the relevant supervisory body for your child's school. See the Resources section of the toolkit for a sample letter of complaint on page 26.

How can I help my child?

Research has shown that involving parents is crucial in dealing with bullying. The biggest impact comes when families help their children learn new ways to deal with bullying at the same time that the school makes changes and enforces consequences for bullying behaviours.

Knowing how to deal with bullies is a basic life survival skill. Experiencing bullying at school can be frightening and negative, but is also an opportunity for your child to learn how to deal with bullying, not just at school, but throughout life in social situation and at work. The following ideas are taken from the resources listed on page 27 and 28.

1. Your child's attitude

It is essential for you to remain positive and focused on trying to find a solution. This positive approach needs to be passed on to the child. A confident, positive and resilient appearance can stop a bully from continuing. Some children may be feeling disempowered and helpless about the situation, so you might need to talk about how to 'fake it, until you make it' – how to pretend to be confident until your child actually does feel confident and positive.

Assure your child that it is NOT their fault. Some children might benefit from discussing why the other child bullies them. You could ask your child to think about:

- why some children bully others (why the particular child bullies); explore ideas that the bullying child might only know that way of dealing with others, or that bullies may feel bad about something they cannot do.

- why the other child chose your child to bully; explore ideas that the bullying child might be jealous of them (e.g. for being attractive, intelligent, sporty) or may not understand how they are different from them (e.g. for a disability, being gifted, a cultural difference).

The aim of this type of conversation is not to excuse the bullying behaviour, which must be stopped, but to reduce the likelihood of your child blaming themselves for the bullying. You can acknowledge that it feels bad to be bullied, but point out it doesn't mean your child is powerless.

2. Your child's skills

Before learning new skills, your child needs to think about what they currently do when the bullying happens, and what they could do differently. Ask your child to think about what the other student gets out of bullying other people, and then ask how your child reacts when being bullied. When your child starts to see that some children bully just to get a reaction, they can begin to understand how changing the way they react could be part of the solution. This might mean pretending not to be bothered or frightened by the teasing or threats.

Talk to your child about the idea of taking back their personal 'power' through learning new ways of relating to the other child. Most children understand the idea of martial arts as blocking physical

attacks. You can extend this idea to explore 'talking martial arts' – stopping the bullying by using your words or actions to 'block' verbal or social attacks (Field, 2007). This might involve:

- pretending not to be bothered or frightened by teasing or threats
- making a quick retort to surprise or disarm the other child
- giving any response rather than looking 'frozen in fear'
- using a humorous response
- using an image in their mind of blocking the negative comments from hurting them.

Although it might feel a bit strange, practising in role play is very useful to give your child the confidence to confront what may be a scary situation, and to change their usual way of behaving. Try role plays where your child practises how:

- to stand and walk in a way that appears more confident
- to give a quick retort to disarm the other child
- to use a routine response (e.g. *okay*, *whatever*) that implies that the child is not bothered.

3. Your child's supports and networks

Options to explore to build your child's supports and friendship networks are:

- identifying strengths and things your child is good at; find ways to develop these, possibly with other children outside of school
- supporting your child to make friends with other groups of children.

It may be necessary to try several different approaches before you and your child find an effective solution. Remind your child a solution may take some time and require determination.

- **Practice**: make sure your child knows it will take practice and time to change how they behave to change the situation.
- **Courage**: encourage your child to face up to the challenge, saying things like: *If you don't try then you don't know what is possible.*
- **Be flexible**: remind your child that it might be necessary to try a few different options to work out how to disarm this particular child's bullying behaviour.
- **Celebrate**: change might come gradually, so keep written records of progress and celebrate any small change you achieve.

How can I protect my child from the harms of cyber bullying?

New communication technologies mean bullying is appearing in new formats and places. While in the past, school bullying might have been confined to the school grounds and surrounds, mobile phones and social networking sites mean children can be harassed and bullied at home.

The strategies previously mentioned for dealing with other methods of bullying also apply to dealing with cyber bullying. In addition, parents can teach their child how to be safe online, as well as supervising and restricting access to technology.

When talking to your child about electronic media and safety, first assure your child they will not lose reasonable access to technology as a result of telling you about any problems, including bullying. It is important to keep the communication between you and your child occurring, and some children may prefer to put up with the bullying than lose access to their phone or computer.

In making decisions about the level of support, freedom and access to technology for your child you could consider:

- your child's track record of keeping him or herself safe
- the friends your child hangs out with and their track record of safety, good behaviour and good decision making
- your child's tendency to give into temptation.

Some options for you to supervise and manage your child's access to technology are:

- explaining that your main concern is that your child is safe, and while electronic media has benefits, it has some unpredictable risks as well
- discussing how to balance social networking with protecting privacy online, e.g. using a non-identifiable, non-gender specific username, not providing personal details of name, telephone, email or banking details; checking your child's profile and explain concerns you might have
- placing computers in a central location at home; avoiding computers in bedrooms
- monitoring technology use by talking with your child, regularly checking the history tab to see which sites are being accessed and saving copies of your child's online conversations (technical advice is available at the websites in the Resource section)
- setting guidelines and monitoring the amount of online time and avoid allowing children unsupervised access to webcams

- choosing a mobile phone for your child that does not feature internet access, or block this service; service providers can assist with blocking any services including limiting calls
- limiting access to mobile phones after a certain time, e.g. no phones after bed time, or restricting phone use to certain purposes, e.g. calling known friends and family only
- discussing the appropriate use of the camera on your child's phone or computer, including when taking photos, video or audio recordings of others and if others are taking photos or recordings of your child
- stressing the importance of not responding to any messages from unknown people
- trying to keep up to date about technology (many sites provide information for parents; see the Resources section).

If your child is being bullied via electronic communication, encourage your child:

- not to respond to the message or image
- to save the evidence
- to block and delete the sender
- to report the situation to the Internet Service Provider or phone service provider; they can help you block messages or calls
- to tell trusted people – teachers and police if necessary.

Despite the concern and distress you may feel, avoid getting personally involved and taking matters into your own hands. You may also wish to contact the school if the person doing the bullying is another student.

What if it is my child who is bullying?

Bullying is a complex interaction based on misusing personal power, so it is also important to help a child who is bullying to learn better ways of relating to others. Sometimes a student who bullies other children in one situation may themselves be bullied in another. It can be distressing to hear that your child has been bullying others, but it is important to take the concern seriously and to work closely with the school.

If you find out your child is bullying others, you can:

- try to understand why your child might be behaving this way; think about issues and problems your child might experience
- discuss the behaviour with your child's teacher (and other staff as appropriate)
- consider whether there needs to be consequences at home as well
- discuss with your child the long term impact of the bullying behaviour, e.g. other people may not want to be around them; potential negative impacts on learning and school, and then work
- consider whether your home environment provides good examples of how to deal with issues and resolve differences with others; try to show positive models of friendly assertive communication with other people
- seek help to develop your child's attitudes about themselves and understanding about how their behaviour affects other people
- seek help to develop your child's skills to relate in more positive ways with other people
- think about how to build up supports for your child to change their behaviour.

Children who bully must:

- be held to account for their behaviour and the harm they have caused through appropriate disciplinary measures and learning programs
- be taught to behave in ways that do not cause harm in the future
- develop their social and emotional skills and knowledge about the effects of their behaviour on others, and their skills in solving problems in a socially acceptable way
- be supported to learning how they can take steps to repair the harm they have caused.

A consistent approach by both the home and school is important. Ensure that your child does not hear criticism from you about the school's management of the issue. Take any such concerns directly to the school staff.

How can I find out what the school is doing to deal with bullying?

If bullying is a concern, there are some questions which can guide parents to find out what their child's school is doing to address bullying including:

- How does the school foster a caring, respectful, inclusive and supportive school culture?
- Does the school have a whole school definition of bullying?
- Is there an anti-bullying policy which has been developed in collaboration with staff, students and parents, which addresses all forms of bullying (including cyber bullying)?
- How does the school respond to bullying incidents (both for the target and the bully) and are there clearly defined roles and responsibilities of staff, students and parents/carers?
- What teaching and learning programs are in place for students to promote personal development and address all forms of bullying?
- What professional development has been provided to assist school staff to understand the anti-bullying policy, implement teaching and learning programs, and to provide support for students?
- Are students consulted regularly about the types of bullying behaviour and the school and social contexts where bullying occurs?
- Have the physical environments in the school and staff supervision practices been considered as ways to limit the incidences of bullying (including cyber bullying)?
- How does the school support and engage families through regular communication and parent awareness raising and skill building?
- Are processes to address bullying regularly reviewed and is the effectiveness of school policies, programs and procedures promoted and celebrated within the school community?

In developing their policy and procedures to address bullying, schools often consult with parents through the official parent organisation at the school (Parents and Citizens (P&C) Association or Parents and Friends (P&F) Association). Parents can get involved with their school's parent group to have input into school policies.

Working Together

Resources and references for parents

Further information about specific types of bullying

The following information on the types of bullying is from the *Safe to Learn* resource (DCFS, 2007).

Bullying related to race, religion or culture

Some surveys and focus groups have found that a high proportion of bullied students have experienced racist or faith-based bullying. Recent political and social issues also appear to have been a factor in bullying and harassment.

Bullying related to appearance or health conditions

Those with health or visible medical conditions, such as eczema, may be more likely than their peers to become targets for bullying behaviour. Perceived physical limitations, such as size and weight, and other body image issues, can result in bullying.

Bullying related to sexual orientation

Evidence of homophobic bullying suggests that students and young people who are gay or lesbian (or perceived to be) face a higher risk of marginalisation than their peers. Homophobic bullying is perhaps the form of bullying least likely to be self-reported, since disclosure carries risks not associated with other forms of bullying. The student may not want to report bullying if it means 'coming out' to teachers and parents/carers before they are ready to.

Bullying related to different home or family circumstances

Students may be made vulnerable to bullying by the fact that they provide care to someone in their family with an illness, disability, mental health or substance abuse problem. Young carers may be taking on practical and emotional caring responsibilities that would normally be expected of an adult. Research has highlighted the difficulties young carers face, including risks of ill-health, stress and tiredness, especially when they care through the night. Many feel bullied or isolated.

Some students are heavily influenced by their communities or homes where bullying and abuse may be common. Some bullying at school may arise from trauma or instability at home relating to issues of domestic violence or bereavement, or from the experience of being part of a refugee family. Siblings of vulnerable students may themselves be the subject of bullying by association.

Bullying related to students with disabilities

Research shows that students with disabilities are more at risk of being bullied than their peers.

Students with disabilities, whether in mainstream or special schools, do not always have the levels of social confidence and competence, and the robust friendship bonds, which can protect against bullying. All schools should ensure that a whole-school approach is taken to deal with bullying related to students with disabilities, and that it is specifically covered in anti-bullying policies.

Where students with disabilities are themselves found to be bullying, schools should apply the same standards of behaviour as the rest of the school community, having made the reasonable adjustments necessary.

Bullying related to students with mental health conditions

Children and young people with mental health concerns may not always have the confidence, coping strategies and peer networks to protect themselves against bullying. Children and young people with mental health concerns such as depression may be particularly susceptible to the effects of bullying due to their tendency to internalise the negative effects and blame themselves for the bullying behaviour.

Sexist or sexual bullying

Sexist and sexual bullying affects both genders. Boys may be targets as well as girls, and both sexes may be targets of their own sex. Sexual bullying may be characterised by name-calling, comments and overt 'looks' about appearance, attractiveness and emerging puberty. In addition, uninvited touching, innuendo and propositions, pornographic imagery or graffiti may be used.

Students identifying as transgender or experiencing gender dysphoria (feeling that they belong to another gender or who do not conform with the gender role prescribed to them) can also be targeted by bullies.

Cyber bullying

Cyber bullying is a 'method' of bullying, rather than a 'type' of bullying. It includes bullying via text message, instant-messenger services and social networking sites, email and images or videos posted on the internet or spread via mobile phone. It can take the form of any of the previously discussed types of bullying, i.e. technology can be used to bully for reasons of race, religion, sexuality, disability, etc.

Sample letter of complaint for parents

If you have done all you can to work with the school and you are still concerned about your child's safety, you may wish to write to the relevant supervisor/supervisory body for your child's school.

Date

I am writing to complain about the way <school name> has dealt with my concerns regarding bullying of my child <child name>

The situation is < description of bullying event/s>

The impact on my child has been <outcomes for your child>

I first raised the issue on <relevant dates> and met with the school staff on <relevant dates>. The meetings were attended by <all participant names, and positions at the school if known> At the meeting it was agreed that:

- <agreed action one>
- <agreed action two>
- <agreed action three>

These things have not been done. I have expressed my concern about this to the school principal, but nothing has improved.

OR

I am not satisfied that the school has acted on my concerns or is serious about improving the situation. The school has not shown evidence that it has a school wide plan for dealing with bullying.

OR

<Other description of school's actions with which you have complaint>

I would like you to intervene in/review the way the school has handled this matter. Please contact me on <contact details>

Yours sincerely

Resources

Websites with information about bullying

Act Smart Be Safe: a gateway for parents/carers, students, teachers and the community to access information to help improve youth safety. http://education.qld.gov.au/actsmartbesafe/

Alannah and Madeline Foundation: a national charity protecting children from violence and its devastating effects. http://www.amf.org.au/AboutUs/

Bullying. No way!: an online resource providing information for parents/carers, students and educators. http://www.bullyingnoway.com.au/who/default.shtml

KidsMatter: a school based framework that aims to improve the mental health and wellbeing of children. http://www.kidsmatter.edu.au/

ReachOut: an online resource that assists young people by providing information to improve understanding of the issues that relate to mental health and wellbeing. *Reach Out* also has information on how young people can get the best help from services, as well as opportunities to connect with other young people. http://au.reachout.com

National Centre Against Bullying**:** a peak body working to advise and inform the Australian community on the issue of childhood bullying and the creation of safe schools and communities, including the issue of cyber safety. http://www.ncab.org.au/

Websites with information about computer safety

K9 Web Protection: free Internet filtering and control solution for the home.
http://www1.k9webprotection.com/index.php

Cybersmart program: the *Cybersmart program* is a national cyber safety education program managed by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA), as part of the Australian Government's commitment to promoting online safety for children and young people. *Cybersmart* provides activities, resources and practical advice to help young children, children, teens, parents, carers, teachers and library staff safely enjoy the online world, so their experiences are safe and positive. http://www.cybersmart.gov.au/

ACMA Cybersmart program: Keeping your computer secure: information about the threats to personal computer security and actions to take.
http://www.cybersmart.gov.au/en/Parents/Keeping%20your%20computer%20secure.aspx

Net Alert: Australian Government website providing information about protecting children online, internet content filters and an avenue for complaints. http://www.netalert.gov.au/

Who's talking with your kids? *brochure developed by Queensland Police Service which includes an internet agreement for parents to discuss with their child.*
http://www.police.qld.gov.au/programs/personalSafety/childProtection

Internet Industry Association: Family Friendly Filters: http://iia.net.au/index.php/resources/764-family-friendly-filters.html

Help Keep Your Kids Safe Online: booklet produced by Telstra which contains information for parents to assist them to make sure their children are safe online. This resource is available on a commercial website. DET does not endorse any commercial messages on this site, but believes parents may find the available cyber bulling information informative. http://www.bigpond.com/internet/offers/tlife/info/CyberSafety-Booklet.pdf

***Cybersafety and Security Advice*:** website provided by NetSafe, an independent non-profit organisation in New Zealand promoting confident, safe and responsible use of cyber space. It also includes information on phone safety. The website has sections specifically for young people, adults, parents, business and community, computer security. http://www.netsafe.org.nz/

Six Quick Tips for Parents about bullying

Series of six short videos for parents by Dr Michael Carr-Gregg, hosted on YouTube
http://education.qld.gov.au/studentservices/behaviour/qsaav/index.html

Books for parents/carers

Carr-Gregg, M. (2007). *Real Wired Child: What parents need to know about kids online*. Camberwell: Penguin Group.

Field, E. M. (2007). *Bully Blocking: six secrets to help children deal with teasing and bullying*. Sydney: Finch. *(This book includes language in real-life examples of bullying that may offend some people)*

Rigby, K. (2003). *Bullying among young children: A guide for parents/carers*. Canberra: Australian Government Attorney General's Department.

Rigby, K. (2008). *Children and bullying: how parents/carers and educators can reduce bullying at school*. Boston: Wiley-Blackwell.

Other references

Bernard, M., & Milne, M. (2008). *Schools Procedures and Practice for Responding to Students Who Bully.* Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

Department for Children, Schools and Families Guidance (DCSF) (2007). *Safe to Learn: embedding anti-bullying work in schools.* United Kingdom.

McNamarra, B.E., & McNamara, F. (1997). *Keys to dealing with bullies.* Hauppauge, N.Y.: Barron's Educational Series.

Rigby, K. (2010). *Addressing Bulling in Queensland Schools*: Consultancy for the Department of Education and Training, Brisbane.

Working Together:

A Starter Kit for developing local Community Alliances Against Bullying and Violence

Current 5 October 2010

Queensland Government

On 23 February 2010 the Premier announced the formation of the *Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence* (the Alliance) to provide advice on best practice measures to address bullying and violence in Queensland schools to the Minister for Education and Training, the Honourable Geoff Wilson MP.

The Alliance is independently chaired by Professor Ian O'Connor (Griffith University) and includes representatives from:

- Education Queensland
- Queensland Catholic Education Commission
- Independent Schools Queensland
- Queensland Council for Parents and Citizens Association
- Federations of Parents and Friends Associations of Catholic Schools
- Queensland Independent School Parents Council
- Queensland Teachers' Union
- Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union
- Queensland Independent Education Union
- Catholic sector principals
- State sector principals
- Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia (Queensland)
- Indigenous education representative
- Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian.

On 3 September 2010, the Alliance endorsed the release of *Working Together: A starter kit for developing local Community Alliances Against Bullying and Violence.*

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Background

In February 2010, the Queensland Premier Anna Bligh MP and Minister for Education and Training Geoff Wilson MP announced the formation of the *Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence (QSAAV).* The purpose of QSAAV is to explore best practice measures to address bullying and violence in schools and provide advice to Government on future actions focused on supporting schools to respond to issues of bullying and violence.

QSAAV included representatives from the state, Catholic and independent schooling sectors, industrial organisations, principal associations and parent groups. In undertaking its work, QSAAV acknowledged the innovation and commitment of Queensland schools in promoting positive behaviour and providing safe environments for learning. QSAAV also acknowledged that promoting positive behaviour and safe environments for learning requires a community response beyond the school gates.

In July 2010, all members of QSAAV agreed to sign the *Queensland Schools Declaration Against Bullying and Violence* (see Appendix 1). The *Declaration* is a public statement of commitment to preventing bullying and violence. The *Declaration* articulates four commitments:

- **We strive to ensure all students are able to learn and work in an environment where they feel safe and are free from bullying and/or violence.**
- **We seek every opportunity to encourage school staff, parents and students to work together to develop the knowledge, understanding and skills that support learning, positive behaviour and constructive social relationships.**
- **We implement policies and strategies guided by current research on effective approaches to the prevention of bullying and violence.**
- **We use our role in the community to raise awareness that bullying of and violence toward children and young people are issues for the whole community and require a community response.**

Local Community Alliances Against Bullying and Violence

Bullying and violence in our schools are complex challenges for our school communities. To prevent violence and bullying in schools, there is a need for collective responsibility and action. Schools, young people, community groups, government, churches, local businesses, the media and local law enforcement agencies all have a role to play.

All schools and their communities are encouraged to form local Community Alliances Against Bullying and Violence with representatives from all educational sectors and other relevant local organisations. A Community Alliance is one way for local communities to make a public commitment to working together to prevent bullying and violence in their schools – similar to the systemic commitment made through the *Queensland Schools Declaration Against Bullying and Violence.* The template for a local declaration provided in Appendix 2 can be adapted by local Community Alliances to make their own public statement of their commitment.

Local Community Alliances may take a variety of models. In some cases, there may be existing structures within communities that would be willing and able to add the issue of bullying and violence to their agenda, such as a regular meeting of school principals or parent groups within the community. In other communities, it might be more appropriate to form a new group focused solely on the issues of bullying and violence. Principals may take a leadership role in facilitating the formation of a Community Alliance, but equally, parents or other school community members can take a facilitating role.

Purpose of Community Alliances Against Bullying and Violence

Local Community Alliances aim to facilitate cooperative work across schooling sectors and other key stakeholders to address bullying and violence in school communities. The purpose of a Community Alliance Against Bullying and Violence is:

- to raise awareness and understanding of effective anti-bullying and anti-violence strategies in schools
- to improve local schools' responses to bullying and violence through sharing of resources and strategies
- to monitor and review trends or patterns of bullying and violence across schools in the local area.

Membership of Community Alliances Against Bullying and Violence

The membership of a Community Alliance may be as varied as the communities they represent. It is recommended that representation includes all schools in the local community – state, Catholic and independent.

For each school in a Community Alliance, it is suggested representation from the following groups are considered:

- principals
- school staff (e.g. teacher aides, administration, grounds people)
- parents
- industrial organisations
- students.

Research shows that engagement of young people is important in the development of effective strategies to respond to bullying and violence. *Working Together: A toolkit for effective school based action against bullying* provides materials to assist schools with the student engagement process. Some Community Alliances may also wish to engage with local youth services.

A Community Alliance may also invite local representatives from:

- government departments such as Queensland Police Service, Department of Communities or Queensland Health
- non-government organisations such as sporting groups and community groups
- local government
- commercial entities such as internet services providers, local businesses, entertainment venues and shopping centres
- local church/religious groups.

Formation of Community Alliances Against Bullying and Violence

How a local Community Alliance is formed will be dependent upon the model a community chooses. If an existing structure is used then the process may be as simple as amending the terms of reference of the group or passing a motion at a meeting that responding to bullying and violence forms part of the work of the group. Below are some steps that may assist small groups or individuals within a community in the early stages of formation of a local Community Alliance.

1. Identify all schools within the local community

2. Set a preliminary formation meeting date for principals and send invitations to all school principals – state, Catholic and independent (Sample letter in Appendix 3)

3. Facilitate the principals' meeting to discuss perceived support for the formation of a local Community Alliance and potential membership (including the position of chair)

4. Set a formation meeting date for the Community Alliance and send invitations to school staff, parent and other representatives as determined (Sample letter in Appendix 4)

5. Distribute draft of Terms of Reference to those indicating an interest in participating

6. Discuss and finalise the Terms of Reference at the first full meeting facilitated by the chairperson, highlighting local areas of concern to be addressed

7. Determine actions using the Terms of Reference to guide further meetings.

8. Develop an Action Plan for the Community Alliance (see Appendix 5)

Terms of Reference

Upon formation of a Community Alliance it is recommended members discuss and finalise their Terms of Reference. A sample Terms of Reference template has been provided on the following page to assist with the development, but Community Alliances are encouraged to adapt this as required to suit local needs.

If an existing committee or community consultation structure is to be used to undertake the cross-sectoral collaborative work it may be appropriate to consider the group's existing terms of reference or constitution and amend it to include bullying and violence explicitly if necessary.

Sample <insert name>
Community Alliance Against Bullying and Violence
TERMS OF REFERENCE

The <insert name> Community Alliance Against Bullying and Violence

The <insert name> Community Alliance Against Bullying and Violence explores effective strategies to prevent, manage and respond to issues bullying and violence in schools the <insert local area name> area. The Community Alliance encompasses the following schools/geographic area:

- xx
- xx
- xx

The Terms of Reference for the <insert name> Community Alliance Against Bullying and Violence are:

- to endorse and promote *the <insert name> Declaration Against Bullying and Violence* (see Appendix 2)
- to collaborate cross-sectorally to ensure a cohesive and whole of community response to, bullying and violence in schools
- to explore evidence-based best practice locally, nationally and internationally to develop a planned approach for local implementation
- to provide advice to school communities within the Community Alliance regarding a coordinated approach to prevent and respond to bullying and violence
- to provide advice to school communities within the local Community Alliance regarding a coordinated approach to addressing professional development needs of school staff
- to provide advice to school communities within the local Community Alliance regarding a coordinated approach to engaging with parents, the community and other key stakeholders.

Membership

Members of the <insert name> Community Alliance Against Bullying and Violence include representatives of:

- schools' names

- relevant principal associations
- relevant parent representative groups
- relevant industrial organisations
- student representatives
- relevant youth advocacy or agency group
- Indigenous representative.

Expert Guests

The <insert name> Community Alliance may invite experts on specific topics to participate as required. This may include locally recognised academics in a range of fields, practitioners or other parties as determined by the Community Alliance members.

The Community Alliance will also seek advice from other Government departments such as Queensland Police Service and the Department of Communities (Child Safety Services) as required.

Chair

Options include either:

- Appoint an independent chair for the local Community Alliance, as nominated by members

or

- Appoint a rotating chair (for example between principals and parents)

Sub-committees

The <insert name> Community Alliance can form other topic specific sub-committees as required, for example a student sub-committee or a committee to oversee implementation of specific actions.

Meeting Schedule

The <local name> Community Alliance will meet according to the schedule determined by chair and members. Meetings will be:

- date
- date
- date

Developing a Community Alliance Against Bullying and Violence Action Plan

Once a Community Alliance is formed it is recommended members investigate existing local strengths, issues and opportunities. The following strategies may assist Community Alliance members to explore and plan their range of actions:

- identify services within the community that provide support/counselling for students
- seek and distribute up-to-date information about addressing bullying and violence
- conduct evaluations of local strategies and share the outcomes
- conduct information sessions across schools for parents about the Community Alliance and its role and potential areas for future action
- work together on students' transitions between schools or develop a local transition plan/agreement.

The media can play an important role in promoting the proactive actions of local Community Alliances and can assist in showcasing the positive role many young people and their schools play in their community.

Where the opportunity exists, Community Alliances may be able to engage the expertise of universities to assist with scoping of issues and providing advice of effective practice for their community.

A template for an Action Plan that may be useful for local Community Alliances is provided in Appendix 5.

Further information

Further information regarding the Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence can be found at:

http://education.qld.gov.au/studentservices/behaviour/qsaav/index.html

Community Alliances Against Bullying and Violence are encouraged to explore the Working Together toolkit and other resources provide via the QSAAV website to assist with the development of their action plans. A list of audit tools designed to enable schools to assess their current approaches to bullying is provided below and may serve as a useful starting point.

Community Alliances Against Bullying and Violence may also wish to sign up to the *Queensland Schools Declaration Against Bullying and Violence* and the international *Kandersteg Declaration.*

Audit tools

Friendly Schools Friendly Families physical environment audit tools
http://www.friendlyschools.com.au/survey/Sample-questions.pdf
http://www.friendlyschools.com.au/materials/whole-school/physical-environment.php#samples
http://www.friendlyschools.com.au/materials/whole-school/physical-environment.php#physical

MindMatters staff survey
http://www.mindmatters.edu.au/verve/_resources/Staff_survey_Full_version.pdf

Bullying. No Way! Key elements
http://www.bullyingnoway.com.au/resources/nssfp/Six_key_elements_to_guide_the_process.doc

The Australian Communications and Media Authority Smart Technology Audit
http://www.cybersmart.gov.au/Schools/Cybersafety%20policies%20and%20procedures/National%20or%20state%20and%20territory%20policies/South%20australian%20cybersafety%20policies.aspx

Declarations

Queensland Schools Declaration Against Bullying and Violence

http://education.qld.gov.au/studentservices/behaviour/qsaav/index.html

Kandersteg Declaration

http://www.kanderstegdeclaration.com/

Appendix 1: Queensland Schools Declaration Against Bullying and Violence

Queensland Schools Declaration Against Bullying and Violence

The Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence (QSAAV) recognises the innovation and commitment of Queensland schools in promoting positive behaviour and providing safe environments for learning, and endorses the position that effective responses require the engagement of the community beyond the school gates.

Our commitment

- We strive to ensure all students are able to learn and work in an environment where they feel safe and are free from bullying and/or violence.
- We seek every opportunity to encourage school staff, parents and students to work together to develop the knowledge, understanding and skills that support learning, positive behaviour and constructive social relationships.
- We implement policies and strategies guided by current research on effective approaches to the prevention of bullying and violence.
- We use our role in the community to raise awareness that bullying of and violence toward children and young people are issues for the whole community and require a community response.

Geoff Wilson
Minister for Education and Training
Queensland Government

Professor Ian O'Connor (Chair)
Vice Chancellor, Griffith University

Julie Grantham
Director-General
Department of Education and Training

David Robertson
Executive Director
Independent Schools Queensland

Mike Byrne
Executive Director
Queensland Catholic Education Commission

Margaret Black
President
Queensland Council of Parents and Citizens' Associations Inc

Fleur Creed
Executive Officer
Queensland Independent Schools Parents Council

Carmel Nash
Executive Officer
Federation of Parents and Friends Associations of Catholic Schools

Norm Fuller
President
Queensland Secondary Principals' Association
State Sector Principal Nominee Inc

Christopher Daunt Watney
Association of Heads of Independent Schools Australia (Queensland)

Gerald Crooks
Principal
St James' College
Catholic Sector Principal Nominee

Steve Ryan
President
Queensland Teachers' Union

Andrew Elphinstone
President
Queensland Independent Education Union

Kerry Tomlinson
Secretary
Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union (Qld)

Stephen Foster
Assistant Principal
Tagai State College
Indigenous Representative

Elizabeth Fraser
Commissioner
Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian

Tomorrow's Queensland:
strong, green, smart, healthy and fair

Toward Tomorrow's Queensland | Queensland Government

Appendix 2: Local Declaration template

<Insert name of school/ local Community Alliance> Declaration Against Bullying and Violence

The <Insert name of school/local Community Alliance> recognises the innovation and commitment of <Insert name of school/s> in promoting positive behaviour and providing safe environments for learning, and endorses the position that effective responses require the engagement of the community beyond the school gates.

Our commitment

- We strive to ensure every student is able to learn and work in an environment where they feel safe and are free from bullying and/or violence.
- We seek every opportunity to encourage school staff, parents and students to work together to develop the knowledge, understanding and skills that support learning, positive behaviour and constructive social relationships.
- We implement policies and strategies guided by current research on effective approaches to the prevention of bullying and violence.
- We use our role in the community to raise awareness that bullying and violence of children and young people are issues for the whole community and require a community response.
- <Insert any local commitment/s>

_____	_____
Name	Name
_____	_____
Name	Name
_____	_____
Name	Name

Queensland Government

Appendix 3: Sample letter to principals for preliminary meeting of Community Alliance

Date

Dear

Regarding: Preliminary meeting – Community Alliance Against Bullying and Violence

Date:

Venue:

I/we are pleased to invite you to a preliminary planning meeting regarding the possible establishment of a *Community Alliance Against Bullying and Violence* in our local area. The idea of a Community Alliance is to involve all relevant stakeholders in working together to find effective strategies to prevent, manage and respond to issues of bullying and violence in school communities.

The purpose of a Community Alliance Against Bullying and Violence is:

- to raise awareness and understanding of effective anti-bullying and anti-violence strategies in schools
- to improve local schools' responses to bullying and violence through sharing of resources and strategies
- to monitor and review trends or patterns of bullying and violence across schools in the local area.

Dealing with bullying and violence in our schools involves not only schools, but also community groups, government, local businesses, the media and local police. At this preliminary meeting the potential membership of a local Community Alliance, its structure and functions, and the possible terms of reference will be discussed.

Community Alliances Against Bullying and Violence are being promoted by the Queensland Government through the Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence (QSAAV). More information about QSAAV is available at http://education.qld.gov.au/studentservices/behaviour/qsaav/index.html

I hope you will join with me/us in establishing a local Community Alliance as a way to make a public commitment to working together to prevent bullying and violence in their schools.

Yours sincerely

Appendix 4: Sample letter for formation meeting of Community Alliance

Date

Dear

Regarding: Formation meeting – Community Alliance Against Bullying and Violence

Date:

Venue:

I/we are pleased to invite you to a meeting regarding the establishment of a *Community Alliance Against Bullying and Violence* in our local area. The idea of a Community Alliance is to involve all relevant stakeholders in working together to find effective strategies to prevent, manage and respond to issues of bullying and violence in school communities.

Bullying and violence in schools are complex challenges for schools. To prevent it, there is a need for collective responsibility and action. Schools, young people, community groups, government, local businesses, the media and local police each have a role to play. To this end, schools and organisations in the <insert local area name/details> have been invited.

The purpose of a Community Alliance Against Bullying and Violence is:

- to raise awareness and understanding of effective anti-bullying and anti-violence strategies in schools
- to improve local schools' responses to bullying and violence through sharing of resources and strategies
- to monitor and review trends or patterns of bullying and violence across schools in the local area.

At the meeting purpose, terms of reference and potential actions will be discussed.

Community Alliances Against Bullying and Violence are being promoted by the Queensland Government through the Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence (QSAAV). More information about QSAAV is available at http://education.qld.gov.au/studentservices/behaviour/qsaav/index.html

I/we hope you will join with me/us in establishing a local Community Alliance as a way to make a pubic commitment to working together to prevent bullying and violence in their schools.

Yours sincerely

Appendix 5: Optional template for Community Alliance Action Plan

Terms of reference	Actions	Responsible person	Date for completion	Notes
1.	1.1			
	1.2			
	1.3			
2.	2.1			
	2.2			
	2.3			
3.	3.1			
	3.2			
	3.3			
4.	4.1			
	4.2			
	4.3			

Working Together

Good practice in Queensland Schools

Case studies of effective school based action against bullying

Current 16 September 2010

Queensland Government

On 23 February 2010 the Premier announced the formation of the *Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence* (the Alliance) to provide advice on best practice measures to address bullying and violence in Queensland schools to the Minister for Education and Training, the Honourable Geoff Wilson MP.

The Alliance is independently chaired by Professor Ian O'Connor (Griffith University) and includes representatives from:

- Education Queensland
- Queensland Catholic Education Commission
- Independent Schools Queensland
- Queensland Council for Parents and Citizens Association
- Federation of Parents and Friends Associations of Catholic Schools
- Queensland Independent Schools Parents Council
- Queensland Teachers Union
- Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union
- Queensland Independent Education Union
- Catholic sector principals
- State sector principals
- Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia (Queensland)
- Indigenous education representative
- Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian.

In September 2010, the Alliance endorsed the release of *Working Together: Good practice in Queensland schools – Case studies of effective school based action against bullying.*

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Introduction

The Queensland Government has been working hard to address the increasingly complex issues of bullying, cyber bullying and violence in schools.

Working Together: Good Practice in Queensland Schools – Case studies of effective school based action against bullying provides examples of good local practice in Queensland state, independent and Catholic schools. The case studies are provided to assist schools in determining their own local action to address bullying.

These case studies represent concerted effort and dedication by the schools profiled. Thank you to all the schools for generously sharing their work and their stories.

The case studies have been de-identified to ensure a focus on the good practice of the schools rather than the schools themselves. They have been grouped according to three themes of: Whole School, Restorative Practices and Social and Emotional learning approaches. Where schools have used a commercial program, a link has been provided for further information.

The views expressed, products and programs included are the views of the schools themselves, and does not imply endorsement by the state, independent or Catholic schooling sectors. Inclusion in this package is not to be taken as endorsement of a particular program or approach.

The Good Practice Case Studies are part of a package of materials developed by the Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence (QSAAV). The role of QSAAV is to provide the Queensland Government with independent advice on strategies to address issues of bullying and violence in all state and non-state schools throughout Queensland. One specific task of the Alliance is to identify evidence-based best practice across Queensland education sectors, nationally and internationally, which may be implemented in Queensland schools.

A key achievement of QSAAV has been the development of an effective framework which is based on national and international best practice to assist schools to take action against bullying. Working Together: A toolkit for effective school based action against bullying is available at

http://education.qld.gov.au/studentservices/behaviour/qsaav/index.html

WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACHES

School A – A School Wide Positive Behaviour Support Approach

School A has an enrolment of approximately 950 students between Year 8 and 12.

DEFINITION OF BULLYING

The school uses the following definition: *Bullying, harassment and/or intimidation involves the abuse of power with the intention of causing distress to other person/s, or for personal gain or gratification.*

PROGRAMS/APPROACHES

School Wide Positive Behaviour Support

School A was one of the first Queensland schools to adopt School Wide Positive Behaviour Support (SWPBS) as a whole-school approach to managing student behaviour. SWPBS has been operating in the school since 2005 and is well embedded and supported by the school community. Due to the transient nature of a significant proportion of the population, staff are required to reiterate and re-teach the behavioural expectations frequently to ensure all new students are aware of the expectations.

SWPBS data determines which behaviours need addressing. The data regularly collected as part of SWPBS provides evidence that bullying is not a significant problem at School A. Therefore the school has not addressed it outside of the SWPBS framework.

Respectful behaviour is modelled by all school staff.

The Healthy Connections Program

A number of the administration team have a Health and Physical Education background and, with several other staff members, have developed *The Healthy Connections Program*. This program has a personal development and human relationships focus. It is comprised of weekly timetabled lessons of 70 minutes for all year levels, which focus on different aspects of health and wellbeing appropriate to the needs of the year level. For example, in Year 8 the students participate in the *Rock and Water* program, anti-harassment workshops and trust and team building lessons. These lessons reinforce the school's expectations of student behaviour.

Safe School Strategy

School A also has a *Safe School Strategy*. This is published in the staff and student diary. The school definition of bullying and 12 student management strategies are listed in the strategy.

PROCESSES FOR DEALING WITH BULLYING

Bullying is approached and dealt with using the model of expectations and consequences developed by the school as part of SWPBS, and the school's student behaviour plan. It is not dealt with as a separate behaviour that has consequences outside of these.

CHALLENGES

One challenge is to develop strategies and responses that are appropriate for both the student who is bullied and the student doing the bullying. Developing strategies to assist the school to attend effectively and appropriately to parent concerns is also required.

School B – A Peace Builder Approach

School B is a primary school with an enrolment of approximately 480 students.

DEFINITION OF BULLYING

School B defines a bully as: *Someone who purposely hurts or overpowers others, using physical or emotional ways.* This definition was chosen in consultation with the students and community.

HOW PROGRAMS WERE SELECTED

A non-government community agency, working with the school and community to develop 'common ground' and common language, assisted the school to become a PeaceBuilder school. *PeaceBuilders* is a youth violence prevention program adopted by organisations to shift the entire climate to a peaceful, productive and safe place for children, teenagers, parents and staff.

The beliefs and actions agreed upon by the community to enhance the wellbeing of the whole community guide the day-to-day management of the school. These beliefs and actions are embedded in the school and community culture.

Teachers explicitly teach the behaviours *'we want the kids to own'.* An *Expectation Wall* provides a daily visual reminder in many classrooms of the expected behaviours. Students were involved in developing the behavioural expectations.

School B also places a high priority on teaching about tolerance and difference and building empathy in students. Staff teach students the skills to develop positive relationships with peers, and in *Circle Time* [1] address community issues of importance, encouraging a transparent environment and information gathering. *Circle Time* issues are communicated to the community via the newsletter. The *Breakfast Program* is another opportunity for students to develop positive relationships with peers. Each morning the school offers breakfast for all children which provides a time where children can sit together and participate in positive conversation. The older children also assist in the set up and clean up from the program.

Parents are valued and are considered to be an essential part of the team at School B. The first conversation with parents is never when an issue or situation is problematic. The school builds the relationship and involves all parents early to work together to 'nip issues in the bud'. As a significant number of parents do not enter the school grounds, many parent-teacher relationships are developed and maintained by teachers spending time at the school gate. These relationships are also fostered by school staff participating in the social life of the students and community.

As part of fostering a peaceful, productive and safe school climate, School B sets aside an A+ *Reward Day* to reward great behaviour. Teachers across Year levels organise reward sessions for all children who meet the school's positive behaviour requirements. Each term those who do not meet the requirements are counselled on strategies to assist them to achieve in the following term.

[1] **Circle time** - circle time aims to create a space for students to communicate through discussion, reflection, emotional understanding, personal empowerment, personal identity and making connections. Students explore relationships, feelings, reflections and emotions.

PROCESSES FOR DEALING WITH BULLYING

The school uses a *Peaceful Playroom* as a place where students are taught to improve their social skills. It is used during break times. Students are withdrawn from the playground, taught skills in socialising and making friends, and are then supported to use these skills back in the playground through a support person monitoring and providing prompts and reminders. In situations of bullying, parents are included from the beginning. Disciplinary measures are used when the bullying includes physical violence and when students do not change their behaviours to those included in the *Expectation Wall*.

School C – You Can Do It Approach

School C is a primary school catering for approximately 80 students from Prep to Year 7.

DEFINITION OF BULLYING

Bullying is defined in the school's behaviour plan for students as*: Any behaviour that is intended to hurt, belittle, intimidate or take unfair advantage of another person either physically or emotionally.*

HOW PROGRAMS WERE SELECTED

School C has adopted the You Can Do It program, and through the persistent embedding of the principles of the program in school life, it has provided a common language for staff and students. The program assists in expressing and maintaining behavioural expectations and it functions as a framework and reference point to discuss these expectations.

The biggest contributor to changing the school culture has been the change to the processes for staff to deal with reports of school violence and bullying by students.

PROCESSES FOR DEALING WITH BULLYING

The school community has agreed to a 'zero tolerance' approach to bullying, which means staff are expected to respond to all reports of incidents until satisfactory consequences have been implemented and the student gives assurances that the bullying behaviour will not continue. All incidents are viewed as serious and are responded to consistently with an investigation, regardless of how insignificant any particular incident may appear.

A three stage process to dealing with bullying behaviour is a standard response. The first stage is that students fill in an incident form that requires reflective as well as factual responses. Secondly, a letter is sent home and finally, parents are interviewed.

The *Community Circle* process plays a critical role in reinforcing the behavioural expectations at School C. This process involves sitting in a circle of peers where students talk about a particular incident and how it affected them. *Community Circles* promote a direct exchange between the student who has done the bullying and the other student/s that have been affected. Rather than the adult being the one who talks and determines consequences, the adult facilitates (with set rules) an exchange that allows people to express their feelings and make amends in a safe and non-threatening process. This process is used in any instance where initial attempts to change behaviours are not successful or when an incident is serious, for example, a fight, verbal abuse, denigrating the families of others with the intention to hurt or obvious rejection of a child over an extended period. The process is generally conducted by the principal.

In relation to cyber bullying, the current school policy requires students to hand all electronic devices to teachers if and when they are brought to school. Any reported incidents of cyber bullying will be responded to in the same manner as other forms of bullying.

The *Student Internet Agreement*, signed by all students, includes provision for the students to have one chance, if there is evidence of misuse, before their agreement is revoked, and access to electronic media at the school is restricted.

CHALLENGES

Assisting children to understand the violence they see in interactive computer games, on television or that may occur elsewhere has no place at school, is an ongoing challenge.

School D – Whole School Approach

School D has an enrolment of approximately 460 students from Prep to Year 7.

DEFINITION OF BULLYING

School D defines bullying *as: The inappropriate use of power by an individual or group over another less powerful person or group that is deliberate and repeated over time. Bullying can be direct or indirect.*

PROGRAMS

A whole school approach to the management of student behaviour is embedded at School D. It is called the 'School D Five' and lists the five key expectations explicitly taught to students. A whole school reward and behaviour level system reinforces these expectations. All students begin with a C grading for behaviour and are expected to maintain or improve it. Students are able to participate in a reward day at the end of each term.

Units of work are developed to teach positive behaviour and are implemented throughout the year, commencing with a one week unit at the beginning of the year, and followed by focused one-day units each term. These teaching units ensure that students in all year levels understand the *School Behaviour Code*, school rules based on the *Code*, and the consequences that can result from inappropriate behaviour.

More importantly, the units of work help instil the personal qualities necessary for achievement and social-emotional development. This is achieved through explicitly teaching the foundations of safety, participation and hard work, respect, organisation and resilience, as well as conflict resolution skills and strategies for responding to bullying and harassment. Specific lessons address assertiveness and the role of the bystander. There is also a focus on cyber bullying which covers developing empathy in students, the legal consequences of cyber bullying, and the implications of leaving a digital footprint.

Positive connections are also encouraged and vulnerable students may be linked with peers to create bonds of caring.

PROCESSES TO DEAL WITH BULLYING

At School D, challenging behaviour is logically linked to the function of the behaviour. Therefore, explicitly teaching an alternative behaviour which serves the same function as the problem behaviour is the first step in intervention. Bullying is addressed within the 'School D Five' framework of consequences as a Level Three Behaviour which may attract disciplinary consequences including detention, writing an apology or delivering a verbal apology, and would involve a process of reflection.

Students who do not maintain a C grade in behaviour do not participate in reward days and are required to attend counselling or group sessions with a team, which includes the principal, to address the problem behaviour.

The principal expects school staff to exercise active supervision skills and hyper-vigilance in addressing behaviour that does not comply with the 'School D Five'.

CHALLENGES

The major challenge for School D is to ensure that new staff align their own expectations of managing behaviour and supervision to the high expectations required at the school.

School E – Whole School Reward Program

School E is a culturally diverse high school with 785 students.

DEFINITION OF BULLYING

Through staff and parent consultation, School E adopted the definition: *Bully involves the abuse of power with the intention of causing distress to the other person(s), or for personal gain or gratification. Behaviours may include repeated behaviour that can be covert and subtle, and be social, psychological, verbal, physical and/or sexual in nature.*

HOW PROGRAMS WERE SELECTED

The programs and approaches employed by School E to prevent and address bullying were chosen by the staff team. A whole school *Student Reward Program* underpins all other programs. The key principles are:

- Feeding the spirit is important to learning. Students respond to encouragement.
- Acknowledge and celebrate success…praise, praise, praise…little and often.
- Provide a cumulative, visual picture of application and achievement across all subjects.

The following programs focus on the development of students' social and emotional wellbeing.

High priority is given to addressing the cultural needs of students. The school has a number of cultural awareness packages and posters aimed at providing a better understanding of Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, Hmong and Polynesian cultures. These programs are supported by three Community Liaison Officers, greatly enhancing the capacity of the school to engage successfully with the community in building aspiration for learning. The school motto *Quality and Equality* is the key ingredient in all school celebrations.

A number of mentoring programs are employed to develop positive connection, including:

- 8s are *Mates Program*, where Year 11 students mentor new Year 8 students
- Academic mentoring program for Year 11 and 12 students
- Year 7 transition programs which include the secondary school delivering 3½ hours of curriculum per week for neighbouring primary students
- *Helping Friends* training in Years 10 and 11
- *Indigenous Aspirations Program*.

Structured programs to teach appropriate behaviours are delivered mainly through the Year 8, 9 and 10 Health and Physical Education curriculum and include Mind Matters activities, decision making skills, and Rock and Water for all Year 8 students. The school's *How to Respond to Bullying program* is implemented through the school's seven step action plan.

Anger control programs are also provided for selected students through a partnership with Youth Justice. School E is currently negotiating training by the Youth Justice team for staff.

The guidance officer coordinates a comprehensive *Student Support Services Team* that case manages identified students. Members of this team include the school nurse, Youth Support

Coordinator, Community Liaison Officer, Community Education Councillor, School Based Police Officer, Chaplain and Learning Support staff.

Every teacher is required to undertake a confidential *Essential Skills* profiling reflection session twice a year and whole school data collected from these profiles is used to identify areas of need, which in turn influences planning for future professional development activities for staff.

PROCESSES FOR DEALING WITH BULLYING

Incidents of bullying are responded to by using the consequences and responses stated in the school's behaviour plan, which includes a bullying and cyber bullying policy.

Mediation sessions may be used where appropriate to deal with bullying behaviour. Behavioural expectations at the school are high and disciplinary sanctions will be applied if students do not respond to formal warnings to improve their behaviour. This reflects the seriousness of bullying behaviour and gives a strong message that it is not acceptable at the school. All students and parents at School E are aware that incidents involving physical violence automatically result in very severe consequences. This message is delivered constantly at year level assemblies, newsletter articles, home visits, induction of new students and re-entry procedures after suspension.

RESTORATIVE PRACTICES APPROACH

School F – Restorative Practices Framework

School F caters for approximately 1200 students from Year 5 through to Year 12 and is organised into three sections: Junior (Years 5-6), Middle (Years 7-9) and Senior School (Years 10-12).

DEFINITION OF BULLYING

Bullying is defined in the School F *Anti-Bullying Policy as: usually a repeated attack on, or harassment of, another person or group of people*. It is acknowledged in this Policy that bullying can occur unintentionally, if individuals are insensitive to the feelings of others. In this way, this definition gives priority to the lived experience of the target primarily, rather than the intention of the student who does the bullying. Types of bullying defined in the policy include physical, verbal, electronic, social and emotional. School F's Anti-Bullying Policy was revised in 2007 with input from students and staff in a process which involved both groups in the study of the literature around the issue.

HOW PROGRAMS WERE SELECTED

Since 2004, School F has been implementing a Restorative Practices framework to underpin its approach to pastoral care and discipline, student development, and Social-Emotional Learning programs. This approach was chosen because it offered explicit detail of practice, enabled study and reflection on the strategies employed, and its philosophical base was congruent with, and supportive of, School F's particular values. Implementation is supported by a continuous, ongoing process of staff professional development.

The Restorative Practices model focuses on building and developing positive, healthy relationships between students, and between students and adults in the school community. Attention to the personal and social development of individual students and their connectedness to each other and to their school are key parts of this approach. In each of the three sections in the school, an age-appropriate approach is taken to the development of these relationships and the personal development of students.

In the Junior School, much of the work in social-emotional development is based around the regular, scheduled use of Circle Time[2] within each class. Through this regular experience of discussing feelings and emotions, the students develop an emotional literacy that serves them well in times of stress. They are better able to communicate with one another and with adults about things that are important to them or that concern them. The familiarity of the students with the Circle Time format also enables it to be used as a means of addressing conflicts or wrongdoing within the class group, should the need arise.

A similar personal development focus continues into the Middle School years through a coordinated weekly program which addresses a range of topics including bullying and aggression, but also dealing with emotions such as shame and anger. This regular program is supported by other activities within the school such as camps and personal development activity days, some of which are integrated within the formal curriculum. In the classroom, major units of study in both of the main intake Year levels (Year 5 and Year 8) introduce students to the philosophy and practice of the pastoral care approach. In the Year 8

[2] **Circle time** - circle time aims to create a space for students to communicate through discussion, reflection, emotional understanding, personal empowerment, personal identity and making connections. Students explore relationships, feelings, reflections and emotions

humanities program, a unit focuses specifically upon conflict, violence and bullying, and building resilience in students.

Reflection days, camps, and other specific activities in the Senior School employ a more mature approach to addressing similar topics in the context of the students' later stage of adolescence.

These proactive, positive approaches to building relationships and to the personal development of students have improved student culture in significant ways. Things still do go wrong, however, but when they do, a restorative approach focuses first on understanding and repairing the harm that has been done to people and relationships. Through restorative processes, the student 'wrongdoer' is challenged and enabled to be accountable for these consequences of his wrongdoing.

PROCESSES FOR DEALING WITH BULLYING

The *Restorative Practices* approach is of particular relevance to bullying because of its relationship focus. In a restorative approach to a bullying incident, the student who has bullied is challenged by the Year Level Coordinator or Head of School to understand and appreciate the level and depth of the harm caused to the other student, and is held accountable for the real consequences of the behaviour by being called to face the 'target' student and that student's parents or other supporters. Through a carefully controlled and safe process (a Community Conference), the 'offender' and the 'target' students and their respective communities of care (usually their parents) come together to explore the harm that has been done and to determine how it might be repaired. Through the conference process, the 'target' of the bullying is given a real voice in determining what needs to be done to feel safe again, with the support of the other members of the community. The conference is also a vehicle through which the student who has been bullying comes to an appreciation of the pain and hurt caused to others through the bullying behaviour, including the student's own parents or supporters.

The Community Conferences can be life-changing experiences for all involved. They are certainly intense experiences. Less significant cases of bullying (as determined through the eyes of the 'target') may be handled with a scaled-down version of the full conference. Such a mini-conference could be facilitated by a specially-trained member of staff, such as a Year Level Coordinator, and would involve the 'offender' and 'target' and one or two student supporters for each. This approach, and the process used to facilitate such meetings, minimises any chance of the 'target' being re-victimised either by the process, or as a result of the response on the part of the school. Participants report that such restorative practices are respectful of each of the persons involved, while sending clear disapproving messages of the particular behaviour which the community is directly and forcefully confronting. In almost all cases, the bullying stops.

Since the introduction of the *Restorative Practices* approach within School F, and the subsequent reduced reliance on punitive responses, the culture of the student body has moved from an "us and them" mentality towards a greater appreciation of the role of staff in supporting the growth and development of students across the school. This has led to a reduced reluctance on the part of bullying 'targets' to see reporting bullying as "dobbing" someone in.

In the Middle School in particular, a regular survey instrument is employed to explore students' experiences of conflict and bullying within the school, and serves to identify students with whom specific interventions are made by members of the pastoral care team.

To monitor and evaluate the approach, in 2007 School F engaged with a local university to conduct a joint longitudinal study of students' psycho-social wellbeing (among other measures). This survey instrument was administered in 2007, and again in 2009, involving almost the entire student population in each phase of the study. This research is proving invaluable in developing understanding of the students' needs across a range of psychological and social areas, as well as in modifying the approach as needed.

CHALLENGES

Because the *Restorative Practices* approach runs counter to the dominant media culture to which the students are exposed, there is a constant need to reinforce the schools messages and to keep true to its values and philosophy. This occurs through the Personal Development program, and through curricular units focussing on various aspects of Restorative Practice.

The increasing potential for cyber bullying is also a challenge for those in education who are not digital natives to understand and to effectively respond. The upside in dealing with the use of the internet and mobile phones for bullying by young people is that these forms of communication usually leave a trail of evidence with which the offender can be confronted.

School G – Restorative Conversations

School G caters for students from Kindergarten to Year 12. It consists of three schools, Junior School (K-Yr 6), Middle School (Yr 7-9) and the Senior School (Yr 10-12), and has a current enrolment of approximately 820 students.

DEFINITION OF BULLYING

Rather than focusing on the term 'bullying', School G focuses on the development and maintenance of healthy and meaningful relationships among its members. When relationships break down, irrespective of the reasons, the school seeks first to resolve issues in a restorative way. This in no way diminishes the school's intolerance of bullying behaviours. Ultimately, bullying is about inappropriate relationship skills and the school sees an educative responsibility towards teaching students the ways in which respectful relationships can be and need to be conducted.

THE SCHOOL'S APPROACH

School G boasts a strong pastoral care system which provides a firm basis and network of support to all students. The school's curriculum and values are interwoven throughout this pastoral approach, thus strengthening support provided to all students and affording many opportunities to explore issues with students.

In order to develop an effective and relevant program which minimises tolerance of bullying behaviours and highlights positive behaviours, a group of students from the Junior, Middle and Senior Schools were engaged in a think-tank to explore social and relationship issues in the preparation stage of this project. Arising from the think-tank, students from School G along with senior staff developed a school-wide program which seeks to heighten awareness of others before self as an underpinning value across the school community. This project has unfolded in the form of: assembly presentations which incorporate anti-bullying films and YouTube clips; guest presenters; senior student friendship advocates; posters; and boxes which allow students to anonymously identify positive and negative behaviour amongst students.

Further to this, a middle-school-based group was established in 2008 to explore and educate fellow students about the risks and positive aspects of internet use. This group has its foundations in a similar organisation established in America entitled *Teen Angels.*

School G also endeavours to involve the parent body in this education process, via publications and invitations to presentations by guest speakers. The school acknowledges the fundamental importance of a partnership between school and home.

PROCESSES FOR DEALING WITH BULLYING

With education as the primary means of managing the issue of bullying, School G engages in a restorative process when relationships break down. Ultimately this process requires the support of all parties and more traditional methods of discipline are used when the student/s doing the bullying is/are not remorseful for their actions. The school believes that empathy and compassion are traits which can be strengthened, developed and learned and a restorative response allows this to occur. Senior staff and many teachers have been trained in the processes of restorative practices, under the tuition of expert in the field, Margaret Thorsborne. This training is ongoing, and several staff undertake this professional learning annually. The success of such an approach relies on the expertise and wide-spread understanding of staff, parents and students. The language of restoration, respect and

responsibility is part of classroom language and is used in everyday interaction with students at School G.

CHALLENGES

School G considers that models of punishment-based discipline rarely deal with the heart of inappropriate, bullying behaviours. Nonetheless, society tends to expect a heavy-handed response to such breaches of conduct. Being required to face other students whom they have bullied in a structured, supportive environment where consequences are discussed, agreed upon and reparation is made in a genuine empathic way is not a soft option. They are approaches which allow for genuine growth, change and healing. The central challenge for School G is the development of a sustained broad community understanding and valuing of a restorative approach to relationship breakdown. Importantly, education needs to be broad-based and ongoing, and involve parents, students and teachers. The effectiveness of the approaches used also need to be monitored and evaluated regularly.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL APPROACHES

School H – The Strength of Relationships

School H caters for 1256 students from Years 5 to 12.

DEFINITION OF BULLYING

School H defines bullying as: *usually a repeated attack on, or harassment of, another person or group of people. It could be physical, verbal or psychological. Bullying can occur unintentionally—if we are insensitive to the feelings and safety of others*.

Bullying can be…….

***Physical bullying**, such as kicking, punching, pushing, shoving, spitting, fighting, damaging or destroying other people's property, jostling, pinching, touching, or physical intimidation.*

***Verbal bullying**, such as offensive or abusive comments, sarcasm, crude jokes and comments, ridiculing appearance, actions or beliefs, teasing or putting other people down (sledging and pay outs), verbal intimidation, whistling.*

***Electronic bullying**, such as obscene or threatening phone calls, texting and emails or internet posting about people.*

***Social bullying**, such as exclusion (rejection from groups), spreading rumours, gossip, racial or sexual comments, graffiti or notes about others.*

***Emotional bullying**, such as victimisation, instilling fear in others, extortion (forcing other students to hand over money, food or other possessions), forcing other students to do their work.*

STUDENT FORMATION PLANS

Responses to bullying at School H are embedded in the school's approach to student formation implemented through the organisational structures, supervision and interaction with students, pastoral care structures, extensive outdoor education programs, school activities, assemblies and the student formation curriculum. The *Student Formation Plan* is a fully articulated plan of personal development for students that aims to develop young people who are flexible in a changing world and fully prepared to make a difference in that world.

The *Student Formation Plan* articulates responsibilities and strategies to achieve the following goals (the extracts are in italics below and have been amended for reproduction):

- *Develop students according to the values and ethos of the school.*
- *Develop personal relationships based on trust and mutual respect between staff and students in order that staff will have a positive influence in the lives of students.*
- *Develop a sense of ownership, belonging to and pride in School H life, traditions and physical environment.*
- *Provide a physical and emotional environment where students and their property are respected and safe.*
- *Develop understanding and valuing of difference in race, culture, gender and class. This will involve the building of respect and knowledge of racial and cultural diversity, women and their treatment, multiple masculinities and its expressions, etc*
- *Have fun.*

ANTI-BULLYING STRATEGY

School H gives explicit messages to its whole school community about its response to bullying behaviour. All members of the school community are provided with a copy of the *Anti-Bullying Strategy* which is sent home at the beginning of the year with a letter from the school principal. The following text in italics is an extract from the School H *Anti-Bullying Strategy.*

How can you help someone who is being bullied?

- *If you know of bullying, report it.*
- *Show the person bullying that you and your friends strongly disapprove of his actions*
- *The person being bullied may be too scared or upset to tell anyone. Remember that NOBODY deserves to be bullied.*
- *Give support to students who are being bullied. Help them to report it.*

If you are bullied, don't retaliate verbally or physically. Report It.

- *Bullying will continue if those responsible think they can avoid being held accountable for their actions.*
- *Approach your House Dean, House Tutor, Counsellor or another adult with whom you feel comfortable.*
- *Try not to show that you are upset, try to look and sound confident. Don't give them the satisfaction of thinking that they have hit their target.*
- *Consider whether you have been bullying others yourself (e.g. have you been name calling, annoying, threatening, showing off?) If you have, change your behaviour.*
- *If the bully continues after reporting it, report it again and talk to your House Dean.*
- *Consider talking to the school Counsellor for help in developing skills, which can be useful in situations where you might be bullied.*

At School H, our community values require us to hold those who might bully others to be accountable for their actions so that they might learn more appropriate ways of relating to others, and to provide real support for those who have been affected.

What are we doing at School H to prevent bullying?

- *Responding appropriately to every report of bullying*
- *Surveys on the incidence of bullying*
- *Through the curriculum, examining aspects of bullying*
- *Inclusion of anti-bullying sessions in the school's Student Formation Curriculum*
- *Involvement of all staff*
- *Visual advertising around the school*
- *Encouraging positive peer group pressure*
- *Explanation of this policy during Student Formation Classes, Year Level Assemblies and publications to parents*
- *Encouraging peer support*
- *Teacher observation of students in and out of classes*

- *Ongoing professional development of staff*
- *Providing a supportive environment for students*
- *Counselling for those affected by bullying*

School I – Beating Bully Bulldozer Approach

School I is a small rural school with approximately 80 students.

DEFINITION OF BULLYING

The definition of bullying used in the school's behaviour plan was developed by staff and the parent association is: *Bullying is the deliberate, persistent, verbal or mental intimidation (including ignoring/excluding) or harassment of a person with the intent of causing hurt or discomfort.*

HOW PROGRAMS WERE SELECTED

The High Five bullying prevention program is used with Prep and Year 1 students and was chosen for its appropriateness for very young students.

Beating Bully Bulldozer is a program used by the school for all year levels, but particularly Years 2-7, to address the issues and behaviours associated with bullying.

The Beating Bully Bulldozer (BBB) program appealed because of the common sense approach and engaging characters. The information relating to 'what isn't bullying' was considered very useful. The school uses a series of videos across all Year levels called *Sooper Pup*py and BBB supports these videos well. *Sooper Puppy* addresses many social issues and behaviours, such as name calling. The students relate very well to the cartoon characters.

Monday afternoon and Friday afternoon are set aside every week for every class to reinforce the messages and skills in BBB and to view the *Sooper Puppy* videos as a class group. These groups are sometimes held at lunch time, when necessary, to reinforce particular behaviours with specific groups or individuals.

Mentoring is also employed as a strategy to support the development of positive behaviours. A group of students who exhibited challenging behaviour developed a cancer relay team raising more that $2000 for cancer research, after working on goal setting and developing a group focus.

Focussed structured lunchtime activities are organised by students for every lunch time of the school week (including chess and other board games, as well as team sports e.g. soccer and netball). This reduces bullying behaviour.

PROCESSES TO DEAL WITH BULLYING

The parents are contacted as soon as possible. Students are required to write their account (where appropriate) of the situation as a class activity. Written accounts often identify areas of concern in an efficient manner.

As a consequence for their bullying behaviour, students are required to write an apology or do something that demonstrates an improvement to themselves or the school community. For example a student may complete a *Time to Think About* sheet under the headings: What I did; What rule I broke; My side of the story; and What I can do next time. Other students commit to organising an activity for the school community, for example, setting up an obstacle course for the Prep students.

CHALLENGES

Applying the strategies employed by School I in the transition to a large high school may be a challenge for some students, and equipping these students to deal with bullying and the social challenges of large school environments is essential.

School J – Focus on Prevention

School J caters for approximately 450 students from Prep to Year 12.

DEFINITION OF BULLYING

School J defines bullying as: *The deliberate, persistent, verbal or mental intimidation or harassment of a person by another person or group with the intent of causing hurt or discomfort.*

As outlined in the Parent Handbook, the School J Position Statement is:

- *School J is totally opposed to bullying in all its forms: physical, psychological and verbal (written and spoken).*
- *School J believes prevention through whole school involvement and awareness is the most effective way to combat bullying.*
- *The school community aims to create an environment of understanding and cooperation in which the victims of bullying will feel empowered to seek help and, by collaboration with staff and others, confront the influence of the bully.*
- *The attitude and response of the school community will help bullies realise their behaviour is anti-social and damaging to themselves. The bully will recognise the need to be guided towards more appropriate interpersonal skills.*

HOW PROGRAMS WERE SELECTED

The school has focused on prevention to develop the following three anti-bulling initiatives:

- *Is It True? Is It Kind? Is it Necessary?* Program, which teaches students to ask these questions before they speak or act.
- The *MIRROR* approach which allows the students to take pride in the person they see in the mirror.
- A buddy culture under which all students see themselves as equals and senior students mentor younger students.

These programs are unique to School J's curriculum and have had great success in preventing bullying, rather than reacting to it after the event. All three programs help students develop positive social skills and form good relationships with others.

Under the *Is It True? Is It Kind? Is it Necessary?* Program, students are encouraged to consider how their words or actions may affect others. Self control and thinking before speaking and acting are challenges that many adolescents face. During the pastoral time in Years 7 to 9, teachers focus on these questions; intensely in Term 1, and then regularly throughout the year. Role plays are especially powerful in encouraging the students to reflect on real-life situations and how they can be better managed. Subject teachers across the middle and senior schools then use these questions to engage students in reflective practice and remind them of the importance of self-discipline when choosing a response. The questions are prominent in all classrooms and have a strong influence on the culture of discussion and mutual respect in these precincts of the school. This program is compulsory and helps students to make good choices when it comes to their communication, not only with each other but with the wider community.

The *MIRROR* approach is incorporated into everything the students do at School J. MIRROR stands for Merciful, Independent, Resourceful, Respectful, Open-minded and Resilient. From Prep, students are exposed to these six terms and are encouraged to reflect every attribute of MIRROR in their daily lives in order to relate successfully and respectfully with others. Students are supported to commit these terms to memory and be able to explain them in an age-appropriate manner. Positive demonstrations of these attributes are recognised and accrue towards a reward for the students, from a special mirror ball key ring for the primary students to an afternoon at the waterfront for students in the higher years. Posters reinforcing these attributes are displayed around the campus and showcase the students demonstrating these attributes. The chaplain and school student leaders regularly refer to the attributes at school community gatherings and through the newsletter.

School J has also implemented a buddy culture which encourages all students to see themselves as equals in the school. Older students are assigned to read with a younger student on a weekly basis and during sports carnivals, the older students provide a 'safety net' by running or swimming alongside their young buddies. The buddy system fosters a culture of extended family within the school, where the older students automatically know to look out for the wellbeing of the younger students.

PROCESSES FOR DEALING WITH BULLYING

While the focus of the school is on prevention, School J takes a zero tolerance approach to bullying. This starts at the pre-entry interview stage and is formally reinforced during assemblies and class.

All staff are vigilant in recognising and addressing any negative interactions. Dealing with bullying at School J is about rehabilitative practices and mediation rather than a punishment-based approach. Each instance of bullying at the school is evaluated individually and a range of consequences incremental to the level of emotional and/or physical harm is used.

The most important factor in dealing with a bullying incident at School J is ensuring relationships are restored between the student who has been bullied and the student who has done the bullying. Rather than just a cursory handshake or apology, mediation between the parties involved is compulsory. Students receive one-on-one counselling from classroom teachers, the assistant principal or chaplain to contemplate how they felt and what could have been done differently and they then talk with the other person involved. Staff are supported with pocket guides of restorative questions and students are followed up with later to ensure that the process has made a positive difference.

Parental input and understanding of School J's preventative anti-bullying initiatives is also of particular importance to the school. There is an open door policy and parents are encouraged to speak to the principal, assistant principal or chaplain about their bullying concerns.

School K – Social Emotional Programs

School K is a P-12 school, with just under 1200 students enrolled in four precincts: Early Years: P-2, Junior Years: 3-5, Middle Years: 6-9 and Senior Years: 10-12.

DEFINITION OF BULLYING

School K defines bullying as: *when a person is exposed repeatedly and over time to acts of aggression – physical, verbal, cyber, indirect/psychological – with the intent to cause embarrassment, pain or discomfort to another. Bullying usually involves abuse of power by an individual or group.*

HOW PROGRAMS WERE SELECTED

You Can Do It, MindMatters and KidsMatter are proactive programs which the school has adopted to cater for the social and emotional needs of students.

Cyber bullying has been an increasing area of concern, particularly in the Middle Years precinct. In order to address cyber bullying, School K has implemented a number of initiatives including:

- Guest speaker, Greg Gebhart (ACMA) addressed student, staff and parents
- Cyber Safety Leaders were selected from the student body to help spread positive cyber safety messages throughout the school
- Staff professional learning (including the Cyberia program – a major professional development initiative of the Australian Government Quality Teacher Program which invited participants to develop strategies to foster cyber-safety in their school)
- Cyber safety programs integrated into the curriculum (e.g. Middle Years Media Studies)
- The Cyber Taskforce, comprising of six staff, compiled age-appropriate cyber safety programs/resources for students in Years 3-12. These programs were taught across all year levels in 2009
- Creation and launch in 2009 of the *Consequences for Cyber Offences* document to enable cyber offences to be dealt with in a fair and consistent manner across the school. This document was promoted amongst staff, students and parents and was also previewed by our Adopt-A-Cop before its launch.
- Continued cyber safety education for students, particularly with the roll out of a 1:1 laptop program in 2010 for students in Years 8-10.

PROCESSES FOR DEALING WITH BULLYING

School K's *Anti-Bullying Policy* is currently being reviewed and the *Consequences for Cyber Offences* document is accessed throughout the school.

CHALLENGES

School K has identified a challenge in responding appropriately to cyber bullying incidents which happen at home and/or outside school hours. Frequently these issues have repercussions at school which require a response. The school is aware of its boundaries, limitations and lack of control beyond the school gate, but wants to provide students with support and strategies when operating in the digital world. Responding to complaints of 'bullying' when there are no witnesses or evidence has been identified as another challenge.

School L – Friendly Schools and Families

School L is a primary school catering for 374 students from Prep to Year 7.

DEFINITION OF BULLYING

School L has an anti-bullying policy in its Safety Policy on the school's website. The policy, including a definition of bullying, was adapted from the Friendly Schools and Families whole-school pack. *Bullying:*

- *Is a repeated and unjustifiable behaviour*
- *Intended to cause fear, distress and/or harm to another*
- *May be physical, verbal or indirect/relational*
- *Conducted by a more powerful individual or group*
- *Against a less powerful individual who is unable to effectively resist*

HOW PROGRAMS WERE SELECTED

School L has the *Friendly Schools and Families* whole-school pack, which consists of a classroom pack with posters and five manuals from Level 1 suitable for Prep and Year 1, up to Level 5 suitable for Year 7 students. There are also resources for whole school planning e.g., considering environmental modifications such as supervision, play space and activities to promote safe lunch-breaks. The pack includes a CD-ROM with PowerPoint slides that can be presented to parents and staff, and assembly items. A booklet called Friendly Families is also available to give to parents. The program does not directly deal with cyber bullying but it mentions the teasing, threatening, excluding, lies and rumours types of bullying which can be discussed in the cyber bullying context.

Some of the advantages of the program are that it is evidence-based and uses current theory and practice in its approach. The program doesn't require expensive training for the teachers to be able to use it. Worksheets for lessons can be photocopied from the manuals. It is based on the National Safe Schools Framework and provides portfolio assessment options if the school wants to use them. The program has a unit on bullying, a unit on self-concept, and a unit on friendship skills and peer groups depending on the age level.

The guidance counsellor runs part of the program with the class teachers in Year 2 each year and the parent booklet is sent home to Year 2 families. A parent evening is conducted before the program commences, as parents often express concerns but may not have a lot of information about bullying. Year 2 was selected because that is when the word 'bullying' is more often heard than in the younger classes. Some of the units are also run in selected older classes as an intervention for social problems as they come up. The Year 7 teacher does some work around cyber bullying in Term 4, and last year a Year 3 teacher did some of the Bounce Back modules with her class.

In addition, each year students in Year 1 participate in *Fun Friends* and students in Year 5 participate in *FRIENDS for* Life, which are designed to increase children's resilience and coping skills for dealing with difficult situations. The programs use a cognitive-behavioural approach which focuses on managing feelings, positive thinking and problem solving.

PROCESSES FOR DEALING WITH BULLYING

The main proactive strategies are School L's anti-bullying policy, the universal classroom programs and specific teaching and learning. Processes for dealing with bullying incidents are outlined in the *Safety Policy* document as shown in the extract in italics below:

Action

- *Protect the bullied student from further harm*
- *Write down the name/s of the bullied student, who reported the incident and the bystander/s*
- *Interview the bullied student to find out what happened*
- *Suggest strategies that the bullied student might use to avoid being bullied in the future*
- *Individually interview bystander/s using the Shared Concern Approach; discuss strategies these students might use to avoid bullying in the future*
- *Monitor the situation over the following few days*
- *Notify the principal of the incident*
- *Where necessary, speak to class without using any names, Circle Time[3], small group meetings, class meeting box*
- *Where appropriate and using discretion, work with parents of the bullied student to assist their child to avoid being bullied in the future; keep them informed about progress and the measures taken*
- *If necessary, where appropriate and using discretion, inform the parents of the student bullying and work with them to establish joint strategies for behaviour modification.*

Record Keeping

All complaints that cannot be resolved will be recorded by the staff member handling the complaint and kept on the relevant file/s. Details should include:

- *The nature of the complaint*
- *Dates and names of parties concerned*
- *Staff members involved in handling the complaint*
- *Action taken and outcomes.*

Sometimes the guidance counsellor will individually support children involved in bullying.

CHALLENGES

Cyber bullying has been an issue in upper primary school. School L has addressed the issue with the students concerned, but acknowledge it is a difficult area as the school has limited control over internet and mobile phone use outside school hours. Bullying can be an emotive area for parents and requires careful management.

[3] **Circle time** - circle time aims to create a space for students to communicate through discussion, reflection, emotional understanding, personal empowerment, personal identity and making connections. Students explore relationships, feelings, reflections and emotions.

Working Together

Understanding student violence in schools

Current 16 September 2010

An initiative of the Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence

Queensland Government

On 23 February 2010 the Premier announced the formation of the *Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence* (the Alliance) to provide advice on best practice measures to address bullying and violence in Queensland schools to the Minister for Education and Training, the Honourable Geoff Wilson MP.

The Alliance is independently chaired by Professor Ian O'Connor (Griffith University) and includes representatives from:

- Education Queensland
- Queensland Catholic Education Commission
- Independent Schools Queensland
- Queensland Council for Parents and Citizens Association
- Federation of Parents and Friends Associations of Catholic Schools
- Queensland Independent Schools Parents Council
- Queensland Teachers Union
- Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union
- Queensland Independent Education Union
- Catholic sector principals
- State sector principals
- Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia (Queensland)
- Indigenous education representative
- Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian.

In September 2010, the Alliance endorsed the release of *Working Together: Understanding student violence in schools*.

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Introduction

The Queensland Government has been working hard to address the complex issues of bullying, cyber bullying and violence in schools. All members of the school community working together are critical for success.

Working Together: understanding student violence in schools provides information to assist schools to understand the complexity of violence as well as the latest thinking about best practice in managing violence between students in schools. It focuses on long-term responses to preventing student violence in schools. Dealing with individual violent incidents will not be discussed.

Overview

The booklet proposes a shared definition of student violence. It explores some myths and facts about student violence, and highlights numerous issues in how youth violence is reported and researched. The booklet then looks what is known about students who have been violent, and the importance of schools' influence on student violence. It concludes with a brief overview of research on what does and doesn't work in preventing student violence. The key message throughout is that sustainable and effective approaches to preventing student violence focus on the school culture.

The toolkit is part of a suite of resources developed by the *Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence* (the Alliance). The role of the Alliance is to provide the Queensland Government with independent advice on strategies to address issues of bullying and violence in all state and non-state schools throughout Queensland. One specific task of the Alliance is to identify evidence-based best practice across Queensland education sectors, nationally and internationally, which may be implemented in Queensland schools.

A key achievement of the Alliance has been the development of an effective framework which is based on national and international best practice to assist schools to take action against bullying *Working Together*: *A toolkit for effective school based action against bullying* is available at http://education.qld.gov.au/studentservices/behaviour/qsaav/index.html Some anti-bullying resources referred to in the *Toolkit* may also be relevant for dealing with student violence in schools.

Defining youth violence and student violence

According to the Report of the National Inquiry into the Impact of Violence on Young Australians, *Avoid the Harm – Stay Calm*, there is no commonly-used definition of *youth violence* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2010).

Youth violence usually refers to interpersonal violence of people between the ages of 10 and 24. Some definitions of youth violence include any violence committed against young people as well as that committed by young people.

Interpersonal violence is defined by Dahlberg and Krug (2002) as:

> *The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against another person or against a group or community that results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation.*

This definition links the intention with committing the act, regardless of the outcome. There may be a considerable disparity between intended behaviour and intended consequence. It also includes all acts of violence whether public or private, reactive or proactive, or criminal or non-criminal.

This booklet will consider only interpersonal violence perpetrated by young people against young people at school, i.e. violence *between* students. While the focus is on student violence in schools, information pertaining to youth violence more generally will be referred to occasionally.

Research studies involving self-reporting by students indicated high levels of physical violence are common in schools, with a sharp decrease after Year 9. High levels of assault have been found in other studies of school violence, both in Australia and overseas (Grunseit, Weatherburn & Donnelly, 2005). The types of violence students reported over the previous 12 months at school included:

- throwing items
- pushing
- grabbing
- kicking
- biting
- hitting with fists
- using a sharp instrument
- hitting with an object
- pulling hair.

Most authorities agree that schools are by and large safe environments and shape young people's positive development (Mazerolle, 2010b). However, practically all schools will experience violent incidents at different times. Minor forms of violence are common across all schools and sectors, while extreme violence is rare (Mazerolle, 2010b). The fact that minor violent incidents may be common among school students is concerning (Gottfredson, 2001). Student violence or threat of violence can undermine the educational process (Grunseit et al, 2005). Defiant, disruptive and violent behaviours decrease the effectiveness and relevance of teaching and learning for everyone involved (Sugai & Horner, 2001).

Avoid the Harm – Stay Calm (Commonwealth of Australia, 2010) suggested it was important to distinguish youth violence from both bullying and other antisocial behaviours, because of possibly differing causes, impacts and appropriate responses. This differentiation is also relevant to understanding student violence.

Bullying is a type of aggressive behaviour; however it should not be equated with aggression or violence. Rigby (2010) defines bullying in the following way:

"Bullying is a systematic and repeated abuse of power. In general bullying may be defined as:

- *dominating or hurting someone*
- *unfair action by the perpetrator(s) and an imbalance of power*
- *a lack of adequate defence by the target and feelings of oppression and humiliation."*

Not all student violence involves bullying, and not all bullying involves violence (Farrington & Ttofi, 2010). Bullying includes physical aggression, damaging another's belongings, verbal insults and abuse, social exclusion, lying or spreading rumours about another person, stalking or harassing someone, and sending insulting or degrading messages by phone or social networking sites. Some components of programs designed to reduce bullying may also reduce student violence, and *vice versa*. The school context and the individuals involved will determine the appropriateness of such programs (Farrington & Ttofi, 2010).

Antisocial behaviour includes a wide range of aggressive, intimidating and destructive behaviours. These behaviours range from non-criminal activities such as swearing, noisy behaviour and binge drinking to criminal behaviours such as the use and/or sale of illicit drugs, property damage and theft (Williams, Toumbourou, Williamson, Hemphill & Patton, 2009). It is thus a wider concept than violence.

Some myths and facts about student violence

Measuring actual levels of student violence in schools is problematic. In the absence of precise data and clarity about the scale and nature of the youth violence, myths and misperceptions can take a disproportionate role in shaping views and responses.

The topic of youth violence engenders strong emotions, including fear, which can affect determining its actual prevalence and impact. Negative perceptions by adults can bias interpretations of young people's behaviour (Commonwealth of Australia, 2010). The issue of student violence is highly visible in the media, and is surrounded by myths that, if believed, cause some people to think no problem exists at all, and others to adopt ineffective policies and programs to combat it (SAMHSA, 2002).

The facts about prevalence, impact and the best ways to manage youth violence in general are clouded by myths and misperceptions, which can make it difficult for schools to determine the best way to respond to student violence at school.

Myth or fact?	**You have to consider …**
Student violence in schools is a major problem	There are no national data available in Australia that could be used to reliably gauge the prevalence of or trends in student violence (Grunseit et al, 2005). Data gathering for 'youth violence' spans the ages of 12 to 25 year olds, thus does not apply specifically to students; nor does it separate the physical violence between young people from that perpetrated by adults on young people, or violence perpetrated at school from that in a range of contexts outside of school (including e.g. assaults on young people at home). Individual jurisdictions' data indicating an upward trend in youth violence generally could indicate more violent behaviour or a greater willingness on the part of young people or school authorities to report violent incidents.
There is too much emphasis in defining and measuring student violence; we need action!	To respond effectively to the issue of student violence, clarity is needed around what behaviour is included and what is excluded in a definition, so the incidence and trends over time can be monitored and compared across jurisdictions. Currently the lack of a single clear definition means the true picture is not clear. A clear and consistent definition is also important to understanding the contributing factors, the nature and complexity of youth violence generally, to assess the effectiveness of programs and initiatives designed to prevent youth violence, to consider both short-and long-term approaches, as well as to determine what is required, both financial and non-financial, to respond effectively over the long-term (Commonwealth of Australia, 2010; Dahlberg & Krug, 2002). Simplistic responses, without a full understanding of the complexities, are unlikely to improve the situation (ARACY, 2010).

Myth or fact?	You have to consider …
Kids these days are out of control and have no values	Consulting with young people reveals their violent behaviour did not stem from a lack of values but rather was grounded in a well developed set of values that holds such behaviour as a justifiable, commonsense way to achieve certain goals (Lockwood, 1997). Almost without exception, the young people in a survey conducted by Grunseit et al (2005) survey felt their violence was justified either because of ongoing provocation, or because the other person hit them first. This leads to an understanding of school fighting and violence as behaviour that has a social significance and a social impact that has very real consequences for the daily life of young people in the school environment. Hemmings (2002) considered fighting to be an adaptive behaviour, i.e. violence was one means by which students could gain or lose social status within these realms. The school context itself can also shape the degree to which violence is taken up to achieve status.
Stories of youth violence are always in the media, it must be happening a lot.	Individuals' assessment of risk is directly related to the source of news, with talkback radio and commercial television news leading to the least accurate perceptions of real risk (Indermaur & Roberts, 2009). This applies to perceptions of student violence. While there may be real issues, the media may also contribute to negative images of young people by selective reporting. For example, *Today Tonight* on 14 June 2010 reported on 'youth' violence 'out of control' on the Gold Coast. In fact, the incidents did not involve youth at all, and even though there was violence occurring, it was being perpetrated by adults as part of an ongoing neighbourhood dispute (ABC 1, *Media Watch*, 19 July 2010). Thus the reports of youth violence in the media cannot be considered to be a reliable indicator of prevalence. Research reported to the National Inquiry into the Impact of Violence on Young Australians suggested that media reporting may in some cases increase anti-social behaviour, with some groups 'enjoying' the associated notoriety (ARACY, 2009)
Student violence is random and unpredictable and therefore we should be afraid	Grunseit et al (2005) found that with few exceptions, students reported fights occurred after a prolonged history of conflict. The tension typically extended over weeks, months, and sometimes year. The initial falling out was often sparked by an identifiable event. Depending on the type of relationship they had with their opponent, students' conflicts had their genesis in such things as perceived betrayals, teasing, minor disagreements, and what could only be described as social clumsiness.

Myth or fact?	You have to consider …
Alcohol causes youth violence	It is important to appreciate the role of alcohol in youth violence is complex. Consumption of alcohol and other drugs is not itself a **cause** of violence, but rather a facilitator or catalyst (Commonwealth of Australia, 2010). While increasing alcohol consumption by young people itself is concerning for its health implications, it is important to understand the real nature of this issue in order to address it. Research on alcohol consumption and violence in students younger than 15 years of age found very high variation across the 30 communities in their survey, and concluded that other factors in the community were likely to influence the level of violence (Williams & Toumbourou et al, 2009). Interventions thus need to identify and target these other factors to make positive differences. (See page 13).
Students just don't want to tell the school staff about violent incidents.	Only half of the students interviewed by Grunseit et al (2005) reported seeking outside help of any kind before the violence occurred, and only one third approached the school despite the many avenues available to do so. Reasons help was not sought from the school included: fear that informing the school would escalate the tension; a lack of faith that it would change the situation; a belief that previous appeals for help had been unsatisfactory; and failure to consider the option of telling the school. Since fear of repercussion or inflaming the situation is a reason some students do not report violence to school staff, ways to address this must be found.
Risk factors tell us which students will end up being violent	A 'risk factor' is a concept from biological or physical science and should be used with extreme caution in behaviour. In fact, what are often called 'risk factors' are merely those features of subjects that researchers have looked for. The idea that particular 'risk factors' **cause** humans to behave in a certain way ignores choice in decision-making and the importance of modelling. Not every young person, even those with many so-called 'risk factors', exhibit violent behaviour (SAMHSA, 2002). The danger with the concept of risk factors is that many identified by research may only serve to stigmatise certain groups of people and reinforce wider negative cultural biases about young people (Watts, 2010). The other danger is that focusing on so-called risk factors may lead to inappropriate responses to youth violence.
Violent behaviour results from certain student characteristics, such as learning difficulties.	Research about how strongly two behaviours or factors correlate (co-occur) does NOT provide evidence that one **causes** the other. This is a very common misperception about research (Gottfredson, 2010). For example, some research suggests that a student's learning problems lead to violent behaviour. However, the causal relationship may equally run the other way. Antisocial behaviour, for example, may make it harder to teach students and result in less then optimal learning. It may also lead to negative teacher-pupil interactions and allow less time for instructional interactions, thereby further compromising academic success (Grunseit et al, 2005).

Myth or fact?	You have to consider …
Watching violent media is linked to violent behaviour	Although debated for an extended time, the most recent thorough review of research on media violence concluded there was unequivocal evidence that media violence increases the likelihood of aggressive and violence behaviour in both immediate and long term contexts (Escobar-Chaves & Anderson, 2008). The evidence strongly suggests that exposure to violent video games increases aggressive behaviour, aggressive cognition, and aggressive affect, as well as decreased empathy and prosocial behaviour (Anderson et al, 2010).
Girls are becoming more violent	The perception of an increase in violence in girls is a matter of unresolved controversy. While there is an increase in reported offending amongst young girls (e.g. in the NSW Children's Court, the proportion of girls appearing for violent crimes increased from 14% in 1998 to 29% in 2007) is not clear if the data reflect real changes in girls' behaviour, or changes in processing of girls by the juvenile justice authorities (Bellis, Downing & Ashton 2006; Najman et al, 2009).
Fighting is just part of boys being boys.	Some aspects of pedagogy or opportunities for achievement may valorise dominating 'masculine' behaviours, including aggression. Masculinity might be demonstrated by being successful in sport or fighting. Mills (2001) believed schools may inadvertently perpetuate an aggressive or violent definition of masculinity through their marginalisation of human relations curricula, failure to prevent the harassment of boys choosing non-traditional subjects, and through practices that reinforce domineering behaviour or excused it. Behaviours such as fighting and aggression could only be reduced if boys were provided with viable alternative ways to define themselves as men.
Girls fighting is just unnatural	Adams (1999) reported that, in contrast to teachers viewing fighting by girls as immature, unfeminine and/or the result of growing up in a violent environment, the girls (13 to 15 years) considered fighting as a way to resist the dominant feminine standard of docility. For the girls, fighting was not related to immaturity or poor adjustment but, instead, their attempt to establish and preserve control over their lives.
Boot camps or other severe punishment is the only way to sort out violent students	Boot camps have not been found to be effective programs in reducing anti-social behaviour and violence (SAMSHA, 2002). They do make high rating TV programs though. Simplistic punitive-based responses to violence have not been found to work (ARACY, 2010). While inappropriate behaviour warrants consequences and a requirement for changed behaviour, punishment **alone** does not work. Instead, it tends to reinforce or send the behaviours underground. 'Get tough' approaches **alone** can result in the creation of more negative, adversarial and hostile school environments (ARACY, 2010; Sugai & Horner, 2001)

Why is there such hype around student violence in schools?

How can schools make sense of the conflicting information about student violence? On one hand, images of schools as frightening and violent places feature regularly in the media; while on the other hand, many academics and authorities insist 'schools are generally safe'.

Violence is a serious issue if it occurs; determining just how common it is, why it occurs and how to deal with it effectively are difficult for several reasons.

The prevailing 'culture of fear' that Zinn (2008) refers to can cloud understanding about student violence in schools. 'Fear culture' results from constant messages of risk/danger through media and entertainment, to grab the attention of consumers. The constant 'fear' messages provoke emotional responses which may not be commensurate with the degree of risk, tend to leave the impression there is an overwhelming problem around student violence, and fail to provide clear information to accurately assess exactly what is happening (Zinn, 2008).

The Youth Violence Taskforce report (2007) reported an increase of 2% by 15-19 year old perpetrators of assault over the period from 2005/06 to 2006/07. This stand in contrast to media coverage of isolated incidents which creates the impression that youth violence is on a dramatic rise. The report states that this perception is not accurate.

The nature of some media coverage of violence in schools adds to the perception that schools are inherently unsafe and all students are at risk (Paine & Sprague, 2000). For example, *School violence at highest ever levels* (Sunday Mail 13 Sept 2009) contained the words 'riddled with violence' giving the impression that extreme violence is widespread, whereas the incidents range from poking and pushing up to rare cases of assault. Some media reports about youth violence have actually been found to be fabrications (e.g. Media Watch 19 July 2010). The accuracy of perceptions about crime in general has been found to be strongly associated with the main sources of media used, with least accurate perceptions related to relying on talkback radio and commercial television (Indemaur & Roberts, 2009). Thus, humans' perceptions do not always align with the actual risk.

As the Queensland Commissioner for Children and Young People and Child Guardian (2010) has noted:

> *I like to remind people that over 90% of our young people have no contact with the justice system and serious juvenile offending is decreasing. In fact children are more likely to be victims than offenders; however they are often portrayed negatively in need of greater control.*

While school violence is a serious issue when it occurs, inflating the issue and engendering fear amongst parents, teachers and students can also have negative impacts.

Just as overstating risk can create problems, a response distorted by misinformation may mean some communities deny that certain violent behaviour is a problem. Violence maybe considered acceptable

or just a fact of life. Bullying and some types of violence have sometimes been viewed this way, yet have serious social consequences for victims and perpetrators alike (SAMSHA, 2002).

Commissioner for Children and Young People, Western Australia (2009, p2-3) cautioned:

> *While responding to this issue with due seriousness, it is also important to remember that the overwhelming majority of children and young people are not involved in violence either as victims or perpetrators. Overstating the risks can potentially lead to an increased risk for children and young people if they disengage from the community through fear of becoming victims or are further marginalised by the adult community through fear of them perpetrating violence.*

Schools need to cut through much of the hype surrounding youth violence in order to plan proactively and to respond effectively to youth violence in schools.

Characteristics of students who perpetrate violence in schools

Understanding why some children and young people are violent to others can suggest ways to intervene. Grunseit et al (2005) found that although schools clearly had a strong influence on violence, individual and family-related factors were also associated with violence perpetrated on school premises.

They found that children who had not learned how to control their impulses, who were poorly supervised or who had come from families were the discipline is punitive, were far more likely to assault another student at school than are students who did not experience these conditions. This was found regardless of the characteristics of the school that a student attends.

Impulsivity, as measured by affirmative responses to statements like “I generally do and say things quickly without stopping to think” has been found to be one of the most important correlates of early onset violent behaviour (Tremblay, Gervais & Petitclerc, 2008).

While some research points to the family make up as a contributing factor, Grunseit et al (2005) said other studies attest to the fact that the kind of parenting a child receives is more important than whether they grow up in a large or a sole parent family. Parental rejection, poor parental supervision, erratic or harsh discipline and/or exposure to high levels of parental conflict, for example, are all much stronger predictors of aggressive and antisocial behaviour than family size and type (Loeber & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1986). Grunseit et al (2005) pointed out the importance of families in violence prevention because of the disjunction between some parents’ attitudes to violence and the attitudes that schools are trying to inculcate.

A caution about research into ‘risk factors’ for student violence

Numerous studies provide profiles of characteristics of people who are more likely to be violent and label these as ‘risk factors’. In fact, this is a misleading use of the concept of ‘risk factors’. The concept of ‘risk factors’ comes from medical research and connotes a causal relationship; such causal relationships are valid when talking about biological or physical processes increasing the likelihood of an individual developing a disease or disorder (Gottfredson, 2001). For example, suggesting that obesity is a risk factor for developing cardio-vascular disease points to a cause and effect relationship between obesity and cardio-vascular disease.

However, in complex human behaviour, simple cause and effect relationships are not valid. The factors listed in profiles of those students who have been violent are just as likely to be the *results* of exposure to violence as the *causes* of violence (Gottfredson, 2001). For example, poverty may equally be a cause or a result of exposure to violence. Even more likely, poverty may be a result of a complex set of characteristics and circumstances that also leads to a higher likelihood to be violent. Choice, decision-making, motivations and modelling are all important in behaviour. The greatest danger of such lists of characteristics mislabelled as ‘risk factors’ is they may erroneously suggest responses which target the ‘risk factors’. Trying to change factors that do not actually cause violent behaviour is unlikely to have a positive outcome.

The issue of violent behaviour amongst young people should be taken in context. Gottredson (2001) points out that most young people report behaviour that is considered criminal or grossly inappropriate, such as stealing, fighting, underage drinking and underage sexual activity. In fact the relation of crime to age 'appears nearly universal' (Gottfredson, 2001, p5), and has been viewed as strongly linked to the developmentally-appropriate reduction in parental supervision and control.

Watts (2010) suggested that the profiles of anti-social characteristics known as 'risk factors' reflect the biases of those doing the research, and contribute to the alienation of youth. Given how limited such information is in informing responses, it is surprising how commonly it features in research and reports. Schools must attempt to see beyond the narrow profiling of students most likely to be violent.

Alcohol and youth violence: a growing problem

The role of alcohol in youth violence is complex. Alcohol not only makes some individuals feel invincible, but fosters an inflated sense of ego, as well as a higher likelihood to interpret slights to that inflated self-appraisal (Mazerolle, 2010b). It inhibits sound decision making.

Over the past five decades, the average age at which young people report having their first alcoholic drink has fallen from 19 to 15.5 years (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008). Williams et al (2009) reported that between Year 6 and Year 8 the proportion of students who had consumed alcohol increased from 39.4 to 57.4% for boys and from 22.9% to 48.2% for girls.

Pressure to drink is an aspect of peer pressure. Underage and risky (binge) drinking has become a 'glorified' social norm or 'rite of passage' amongst some groups of young people (Roche et al 2008). However, research suggest that young people tend to overestimate their peers' drinking both in frequency and amount, and a strong relationship exists between perception of frequency of drinking among peers and self-reported frequency of drinking. So the picture is not clear; it may be that the data over-represent the actual prevalence of underage drinking (Perkins & Craig, 2006). Self-reported incidence of drinking therefore has significant limitations.

Williams et al (2009) examined the relationship between violent and antisocial behaviour and alcohol consumption in students younger than 15 years. The likelihood of engaging in violent behaviour was approximately three-and-a-half times higher for those who had used alcohol, but with very high levels of variation across the 30 communities they surveyed. They concluded (Williams et al, 2009, page ix) 'there are inherent, as yet unidentified, factors within communities that influence the level of violence.' It is apparent from their study that alcohol is implicated in youth violence, but is not clearly a cause; underage alcohol consumption and engaging in violent behaviour could both emerge from numerous other influences.

Numerous submissions to the *National Inquiry into the Impact of Violence on Young Australians* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2010) commented that alcohol itself was not the cause of violence. Again, understanding the cause and result relationship is important, because misunderstanding can lead to responses which may be misdirected. It seems from the evidence that alcohol consumption by young people is a factor in situations blowing out of control into violent behaviour, but is not itself a cause of violence (Commonwealth of Australia, 2010).

Schools' influence on student violence

The perceived increase in student violence mirrors a wider cultural environment in which the use of violence as part of being tough, settling differences and resolving conflict is strongly endorsed. Such endorsement occurs on football fields, on the roads, and as young people start to go out, at parties and clubs. This may be reinforced by a peer group in which alcohol and machismo are highly valued.

Students' understanding and attitude toward violence are thus shaped in contexts other than the school. Students may receive messages of intolerance of the school towards physical violence at the same time as receiving messages of its normalisation and acceptance outside the school context. For example, parents sometimes implicitly condone violence even if not directly promoting it (Grunseit et al 2005). For example, parents may cautioning their child 'not to look for a fight', but urging them if bothered by another student to 'make sure they give the other kid a good hiding'.

However, considerable evidence suggests that youth violence in schools is not merely a reflection of what goes on in the environment surrounding it. Beyond the influence of individual and cultural factors predisposing students to violence, factors associated with the management, organisation or culture of a school make a significant difference to the likelihood of a student becoming involved in violence or school misconduct (Grunseit et al 2005; Jenkins, 1997).

Welsh, Greene and Jenkins (1999) found that almost all the variation in school behaviour disorder rates in their study could be explained by various school-level factors, such as fairness of school rules, clarity of school rules and attachment to the school.

Important factors influencing the likelihood to be violent included students' knowledge of whether there was a school discipline policy, the formal teaching of school rules and student attitudes regarding school rules, classroom culture, and racism and bullying in the school. The likelihood of attacking another student was higher among students who felt that students were uninformed about school rules, spent a lot of class time copying out of textbooks or the blackboard, or felt that good behaviour was not rewarded in the school. A lower likelihood was found among students who felt that their teachers were prepared for class lessons, who felt that they always got help with their schoolwork, and who felt that their teachers curtailed racism and bullying (Grunseit et al, 2005).

The efforts to work at the school level to prevent youth violence are based on the belief, supported by a growing body of research, that:

- Violence is a learned behaviour, and as such, can be unlearned
- Everyone can contribute to violence prevention; young people are part of the solution
- Partnerships and collaboration are more effective than isolated individual efforts
- Certain factors associated with a school's management, organisation or culture can significantly reduce the likelihood of violence.

Ways to think about student violence and schools

The role of schools as places where violent behaviour may occur is complex. Schools have the potential to effect positive change and be a supportive agent because of the extended time young people spend at school. School environments can be structured to minimise opportunities for violence. They also have the potential to influence violent and other anti-social behaviour that occurs outside of schools by providing a convenient setting for prevention activities (Gottfredson, 2001).

In recent years, views about student violence have changed. It is now recognised there are multiple factors operating at the individual, family, school, community and broader social level. Effective strategies need to operate at these multiple levels though integrated approaches which recognise the developmental needs of children and young people (ARACY, 2010; Farrington & Ttofi, 2010). The growing understanding that student violence is part of a broader school or community culture that endorses violence leads to a shift in the types of response schools can consider – responses that look at the overall culture or climate of the school. Young people, families, community groups, governments, churches, local business and police all have a role to play in preventing student violence at school (Mazerolle, 2010b).

The following is a brief overview of how violence is considered at each level; resources with more comprehensive information are listed on page 22.

Individual

This is based on non-experimental research which has suggested personal characteristics, beliefs and attitudes are key factors in whether students engage in violent behaviour (Gottfredson, 2001). In the past this has been the dominant way to view violent behaviour, thus twice as much research has been conducted from this viewpoint. Programs to teach self-control and social competency skills have been found to be most effective, but most have not been found to have long lasting impacts.

This leads to responses including:

- Programs delivered to students which target individual risk factors for violence (Mazerolle, 2010a)
- Social-emotional development strategies which teach children how to handle tough social situations, and to learn how to resolve problems without using violence (CDCP)
- Behaviour modification programs focused on changing behaviours (Gottfredson, 2001).
- Mentoring programs which pair a young person with an adult who serves as a positive role model and helps to guide the young person's behaviour (CDCP)
- Counselling, social work, psychological or therapeutic strategies to explore the underlying causes of the violence with the individual (Gottfredson, 2001)
- Diversionary programs to provide fun alternatives to antisocial behaviour (Gottfredson, 2001).

Family

This perspective is based on the finding that exposure to attitudes and behavioural models endorsing the use of violence in the family has a strong impact on a young person's tendency to be violent. Schools trying to inculcate a culture of intolerance toward violence sometimes find themselves dealing with students whose parents condone violent behaviour (Grunseit et al, 2005).

This leads to responses including:

- Programs designed to improve family relationships (Mazorelle, 2010a)

- Parent- and family-based programs to improve family relations in which parents receive training on child development, skills for talking with their children and ways to solve problems in non-violent ways (CDCP).

Peers

This perspective is based on the finding that the most consistent characteristic of students who are violent is having friends who are violent. Peers have a significant effect on many aspects of youth behaviour, and when the peer norm is *machismo*, bravado, anti-authoritarian or violent behaviour this has a strong correlation with an individual's tendency to be violent. However the mechanism is not well understood. According to Gottfredson (2001) it could be that children rejected by prosocial peers for whatever reason do not experience opportunities to learn appropriate ways to interact; or it could equally be that a peer group in which antisocial behaviour is considered normal is more accepting.

This leads to types of responses including

- Programs involving mentoring by peers or by slightly older students.

Gottfredson (2001) cautions that peer programs have not been found to be effective; and in fact some research suggests there is potential harm in peer-based programs (Farrington & Ttofi, 2010).

School

This perspective is based on the concept of school culture or climate (Gottfredson, 2001; Sugai, Horner & Gresham, 2002) as serving to engender or minimise violent behaviour between students. Research suggests that improving the way schools are organised and managed can be more effective than providing special prevention programs and intervention services.

This leads to responses including:

- Programs to modify school level characteristics, class structures and physical environment (Gottfredson, 2001)

- Focusing on highly visible and reinforced school rules and discipline policies (Gottfredson, 2001)

- Broad, school wide approaches which contain an emphasis on behaviour management, social-cognitive development and clear setting of the behaviours expected or 'norms' (Gottfredson, 2001)

- Whole school programs such as *Positive Behaviour Support* (Sugai & Horner, 2001) which aim to improve classroom and school climate to maximise learning as well as to prevent violence.

Community

This perspective is based on the concept of the school culture as an expression of a wider community which Mazerolle (2010b) described as having 'a disordered values framework'. It recognises the impact of wider issues (e.g. poverty, availability of drugs, acceptance of exposure to violence) in student violence. Schools may find their students are struggling with the disjunction of differing views on violence, and having to find a way to exist in the wider community in which other powerful "truths" about violence are promoted (Grunseit et al, 2005).

This leads responses including:

- Changes to the physical and social environment to address the social and economic causes of violence (CDCP)

- Programs/efforts to modify the social and cultural climate which supports violence at the societal level (Mazerolle, 2010a)

- Social marketing responses targeting the whole community (Gottfredson, 2001).

Understanding student violence as part of a broader school or community culture that endorses violence allows a shift in the types of response that schools can consider – responses that focus on the overall culture or climate of the school. Such a view also means the young people, families, community groups, local businesses, the police and governments each have a role to play (Mazerolle, 2010b).

What doesn't work in preventing student violence?

Many interventions aimed at preventing student violence are informed by ideology and what seems like 'common sense' rather than evidence (Mazerolle, 2010a). Despite their appeal to some members of the community, research shows that the following simplistic or punitive approaches to preventing violence in schools do not work (ARACY, 2010; Morrison & Skiba, 2001):

- Zero tolerance and 'get tough' suspensions and exclusion
- Rigid control of student behaviour
- Belief that students **must** receive punitive and negative consequences
- Increased security measures
- Unfair and inconsistent use of discipline
- Punishment without support

Despite their high media profile, approaches such as 'boot camps', 'Scared Straight', 'Three Strikes and You're Out' have not been found to be effective in reducing anti-social behaviour and violence (Mazerolle, 2010a; SAMSHA, 2002). One thing obvious in the research is that just 'coming down hard' **alone** on a student who is violent does not resolve the situation; in some cases it may actually aggravate the problem (ARACY, 2009).

Hyman and Perone (1998) cite the well established links between psychological and physical abuse and aggressive behaviour in non-schools settings as one reason for avoiding hostile and punitive disciplinary practices in schools. They suggest that psychological or emotional maltreatment, corporal punishment, and law enforcement-style behaviour management potentially feed resentment, distrust and aggression among affected students.

It may be difficult for some people to accept that the types of approaches listed above do not work (despite the solid research evidence) because they seem like to be grounded in 'common sense', but they are overly simplistic answers to a problem that is complex and multifaceted.

The types of programs listed above are a response to the fear that violence generates, and a desire to see justice done and for those who have done wrong to be punished (Beccaria (1764) cited in Groenewegen, 2002). While this may be a justifiable emotional reaction, it does not lead to effective responses. This tendency does, however, have implications for schools attempting to encourage productive responses in the community; some community members may insist maintain this is the only way to deal with student violence in schools.

Grunseit et al (2005) suggested the reason these types of approaches do not work is that such practices undermine traditional forms of non-intrusive behavioural control, such as teacher authority and a supportive, nurturing school climate. Significant research suggests the key area on which to focus to prevent violence amongst students is the school culture, also called the school climate.

Principles of effective violence prevention approaches

The number of anti-violence and anti-bullying interventions available can be overwhelming, and not all have been evaluated with the same degree of rigour. The result is a potentially confusing array of interventions and programs at various stages of implementation and evaluation (Commonwealth of Australia, 2010). This can make it difficult for schools to select an approach or program suitable for their needs.

Research currently does not point to any particular program or practice for reducing problem behaviour (Gottfredson, 2001). The following principles are derived from research and academic opinion to assist schools to consider programs and to plan their own local programs to prevent student violence.

Be proactive. Avoid reactive responses based on exceptional events, and avoid developing a 'fortress' mentality (Mazerolle, 2010a). Proactively plan for a safe schooling context for all; plan also for adequate staff preparation and skilling.

Start young and tailor to student age. Patterns of student violence can begin in early childhood (Tremblay et al, 2008). Gottfredson (2001) points to the need to be alert to violent incidents from Year 4 onward and not to wait until high school to implement prevention programs, but do continue through schooling. It is vital to develop age-specific and developmentally-responsive programs. For example, Farrington & Ttofi (2010) reported that disciplinary methods work better for younger children (Year 4), while only two years later in Years 6, the non-punitive approaches seemed to work better.

Use whole school approaches. Whole school approaches entail delivering instruction in ways that promote learning for all and engagement with the school community. Specific foci can include behaviour programs and/or social emotional learning (Morrison & Skiba, 2001). Do not limit responses or preventative measures to those students considered 'high risk' (Crone, Hawken & Bergstrom, 2007; Mazerolle, 2010a).

Endorse a student support approach. Combine student support approaches with adequate supervision and disciplinary responses (Bradshaw, Reinke, Bevans & Leaf, 2008; Farrington & Ttofi, 2010; Morrison & Skiba, 2001).

Explicitly teach school rules and alternative dispute resolution skills and opportunities. Explicitly teach schools rules and expectations for behaviour, and enforce these with appropriate behaviour management. Given that young people report that in the majority of cases physical violence is used to resolve disputes, teaching alternative ways to resolve disputes can reduce violence. Opportunities to deal with interpersonal issues or friction before they escalate can also help (Grunseit et al, 2010; Newcomer & Lewis, 2004).

Ensure leadership is highly visible. Leadership is important and commitment to preventing violence is essential at all levels: the community, school, staff and student level (Bradshaw et al, 2008; Flannery, Sugai & Anderson, 2009).

Engage with the community. Trying to impose a violence prevention program on a school or broader community that is not ready or willing is unlikely to work (SAMHSA, 2002). Success at a community level requires engagement and collaboration, which can be very demanding and time consuming, but which ultimately provide the strongest support for violence prevention (Bradshaw et al, 2008; Crone et al, 2007).

Choose programs that have been shown to be effective. Schools' responses need to be informed by evidence; Gottfredson (2001) provides a comprehensive review of programs and approaches. Be alert to the tendency to resort to simplistic approaches which do not work, and the possible expectation from some amongst the wider community for punitive approaches (Mazerolle, 2010a; Newcomer & Lewis, 2004).

Ensure programs are implemented appropriately with sufficient intensity and duration. It is critical to implement anti-violence programs with sufficient intensity and duration, and as intended in order to see change (Gottfredson, 2001; Mazerolle, 2010a). Programs found to be efficacious in research did not have the same results in schools because they were not implemented as intended and for long enough; in fact, programs implemented inappropriately have been shown to have a negative effect (Gottfredson, 2001). This means schools must seriously consider their capacity to implement a program as intended; conversely it means programs must be developed with the realities of school contexts and resources in mind (Bradshaw et al, 2008; Newcomer & Lewis, 2004).

Plan for sustainability. Schools are busy places and measures designed to prevent violence must be able to be accommodated within the available school resources and implemented on a sustainable basis. Building staff capacity is integral to success. Monitoring over time is critical to identify improvement and to inform changes if there is no improvement (Mazerolle, 2010a).

Building school culture to prevent student violence

This booklet has explored the myths, misperceptions and challenges in accessing valid information about student violence in schools. Schools face a considerable challenge in understanding the problem and considering their options to effect positive changes in the local school community.

The current research supports the idea that sustainable and effective approaches to preventing student violence focus on the school culture or climate. Gottfredson (2001) said schools must address aspects of their school culture that, possibly inadvertently, support or endorse the use of violence to resolve conflict.

Building a positive school culture is not a product of inventing new approaches or radical anti-violence programs (Sugai & Horner, 2001). It involves building a culture of social competencies that supports prosocial behaviour and maximises learning. Audit tools which assist school staff and students to review their school's culture or climate as part of a response to student violence, as well as other resources on school climate are listed on page 23.

Gottfredson (2001) said school level responses are aimed directly at enhancing the enduring capacity of the school to function effectively. They do this through reducing opportunities or dispositions of students to engage in problem behaviour by increasing their self control and their social bonds. Maximising student learning and engagement, modelling appropriate behaviour and establishing a fair and just discipline system enhances student belief in the validly of rules and laws.

Mazerolle (2010a) suggested a long term strategic approach is needed to ensure schools are safe places for all. This includes the following steps:

- Develop school/community partnerships
- Undertake comprehensive needs assessment
- Develop a comprehensive school plan
- Identify strategies and programs and implement
- Conduct evaluation
- Share the outcomes and make adjustments as indicated.

Schools have a great deal to contribute to violence prevention but their progress will always be influenced by the extent to which violence is endorsed within the family and the wider community (Grunseit et al, 2005). Engagement with the wider community and local alliances against violence provide a way to challenge these views.

Working Together

Resources

Resources and references

Websites with information about youth violence

Act Smart Be Safe: a gateway for parents/carers, students, teachers and the community to access information to help improve youth safety. http://education.qld.gov.au/actsmartbesafe/

Alannah and Madeline Foundation: a national charity protecting children from violence and its devastating effects. http://www.amf.org.au/AboutUs/

National Centre Against Bullying**:** a peak body working to advise and inform the Australian community on the issue of childhood bullying and the creation of safe schools and communities, including the issue of cyber safety. http://www.ncab.org.au/

National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center (2001). Community-Based Collaboration http://www.safeyouth.org/scripts/facts/community.asp

Positive Behaviour Intervention and Supports websites www.bpis.org www.cber.org www.swis.org

ReachOut: an online resource that assists young people by providing information to improve understanding of the issues that relate to mental health and wellbeing. *Reach Out* also has information on how young people can get the best help from services, as well as opportunities to connect with other young people. http://au.reachout.com

State Wide Positive Behaviour Support Learning Community (Education Queensland) http://www.learningplace.com.au/deliver/content.asp?pid=28246

Striving to Reduce Youth Violence Everywhere (STRYVE): US website with online training modules entitled Look for Warning Signs, Understand Youth Violence, and Protect Your Community, and other information. http://www.safeyouth.gov/Training/Pages/Training.aspx

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [SAMHSA] *Preventing Youth Violence: Communities Take Action* http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov

WHO Collaborating Centres for Violence: work to support and develop violence prevention internationally http://www.nwph.net/preventviolence/default/aspx

Working Together suite of resources: set of resources which provides Queensland schools with practical strategies and tools to address student-on-student bullying in all its forms. http://education.qld.gov.au/studentservices/behaviour/qsaav/index.html

School climate audit tools

Oregon School Safety Survey v 2.0 (Sprague, J., Colvin, G. & Irvin, L. 1995, 2005)

http://www.pbis.org/pbis_resource_detail_page.aspx?Type=4&PBIS_ResourceID=243
The Oregon School Safety Survey was developed to obtain an efficient index of perceived school safety. This survey provides a summary of risk factors and protective factors that can be useful in determining training and support needs related to school safety and violence prevention. It contains the following sections:

- Assessment of Risk Factors for School Safety and Violence
- Assessment of Response Plans for School Safety and Violence
- Your Comments on School Safety and Violence

School Safety Survey Australian adaptation (2006)
http://www.learningplace.com.au/deliver/content.asp?pid=28246

The Oregon Safety survey was been adapted for use in Queensland schools by Nehrmann, Dawson, and Swayn in 2006. The purpose of the School Safety Survey (SSS) is to assess risk factors and response plans for school safety and violence. The survey is designed to help school leaders evaluate:

- The extent to which the school provides a safe learning environment
- Training and support needs related to school safety and violence prevention
- Responses to violence and the effectiveness of protective measures.

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http://www.aracy.org.au/index.cfm?pageName=preventing_youth_violence#Paper
This report was released in October 2010 (after this booklet was published). It reviews many programs which may be of interest to schools and includes an examination of the evidence on what works in addressing youth violence and why it works.

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commission for
children and young people
and child guardian

Student Consultation Report:
Students' views about bullying

16 September 2010

An initiative of the Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence

Acknowledgements

The Commission would like to thank the students who participated in this consultation, and acknowledge their parents /carers for giving consent. The students willingly shared their ideas and opinions with an honesty that was admirable. We are mindful that for some students who participated bullying is an emotive topic, and we are very grateful they felt comfortable enough to share their personal stories and perspectives. It is hoped that by participating, students learned from each other.

The Commission would also like to thank the participating schools. Without their agreement this consultation would not have been possible. Despite very short notice, the five schools accommodated the consultation activity in the busy last weeks of second term. A special thanks goes to the staff involved in making the necessary arrangements.

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Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of a student consultation process conducted by the *Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian* on behalf of the *Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence* (QSAAV). Students in Year 6 and Year 9 from five Queensland schools were invited to participate in eight focus groups about bullying in schools. In all the Commission heard from sixty-three students.

The primary purpose of the consultation was to (i) test specific elements of the best practice toolkit developed by QSAAV to assist schools to take action against bullying, and (ii) determine if, and how, students want to be involved in developing and implementing anti-bullying policy. A secondary purpose was to model and document a student consultation process that schools could adopt.

Students as stakeholders

The consistent and unequivocal message from both Year 6 and Year 9 students was: *'we should be included', 'we want to be included'* in developing, implementing and monitoring our school's anti-bullying policy and responses. Students suggested they are well placed to know what is going on, what types of bullying are common in their school and if strategies to address it are working. They reasoned that without their involvement, the school's policy will not be as effective.

The strength of their views and the rationale behind them, reveal that the students do not see themselves as passive recipients of school policy and practices. Rather they see themselves as major stakeholders whose input into every stage of policy development and implementation will add value to the decision-making process, ensure greater student ownership of the problem and solutions and produce better outcomes.

The majority of students did not suggest a year level or age which should preclude participation, but inferred all students should have the right to participate if they choose. The only do-able way of giving students this opportunity is by engaging with them at the local level using a range of methods that allow them to give their input honestly.

The merit of the toolkit

The three elements of QSAAV's *Working Together* toolkit which the focus groups 'tested' related to establishing a whole-of-school definition of bullying, the collaborative development of an anti-bullying policy and processes for reporting and responding. The consultation findings indicate that students consider all of these matters to be important. However from the students' perspective, the crux of the matter is putting an end to the bullying without making their situation worse.

The students also expressed views that are relevant to the remainder of the toolkit. In particular, their views support the call for respectful and inclusive school cultures; programs that develop students' emotional resilience; school staff with skills to respond appropriately to students' bullying concerns, and parental awareness of the schools' management approach to bullying.

Overall, the collective views of the students correlate with the research and best-practice evidence presented in the toolkit. Their views bear out the usefulness of the toolkit and the framework it provides for a whole-of-school approach to dealing with student-on-student bullying. Indeed the students' comments strongly suggest that they want to see a clear and consistent whole-of-school approach rather than ad hoc responses to bullying at school.

Student voices add value

By giving voice to the insights of students, the consultation findings bring a reality and richness to the toolkit's messages which adds value for *Working Together* audiences. More importantly perhaps, the findings identify some consistent themes and common issues among the participating students which may be relevant to the wider student population. In this way, the findings may also give direction to schools on where to focus their efforts.

For example, students in this consultation placed an emphasis on telling someone trustworthy, having someone who will listen compassionately, being able to report confidentially and having their report dealt with immediately and discretely without incurring retribution or further embarrassment. They want to see people who bully held to account. Yet they also recognise that all parties need to be offered support to manage their interactions with others and to build skills to deal more effectively with conflict, whether it be bullying or other behaviours which can be just as hurtful.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the consultation findings, the Commission recommends that:

1. Queensland schools give all students the opportunity to be involved when developing, implementing and monitoring school-based anti-bullying policy and strategies at the local level.

2. The student consultation report be made available to Queensland schools to complement the *Working Together* products and to demonstrate the insights and ideas to be gained by involving students.

3. The *Working Together* section on the professional development of teachers include references to the insights of students. In addition, the list of development topics should include:

    - the recognition and management of latent and emerging behaviours which do not fully manifest as bullying, and

    - exploration of the tensions between a student's sensitivity about disclosure, their desire for confidentiality and the need to take action to address the problem.

4. The insights of students be included in products developed by the sectors to inform parents about bullying and how to respond to bullying concerns which arise at school.

5. Queensland schools create opportunities for students to safely recognise, explore and practice responses to bullying. Opportunities should include the use of drama to demonstrate relevant scenarios and solutions accompanied by discussion with teachers and peers.

6. Schools collect local data and information from students to assist in the development of tailored school-based approaches to bullying and enable the school to internally evaluate the effectiveness of those approaches over time.

Introduction

Background to consultation

In February 2010, the Premier announced the establishment of the cross-sector *Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence* (QSAAV). QSAAV's role is to provide the Queensland Government with independent advice on effective strategies to address bullying and violence in all Queensland state and non-state schools, and to oversee the implementation of recommendations made by Dr Rigby in his report "*Enhancing Responses to Bullying in Queensland Schools*".

An important consideration for QSAAV has been how to give students a voice in this process. The Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian (the Commission) is a member of QSAAV and has led QSAAV's student consultation. QSAAV has focused its consultation on students' views about anti-bullying policy development and implementation in schools, rather than on bullying and violence more broadly. This decision takes account of what is already known from research and consultation in this area. (An overview of recent research and engagement activity involving students can be found in the Appendices.)

Purpose of consultation

The primary aim of the consultation was to 'test' three of the ten elements of effective school based action against bullying identified in QSAAV's *Working Together Toolkit*. The toolkit has been developed to provide schools with an effective framework from which to address bullying and is based on national and international research and best practice.

The consultation focused on the following three elements of the toolkit:

- establishing a clear whole of school definition of bullying
- establishing a clear anti-bullying policy and
- developing procedural steps to respond appropriately to bullying incidents.

Emphasis was also placed on gathering students' views about student consultation and if, and how, they would like to be consulted when schools develop and implement policy. Ultimately QSAAV's aim is for every school to consult with its own student body about how bullying is handled at the local level.

A secondary aim was for the Commission to trial one consultation method which schools could apply when making whole-of-school decisions, not only about bullying, but other matters significant to students. To assist schools, the Commission will provide QSAAV with Consultation Guidelines for inclusion in the *Working Together*'s resource section. The Guidelines will describe a range of consultation methods – with an emphasis on those suggested by students during this consultation.

Consultation Design

Consultation method

The method used was focus group discussion. The Commission conducted a total of eight focus groups with Year 6 and Year 9 students across five schools from the three education sectors (Government, Catholic and independent). The eight groups were held between 10 June and 23 June 2010.

Participating schools

The five schools were chosen from a list provided by the QSAAV Secretariat. The aim was to include at least one school from each education sector and schools of different demographics. At QSAAV's request, the Commission included two North Queensland schools. To protect student confidentiality, this report does not name the schools.

A total of sixty-three students participated. The distribution by Year level and school was as follows:

School	*Description*	*Year*	*No of students*	*Groups*
A	Regional independent, all girls school	9	8 - all girls	1
B	Regional state high school	9	19 - 7 boys/12 girls	2
C	Metropolitan Catholic primary school	6	13 - 4 boys/9 girls	2
D	Rural state primary school	6	8 - 4 boys/4 girls	1
E	Metropolitan Catholic co-educational school	9	15 - 7 boys/8 girls	2

Participating Students

Consultation was limited to Year 6 and Year 9 students. The students were aged between 10 and 14 years old.

Seven of the eight groups were single gender groups. One Year 6 group was mixed. Of the sixty-three students who participated:

- 21 students were from Year 6 – 8 boys and 13 girls
- 42 students were from Year 9 – 14 boys and 28 girls
- 41 of the students were girls and 22 were boys

Schools selected the students. The Commission's parameters were that students must want to participate, be willing to have a say, have parental consent and not currently exhibit bullying behaviour[1].

Beyond that, the approaches taken by schools differed. For example, one school said the selected students represented the school's cultural diversity, while another school group represented a wide 'behavioural' mix.

[1] The exclusion of students who currently bully others was intended as a risk minimisation measure.

By their own admission during group discussion, some students identified as having a past history of bullying behaviour and some students said they had been bullied.

Though the Commission suggested eight students per group, the group size was ultimately decided by the number of students with signed parental consent who wanted to participate on the day. On the day, two boys at different schools chose not to take part.

In those schools where separate gender groups were held, more girls than boys chose to participate. The inclusion of an all girls' school also contributed to an over-representation of girls in the sample.

Schools were asked to do some preparatory work with students prior to the focus groups. The aim was to give students an opportunity to reflect on the topic of bullying so they could articulate a more considered personal view during the group discussion.

Focus group questions

The focus questions were divided into three sections to align with the three elements of the *Working Together Toolkit* being tested. The questions sought to obtain students' views about:

- The nature of bullying – what it is and what form it can take
- Procedural steps – what actions should be taken when bullying occurs (ie. reporting process and intervention strategies) and
- Developing a school anti-bullying policy – who should be involved, the best ways of involving students and how the policy can be communicated.

The Focus Questions can be found in the Appendices.

One significant change was made to the focus questions during the consultation process and this was after the first group. The first group was asked to anonymously rate how big a problem they thought bullying was on a scale of 1 to 10. Subsequent groups were also asked to anonymously rate how big a problem bullying was for them personally and to give a reason for both of their ratings.

Ethical considerations

Participation required the written consent of the student and their parent/guardian. Parents and students were also asked to consent to an audio recording of the group discussion, and for the student's de-identified comments to be used in the Commission's report.

An Information Sheet accompanying the Consent Form advised students and parents of the purpose of the consultation, how the focus group would be conducted and what to expect in relation to privacy and confidentiality. (The Consent Form and Information Sheet can be found in the Appendices.)

Schools were invited to have a staff member sit in as an observer, and/or to have staff available afterwards in case a student wanted to talk about something that came up during the discussion.

To minimise disclosure of personal information, students were asked, before the group commenced, to try to avoid talking about themselves or using real names when telling a story to explain their ideas.

They were also asked to follow a 'no gossip rule' after the group concluded, meaning they could talk with teachers, parents or classmates about the questions and their own answers, but not about other people.

Students were advised at the outset to speak up if they felt uncomfortable at any time or wanted to say something without it being recorded. Importantly, students were informed that their personal information would be kept confidential, except if something was said that led the facilitators to believe that an individual was at significant risk of harm. Students were directed to talk to the school representative after the group if they wanted to follow up on any personal issues.

Procedure

The focus groups were held on school premises. Most of the groups ran for 90 minutes and included a refreshment break. Two Commission officers facilitated the group discussion and a third officer took notes. Three of the five schools chose to have a staff member sit at a distance from the group in the role of observer.

Discussion was guided by a series of focus questions put to students by the facilitators. Each student was encouraged to give an opinion and students were invited to talk to each other rather than directly to the facilitators. The facilitators did not give their own opinions. (The Discussion Guide can be found in the Appendices.)

The focus questions were divided into three sections. Seven of the eight groups broke out into two smaller groups to discuss the set of questions which addressed procedural steps in response to bullying incidents. The boys group at school E did not break out as there were only four students in the group.

Limitations

The consultation was limited to eight focus groups due to timeframes imposed by QSAAV's own reporting deadlines. While the small sample size means the student views presented in this report cannot be considered representative of students in general, the findings highlight the value and benefits to be had if schools across the State were to consult with students more broadly. In 2009, there were more than 700,000 students enrolled in a total of 1700 primary and secondary schools in Queensland[2].

Evaluation

At the close of each focus group, students were invited to complete an Evaluation Form. The results are discussed on page 48 of this report. (The Evaluation Form can be found in the Appendices.)

[2] Australian Bureau of Statistics (2010). Schools, Australia, 2009, Cat No. 4221.0 Canberra, Australia

Findings

1. Establishing a clear whole-of-school definition of bullying

What the Toolkit says:

The *Working Together Toolkit* overviews the nature of bullying and suggests that a key step in taking effective action against bullying is for schools to establish a clear whole-of-school definition.

The Working Together Toolkit –

— recommends any definition adopted should identify that bullying is repeated behavior, involves a power imbalance and takes many forms.
— identifies five kinds of bullying: physical, verbal, covert, psychological and cyber.
— suggests schools may choose to incorporate within their definition some specific types of bullying relevant to their school.
— notes students can be bullied for variety of reasons such as race, culture, appearance, sexual orientation, home circumstances, learning needs or disabilities, gender.
— notes the characteristics of students who bully. For example, they are often popular, have good leadership skills, are not malicious in their intent, and are thoughtless in their actions.
— identifies behaviours that do not constitute bullying but can be upsetting and need to be addressed such as mutual arguments, single acts of social rejection, one-off acts of meanness or spite, isolated acts of aggression.
— identifies the different roles students can play in bullying behavior such as ring leader, associates, reinforcers, bystanders and defenders.

What students said about:

(i) what is bullying

The ability to define bullying varied across the eight groups. Some groups, including the Year 6s, were better able to articulate the elements that distinguish bullying from other behaviours. However, across the groups, students collectively referred to elements that concur with accepted definitions of bullying.

All groups described bullying in terms of **hurtful behaviour** and referred to **different forms**. Typically, bullying was described as:

- *anything that makes anybody feel uncomfortable or hurts them – anything physical or mentally.* (Year 9 boy, school C)

Behaviours which students cited as causing hurt to someone else included (but was not limited to):

- *making rude remarks, name calling, punching, gossiping, spreading rumours and fake information, dirty looks, threats or excluding someone.*

Other descriptors used for bullying included:

- *being mean and unfair to someone, belittling someone, feeling personally attacked, made to feel unsafe and insecure, being put down, being angry and taking it out on someone else.*

The **different forms** of bullying which students identified are discussed on page 13.

The majority view of students in all groups was that bullying is **repeated behaviour**: For example:

- *You can have a big argument and …a biff-up with your best mate and afterwards you can be mates again, its over. But when its continuous, when it goes on and on that's when it turns to bullying and being malicious.* (Year 9 boy, school C)

- *if you're in a game and no one is letting you in and you try it every day but it never happens.* (Year 6 boy, school E)

However a few Year 9 students from different schools considered some one-off acts, such as bashing someone up or spreading a rumour, as bullying. One Year 9 girl had a particularly strong view:

- *If you're just going to do it one day or heaps of days, it's still bullying. There's no difference.* (Year 9 girl, school C)

Half of the groups made direct reference to '**power**' when trying to explain what bullying is. A Year 6 boy from School E for example, said bullying was:

- *when one person or a group has more power over another person or a group and they call them names or physically hurt them.* Having more power, he said, meant '*like physically stronger or more popular'*. (Year 6 boy, school E)

A power imbalance was implied in many of the reasons all the groups gave when asked why some kids are bullied and what kids who bully are like. (See pages 15-16). On the other hand, some of the bullying situations discussed, particularly by Year 9 girls, sounded more like disagreements between people of equal power.

Not surprisingly, a number of students associated bullying with **group behaviour.** One Year 9 girl for example spoke about the '*hierarchy in groups.*' Another said:

- *bullying can be based on a leader – like everyone does what they do, where they sit .. and then if that person decides to pick on someone else, everyone else in the group does too.* (Year 9 girl, school A)

Several students in one group expressed strong views that bullying is **deliberate.** Yet a comment made in most groups was that sometimes a person '*may not know that what they are doing is bullying'*. The suggestion was that 'the bully' may be unaware of the hurt they are causing as it can depend on how the other person perceives their actions or words. As a Year 9 boy explained:

- *It's not really up to you when you cross the line between joking and bullying. It's up to the person who is subject to that.* (Year 9 boy, school C)

Bullying is often passed off as a joking around. Students were asked to explain the difference. A student who had been bullied said:

- *You know its joking around when they say sorry, help you up, make sure you're okay. When it's bullying they won't do that. They'll laugh and walk away or just keep hitting you.* (Year 9 boy, school C)

Groups were not questioned further about **what isn't bullying**. However, both Year 6 groups at school E spoke about the value of knowing how to differentiate between bullying and other hurtful behaviours. They described an anti-bullying program their school had recently introduced which:

- *.. kind of tells you what isn't bullying. So you ignore what isn't bullying. Like, there is one thing on bullying, and then there are other things that may seem like bullying, but actually aren't because they don't continue.* (Year 6 girl, school E)

Notably, one Year 6 student commented on the focus group evaluation form that: "*We should have discussed what bullying isn't more".*

(ii) forms of bullying

When asked what forms of bullying there were, all groups referred to **physical, verbal** and **cyber.** Seven of the eight groups also referred to **spreading rumours**. Other 'forms' were variously described as: *social, mental, psychological, emotional, harassment, gossiping, discrimination* and *exclusion*.

There were different views about what form, if any, was **worst.** A few students indicated that they were "*all bad in their own way,*" "*all types should be against the rules*" and it depended on the individual:

- *like someone might get more hurt by emotional and some by physical.* (Yr 9 girl, school B).

However most expressed a view about one form of bullying being worse than others. Year 6 students generally said '*physical bullying*' or *'rumours'* while Year 9s most commonly said either physical, rumours or cyber bullying. The reasons students gave for why they thought a particular form was worse included:

- *I reckon nothing worse than physical – because physical is …getting right in there, just bashing them up.* (Year 9 boy school B)

- *for me its face to face because it just intimidates you --- especially when you have someone towering over you --- and they've got cronies that will back them up and you're there with a couple of friends and your couple of friends don't want to get involved so they walk off and then you're left by yourself.* (Year 9 boy, school C)

- *Rumours – because they can like make the bystanders as bad as the bullies -- cause the person they can get really sad sometimes and it hurts them bad -- when you spread rumours people believe them and they don't want to be your friend because they think it's true. [It can] Ruin your reputation.* (Year 6 girl, school D)

- *Cyber definitely – because can't escape, it's 24/7 – they keep sending and sending and sending. The only way you'll escape it is not to go on.* (Year 9 boy, school C)

- *With cyber you can tell someone and they'll do something about it. With physical you get scared to the point where you don't know what you should do and I've been in that situation and it hurts you the most because you're feeling it on your skin. If someone punches you it hurts. But with cyber, you can kind of go, "I can ignore that for a bit" but with physical you can't ignore it because it's always going to be there.* (Yr 9 girl, school C)

- *the sort of bullying that is really bad is where they build up saying "I'm going to come and get you" and keep building it up but never actually do anything but you build it up and say to yourself "they're really going to do this to me" -- and then you feel self-conscious and scared of everything.* (Year 9 girl, school A)

- *Mental. Like something that is going to stick with them. Like the SEU*[3] *people. People that have a disability. People have no feelings for them you know. And just diss them. Just diss them all the time. And they haven't done nothing to them.* (Year 9 boy, school B)

Cyber bullying: It was noted that Year 9 girls at school A spoke about gossiping, rumours and **'cyber'** interchangeably. When asked about this, the girls indicated that 'cyber' is often the vehicle used to spread rumours and misinformation about someone.

- *[They are the] same. You can gossip on Facebook, like say, there's a photo and someone posted it from someone else but they didn't want it up there and then all these comments – its kind of like rumours but posted on like a page. Or somebody could say something and you misread it or you say something. Because you can't hear tone.* (Year 9 girls, school A)

So while students did not make frequent references to 'cyber bullying' when discussing bullying incidents, it can be inferred from the wider conversations that some of the gossiping, name calling, rumours and other behaviours discussed involved the use of social networking technologies.

Most of the 63 students, including the majority of the Year 6 students, indicated they use technologies such as msn, Skype and Facebook to communicate with their friends. Year 6 students indicated there was "*not much bullying on their contact list*' but, as one student added, "*it's in the news a lot*." No clear picture on the extent of cyber bullying emerged from discussions with Year 9s.

Students said they were aware of techniques they could use if bullied such as blocking messages, putting settings on private, deleting friends and printing conversations. All school groups indicated they had received information sessions on how to manage cyber bullying.

Gender differences: Most students in six of the eight groups had a view that there were gender differences when it came to how kids bullied. The Year 9 boys (school B) and Year 6 boys (school E) said either there was '*no difference'* or '*they didn't know'*. However the dominant view was that boys

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use more physical forms of bullying while girls are more likely to gossip and spread rumours, and '*with girls it goes on and on for ages.'*

A gender difference was evident in the bullying forms and situations the groups focused on during discussion. The girls' groups talked more about rumours and gossiping while the examples the boys' groups gave were more often about physical acts and name calling.

(iii) why kids are bullied

Numerous reasons were given for why some students are bullied. The reasons given by the different groups can be categorised as follows. A person who is bullied:

- **is '*vulnerable'* in some way** – *has family issues; appears physically or emotionally weak; is new to the school, how they carry themselves; is not as good at sport or as smart; has a shy personality; is unpopular*

- **is *different* in some way** – *wears glasses, has freckles, chubby, different colour skin, has a different opinion, has a disability, who they hang out with, "the shape of their eyebrows"*

- **has something the bully is *jealous* of** – is *smarter, prettier, has a boyfriend/girlfriend, good at sport, popular, parents who aren't divorced*, or possessions*, "like a lunchbox or mobile phone."*

There was a common view that the initiating reason can be *'silly stupid things'* and a "*small incident can escalate into something more serious*". For example, some Year 9 girls said bullying often starts off with:

> o *Fights between friends and then they end up telling rumours so that people get on their side of the argument -- And a lot of things get taken the wrong way and then that gets worse from there.* (Year 9 girls, school C)

When asked what kids can do if they are bullied (see page 30), a number of students spoke about how the behavior of the person being bullied can encourage or discourage the bully to continue. They indicated the bullying was more likely to continue if the student:

- ***'reacted'*** and showed they were angry, upset or frightened

- ***'didn't stand up for themselves'*** by telling the bully to stop, and /or

- **had no friends** around to support them.

There was also a view expressed by some Year 9 students that they were at a **developmental age** where they are more sensitive to the actions and comments of others which in turn made bullying more of an issue. The following statement made by a Year 9 girl, was echoed by a Year 9 male:

- *if you say something little at this age, it means a lot to you even if it's little. But when you're like 2 or you're 10 and you're in prep and stuff its not going to mean anything. You really don't care at that age. You haven't got – you're not going through stuff we're going through at the moment – and that's why I think that bullies fight and take sides because everyone just takes things serious.* (Year 9 girl, school C)

(iv) what kids who bully are like

There was not a particular characteristic which was consistently used to describe students who bully. The following list categorises the descriptions students gave, loosely ranked in order of the frequency in which they were mentioned across the groups (most frequent first).

Students who bully others were described as either:

- having family issues and/or their own problems – *are bullied at home; have a bad day and take it out on someone*

- have been bullied themselves

- are the popular or *'cool kids'* or want to be –

  - *There's this girl and she makes up lots of rumours ..to put other people down so she can be the most popular in the group. So she makes people believe bad things about the people so they don't like that person and then nothing's bad said about her so that's why she's being liked less.* (Year 6 girl, school E)

- want to build up their image, confidence or reputation – *they are the "try hards.*"

- have a high estimation of themselves – *bullies can be stuck up; think they're big and can get it on with anybody.* (Year 9 girl; year 9 boy, school B)

- enjoy bullying others – *bullies sometimes just bully people for fun.* (Year 6 boy, school D)

- bully to *'hide their own weaknesses*' – *they're insecure; don't like themselves; they're not as smart, or can't run as fast; are jealous*

- are acting out learned behaviour – *have seen their parents fighting are imitating that*; *have not been told the right way to behave by their parents.*

There were different views about whether or not the bully had friends. The stronger view was that a bully is: *'a person who has lots of mates to back him up if someone stands up to him*' (Year 6 boy, school E) or as another student put it:

  - *A bully is nothing without his posse. If his posse turns on him, he's stuffed*. (Year 9 boy, school C)

Three students who participated in the focus groups openly acknowledged that they had bullied others in the past. They were all boys in Year 9. One student admitted he:

- *used to bully everyone at state school* [and] *"I hit people and …. picked on the same kid every day – like almost every day – almost every week.*

When asked what made him target that person, he explained:

- *I don't know. So sometimes he had a smart mouth sometimes. Smartness, yes. Sometimes he would, like, go through people's bags and that sometimes, you know. He went through my bag one day, and I started hitting him soon. But the first time I just went up to him and just start hitting him. That was the first time*.

(v) why some kids watch or join in

Students were asked why some kids watch or join in when they see someone else being bullied. The reasons they put forward can be categorised (and ranked in order of frequency) as follows:

- **Fear of consequences**:
  - '*fear of being bullied themselves'* if they intervene or draw attention to themselves
  - fear they might '*get the blame if try to stop it*'
  - fear of being '*kicked out of the group'* or *'they might lose their friends'*
  - fear of being *'the odd one out'* or *'seen as a wuss*'.

- **Get some satisfaction** from it – they are *'entertained'* by watching; join in to *'get a piece of the action'* or stand back because they *'don't like the person being bullied either'.*

- *'**Don't know what to do'*** – or '*lack confidence'*

- **Want to assist** – either to assist the bully because he/she is *a 'family member or close friend'* or to '*help the person being bullied*'.

- **Following the herd** – *because you're kind of a group... Because my friends are doing it. That is why I am doing it.* (Year 9 girl, school B)

The fear of being hurt by the bully was the most cited reason.

Fear of being alienated by their friendship group was a principal theme raised by a group of Year 9 girls. As one student explained:

- *if the bully has higher status in a group and you belong to that group, if you go against them you'll most likely get kicked out but you don't want to do that because I want to be in the group.* (Year 9 girl, school A)

(vi) what it feels like to be bullied

Although students were not asked to, some students indicated in the course of discussion they had been, or were being, bullied. Their comments provide insights into how it feels to be bullied and the affects it can have on a student's social or emotional wellbeing. The following is a discussion between a subset of Year 9 students in one group:

- *bullying stays with someone forever .. sometimes you forget about it, sometimes you move on from it but other times it just sticks with you.*
- *Thing is sometimes they just give you one or two comments and they leave it alone and they just let it eat at you.*
- *It just drops your spirit as well.*
- *It leaves you hanging.*
- *And you also feel like you can't tell someone a lot of the time because you think I'll just get even more bullied. Everyone will call me, dibber-dobber and tell you you shouldn't have whinged and dobbed on them because there's no real point in it. You feel like you can't really tell anyone. You feel like you can't win.*
- *You're excluded.*

This comment from a Year 6 girl also sums up the feelings some students conveyed:

- *you feel bad about it, every single day, all the time and so you keep on thinking about it and it just worries you all the time so it sort of takes over your life.* (Year 6 girl, school E)

How kids rated bullying as a problem

All of the 63 students who participated were asked to anonymously rate, on a scale of 1 to 10, how big a problem they thought bullying was for kids in general, with 10 indicating it was a huge problem. Fifty-five of the students were also asked to anonymously rate, on a scale of 1 to 10, how big a problem bullying was for them personally, and to give reasons for their ratings[4].

The aim of this process was twofold: (i) to gauge the difference between students' perception of the problem and their actual experience of it and (ii) to allow students to confidentially and anonymously share something they might not otherwise disclose.

An examination of mean scores revealed that bullying as a general problem was rated more highly by the students than bullying as a personal problem. As depicted in Figure 1, the mean scores were 7.8 and 5.7 respectively. These differences were found to be statistically significant. The result indicates that collectively this group of students perceive bullying to be a greater problem than their actual experience of it.

[4] Students in the first focus group were not asked to rate how big a problem bullying was for them personally.

Figure 1. Comparison of mean scores – bullying in general and bullying as a problem personally

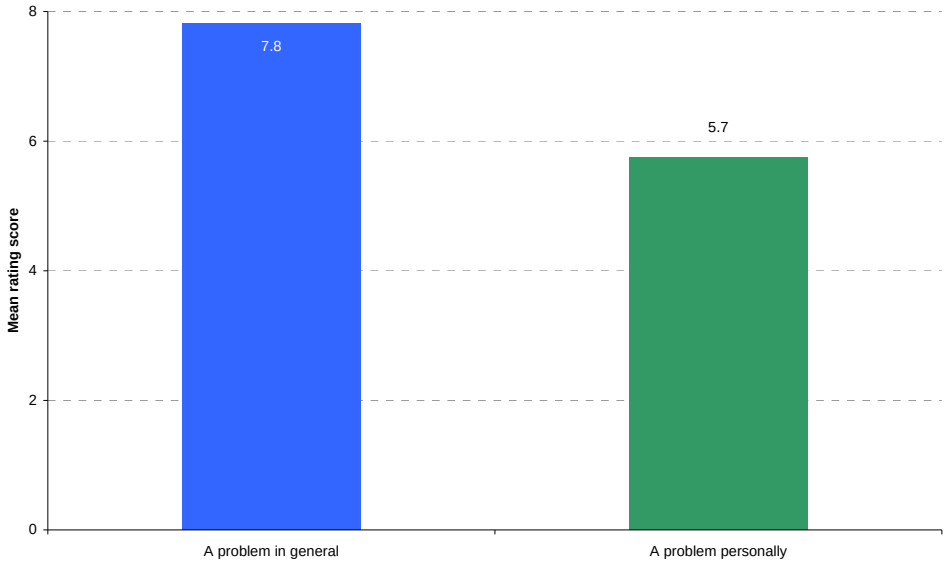
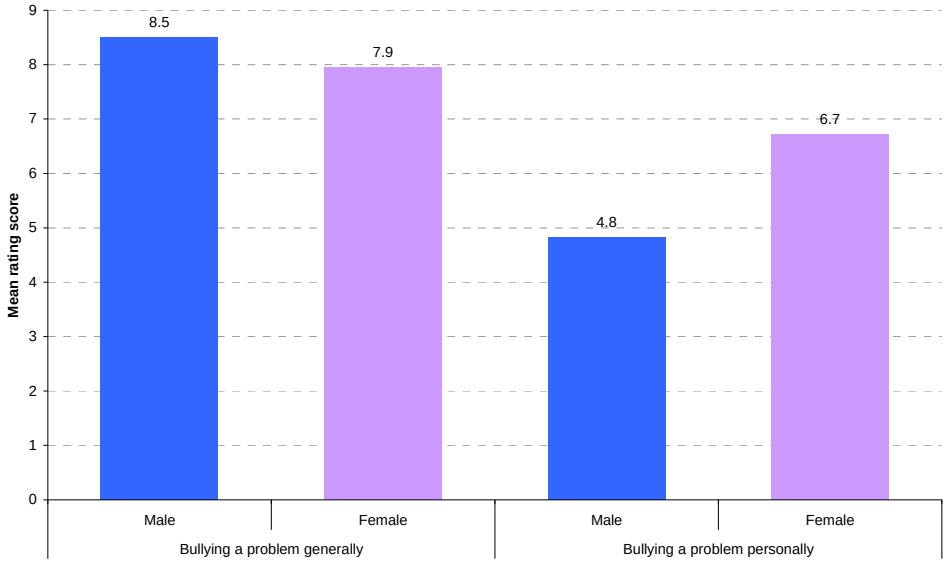


Figure 2. Differences between the genders – for both bullying as a problem personally and in general:



A statistically significant difference was also found according to gender, with girls rating bullying as a personal problem more highly than boys. As Figure 2 shows, the mean scores were 6.7 and 4.8 respectively. No differences according to gender were found for ratings of bullying as a general problem. There were also no differences according to student Year level.

The reasons students gave for their scores for bullying as a general problem related to how prevalent they thought bullying was, or its potential for harm. They generally rated bullying as a personal problem based their own or their friends' experience.

The following is a sample of the students' responses. They provide valuable insights into how students perceive bullying and their actual experience.

Year level	Gender	Rating problem in general	Reason for rating	Rating problem personally	Reason for rating
6	F	10	It makes kids feel bad	10	It makes me feel bad about myself
6	F	7	I think it is a problem and we have to deal with it but it is not the biggest problem	8	I think it is a big problem for me because it happens occasionally
6	F	9	Because it means that kids feel bad about themselves and they don't want to go to school	6	Because I was bullied for a short time in grade 2 and I know how it feels but I haven't ever been bullied again and I rose above it
6		4	It does happen but not every day	1	It rarely happens to me
6	F	6	Most bullying is being handled by programs but some bullying is still happening and not much is being done about it	8	Because I feel really bad because I know that some people around me are being bullied and they are troubled and confused because of it
6	M	9	I think it is so high because some kids can be bullied day after day and it wouldn't be nice for them	3	It is that low 'cause I don't really have anything for people to be mean to me about
6	M	10	I think this because if the government lets this go, kids would not come to school because of fear	8	Because I have been bullied this year but it's been dealt with and I am not so worried about it anymore
6	M	3	I think this because most kids would just want to play and have fun	2	Because I think people just would like to fit in
6	F	7	I think this because I see a lot of kids being bullied and its on the news a lot, mostly physical	10	This is because a girl in my class bullies me. She calls me names and spread 2 rumours about me which made me feel very sad for a week
9	F	8	In most schools more than half of them are called names every day	1	I get called a few names but I know they are mucking around
9	F	9	It happens so much and so often	6	It has happened to me a bit before and I've seen it happen to others with their friends and parents
9	F	8	Because if one person hates you everyone hates you	5	Because people get angry over small things
9	F	7	I think this is 7 'cause it is bad and people get really hurt by it but some people don't get bullied.	7	Cause I think I'm bullied without them knowing it and if someone doesn't like me for something they pass it around so no one really does
9	F	9	Because lots of people get hurt and some even loose their life	4	Because I don't want to get hurt. Its not a nice feeling
9	F	6	It happens everywhere but in the majority of cases it isn't severe	4	It doesn't effect me so much but everyone gets called names. I was bullied a while ago so I have more of an understanding now
9	F	7	It could be really bad till it gets dangerous like some kids could go suicide for their problem	4	It is a problem to me personally because it affects me.. some people make rumours of how they describe me .. it hurt feelings
9	M	9	You cant' stop it and its in every school and every class	5	It still happens but I've learned to ignore it
9	M	7.5	Most kids will deal with bullying differently, with each different situation	8.9	I have been bullied since grade 1 and have mental scars that will stay with me for the rest of my life
9	M	10	Because if they are bullying it will carry on through ages	4	Because I haven't had a fight in years
9	M	10	I believe bullying is a massive problem for young people as almost everyone is bullyed who aren't bullys.	10	A huge problem as I have been bullyed all my life and it hasn't stopped
9	M	8.5	Because all kids at one time or another experience bullying	6	Because I don't get picked on as much as I used to
9	M	7	Because many kids get bullied every day	1	Because I don't get bullied

Note: Spelling as per students' written comments.

2. Developing and implementing an anti-bullying policy

What the Toolkit says:

Element 3 of the *Working Together Toolkit* recommends schools establish a clear **anti-bullying policy** developed in collaboration with staff, students and parent/carers which addresses all forms of bullying (including cyber bullying).

The *Toolkit* –

- recommends a school's anti-bullying policy contain a statement that clearly identifies the schools stance and action
- recommends that schools engage with all members of the school community when developing the policy, particularly students and parents/carers
- refers to expert advice that engaging students in the process of policy development, particularly as its relates to cyber bullying, is a critical factor in ensuring its successful implementation
- suggests anti-bullying polices may be developed as part of the process of developing the school's wider behaviour policy
- states the success of a school's policy is largely dependent on how well it is communicated and understood within the school community
- suggests the policy may be used to celebrate the school's commitment to the safety of all students
- recommends the policy be reinforced to the school community throughout the year, including the start of each school year, and using opportunities such as a designated day of action, assemblies, newsletters, website

What students said about:

(i) who should be involved in deciding what the policy says

There was a strong collective view that **"everyone"** in the school should be involved in deciding what a school's anti-bullying policy says:

- *all the students that go to the school and the teachers; people who look after the school, parents, P&C, Principal, teacher's aide.* (Year 6 students, school D)

Students: Foremost, there was virtually unanimous agreement that **students** should, and would want to be, involved. Typical comments were:

- *All students – all people need to have their say. It shouldn't be just the principal and staff. It should be what the students think.* (Year 9 girls, school B)

- *Students. Always. Students all the way. Students know what type of bullying is out there. You know what the worst is, they know what to deal with first.* (Year 9 boy, school C)

Only one group spoke of restricting which grades could be involved, with four Year 6 boys (school E) suggesting it should:

- *probably be only the higher grades like 6s and 7s -- and maybe some of the year 5s -- the smart year 5s.*

While they agreed it was important for younger kids to know what the plan is, "*probably not all of them* [could be involved in developing it] *because there'd be too much*". Interestingly, this view contrasted with that of the Year 6 girls from the same school who said:

- *They should have an open vote so children can have some input on it – all children can do it but you don't have to use all the ideas that are given.*

The girls suggested that "*for the younger kids there might be a fun way of doing it – like colour in your opinion or something".*

The Year 9 students were the most vocal about the need for students to be involved, and adamant that the majority of students would <u>want</u> to be involved:

- *Especially the middle years because I think that's where most of the bullying goes on. (*Year 9 boy, school C)

A number of Year 6 and Year 9 students indicated it was important to involve "*people who have been affected by bullying*". As some Year 9 girls (school B) explained:

- *They would say its shame, but I reckon the kids that have actually been bullied and have been really hurt would want to be in it.--- 'Cos they want to deter it' ---- want to stop it happening to others ----Yeah. They don't want the experience.*

<u>School Staff</u>: All groups said that teachers and the principal should be involved. However, a common view among Year 9's in particular was that staff do not always know what's going on. This comment, made by a Year 9 girl (school B) is a typical example:

- *they [principal and staff] don't really ever get the full aspect of why people are bullying each other and everything so they've got like no idea.*

Comments from Year 9 students indicated that the principal was seen as being the most removed from the bullying. By contrast the Year 6 students indicated their principals were most involved. This may be due to the comparative size of the participating primary and secondary schools.

Guidance officers, counsellors, pastoral care coordinators, and certain teachers were singled out by some students as important people to have involved in working out the policy. For example, a Year 9 girl (school A) suggested that students:

- *work it out with – not the principal but a really trustworthy teacher or school counsellor or someone that deals with that sort of stuff every day so they know what is going on – whilst the principal might not know everything that's happening.*

<u>Parents</u>: Students expressed different views about why, and to what degree, parents should be involved in developing a school's anti-bullying policy. Year 6 students were firmly of the view that

parents should have a say, as were the majority of Year 9 students. Reasons for involving parents included:

- *because they have a right to know what the policy is with the teachers* (Yr 6 girl, school E).
- *because parents can kind of enforce it at home.* (Year 9 girl, school A)
- *[it's] their kids that need protection at school. They come to school to learn not to get bashed up. Parents can then complain.* (Year 9 girl, school B)
- *they are the ones who experience the effects on the students at home plus the parents are also worried for their own children – for their kids own safety.* (Year 9 boy school C)

By contrast, a subset of Year 9 girls in one group said that parents should not be involved because:

- *parents don't matter at school*
- *bullying has changed since parents were are school*
- *parents don't know cyber.*

(ii) why students want to be involved

Three reasons were repeatedly given for why students want to be involved:

- **It is their experience.**
- **The policy will be more effective.**
- **They want their views heard**.

<u>It is their experience</u>: This was the dominant reason. Typical comments were:

- *really I think it [the policy] should be made by the students because the student are the ones who are witness to it – the students are the ones who experience it, they're the ones who are affected by it. The teacher can make it but they're not out they're not bullied.. or out there bullying.* (Year 9 boy, school C)
- *Its the students so you should ask the students what they have to say. What they feel they can and can't do when they're being bullied, 'cos they kind of think we can just walk up to the office and say "Hey, I'm getting bullied" but you can't.* (Year 9 girls, school B)
- *because the teacher and principal, since they're not kids, like the kids being bullied, they probably don't know what would work best .. how it could be stopped ...might not be as good without a child's opinion.* (Year 6 girl, school E)

- *If the staff and principal just do it [make the plan] then they might actually not know what happens. They might come up with something that they've heard of, but they don't actually know what the kids are going through. Maybe the parents do, but they might see it differently to the kids so they should let the kids say what [to] do. So if they have a plan, they know what happens and what the solution [is].* (Year 6 girl, school E)

- *The students are experiencing what happens - and staff don't know* (Year 9 boy, school B)

The policy will be more effective: Students said the policy is more likely to work if they are involved:

- *if you make it up you want to stick to it. But if it's just made up by somebody you don't even know, you don't have interest, you don't want to bother with [it]. But if your friend did or you did, you want to stick to it.* (Year 9 girl, school A)

- *If kids have a say in making the rules well then they might be less likely to break them. Instead of "do this do that" you know "this is what we have chosen to do so now I'm going to do that."* (Year 9 girl school A)

- *the teachers would have something to use against the bullies because if the teachers said "You know, the students made this, this is what the students wanted, how come you're not abiding by it?" it would make the bully feel "good point."* (Year 9 boy, school C)

- *the children might not agree and they might not go by the plan because they didn't have any say in it, they didn't agree and so it just causes strife.* (Year 6 girl, school E)

- *classes should be able to choose representatives ..and they should make a plan and hand it to the teachers to check and if teachers say that's okay that's the plan because that way there's going to be an effective way to deal with it, not a way that teachers thought up …they don't know how it's happening, they don't know where it's happening, they don't know when it's happening, they just know it's happening.* (Year 9 boy, school C)

- *[without us] it wouldn't work because obviously what the kids want is not really what the staff think is right -- they'd be totally different to 14 year olds.* (Year 9 girl, school B)

They want their views heard: Students have a viewpoint that is likely to differ from that of adults and they want to be heard and understood:

- *I hate it when adults automatically assume that since you're younger than them, you're automatically going to agree with them ---- It happens with my parent all the time.--- And the same happens with the school. They assume since they thought the plan's good, we're going to think the plan's good. We're not.* (Year 9 boys, school C)

- *if the adults did it would be from the adults point of view not the children's, and the children might not understand, they will be like "what does that mean" because they didn't have any input* (Year 6 girl, school E)

- *Older adults don't understand a child's point of view. For instance, say I got bullied and I tell my mum and then she might say "Oh she is just trying to do this. She is just trying to get you to be her friend" or something like that. And they treat – they won't understand. They just try and .... so if you compare a child's point of view with an adult's about the school, it would be completely different because the adult isn't actually the person at that situation. And so a child's opinion would be a lot better* – (Year 6 girl, school E)

- *they're a different generation and we're a different generation too* (Year 9 boy, school B)

(iii) ways of involving students in policy development

A variety of ways were suggested for getting students involved. There was **no "best way".**

Some students said they would prefer to have their say in a group while others said they would rather write something down. A number of Year 6 students said some kids would be more comfortable giving their opinions anonymously, so their "*names would not be called out"*. It was clear from the students' discussions that **more than one method** should be used.

Repeatedly suggested methods were:

- **surveys**
- **voting**
- **writing their views down**
- **small group or class discussion**.

Other suggested methods for getting students' input into the policy were:

- debates
- an anonymous suggestions box
- asking friends from other schools to make suggestions
- doing murals of role models and getting students to write their messages up
- *have a sausage sizzle and instead of getting them [students] to pay money – they pay us input* (Year 9 boy, school C)

Many of the students who said they would prefer to have their say in a group suggested '*small groups just like this'* [that is a focus group]. The Year 6 boys (school E) said it was *'definitely the best way'.*

Whatever the method/s, a strong message was that *'every person has a chance to say at least one thing'* and *'not just certain people from each grade'*. Some suggested ways of going about it were:

- *they could get these A4 bits of paper and each student gets one* – [and writes down their opinion on] *how the school could be changed and they staple it all together -- and make like a book of ideas* (Year 6 boy, school E)

- *I reckon the students from each year level – the 1-2s they should be able to make a draft for bullying and then the junior years should .. and the middle years we should be able to make our own and then senior years should be able to make their own – make drafts …relevant to their year level.* (Year 9 boys, school C)

- *for the younger kids you might have a fun way of doing it – colour in your opinion or something --- and for the older kids – a vote or a survey --- the year 7s can go around to the school's older students and they could give them a piece of paper and they write something that might have happened to them. And probably the most amount of bullying, like calling names – whichever bullying thing had the most amount, they could kind of make up a plan and try to stop that one and maybe try another survey.* (Yr 6 girl, school E)

- *Get them to write on a piece of paper, on a form and then we just hand it to the principal and the principal can read it.* ***Just need to get their voice heard.*** (Year 9 boy, school B)

- *well the principal should talk to the staff and then they should actually get the parents to do a survey as well so the parents know what's going on and they can actually agree to it. So they think "Oh OK yes that's fine" and all parents and staff and teachers, staff, parents, everyone, adults should have a survey saying" this is what should go in and why we think that and how it can be stopped."* (Year 6 girl, school E)

(iv) communicating the anti-bullying policy

Students said it was important '**everyone'** know about the policy. Several students explicitly said **teachers** and **parents** should be told as well as students:

- *New teachers – in staff meetings*

- *all teachers not just some*

- *every teacher – because you don't know which teacher is going to get involved.*

- *They could also send a note home tak[ing] some parts out of it [the policy] what is the problem and then what is their solution to it. And then the parents can see what their policy plan is, so they know what is going to happen. And if it happens then they know what to do.* (Year 6 girl, school E)

- *The teachers could do a session on it to the class so everyone understands it – and parents could do a session too – like have a special interview meeting.* (Year 6, school D)

A Year 9 boy (school B) made the point that '***new kids*** *should get told when enrolling'* adding '*I reckon you control it during enrolment*'.

Understanding the policy: Students were asked to suggest ways of making sure everyone understands the plan. They came up with a range of ideas. Their ideas indicate they want the message delivered in multiple ways: visually, verbally, in writing, and acted out. Many of communication mediums suggested have two common features. They involve:

- **demonstration** of bullying scenarios and solutions with follow-up discussion, and/or
- **actively involve kids** in delivering the message.

There was a strong sense that demonstrations of scenarios and solutions must be accompanied by discussion, and when students deliver the message, they want to do it in imaginative and creative ways. This is evident from the methods which, when suggested by a student, drew support from other students in the group. They were:

- *don't just say it – you've got to reinforce* [the message] --- *yeah do a skit – like acting it out so people are going to pay attention if somebody is actually doing something.* [Rather than] *someone just speaking make it interesting, mix it up a bit and show everyone how you can help – show a scenario and how to fix it --- reminding people in different ways in an ongoing way what the policy is.* (Year 9 girls school A)

- *You've got to get, like, kids saying it or something – 'cos they listen to kids.* (Year 9 girls, school B)

- *Say for example the school made a character – almost a superman figure and he's in a big picture that says "Don't bully, it's bad, I wouldn't do that " and that can be for the preps. -- They could take a vote in their class and think of their favourite superhero -- and tally up the votes – and whoever is their favourite superhero they could have that on the poster.* (Year 9 boys, school C)

- *You could make a movie about it. -- Yeah and you could put a little reading with it and say "well this is how bullying has affected this person, tell a story about it and stuff" -- And you think about how it feels to be bullied. Think about it from the bully's perspective. Then if you come from the victim's point of view it sort of changes the whole factor of the way you think about it, you know what I mean*. (Year 9 boys, school C)

- *We could make up a catchy slogan .. like a catch phrase .. the little kids could make one, the early years could make one, the junior years could make one, the middle years and then the senior years could make one.* (Year 9 boys, school C)

- *Have a mascot that would go around the classes and they'd help people who were being bullied, or they'd give the class good ideas on how to help people who were being bullied.* (Year 6 students, school D)

- *Most people listen when the year 7s come to our class … so maybe they should go around the school and have a chat with each class.* (Year 6 girls, school E)

- *A play a term.* (see details under 'reinforcing the policy' below)

Notably, the value of using drama and students as mediums was also evident in the list of things the students nominated when asked to name the best thing their school has done to combat bullying. (See page 44). Those things included:

- performances by an external Theatre group
- being shown a video about bullying and discussing it
- role plays by grade 7s on each of the types of bullying
- a whole of school activity in which students wrote anti-bullying messages on coloured hands strung up around the school.

Other ways students suggested the policy be communicated were:

- *Posters that aren't boring, bright colours*
- *a quote of the day, every day*
- *In the classrooms there should be like, discussion, like here*
- *On Facebook and the school's intranet*
- *In the newsletter and student handbook*

(v) reinforcing the policy – how often and in what ways

Most groups said the school community should be **continually** reminded of what the policy says. Several groups made suggestions about doing something additional **each term*:***

- *Every term someone could come and talk to us about bullying and the new things that have been added to our plan.* (Year 6 girl, school D)
- *A survey at the beginning and end of term to see if opinions change.* (Yr 9 girl, school E)
- *A play – we have in one every year but that's not really often enough – we should have one every term – because that's four a term.--- Different issues that happen at school every term and they could do it on a two year cycle. --- Just mix it up, do different social issues, performances. --- It's like the way the curriculum keeps on cycling …then we could mix it into the curriculum as learning – intertwining it, if you want to put it that way.* (Year 9 boys, school C)
- *And every time they had a period of time when they've got a certain, really big amount of complaints about bullying, they could remind people again and so probably at different points it would go down at bit but later in the year when everyone gets tired and restless it will probably go back up again and they could remind them at a time the complaints come up again.* (Year 6 girl, school E)
- *Regular talks about it – keep talking about it.* (Year 9 boys, school B)

Keeping track of bullying: Year 6 girls (school E) indicated it was important for schools to survey students to find out what forms of bullying were most common and have some mechanism for keeping track of bullying complaints. Year 9 boys (school C) also suggested that teachers should keep a record of *'those students who are bullying.'*

- *They should collect all complaints from people and keep an eye on the bullies' names who are repeated and kind of have a little chat with them – but you don't actually say out loud "oh we found a bully and these people have been our main victims."* (Year 6 girl, school E)

- *There could be a teacher, a special teacher you could go to and you could just talk about it with them – so if you were getting bullied or you knew someone you could just tell that teacher anonymously. And then that teacher would be in charge of all the bullying that goes around in the school and they could keep track. They could tell the principal when something was getting a bit out of hand and if the parents needed to know. There is someone to keep track of everything.* (Year 6 girls, school E)

- *You should keep a record of who the student is that's actually bullying because if someone else is subject to the bullying, then they can just ...The bullies don't always pick on the one person. Like sometimes they do, but it's normally a variety of students. And one problem with our structure is if they're good for so many weeks, then they're back up to independent which means it's a warning the next time.* (Year 9 boys, school C)

(vi) values and behaviours a policy should encourage

Students were asked what positive values and behaviours an anti-bullying policy should encourage. '*Respect*' was a recurring theme across all groups. Collectively, students said:

- Respect others
- Understand and accepting differences
- Treat others as you want them to treat you
- Be inclusive
- Be caring and supportive
- Be safe

When responding to this question, Year 6 students at school D talked about how important it is to be connected and included. They made this very practical suggestion:

- *start up a game cause sometimes when you just sit around bullying can happen and gossiping and rumours. So maybe at lunchtime cause what we do it we start up a game – games that include lots of people – each Thursday in our big break our class elect a game and like refs and captains and we have a field and then the whole class plays against each other.* (Year 6 students, school D)

3. Developing procedural steps to respond to bullying incidents

What the Toolkit says:

Element 4 of the *Working Together Toolkit* recommends schools collaboratively develop procedural steps to appropriately respond to bullying incidents that are clearly documented and clearly define the roles and responsibilities of staff, students and parents/carers.

The *Toolkit* –

— recommends implementing clear and effective systems that students and parents/carers can use to report bullying behavior, supported by a school staff aware of reporting procedures
— refers to research findings that students who are covertly bullied seek help from their friends most often, followed by their parents /carers, then by a teacher or staff member; with one third of males and 23% of females not seeking help from anyone – highlighting the need for all members of the community to be involved in developing appropriate reporting methods
— suggests a range of reporting methods may be used which could include electronic bully boxes, secret ballot techniques, consumer satisfaction surveys
— cites that reporting systems are of value when students have confidence their concerns will be treated promptly and seriously and action taken that will not make their situation worse; can access reporting routes easily; know who will deal with their concerns and have trust in both them and the systems the school uses, and are aware malicious reporting will be taken seriously
— emphasises the importance of parental reporting and identifies what is required for methods to be most effective
— identifies a range of intervention strategies which may be effective in responding to bullying incidents including the traditional disciplinary approach, strengthening the target, mediation, restorative practice, support group method and method of shared concern
— recommends that the students involved and interventions applied must be monitored over time

What students said about:

(i) what actions kids can take when bullying occurs:

If bullied themselves, students in every group said they had three options:

- ignore it/walk away
- be assertive and tell the bully to "*stop, I don't like it*" or
- tell someone.

If they witness someone else being bullied, most students indicated the options were to:

- tell the bully to stop
- walk away with the person being bullied and
- report it.

The degree of confidence students expressed in these processes varied by group and by Year level.

Year 6 students generally expressed confidence in these processes. They indicated that ignoring 'the bully' or being assertive was sometimes enough and the statements they made about reporting to teachers were generally positive. For example:

- *Sometimes I just say "stop being rude. It's not nice; it's not cool." I just say those sort of things. Until you get other friends and try and not gang up but just show them. -- Show them they're not the best. --- When you stand up for yourself, don't be like the bully, but make yourself feel like there's not anything wrong.* (Year 6 girls, school E)

Year 9 students expressed less confidence in these processes. One group of Year 9 students in particular was quite pessimistic. At this stage, it is important to note that the students in every group made positive comments about their respective schools. Rather the implication was they did not feel the choices they had for dealing with bullying were effective.

Examples of their concerns about walking away and being assertive included:

- *thing is you walk away they can follow you. People tell you to walk away. It's called "They walk with you".*
  Where do you walk to though?
  You can't walk anywhere really. You can walk to the office and that's it but if you're on the oval they're going to be able to haunt you the whole way up. (Year 9 boy, school C)

- *I don't think people are going to want to just stop it. Like I think you would have to say something like "piss off" because they're not going to listen to you if you just say "Stop it I don't like it."* (Year 9 girl, school B)

- *[Telling them to stop] it depends how big that person because if you're small .. you can't do anything to them. --- The only chance you have is to run [and]--- if they have a big group, they can cut you off..* (Year 9 boys, school C)

Reporting was cited as often ineffectual because *'nothing happens'* or *'it makes things worse'*. (See page 33). Consequently, some students resort to alternative strategies, as demonstrated by the separate conversations of two subsets of Year 9 boys:

Group 1:

- *and if you know there's a certain place* [the bully] *hangs out, try to avoid that place.*
- *Go to the library..*
- *but you want to buy tuckshop …. Just go through here, just come round this side instead … and get your mate to get you something in the line…*
- *but it shouldn't have to get to that ….*
- *It shouldn't have to, but if that's what you have to do to avoid bullying, then I suppose its sort of working.*
- *That's bullying. We should be able to walk around freely and talk to people without having people by our sides.*
- *And scared.*
- [We should be able to] *feel safe anywhere in school.*

Group 2:

- *the library's really a pretty good place to seek refuge cause the teachers are there and they notice if something's getting too rowdy*
- *but the problem with the library is ichat* [school intranet]
- *That's one way we get bullied – people ichat "I hate you" and "stuff you" and I'm gonna hit you"*

(ii) telling someone

All groups indicated it was important for kids who are bullied to tell someone, even if they did not report it. Two themes emerged when students talked about telling someone. Students want:

- **to tell someone they can trust**
- **someone to listen**

Someone you can trust: When asked who kids should tell, the most consistent response across the groups was "*someone you can **trust**.*"

- *I'd usually go to someone I can trust and I'll tell them.* (Year 9 boy, school B)
- *you've got to trust – because there's some teachers that will go out and say "You did this to so-and-so" and then the bully will go "Oh I'm going to go and get them back."* (Year 9 girl, school A)

Someone who will listen: Some students also said there are times when they simply want someone to listen, not necessarily to 'fix' it for them:

- *even if like, telling speaking your feelings to someone ..if you know they're not going to spread it …sometimes telling somebody makes you feel a whole lot better.* (Year 9 boy, school C)
- *A person who you can go to, but not have them give a whole lot of advice – well it depends if you want it – because I hate it when somebody gives me all this advice and things and you just – you don't want advice you just want to tell someone about it.* (Year 6 girl, school E)
- *A counsellor or someone at the school [who] can give you advice on how to do it yourself, how to solve it yourself without getting anyone else involved.* (Year 9 girl, school C)

Who they would tell. When asked who they trust to tell, students generally nominated someone they knew, such as a teacher, parent, a close friend, older sibling, other relative or a school counsellor. For example, two Year 9 students said:

- *I trust my teacher and even though it may escalate to something worse at least I will have someone on my side. She's more powerful and it'll help me regain my friends... I trust my teacher she's one who will listen.* (Year 9 girl, school C)

- *My cousin in school. He has had a lot of experience with abusement and bullying, and he just – he always tells me, you've just got to walk away. Yes. You've got to take your mind off it and go and play footy or something. And just try to stay away from that person*. (Year 9 boy, school B)

Several Year 9 girls (school A) said it would be helpful:

- *if you had a friend, like a partner that you can go to, like anyone at any age in the school – to talk about your problems – like a buddy ----or one certain teacher or counsellor who comes in and keeps everything confidential and just someone to talk to---- but its really hard when you tell somebody because obviously they're going to want to fix it.*

Reference was made to telling teachers and parents more than friends were mentioned. Several students in different groups indicated that friends can't always be trusted. For example a subset of year 9 girls (school A) agreed that:

- *its really hard as well because you think you [can] trust some girls but then you tell them and they go around and tell everyone. Its hard to find a friend that you can trust completely that won't tell anyone.*

Not everyone said they would tell someone they know. Some students suggested they would prefer to talk to someone they didn't know, such as a counsellor or the Kids Helpline, instead of, or before, speaking to a parent or teacher. The Kids Helpline was mentioned by Year 6s as well as Year 9s.

- *someone who is experienced who can tell them what to do.* (Year 6 girl, school E)

- *in year 6 I saw a counsellor for a few weeks and that helped. And last year. It helps a lot to have someone you can talk to who's not going to tell anyone else – its not like it's your mum who's gonna let slip to one of her friends at a party and then everybody's gonna know. It's not like a teacher who might let slip at a conference or in a meeting.* (Year 9 boy, school C)

- *1800 kids line I always call that when I'm in trouble, When I, like, have trouble with my family.* (Year 9 girl, school B)

- *It would help to call the Kids Helpline because you can tell someone who can't get involved and really has no idea. But actually telling someone and having them sympathise with you. And just know there's someone on your side.* (Year 9 girl, school C)

(iii) why kids don't report

There was general agreement in every group that kids who are bullied or witness bullying should report it to a teacher, but students acknowledged that many kids don't. Year 9s discussed this more than Year 6s. Reasons given can be summed up as:

- **It can make things worse**
- **Nothing happens**
- **It's embarrassing**

It can make things worse. Students fear that reporting will make their situation worse. Not surprisingly, their worst fear is that the bully will find out. Associated fears are that they will be called dibber-dobbers by their peers or the bullying may be seen as their fault. Typical comments were:

- *they're scared the bully will hurt them even more. More than what they've been already.* (Year 9 boy, school B)
- *Everybody gets called the dibber-dobber if they go and tell – or even if they're a witness and they go to the office and have a statement straight away they're just in it. It doesn't matter.* (Year 9 girl, school B)
- *[You] try to express your feelings to the principal and how you feel when someone is bullying you – but you really can't express your feelings. Because they're just like – they like try to act like you're being bad and you can confess.* (Year 9 girl, school B)

Nothing Happens. A number of students also indicated that some kids give up reporting when nothing happens to fix their situation or their report is not believed. Unfortunately this can then lead to an escalation of the situation. For example, a Year 9 boy (school C) said:

- *At my old school, I've had incidents – this was where people were punching me and everything. I went to the teacher. The teacher didn't care because it was the new kid. He was popular. And it actually went to the point where he wouldn't stop hitting me, and I actually had to react and I walked away. And he came back after me and I had to react again, and I actually had to stop him from being able to hit me again. And I got into more trouble because I did more damaging – even though I'd told the teacher several times he was hitting me. There was people there saying, "He threw, like, eight punches before I threw the first one". And the problem is sometimes it's a case of if you're the kid who isn't often around with friends, if you're not that popular, you're more likely to not be believed.*

It's embarrassing. Students continually referred to bullying as **embarrassing.** *'It's embarrassing to tell the teacher', 'it's embarrassing to tell your parents', 'it's embarrassing if other kids find out'.*

- *You get embarrassed about telling someone. ---- Yeah. You'll seem like you're weaker and they'll make out like your weak because you told someone ------- Or you're just weak for not being able to do anything about it. And you tell someone and you think "Oh they probably think I can't handle my own problems".* (Year 9 girls, school C)

The feeling implied by students is best reflected in this comment from a Year 6 student who said, if she was bullied, she would:

- *feel sad, angry and disappointed in herself.*

There was also a sense in the discussions that kids who are bullied lose friends, as illustrated by this comment from a Year 9 boy:

- *You're just a source of – a sense of isolation because… if you've been bullied, not many people want to see you.* (Year 9 boy, school C)

(iv) what would make them comfortable about reporting

When asked what would make them more comfortable about reporting bullying incidents, the responses from students across all groups had two recurring themes. They would feel more comfortable about **reporting to teachers** if they:

- **Could trust it would be kept confidential** and
- **Know the problem would be fixed**

Students also spoke about who they prefer to report to in their school. It was clear from their comments that **relationships with teachers matter.**

Confidentiality: Students want to know they can trust the person they tell will keep their information confidential. Specifically, students in every group said it would make them more comfortable if the teacher they speak to about a bullying incident, does not use their name when dealing with the bully.

Many students used the term 'anonymous' as synonymous with 'confidential', especially the Year 6s, however a number of students actually want to be able to anonymously report bullying incidents. Their reasoning is that anonymity (or confidentiality when they report) will protect them from the bully, from being labelled a dobber and being further embarrassed.

- *Everything must be anonymous and confidential -- Otherwise they'll get bullied --Because – somehow, some way, it always leaks out that it was this person that said that and then other people go looking for them ---Yes like last year I had an incident down at the oval and I got hurt and I didn't tell anyone …and then on assembly Mr [principal] said something – talked about it, and like how the hell did it get to that – because I only told my parents and I didn't hear them not once talk to the principal.* (Year 9 boys, school C)

- *If you're being bullied, it would be much easier to tell the teacher ..if there's not a kid behind you, or there's not a kid going around saying "This person is bullying this person" like a private conversation with the teacher.* (Year 6 student, school D)

- *Cos ..telling a teacher is like a bit weird and hard. Cos you don't just go up to a teacher and say "Oh yeah this person has been bullying me". -- You don't tell them why. --Its a bit weird and uncomfortable. -- They want to know what or the names. -- It feels a bit awkward. Even if you ask for confidentiality*. (Year 9 girls, school B)

- *Some kids probably think "Oh, if I tell, the bully is going to find out and make it worse and everything." But if the teachers or seniors or other girls that encourage that no one is going to find out if you – like, it's all going to be confidential and like, if they can't do*

anything to you and everything, then they'd probably have more guts to like speak up. (Year 9 girls, school A)

Maintaining confidentiality can present obvious difficulties for teachers (and parents). How do you help without disclosing what they have told you? The following comment from a Year 9 student illustrates what can happen from the student's perspective.

- *I think it's about trust, really, being able to trust the person you're telling because you don't want them to go off – I know – it happened to me last year. I told a teacher about something and she went off and told the other teachers, then all these teachers started getting involved. It's like I really need to trust the person that you're telling so you can be open.* (Year 9 girl, school C)

For those who wanted to report **anonymously** the most common suggestion put forward was the idea of a Box. Some Year 6 students (school D) said they already had a 'bully box" in their classroom. A subset of Year 9 girls (school C) explained their box idea this way:

- *I reckon that should be done once a week in every class and .. everyone has to put down at least one problem and some sort of solution like what you want done about it or don't want done about it. --- Or once a fortnight. --- And the teacher would get them out and read it to the class so everyone heard the problem and then she could help the person without directing it to them. Don't include names, [and if you want] you can write on it that you don't want it to be read out. You just want someone to know to get it off your chest.*

Knowing the problem will be fixed: Students also said that they would be more comfortable about reporting if they had "*reassurance action will be taken*," "*that it gets fixed*", that it will be "*taken seriously*", that there would be "*consequences for the bully*". Typical comments were:

- *Just have teachers who won't just sit there and say, "Oh, just get over it." Have teachers who will, as soon as you, you know, let them know or notify them of the bully, that they will act, they will let the right people know, they will, you know, get in and do stuff, because in a lot of my old schools, what'd they'd do is they'd just say, "Oh, just – you know, it'll be all right. Just get over it. You know, they'll – you know, they'll leave you alone eventually." ---- They [the bully] have to know it's going to be taken more seriously, then they are less likely to do it.* (Year 9 boys, school C)

- *tell stricter teachers – not those who will let them off with a warning* (Year 6 boy, school D)

- *Total confidentiality -- [and] that teachers will keep a closer eye on the bully. Instead of just passing it off sort of as "Oh they promised they won't do it again." --- And keep a closer eye on the student being bullied and the actual students who's bullying them. Make sure there's no interaction with them. And knowing that action will be taken.* (Year 9 boys, school C)

- *I don't think teachers deal with it all the time, most of the time they ignore it. Even if they do try and do it, they don't normally do it right. They'll give them a warning. I don't think*

going up to the person and saying "Well M told me that you're bullying them so you're in trouble now" kind of thing – that doesn't work. (Year 9 girls, school C)

The value which students place on bullying incidents being handled confidentially and effectively is illustrated by the answers the Year 6 girls (school E) gave when asked what is the best thing their school has done to combat bullying. (See page 44.) Their answers included:

- *Probably that they sort [it] out as soon as possible so it gets stopped at the earliest moment and they don't let it go on and so it won't happen again --Some people in my class have been bullied badly and the teachers and principal have taken care of it really fast, and its anonymously and discreetly. -- If you're bullied, it usually goes straight to the principal, there is no stuffing around with teachers that just give you like a warning or something. You go straight to the principal every time.* (Year 6 girls, school E).

Relationships with teachers matter: Who students report to often depends on the person not the role. This seems particularly so for Year 9 students. Their comments strongly suggest that many students are more comfortable about reporting when they perceive a connection with the teacher, while reporting to a teacher who they feel they have no relationship with can be problematic.

- *And some teachers have their own opinions of some students you know – favouritism is a big thing that teachers normally do – so there should be no favouritism when they're dealing with it.* (Year 9 boy, school C)

- *when you were at school, remember those really old teachers that were really mean? Well no-one listens to them. No one does. But if you tell it to someone cool and they say "no this is not on guys. You know just break it up, stop being idiots" people will listen to them, because they think "Well you know they're cool. I want to be like that person" so they' listen to them.* (Year 9 boy, school C)

- *You might like [a particular teacher] more than a [particular counsellor]. Because she's actually doing something not like the other teachers. And she gives a good vibe. She's got a good relationship with most kids, she's really nice. But if you get into trouble by her, she's not short tempered. ---- You really need to know the person as well, because I wouldn't go up to a stranger and like "Hey look at my problems". We don't need to know the counsellors – you don't know them. Whereas Ms T gets around and does come and talk, like even at lunch break she'll walk past and say hi and just talk to you and stuff whereas you never really see the other people. They are just strangers. ---- Yeah, counsellors just make you awkward.* (Conversation among Year 9 girls, school C)

The above views were echoed by Year 9 girls from school A who spoke about the need for teachers and students to do more to create positive relationships as a means of combating bullying.

- *have a good relationship with a teacher – but not like be a teachers pet have a good relationship with a teacher that you can approach and then if it happens [bullying] go and see that teacher straight away because they'll be more inclined to listen to you and do something about it – but don't be the teacher's pet.* (Year 9 girl, school A)

- *when teachers are on ground duty – maybe they can walk around a bit more and just pay attention. See what's going on in the different sitting groups. They can come in and have a conversation with students not just 'hats ladies' – some might call its eavesdropping but it's for the safety of the students.* (Year 9 girl, school A)

Year 9 girls (school C) also emphasised the need for **teachers to model positive behaviours:**

- *a positive surrounding – some people coming home after school feel really bad because even the teacher yelled at them for not having something right------- and I know some teachers what do bully. And if some of the teachers stopped bullying, they would be a lot happier too. So they wouldn't think it was okay. Because if teachers bully, then they think its okay to say this. And the teacher might be joking about like a whole class – she's up in the front of the class and the whole class will hear it and then it'll just be a long standing joke. I know that has happened to a few kids. ---- I think – change everyone's approach on things. Some people approach things with an angry face and some people just calmly approach it. ---- I don't think they [teachers] should be around kids if they're bullying them. It's their job to make us safe and for us to get taught by them and some just don't. ---- I know heaps of kids what don't come just because of the teacher.*

(iv) involving parents

<u>Schools involving parents</u>:

If a student is bullying others, their parents should be told. This was the consensus view across all groups. There were different views about whether or not the parent of the bully should be asked to come to the school for a meeting. Year 9 boys (school B) suggested it could just be making contact to say:

- *Your kids are being – mucking around – just want you to know – is there any problems at home or anything?* [Then the parents] *can help stop it by talking to them. In a calm way, not by yelling at them because you just feel angry and aggressive.*

A stronger approach was suggested by Year 9 boys in another group. Their view was:

- *The bullier, their parents should be told straight away. And they should have to come in, no matter what, even if its petty bullying.*

One boy, who admitted to bullying and being bullied, agreed parents should be told immediately, every time:

- *Parents should be told every time 'cause I've had incidences when I've been bullied or I've bullied – I'm not proud to admit that I have bullied – and my mum hasn't been notified until the day before a meeting with the teachers and she's said it before, "I wanna be notified the day it happens not three or four weeks later"* (Year 9 boy, school C)

However, a view repeated in several groups was that:

- *calling parents is not much of a consequence, some parent just don't care.* (Year 9 girl, school A)

If a student is being bullied, the view of a subset of Year 9 boys was that the school should notify the student's parents:

- *If its petty bullying then I think* [their] *parents should be notified of it, just to watch their son or daughter's behaviour but they shouldn't have a big sort of 'hubabub' about it. If its serious there should be a big hubabub ---- they come into the school, they speak with the other parents here.* (Year 9 boys, school C)

However when it came to telling their parents themselves about being bullied, there were markedly different views expressed by students in the different groups about if, and when, parents should be told.

<u>Students telling parents</u>:

The majority of students acknowledged they should tell their parents if they are bullied, but many also expressed reservations about doing so. While some students said they would tell their parents *'immediately'*, others suggested they would only tell them *'after they had dealt with it',* or *'when it got serious',* or when they couldn't handle it themselves.

It was principally Year 9 students who expressed reservations about telling parents, however a few Year 6 girls also said they might not want to talk to their parents in the first instance. They spoke about talking to someone else first.

The reasons which students gave for not telling parents had similarities to why they don't tell teachers. Primarily the reason given was '*parents just interfere and make it worse'.* Other reasons related to *'being embarrassed'* or perceiving it as *'not their business'*. The notion that it was not their parents' business was expressed by several Year 9 students and may reflect their growing sense of autonomy.

Parents will make it worse.

- *because your parents normally don't do the right thing by you. --- Like they don't understand its a big deal ---- because they don't understand where we're coming from and they just go and tell someone and then that can make it worse. They'll take it right to the kids that do it ---- And then make it worse.----- Or talk to their parents. Yeah. "You can do it. Make friends with the person now" How? They, like, hate you!* (Year 9 girls, school C)

- *when we get bullied, like, physical and like, at school, verbal. I know, parents are like, "Yeah, you should tell us everything that's going on," and so – but you don't want to because --- and you don't want your parents interfering.* (Year 9 boy, school C)

- *I think kids don't tell their parents because – they want to tell their parents but they don't want their parents to call up the school.* (Year 9 girls, school B)

It's embarrassing.

- *Actually I wouldn't tell parents but I know you should – because I'd feel embarrassed about it. Personally it may be too embarrassing to tell parents. I think that's why a lot of victims don't tell their parents and they don't want to get into trouble.* (Yr 6 girl, school E)

It's not their business.

- *Like, little kids, they will always tell their parents, because their parents are like .. Gods … and will protect them …but whereas you get to, like, our age and you get bullied, you don't really want to tell them, because it's your life, you want to keep it personal to you*.

- *Yeah, and it's your domain. It's like, your parents – at this age, your parents are just there, like, push them aside a bit. They're just over in the corner, they just keep feeding us each night like we love them, we tell them we love them, which you do.* (Year 9 boys, school C)

- *…didn't tell parents 'cause it's really none of their business. Only tell them if it's something you can't deal with.* (Year 9 girl, school B)

(vi) consequences for the bully

Students across all groups said there should be consequences for anyone who bullies. The strong majority view was that consequences must be **immediate** and **meaningful.**

- ***Immediate punishment****, if you go to a teacher – it should always be followed up the day that you tell them not storing it up for later.* (Year 9 boys, school C)

- *its got to be* ***… proper actions*** *and they actually feel bad so they' don't do it again.* (Year 9 girl, school A)

Warnings were dismissed as ineffectual. If there is a warning, the view was it should be one only:

- *One warning. One warning, that's it. And that will influence them to stop fighting.* (Year 9 boy school B)

When asked what the consequences should be, students principally spoke about **disciplinary measures** such as writing out lines, detentions, internal and external suspensions, community service and exclusion – even though students also expressed a view that these measures don't often work:

- *I've had people who I've told on and they've got community service. They've filled the bag [with rubbish] and then come and dumped it on my head. It's not gonna work.* (Year 9 boy, school C)

- *A lot of time when you do out of school suspensions ..they just stay at home playing X box or something depending on the parent.... some parents don't give a damn... They don't really get anything out of it. They think of it as a holiday.* (Year 9 boy, school C)

The notion that an external suspension was just another holiday for some students was repeated in several groups.

- *I don't want to be rude but some parents don't really give a s**** and then they go home a for like five or six days and their parents don't do anything. So its just another holiday. They get to do whatever they want and don't pay for what they've done. It just doesn't sink in.* (Year 9 girl, school B)

Students, especially Year 9s, generally indicated that lunchtime and afternoon detentions, and internal suspensions were the disciplinary approaches which can have greater affect:

- *If they get suspended they should not go home but be at the office for all of class time. Do work at the office. Hard work.* (Year 9 girl, school B)

- *After school suspension that kills people, their special times --- and get heaps of work and things.* (Year 9 girl, school B)

- *If they weren't allowed in the school grounds at lunchtime then they would finally figure out that they shouldn't do it anymore otherwise they'll just be in the principal's office all day.* (Year 6 boy, school E)

- *This sounds really antisocial of me but it's really the friend group that's motivating them to bully cause if they don't have their friends they've got no other reason to do it – they've got no power – so if you can actually manage to cut them off from their friends as a punishment – like keep them at the office 3 lunchtimes a week would make them lose the influence from their friends, cause once they lose that influence ... you're gonna find that it happens less.* (Year 9 boy, school C)

Interestingly, when asked what was the best thing their school had done to combat bullying, some Year 9 girls (school B) said *'a return to suspensions'*, and some year 9 boys (school C) said *'some of the internal suspensions'.*

There were different views about exclusion, with some students suggesting it should only be for very serious incidents, while a minority of students suggested otherwise.

In the main, students indicated the consequences should be dependant on the frequency and severity of the bullying, but all bullying should incur a consequence.

Knowing what the consequences will be was also cited as important. Year 6 students from school D explained how bullying was addressed as part of their school's positive behaviour plan with a rewards system based on behaviour keys ABCDE. They know clearly what the consequences will be:

- *you get one key if your behaviour is rated A, B or C. If you go to a D or E you have your key taken off you and don't get to participate in fun day. At the end of each term,* [kids] *do a key level – a piece of paper with all the rules you have to follow and you mark yourself. Then the teacher marks you – so you have a bit of a say in it as well. You get a D or E for not following the 5 [principles]; for getting into trouble a lot – like a mark for your behaviour. ------ And there's a reward at the end of the term and if you're an A, B or C you can go to the rewards day and we do all sorts of activities. And if you're a D or an E you have to go to work. So it kind of encourages people to want to do it. It encourages them to work to the best of their ability.* (Year 6 students, school D)

Several groups suggested a possible consequence for the bully could be to *'make them apologise.'* In addition to incurring a consequence, there was a general view among students that that someone should talk to the bully about why they are bullying and explain the impact of their behaviour. (See next section).

(vii) helping those involved

Help for the bully: When students were asked what sort of help might change the bully's behaviour, common responses were counselling, anger management, private conversations with the principal, a letter of apology to the person they have bullied, and talking with the person they had bullied:

- *Talk to principal about it and why they are doing it. Have conversations – it might be a family problem.---- They should just have one on one meetings because he might not want to talk about it in the presence of his parents. ----- It could be difficult for the bully, they might be bullied – or family problems – so the bully should have someone to talk to, to tell them everything and then help them because it might be really hard for the bully and .... talk about other ways to behave What to do, what not to do, so a little help.* (Year 6 girls, school E)

- *And there should be some form of anger management or something, some form of counselling to find out why they're bullying to help them stop.* (Year 9 boys, school C)

- *Even they could get counselling because if they have got bad things going on at home, they could get counseling for that then they might stop bullying. Yes if they get counselled for that then their issues will be sorted out so they'll stop giving us issues. (*Year 9 girls, school B)

- *Maybe if it's a small thing the teacher could have a small meeting with the bully and person being bullied to just talking it through – if they don't realise they're bullying.*

Many students were cautious about getting the parties involved to talk issues through, fearing it would only make matters worse. However, some Year 9 students (school B) suggested the success of this approach can depend on how the meeting is facilitated:

- *Maybe sit down with the person they've been bullying. See what they've done to them. And sort it out. I reckon that is one thing you should be able to tell the principal. Like get them to organise a meeting. Like just them two (victim and bully) in a room by themselves and get them to sort out their problems. Without teachers butting in. But – so they can just, sort of, like, "What have I done to make you do this?" or whatever. Yes, like, especially if they are just bullying you and you have got no idea what you've done wrong.*

Facilitator: You are saying that the teacher shouldn't be in that sort of meeting?

- *No, because – I'm not being mean, but they just butt in and tell you what to say and stuff. Yes. And it's like - - - So you can't really get it out when they're in there.*
- *Sometimes when, like, you're in the office and you're like, talking, like, to the bully or whatever – like, or you're the bully and you're talking to the witness or something, you want to, like, say, "I bullied you because you're swearing and calling me and – like, swear words," like, you know. You want to swear, but then, like you can't.*
- *Like, if we were in the office with Mr Principal you'd be talking it out, and then he's like, "Well, why would you do that? Why did you do this?" Like, they just butt in. Because, like, just to cut it down, we can't really say what we want to say to the student because, like, the teachers are there and stuff. But we don't want to say it because they're in there.*

Is there anyone that you would feel you would trust or be comfortable enough sitting in there?

- *The guidance officer. I reckon the guidance officer would be good, because you could just say, like, "Can you just be quiet for a second, and then let us talk?" And then he can come back in. Or, like, they could just sit to the side and then just say, "Can you be quiet for a minute?" and then talk, and then they can talk.*

There was a strong view across the groups that it would be helpful to **make 'the bully' aware** of how their words or actions can affect the other person. Typical comments included:

- *Get someone who has been bullied and something really bad has happened to them – get them to come and speak to them to show that this is what happens to people so don't do it.* (Year 9 girls, school A)

- *And you think about how it feel to be bullied. Think about it from the bully's perspective. Then if you come from the victim's point of view it sort of changes the whole factor of the way you think about it, you know what I mean*.(Year 9 boy, school C)

- *Show them how much they are affecting people's lives because most people are kidding about it but it does effect them.* (Year 9 girl, school C)

It is worth noting at this point the comments of the Year 9 boy who identified as having bullied '*everyone at state school*" He described the **impact bullying can have on the bully**:

- *I used to bully everyone at state school. And bullying does affect people though. And it does affect the bullies – the bullies life too – if I get a ….. education, might get expelled from school, you know, and stay at home. That's the sort of thing I didn't want to do. I didn't want to be staying home all the time. I used to bully people a lot. So I just, you know, stopped bullying, and I just looked forward to my education. It affected other people by – it was me.*

Help for students who are bullied: Students consistently said that kids who are bullied need reassurance and support, time out, to have friends and be encouraged to move on. There was also a view that they need help to become more confident about how to stand up to the bullies. Typical comments were:

- **reassurance and support**

  - *They need some real support from, not only their friends but families as well ..to get back to that place.. because when you're down here, like in a hole, and you've dug yourself a little shelter .. and you're just trying to get out of it – that's when your parents need to help you climb out of it. That's when your friends come in and they support you*. (Year 9 boy, school C)

- **to have friends**

  - *If bystanders know they are being bullied, they should ..comfort them and be their friend so they don't feel like they are as weak as the bully*. *--- Other students [to] play with them so they're not as lonely and they've got protection from the bully – and the bully doesn't get what he wants because there's lots of witnesses.* (Year 6 students, school D)

- *Security. Feeling they belong. And close friends as well, because if you have close friends they support you and help you along. And if you know the person who is being bullied is good at something get them to do that thing so they feel pretty good. They feel more confident when they're doing it like everyday stuff.* (Year 9 girls, school A)

- *when you have friends around you can just ignore it and say "Oh don't worry about it." [But] if you've already been bullied to the point where you've lost all your friends, then its harder to ignore because its such a major issue*. (Year 9 girls, school C)

- **time out**

  - *Personal time with someone to express their feelings so they don't keep it bottled up inside and they feel really bad.* (Year 6 student, school D)

  - *a free period for you and your friends to recoup and [discuss] what just happened. – they take you away for half an hour, away from that environment. They talk to you.* (Year 9 boys, school C)

- **encouraged to "move on"**

  - *Encourage the student to leave it behind them and move on. Not easy to do – normally if there was a physical thing, its hard to get out of your memory. cause it's a … nightmare and it stays with you.* (Year 6 student, school D)

- **counselling**

  - *I got bullied for being really, really, really antisocial last year but that was in the weeks after ……..and I really was about to hit someone and then I went and saw the counsellor, talked to him about it, and it just went away. It gets your emotions out.* (Yr 9 boy, school C)

- **confidence building**

  - *They need personality building. They need things to establish who they are and just how they can stop this. Like how to say no, that's not right. --- confidence in not letting the bully get to them.* (Year 9 girl, school A)

  - *Students don't feel comfortable because normally a lot of the time teachers just say "Oh you have to speak to the bully rad-di-rah-rah". Sometimes the students don't feel comfortable about actually confronting the bully. It needs to be like a gradual introduction – reintroduction.* (Year 9 boy, school C)

(viii) the best thing their school has done to combat bullying

The 'things' which students nominated as the best thing their school had done to combat bullying are described below 'in their own words'. They highlight the importance students place on (i) strengthening their knowledge about bullying and developing the skills to deal with it (ii) being in agreement with how the school deals with those involved when bullying occurs and (iii) having someone they can talk to.

School E: Metropolitan primary school.

Boys:

- ***Just saying bullying won't be tolerated.***

- ***And the anti-bullying program*** *– it's a new thing: There's bully bulldozer, icy isolation – that's someone who does own thing, roving random and crazy conflict.*

Girls:

- ***We have these character charts****. And there is four different types of bullying and every week the grade 7s do a role play on a each of the types of bullying and when year 7s come in to do an example and each character – there is one a week – the teachers explain it to the classes. There's icy isolation, roving random and bully bulldozer. They make the names seem fun so the younger kids are a bit more encouraging and start to look at it, because of the pictures and names. And that chart – it kind of tells you what isn't bullying so you ignore what isn't bullying – like there is one thing on bullying and then there are other things that may seem like bullying but actually aren't because they don't continue*

- *Probably that they* ***sort [it] out as soon as possible*** *so it gets stopped at the earliest moment and they don't let it go on and so it won't happen again. Some people in my class have been bullied badly and the teachers and principal have taken care of it really fast, and its anonymously and discreetly. And I think one of the best things our school has done is, if you're bullied, it usually goes straight to the principal, there is no stuffing around with teachers that, you just get like a warning or something. You go straight to the principal every time Just to add to that our principal is pretty strict and she can deal with any really serious bullying and people come out like nothing happened, because they know" Oh if I bully ..I'm going to end up back in there again* (and all agreed) '*and you don't want that to happen again'*

School D: Rural primary school. Mixed gender group.

- ***Our behaviour plan,*** *called the [Name of School] Five and we've been shown* ***videos*** *of what happens when people get bullied and lots of bullies stopped after that.*

  [The plan] is 'based on five keys: (1) Be safe (2) participate and work hard (3) show respect (4) get organised, and (5) bounce back. Show respect is probably the main one we focus on because its with bullying and to other classmates and teachers and stuff.

- *Bounce back – that one has something to do with bullying like --- When you get bullied or you break one of those rules, you don't go on crying, or giving dirty looks ---You like bounce back and don't worry about it. ---- Or if you fail a test. ----You don't spread rumours about someone …. just because they're being mean. You be positive about it. --- You just forget about it and say "that's okay I wont do it next time".*

- *And there's a reward at the end of the term and if you're an A, B or C you can go to the rewards day and we do all sorts of activities. And if you're a D or an E you have to go to work. So it kind of encourages people to want to do it. It encourages them to work to the best of their ability.*

School C: Metropolitan Catholic co-educational school

Boys:

- ***We had a play*** *recently that was really good It's "fight flight flow" – and basically that taught us about bullying and what it does and it just helps people to realise what can happen. Cause it actually stops a lot of the bullies – it makes them realise….I think we need to get explained situations that are relevant to us.*

- ***Some of the punishments*** *– like internal suspensions.*

- ***Guidance counsellors*** *– speak to someone --- Even if like, telling speaking your feelings to someone .. if you know they're not going to spread it …sometimes telling somebody makes you feel a whole lot better.*

Girls:

- *In year 7 a counsellor came* ***to talk to whole class***

- *we had people come in who* ***act out scenarios*** *and how to manage them*

- ***the counsellors*** *are good at this school*

School B: Regional state high school

Boys:

- ***coloured paper hands*** *and they* [students] *cut it out and wrote on it. We had a bit of description and stuff on it about 'stop bullying' and that, you know and then we stuck it up against the wall. Joined the hands up around the school.--- I wrote "Stop bullying It ruins your life" --- I wrote: "It will stop your learning if you keep bullying'.--- It was good cause learned other people's ideas.*

- *We had a* ***bullying week*** *and teachers talked about it in the break.*

- *Last year in grade 8 we had actresses come from Sydney and they cam to talk to us about bullying and did* ***acting about bullying****. Its happening again today. --- This afternoon. Its just like a play. In the theatre. They come from Sydney.--- Just for 8s and 9s.--- Called Brainstorm. --- They act out different scenes of bullying scenes and also how to respond. And they just ask questions and stuff.* Facilitator: That acting out, is that a helpful way of learning what to do?

- *Yes. Yes. Its kind of cool too. We had an actress about - had her acting about, like, people that are in rumours and that stuff didn't ..... of the rumours and how he ad-libs it, you know -he ad-libs it that that's worse then going up to another person and ask them. And that was true, you know, about the rumours, you know.*

Girls:

- ***Return to suspension*** *and* ***regularly tell us*** *the policy*

- *I don't really know because I don't do that bullying stuff. I don't see bullying at school. I don't get involved so I wouldn't really know.*

School A: Regional independent all-girls school

- *I seriously reckon its things like [School Name] Against Bullying - It sounds fun **and you want to get involved** in it.*
- *An even though it might not be directly aimed to stop bullying, I like the **activity days** and school camps we have because it **gets people to bond** with each other so you learn so much more about each other – different things and you learn why they [some students] might be different.*
- *I think **having people to talk to** – there is always someone you can talk to. Yeah pastoral care groups and like, a teacher you can talk to that you are close to that you can talk to and you're not scared to talk to them.*

3. Consulting with students

What the toolkit says

Element 7 of the Toolkit recommends schools consult students regularly to monitor and determine the types of bullying behaviour and assist in the development of appropriate school based approaches.

The *Toolkit suggests* –

— it is important to listen to students, encourage their participation and seriously consider their views when developing, implementing and monitoring school based approaches
— suggests schools need to build skills in gathering information and data on students' views and experiences of students to enable the school to understand the patterns of bullying occurring and to involve students in developing tailored responses
— when engaging students, schools need to develop strategies that demonstrate respect for views, honest debate within safe boundaries, engage marginalised students as well as those who often have a voice, and use mediums students are comfortable with
— ways of engaging students in discussion can include focus groups and small group discussion, interactive websites and other social media art, posters, drama DVDs and interactive activities and within the curriculum.

What the students said

The views of the students who participated in this consultation highlight the benefit of consulting with students and their desire to be consulted. Their views are a strong endorsement of element 7 of the toolkit and their ideas about ways of being engaged 'flesh out' some of the methods and mediums which can be used.

Focus group evaluation findings:

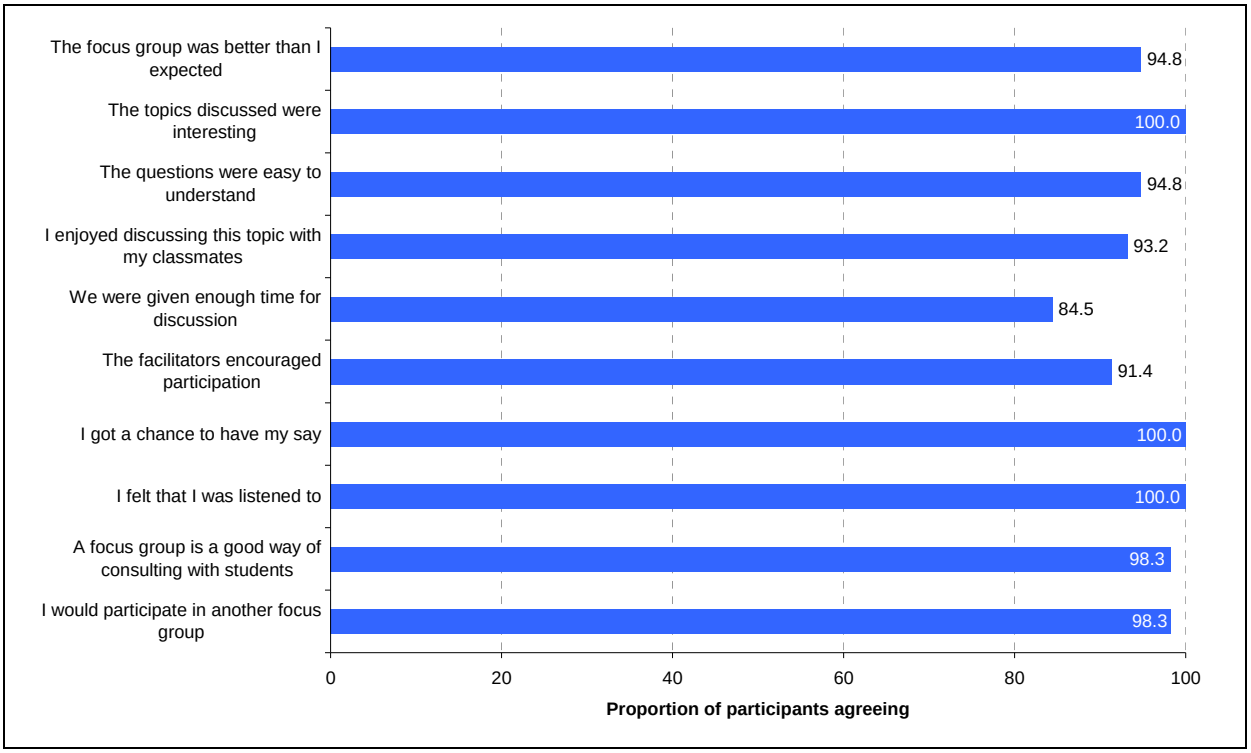
The Commission's consultation demonstrates the use of focus group discussion as a method of engaging with students. While it is not a method that will suit all students, its value is evidenced by the depth and breadth of the views elicited during discussion as well as the students' very positive written feedback about the focus group process.

Fifty-eight of the 63 students completed a Focus Group Evaluation Form. Their feedback was very positive as illustrated on the graph below (see over page). All students reported they found the topics interesting; got a chance to have their say; and felt listened to. The vast majority also indicated that a focus group is a good way of consulting with students and they would participate in another group. Written comments about the value of the group and/or the facilitators included:

- *I think this group was great and I learned a lot.*
- *I liked everything because I get to know a lot about bullying.*
- *There should be more of these groups*
- *I liked the focus group. It was good to discuss this issue with a wide range of students*
- *I really liked the facilitators. They were friendly and understanding. I felt understood and safe. The questions were easy and I am really glad I came.*

- *I thought it was really great and before this I felt really nervous, but during it I felt a lot more comfortable, I didn't really like when everyone was silent and no one knew what to say.*
- *The group was great. Everyone was very encouraging and I felt comfortable about speaking about anything with them.*
- *I liked it a lot especially the facilitators and the break. I also enjoyed getting everyone's thoughts.*
- *I liked how you were given time to speak and weren't hurried and/or rushed to finished speaking.*

Participants' evaluation of the focus groups:



Several students made suggestions about things the group should have discussed but didn't. Suggestions were:

- *Probably a little more about cyber bullying*
- *Yes the safety of kids on the internet like face book or twitter.*
- *How often does the bullying actually occur*
- *I think that children with disabilities and differences should be discussed*
- *more opportunity for us to just talk*
- *I think maybe deep discussion with verbal bullying*
- *more about our school*
- *discussing the current plans we have*
- *We should have discussed what bullying isn't more*
- *At the end when other kids have left we could talk about our own problems*
- *Maybe if you or another person had a bullying experience (anonymously) and how our school resolved that.*

Discussion and Recommendations

Discussion

The consultation tested three elements of QSAAV's *Working Together* toolkit. The findings suggest a strong correlation between the students' views and the best practice evidence presented in the toolkit. The students' views also had relevance to other elements in the toolkit. Importantly, the findings identify some strong themes and common issues from the students' perspective which may be relevant to the wider student population.

Establishing a definition.

The findings suggest that students perceive there are positive advantages in having a clear definition of bullying. By helping students to differentiate between different hurtful behaviours, a definition can help them to decide how to respond and how they view themselves. However, the findings also indicate that behaviours which do not meet the bullying threshold should not be trivialised and need to be dealt with appropriately so situations do not escalate.

An associated definitional issue is the language used to define students' roles in bullying situations. The findings indicate that from the student's perspective, terms such as victim and bully can be highly emotive and can become labels that stigmatise both parties. Furthermore, the roles can be interchangeable.

The findings support the toolkit's recommendation that schools develop local definitions that are consistent with the views of the school community. It was clear in this consultation that opinions differed between the school groups about the defining elements of bullying and the types of bullying discussed. Significantly, students consider they are best placed to identify which types of bullying their school should address first.

There were also differences in how students rated bullying as a problem with most students rating it a bigger problem for kids generally than they did for themselves personally. This finding could arguably suggest that caution be exercised when raising students' awareness about bullying and its potential for harm, so students do not become over-anxious or hyper-vigilant about it.

Developing and communicating the policy.

The findings support the collaborative development of a school's anti-bullying policy and provide overwhelming evidence that students see themselves as key stakeholders who should be involved. The students' commentary suggests that their knowledge, perspectives and input is crucial to the development of a successful school policy. There was a strong view that all students should have the opportunity to be involved. This would require multiple methods of engagement.

While the focus of student discussion was bullying, the conversations frequently linked with behaviour codes more generally. This was most evident in the conversations with Year 6 students from school D who continually referred back to their school's behaviour plan. Moreover, the values and behaviours that students said anti-bullying policies should encourage – respect, inclusiveness and acceptance of

differences – correspond with the toolkit's emphasis on the creation of a positive school culture as the foundation stone for taking action against bullying.

The consultation findings support the need to communicate the school's anti-bullying policy so everyone in the school community is on same page – teachers, parents and students. Once again, students indicated they want to have a say in the communication methods used. They suggested students should play an active part in delivering the anti-bullying message to each other in creative ways. Notably, students spoke of the benefits of using mediums such as drama to safely demonstrate and explore bullying scenarios and solutions. This finding is in keeping with messages in the toolkit's section on teaching and learning programs.

Procedural steps.

***Reporting* –** The findings suggest that students often make a distinction between telling someone about being bullied and reporting it. Students in this consultation stressed the value of having access to someone who will listen to their concerns and validate their feelings without interfering. They suggested this can sometimes be enough to enable them to deal with the bullying themselves. This finding has implications for teachers and parents whose first reaction may be to actively intervene to fix the problem.

Further themes which emerged reveal that 'trust' determines who students will tell or report to about bullying incidents, and embarrassment is the feeling most associated with disclosure. These findings highlight the need for both teachers and parents to build trusting relationships with students and to find ways of deflecting the negative self views that underlie their embarrassment. The comments of students in this consultation revealed a positive correlation between having a trusting relationship with a teacher and their level of comfort about reporting.

Teachers – The findings contain other strong messages for teachers. In particular, students want to be able to report to teachers confidentially and have their report dealt with immediately and discretely without incurring retribution or further embarrassment. The tension between keeping the student's disclosure confidential while taking action to address the problem highlights how sensitively teachers must tread at times. It also demonstrates the need for schools to build confidence within the student body that disclosure is beneficial. This requires students to see evidence of positive outcomes and for teachers to revisit with students to see if their situation has improved.

***Parents* –** The findings confirm that students are apprehensive about telling parents they are bullied, particularly as they get older. A major concern is that parents can unintentionally make their situation worse. This finding underscores the need for awareness raising among parents about bullying and appropriate responses (demonstrating the value of products like the *Working Together* toolkit for parents). The students' views also demonstrate the value of documenting the parent's roles and responsibilities and reporting processes in the school's anti-bullying policy and ensuring the policy is communicated to them.

Interventions – The findings confirm that students want those who bully others to be held to account for the hurt they cause. The students expressed strong views about the need for meaningful and immediate consequences for those who bully. However, they recognised the limitations of traditional disciplinary measures and identified which ones they considered more effective. Their views,

particularly about the value of internal suspensions as opposed to external suspensions, may have implications for school behaviour management plans.

While the findings support the retention of disciplinary measures, they also demonstrate that students see value in having non-punitive measures in place to help those who bully others to understand and address the impacts of their behaviour. The findings also stress the importance of having systems of formal and informal support in place for the student who is bullied. Underpinning much of the discussion about support was the need for students to build skills and relationships which will help them to deal more effectively with conflict, whether it be bullying or other behaviours which can be just as hurtful.

Recommendations

In light of the consultation findings, the Commission recommends that:

1. Queensland schools give all students the opportunity to be involved when developing, implementing and monitoring school-based anti-bullying policy and strategies at the local level.

2. The student consultation report be made available to Queensland schools to complement the *Working Together* products and to demonstrate the insights and ideas to be gained by involving students.

3. The *Working Together* section on the professional development of teachers include references to the insights of students. In addition, development topics should include:
    - the recognition and management of latent and emerging behaviours which do not fully manifest as bullying, and
    - exploration of the tensions between a student's sensitivity about disclosure, their desire for confidentiality and the need to take action to address the problem.

4. The insights of students be included in products developed by the sectors to inform parents about bullying and how to respond to bullying concerns which arise at school.

5. Queensland schools create opportunities for students to safely recognise, explore and practice responses to bullying. Opportunities should include the use of drama to demonstrate relevant scenarios and solutions accompanied by discussion with teachers and peers.

6. Schools collect local data and information from students to assist in the development of tailored school-based approaches to bullying and enable the school to internally evaluate the effectiveness of those approaches over time.

Appendices

All appendices available at:
http://education.qld.gov.au/studentservices/behaviour/qsaav/index.html

Appendix 1. Focus questions

Appendix 2. Focus Group Discussion Guide

Appendix 3. Consent Form

Appendix 4. Information Sheet for parents and students

Appendix 5. Evaluation Form

Appendix 6. Overview of recent bullying and violence research and engagement activities involving students

Introductory statement: *Our questions are broadly divided into three sections – the first set of question are to do with bullying in general, the second set is about actions that people might take and the third section, is about consulting with people about a school bullying policy.*

1. Questions to whole of group: (About nature of bullying and defining it) Allow 20 minutes

Introductory statement: *Bullying has received a lot of media attention lately.*

Q	Primary questions	Secondary questions
1	What do you think bullying is?	o What's the difference between 'just joking around' and bullying? o In your view, is it bullying if a person says or does something hurtful to someone just once?
2	What forms of bullying are you aware of?	o Do you think any forms are worse than others? o Is bullying different for boys and girls? o What can you tell us about cyber bullying?
3a	*On this slip of paper please record:* How much of a problem do you think bullying is for kids in general? ……If you had to rate it on a scale from 1 to 10……	…where 1 means no problem and10 means it a huge problem, what score would you give? o Why do you think this? *(Your responses will not be shared with the group)*
3b	*On the second slip of paper record:* How much of a concern is bullying for you personally.? If you had to rate it on a scale from 1 to 10……	…. where 1 means no problem and10 means it a huge problem, what score would you give? o And why have you given this rating? *(Your responses will not be shared with the group)*
4a	Why do you think some kids are bullied?	
4b	What about the kids who sometimes bully others – what are they like?	
4c	Why do some kids join in or watch?	

2. Break into 2 groups – Questions for break-out session: (About responsive actions) Allow 25 minutes.

Introductory statement: *If every school wanted to have a policy to manage bullying, imagine what would they need to think about and what actions everyone might agree to take when bullying occurs.*

Q	Primary questions	Secondary questions
5	If you had your way, what would the plan say kids should do if: (a) they are bullied or (b) see someone else being bullied?	o What could kids say or do at the time to make the bullying stop? o If the bullying doesn't stop, what do you think the victim or people watching should do? o If they chose to tell someone, who'd be the best person to tell?
6	What would make you comfortable about reporting that you or someone else was being bullied?	o Why do you think some kids don't report it? o What methods might encourage kids to report? o What about parents – do you think they should be told? If so, when?
7	In your opinion, what should the school plan say about how to deal with kids when they bully others?	o What would you consider if you were deciding what the consequences should be? o What sort of help do you think might change a person's bullying behaviour? o What do you think should happen if the bullying is reported but doesn't stop?
8	What about the kids who are bullied - what help do you think they need?	o Who do you think should give them this help?
9	What values and behaviours should the policy encourage among the whole school community?	

Break for 5 – 10 minutes for drink/snack/stretch. During break, post the break-out session Qs and As on the wall.

Reconvene group. Ask students to read the recorded comments from the two groups. Any questions to be directed to students in the respective groups.

3. Questions for whole group: (About consulting on / communicating policy). Allow 15-20 minutes.

Introductory statement: *Thank you for all your ideas and opinions so far. Lets' now think about how a school would go about writing a school policy and putting it in place so it works.*

Q	Primary question	Secondary questions
10	Who do you think should be involved in deciding what the policy says?	o Anyone else in / outside the school community?
11	What would be the best way of involving students?	o Do you think most students want to have a say? o What if students weren't involved, how well do you think the policy would work?
12	How would everyone know about the policy?	o What are some ways of making sure everyone understands it? o How often do you think everyone would need to be reminded about what the policy says?

4. Closing questions: Allow 5 minutes.

Q	Primary question	Wrap up question
13	Name the best thing you think your school has done to help put a stop to bullying?	o Is there anything anyone wants to add before we finish up?

Probing statements:

- Would you explain further?
- Can you give me an example of what you mean?
- What do you mean when you say..?
- How did you handle that?
- Does anyone see it differently?
- Lets do a go-around…
- What do you think (name)..?

5. Close and Evaluation

Refer to Discussion Guide. Lead facilitator to give closing comments and ask students to complete evaluation forms.

Welcome and introductions
Good morning and thanks for coming to talk with us about bullying in schools. My name is …… and these are my co-workers. We work for the Children's Commission – which promotes and protects the rights of Queensland kids. (School staff member) is going to sit in case you want to talk about our discussion after we've gone.

Check OK about taping and being here
(Commission officer) will take notes but we're also going to record the discussion so no ideas get missed. Can I just make sure that everyone's OK about that? Also, is everyone here because they want to be? If you've changed your mind it's okay to say so. OK, I'm now going to tell you a little bit about why we're here and what you can expect .

Purpose of group
We're here because a group called the *Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence* has been set up to advise government on how tackle bullying and violence in schools. The Alliance is made up of representatives from State, Independent and Catholic schools and the Children's Commissioner. The Alliance has been talking to teachers, parents, principals and researchers. They've asked the Commission to talk with the real experts – students – to find out what you think. We're having discussions with students at several schools in Queensland.

What we'll do with the information
We'll put all the ideas we get from students together in a report to share with the Alliance. Your ideas will be used to help other schools in Queensland become safer places.

Who'll do most of the talking
Our focus group discussion should last about an hour and a half and we'll have a break halfway. Once we get started we'll ask you questions and we'd like you to share your ideas / opinions. We'll leave it up to you to do most of the talking and we will do a lot of listening. We won't be giving our opinions. Remember we want to learn from you.

Agreement about confidentiality
During discussion try not to use people's real names if you use a story to explain your ideas. Although we'll keep personal information private, we can't promise that everyone will. If friends ask you about the group later so we'd like you to follow a 'no gossip agreement'. This means you can talk about the Qs and your answers, but not other people or what they say.

If uncomfortable
Please tell us if the discussion makes you feel uncomfortable at any time, or if you want to say something but don't want it to be recorded. If something personal comes up you'd like to talk about, please one of us in the break or …… later.

Exception to confidentiality agreement
We'll keep personal information confidential, except if you tell us something that leads us to believe someone is in need of protection – for example, if someone says they are thinking of hurting themselves or someone else, or they are being hurt or abused. In these cases, the law says we have to pass the information on so the person gets help.

How the group will run
We'll ask one question at a time and wait for everyone to have a chance to answer. Please be respectful of each other's opinions. There are no right or wrong answers. It's okay to have a different opinion. Don't feel like you have to talk directly to us. Feel free to talk to each other. you can reply to something someone's said. We might ask people by name if they want to speak – just so we can be sure everyone gets a say.

So let's just go over these points again.

- Try not to use the real names of people if you use a story to explain your ideas
- Try not to gossip after the group
- Let everyone have a chance to speak and be respectful.

Does anyone have any questions about why we are here or add any other points to our agreement or how the group should be run? Before we begin with the first question –we'll go round the group and can everyone say their name.

REFER TO FOCUS QUESTIONS and commence discussion

CLOSING

Brief oral summary (by facilitator or note taker)
— Is this an adequate summary? Have we missed anything?

Thank you
— for your time and for sharing your ideas with us today.
— for being so considerate and respectful of one another.

Please remember the 'no gossip agreement'
— and that you can talk with (school staff member) if something said in the group bothers you.

So what happens next?
After we've spoken to all the schools taking part we'll put everyone's ideas together. We'll look at the similar / different ideas and put these in a report to the Alliance. We'll then let you know the results and how the Alliance will use your opinions and ideas. I'm sure your combined views will be really helpful to other schools in Queensland when they consult with their students.

Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence
Consultation with students about bullying

Discussion Group Consent Form

Student's consent (Please tick the box if you agree with the sentence beside it)

☐ I want to take part in the Discussion Group with the *Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian* to talk about bullying in schools.

☐ I agree to the Discussion being taped so the Commission can check what is said.

☐ I agree to the Commission reporting on my ideas as long as I am identified by my age and gender (boy / girl) only.

Student's name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____ **Age:** _____

Parental consent

I/We (insert name of parent/guardian) _____

give my/our consent for (insert name of student)_____

to participate in the consultation process being undertaken by the *Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian* on behalf of the *Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence*.

☐ I/We have read the Information Sheet provided and understand the purpose of the student consultation and what it will involve for students who take part.

☐ I/We agree to the Discussion Group being audio-taped so the Commission can check for accuracy when writing its report on the consultation.

☐ I/We agree to my child's comments being used in any report the Commission writes, provided the only identifiers used are their age and gender.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Privacy statement: The Commission is gathering students' opinions and ideas about the discussion topic on behalf of the *Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence* for use in a report on engaging with students about bullying in schools. Personal information will be managed in accordance with the *Information Privacy Act 2009 (Qld)* and will not be given to any other person or agency unless you consent or we are required to do so by law.

Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence

CONSULTATION WITH STUDENTS ABOUT BULLYING IN SCHOOLS

Students in Year 6 and Year 9 from several Queensland schools are being invited to give their views about bullying in schools. The student consultation is being conducted by the *Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian* on behalf of the *Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence*. The purpose of this Information Sheet is to tell parents and students about the consultation and what it involves.

About the Alliance

The *Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence* is a group of people from State, Independent and Catholic education and parent, teacher and principal organisations. The Alliance is working with the State government to tackle bullying and violence in schools. The aim is to make schools a safer place for students to learn and teachers to teach.

About the Commission

The Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian is also a member of the Alliance. It is the Commission's job to promote the safety and wellbeing of children and young people and their right to have a say in decisions that affect them. This is why the Commission is leading the consultation with students. The Commission will talk to a sample of students, gather all their ideas together, and report to the Alliance.

How consulting will help

The Alliance will use the students' views to improve the information and resources being provided to Queensland schools to tackle bullying. In time, the Alliance wants every school to consult with its own students about how bullying is handled in their school.

What sort of consultation is it

The Commission is holding focus group discussions with Year 6 and Year 9 students from different schools. There will be no more than 8 students in a group. Some groups will be all girls or boys and some will be mixed. Students can choose to take part or not.

What will students have to do

Staff from the Commission will ask students in the group some general questions about bullying and what schools can do about it. Each student is encouraged to give their own opinion or ideas. Students will not be asked to share personal stories. The group will meet at school during class time and take about 90 minutes (including a refreshment break).

Is permission required

Yes. The attached consent form must be signed by the student and their parent /guardian and returned to the school if a student wants to take part. If a large number of students are interested, the school will choose which students actually participate.

School support for students

A school staff member will sit in on the group discussion. Staff will also be available afterwards if a student wants to talk with them about something that has come up during the group discussion.

Recording what students say

A person from the Commission will write down what is said in the group. The discussion will also be audio-taped so the Commission can check that no one's ideas are missed. The tape will be destroyed once the Commission has written its report.

Privacy and confidentiality

The Commission will keep all personal student information confidential[1]. Names of students will not be used in any reports the Commission writes. If a student is quoted in a report, the report will only say if the student is a boy or a girl and how old they are.

What happens after the group

Students who take part in the groups will be asked to follow a 'no gossip rule'. This means they can talk with their teachers, parents or classmates about the questions and their own answers, but not about other people.

Will students be told the results

After all the schools have been consulted, the Commission will tell students and parents about the results and how the Alliance will use students' opinions and ideas.

[1] The only limit to confidentiality is if information is shared that indicates someone is at significant risk of harm. In this case the Commission and school staff present have a legal obligation to pass the information on to the relevant authority/authorities (eg. the Police, Department of Communities).

Focus Group Evaluation Form

Your feedback will help us to plan for the next focus group.

Insert Logo

School:_____

Year level:_____

☐ Male ☐ Female

Beside each of the following statements, please place a tick in the appropriate box.	Yes	No	Not Sure
The focus group was better than I expected			
The topics discussed were interesting			
The questions were easy to understand			
I enjoyed discussing this topic with my classmates			
We were given enough time for discussion			
The facilitators encouraged participation			
I got a chance to have my say			
I felt that I was listened to			
A focus group is a good way of consulting with students			
I would participate in another focus group			

Please tick the response you agree with:

Overall, the focus group was.....	☐ Great	☐ Good	☐ OK	☐ Poor
The facilitators were.....	☐ Great	☐ Good	☐ OK	☐ Boring

Was there something you think we should have discussed but didn't?

_____

_____

Any other comments? (*eg what you liked or didn't like; how the group could be improved*)

_____

_____

_____

Thank you.

commission for children and young people and child guardian

Overview of recent research and engagement activities involving students

1. Bullying and violence – state and national engagement activities:

Activity	***Youth Violence Forum* – Queensland**
	Held in Brisbane - July, 2007
Organised by:	Qld Youth Violence Taskforce and co-sponsored by the Queensland Police Service and Department of Communities
Stated purpose:	The purpose of the Forum was to engage young people aged 15 – 17 years on issues associated with youth violence and its occurrence within an everyday setting.
Who participated:	87 students from independent, private and public schools across SE Qld. The school network was used only to provide access to appropriately aged young people aged 15 to17 years old.
Structure:	Students heard from distinguished guest speakers. Students were then placed in 14 working groups to work on 3 group sessions focusing on violence, alcohol and drug use and suggested strategies. A series of questions were asked of each group.
Findings/ messages:	• From students' discussion on violence: - violence often occurs on a group basis rather than one on one - violence is often related to status, alcohol intoxication and cultural conflict - miscommunication via technology is also a reason why some fights start - a negative public perception of youth generally contributes to feelings of low self worth - low self esteem makes them vulnerable to dangerous behaviour including joining gangs (to get a sense of belonging and status), carrying weapons (perceived as self protection), binge drinking (to help them socialise in a group setting) and negative peer influence (being egged on to smash someone) - students would respond to their peers before responding to authoritative figures - peer pressure influences the use of violence • Some of what students said about strategies to reduce violence: - continual educational reinforcement of how one action (i.e. one punch) can damage lives could assist to override other influences and encourage "mates" to assist their friends to walk away from explosive situations without it reflecting on their status - education about violence should be delivered by young people and role models and those who have been affected by youth violence (both as perpetrator and victim) - education (eg about violence, alcohol consumption and peer pressure) must start as early as possible, preferably in primary school and there should be a focus on promoting self esteem and positive images of young people - parents and the community also needed to be educated on these issues to shift what is socially acceptable - positive reinforcement is more effective than a punitive approach - ensuring confidentiality would result in increased use of school support programs - the educational advertising genre most preferred is the use of shock tactics similar to the *Because [Enough is Enough]* campaign, combined with positive images about being proud to be young and having the capacity to make choices.
Output/outcomes:	Strategies suggested to combat youth violence were analysed further by the Youth Violence Taskforce in their development of recommendations to Government. Students felt empowered by the Forum and agreed they would like it to be an annual event.
Information sources:	Youth Violence Taskforce.(2007) *Youth Violence Forum Summary Report: Student Discussions and Suggested Strategies to Combat Youth Violence* http://www.police.qld.gov.au/Resources/Internet/news%20and%20alerts/documents/Attachment%204%20Youth%20Violence%20Forum%20Report%20July07.pdf The full *Youth Violence Taskforce Report* and recommendations can be found at: http://stephenrobertsonmp.com/_dbase_upl/youthfinal.pdf

Activity:	***Leading Responsibly in a Digital World Student Summit* – Victoria**
	Held in Melbourne on 13 October 2009
Organised by:	Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Victoria
Stated purpose:	To involve students as partners with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development as it develops and refines its policies and practices around the responsible use of digital technologies.
Who participated:	240 Year 10 students from 60 Victorian government and non-government schools
Structure:	Participants were asked to do some pre-summit activities to help them reflect on and articulate their views. At the Summit, students were invited to discuss their experiences in online communication, examine ways to foster and promote healthy and respectful online relationships and develop positive action plans to take back to their schools and share with classmates. The 60 accompanying teachers participated in workshops about strategies to support their students back at school.
Key messages:	No information appears to be publicly available at this stage.
Expected outcome:	• Students were expected to make a declaration about what it takes to lead responsibly in a digital world, and commit to taking an authentic leadership role back at their school. • Suggestions made before the Summit about what an action plan might contain included: continuing the conversation with other students, holding a parent information night, working with members of the school community in developing their skills online or 'even organising a student forum of your own with nearby schools'.
Information source:	Department of Education and Early Childhood Development website: http://www.education.vic.gov.au/management/elearningsupportservices/www/studentsummit/default.htm

Activity	***Cyber Friendly Student Summit* – Western Australia**
	Held in Perth on 22 October 2008
Conducted by:	Conducted by the Child Health Promotion Research Centre from Edith Cowan University as part of a $400,000 study into cyber bullying prevention
Stated purpose:	To obtain students' views about how to improve cyber safety and reduce the harms students can experience from cyber bullying
Who participated:	210 Year 10 students from across Western Australia
Structure:	Prior to the Summit, nominated students were invited to create an original multi-media submission about a key bullying topic. Throughout the Summit, an electronic voting system was used at regular intervals to encourage student involvement and to increase awareness of, and shift student's social norms. Adults who accompanied students were invited to attend a concurrent Seminar, and parents were invited to attend a Seminar in the evening.
Key findings:	• When asked who they believed had the greatest responsibility to reduce cyber bullying among young people 48% indicated everyone (government, schools, parents/families and corporations) and 46% indicated 'young people'. • The aspects of cyber bullying of greatest concern to students at the Summit were the anonymity of the perpetrator (55%) and the public humiliation (26%). • When asked what role they could play in helping their community learn more: - 66% of students indicated they could work with younger students in a mentor role - 63% indicated they could show adults how to use technology and - 42% indicated they could assist schools with the development of policy and guidelines to address cyber bullying.
Output/outcomes:	The day culminated in a declaration stating what students believe needs to be done: the *Cyber Friendly Communities' Declaration against Cyber Bullying among Children and Young People***.** Students concluded the most important thing a school can do is to ask young people what they think can be done and to listen.
Information sources:	Child Health Promotion Research Centre, Edith Cowan University: http://chpru.ecu.edu.au/research/bullying/cyberfriendly.php Cyber Friendly Schools Project (and Summit) at: http://www.cyberfriendly.com.au/

Activity	***Cyber-bullying Online Forum* – New South Wales**
	Held from 6 October to 7 November, 2008
Conducted by:	The NSW Youth Advisory Council and hosted on Youth NSW website
Stated purpose:	To consult with young people on the issue of cyber bullying in order to provide advice to the NSW Government on strategies to build awareness of cyber bullying and its affects.
Who participated:	A total of 65 legitimate users registered for the Forum, with the majority of these being young people aged between 12 and 21 years old (39 were female).
Structure:	The forum consisted of 5 discussion areas which posed 5 different questions related to cyber-bullying. To assist young people using the forum to fully understand and participate in the discussions, the Council developed a definition of cyber bullying.
Findings/messages:	- 25 young people said they had been cyber bullied. The three most common ways they had been cyber bullied were through social network sites, in chat rooms and by email. Most of the young people said they were cyber bullied by someone they knew. - Young people's responses indicated awareness of basic strategies they can use to protect themselves against cyber bullying, (such as not giving out their real name to personal details, blocking people on social networking pages, email accounts and mobile phones) but many are not aware of what to do if cyber bullying becomes serious.
Output/outcomes:	- The Council identified a number of key issues as a result of its review of the research and the Online Forum and made 8 recommendations to the NSW Government such as: "encouraging a better awareness and understanding of the issues among teacher and school communities, and including cyber bullying as a specific area of concern within the revised NSW Department of Education and Training Student Welfare Policy". - In regards to awareness raising in schools, the Council said "the Government should focus on educating and providing resources to teachers and students rather than investing in technology which attempts to block or protect users from harmful messages and images eg. firewalls, which are often ineffective and must be constantly updated."
Information sources:	NSW Youth Advisory Council, December 2008. *Report to the Minister for Youth on Cyber bullying.* http://www.youth.nsw.gov.au/__data/page/1105/Cyber_bullying_Report.pdf

Activity:	***Inaugural Australian Youth Forum (AYF) event* – youTHINK**
	Forum held Friday 20 February 2009 with pre- and post-forum website discussions
Organised by:	The Australian Youth Forum – launched in October 2008 and designed to the Government's direct communication channel with young Australians and the youth sector.
Purpose:	The **youTH**INK Forum was the AYF's first national event. Its purpose was to enable young people aged between 15-24 to express their views directly to Government on two issues: *Violence and safety* and *Contributing to Democracy*.
Who participated:	618 young people attended 10 Forums held simultaneously in all capital cities and in Alice Springs and Cairns, connected live by satellite. Half of the young people were aged 18 or under – 94 were under 16 and 209 were aged between 16-18. The remainder were over 18 or did not state their age.
Structure:	The forum was professionally facilitated. AYF also hosted a 'Have a say' discussion board on its website prior to the youTHINK event and an online discussion after the event. Information from participant evaluation forms gathered at the conclusion of the **youTH**INK event were analysed and an Evaluation Report published on the AYF website.
Findings/ messages:	Common themes among what young people said about violence and safety were: - violence is largely related to alcohol with a perceived direct linkage between binge drinking, cultural acceptance of drinking, underage drinking and a lack of education about responsible drinking - limited activities to engage young people and boredom can lead to irresponsible alcohol consumption and violence – so too can the lack of suitable youth spaces and services and/or lack of awareness of services - there is a lack of education on the consequences of violent behaviour and alternative conflict management strategies and this should be addressed with education programs

Activity:	***Inaugural Australian Youth Forum (AYF) event* – youTHINK**
	implemented in the early years and continuing throughout school - parents and families can influence young people's acceptance of violence and some young people think parents themselves need to be better educated in handling conflict - the relationship between young people and the police needs to improve and policy should not automatically assume young people are going to cause trouble - the media legitimises violence and young people are too often represented as the perpetrators when often they are the victims as well - many young people feel unsafe on public transport and there needs to be more public transport at night and greater levels of security.
Output/outcomes:	Ideas from **youTH**INK were to be fed into *the Inquiry into the Impact of Violence on Young Australians.*
Forum Evaluation:	Most forum participants said the discussion topics were relevant; it was great to have their opinions taken seriously, and that hearing other peoples' views made them think differently about things. In relation to future events, participants commonly said that: - a longer time should be allowed for promotion and planning of the event, - a broader range of young people should be engaged, with the focus on the 18-24 age group and minority groups, through engagement in their own communities, and - more time should be allowed for discussion, recording it and giving a concrete purpose for the discussion input.
Information sources:	Australian Youth Forum. (2009) *Violence and Safety, A report on youTHINK findings and website discussions.* (Feb-March 2009). www.youth.gov.au/ayf/pages/response.htm Australian Youth Forum. (2009) *youTHINK Evaluation (February 2009):* www.youth.gov.au/ayf/.../youTHINK_Feb09_EvaluationReport.rtf

Activity	***(National) Inquiry into the Impact of Violence on Young Australians***
	Announced on Thursday 16 June 2009 by the Minister for Early Childhood Education, Childcare and Youth and Minister for Sport, The Hon Kate Ellis MP
Conducted by:	The House of Representatives Family and Youth Committee
Purpose:	The Committee has been asked to specifically examine the following: - perceptions of violence and community safety among young Australians; - links between illicit drug use, alcohol abuse and violence among young Australians; - the relationship between bullying and violence and the wellbeing of young Australians; - social and economic factors that contribute to violence by young Australians; and - strategies to reduce violence and its impact among young Australians The Inquiry was prompted by the Mission Australia 2008 Survey of Young Australians which surveyed 45,558 Australians aged between 11 and 24. The survey found that 22 per cent of the young people who responded identified personal safety as a significant concern. This is a new issue that has not been identified by previous Mission Australia surveys.
Structure:	In addition to the call for submissions an online survey was developed to enable to develop a survey which will allow more young people to be involved, and in an anonymous way. The Inquiry has also held a youth forum, invited young people to attend public hearings and on 17 March heard from representatives of the NT Youth Minister's Round Table of Young Territorians - an advisory body made up of young people aged between15 and 25 years that provide a link between young Territorians and the Northern Territory Government.
Who participated:	More than 600 young people had responded to the online survey by 5 November 2009.
Output/outcomes	The deadline for written submissions to the Inquiry has expired and the online survey has closed however public hearings continue. There is no due date for the tabling of the Inquiry's report.
Information source:	House of Representatives Family and Youth Committee Youth Violence Inquiry webages: http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/fchy/youthviolence/index.htm

Activity	***Focus groups on youth violence***
Conducted by:	The Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian, in 2009
Purpose:	The Commission used the focus group sessions to explore the young people's perceptions of peer violence in order to inform the Commission's submission to the House of Representatives *Inquiry into the Impact of Violence on Young Australians*. The focus groups related to the Inquiry's first Term of Reference.
Who participated:	Three separate focus groups were held with young people: - The first group was from YOS, a program of *The Salvation Army* that works with young people aged between 12 and 20 years, who are at risk of homelessness, are homeless and/or are in need of support. The group was part of the *YOS Education Program* for young people who want to study year 10, 11 and/or 12, offered as an alternate delivery model. This focus group consisted of five males and one female. - The second and third groups were students of Craigslea SHS. Consultation occurred with a group of six year 11 and 12 girls, and another group of three boys and three girls from across years 8, 9 and 10.
Structure:	The young people were asked to answer a series of questions examining their perceptions of violence and safety.
Findings/messages:	- The perception of 'being safe' is subjective. Young people across all groups found it easier to define what made them feel unsafe, rather than what 'safe' meant to them. - The YOS group felt less safe in their community possibly because issues with accommodation and support mean they have fewer options for avoiding violence and suggested that young people are regularly either the victims or the perpetrators of violence as a result of self-protective action. - The perceived level of violence in the community was rated as 'medium' by the majority of young people in all three focus groups, with the YOS group rating it medium to high. - The influence of family and peers was given as both a cause for violence among young people and as a means of reducing it. - The year 11/12 group at Craigslea SHS felt that most violence was perpetrated by males (but not exclusively) and reference was also made to an 'alpha male' or 'tough guy' image in the year 8/9/10 group. - The year 8/9/10 Craigslea group felt that violence among males was more to prove a point, more physical and more about keeping your reputation while violence among females was more verbal and starts mostly 'behind your back' as gossip.
Information source:	The Commission's submission is available on the Inquiry's website at: http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/fchy/youthviolence/subs/sub066.pdf

2. Bullying and violence – some recent research activities:

Research Activity	***Preventing youth violence*** [project]
	Report released October 2009
Conducted by:	The Murdoch Children's Research Institute for the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY)
Stated purpose:	To inform the development of strategies aimed at preventing violent[1] and antisocial behaviours[2] among young people.
Who participated:	More than 8,000 Year 6 and Year 8 students in 30 communities (15 rural and 15 urban) across Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia were surveyed. While the ages of the young people ranged from 10 to 14 years, 80% were aged 11 or 12 years.
Structure:	The data for the analysis came from the 2006 Healthy Neighbourhoods Project. Students were surveyed about their attitudes, experiences and behaviours relevant to their health and wellbeing. Communities were randomly selected to take part after having been stratified according to socioeconomic status and urban/rural location. The survey consisted of a web-based questionnaire administered in normal class times, taking approximately 45 minutes to complete. Paper based surveys were used in schools without web access.
Findings/ messages:	- Individual factors such as gender and age may contribute to problem behaviours with the boys surveyed five times more likely than the girls to say they had been engaged in violent behaviour and more Year 6 boys reporting violent behaviours than year 8 boys. - There is a strong link between alcohol consumption and violence. Young people who had ever consumed alcohol, or consumed alcohol in the previous month, were approximately three-and-a-half times as likely to have been violent in the previous year, and six times as likely to have participated in antisocial behaviour. - Between Year 6 and Year 8 the proportion of students who had ever consumed alcohol increased for both boys and girls—from 39.4% to 57.4% for boys and from 22.9% to 48.2% for girls; and the proportion of boys who had engaged in binge drinking (ie five or more drinks in a row in the previous fortnight) increased from 4.5% to 8.7%, while for girls the proportion increased from 2.0% to 6.9%. - The study confirmed that the greater the number of risk factors in the young person's life, the more likely they are to engage in problem behaviours. For each additional risk factor the likelihood of violent behaviour in the previous year increased by 80% and the likelihood of antisocial behaviour doubled. - Conversely, the greater the number of protective factors, the less likely the young person engaged in violent behaviour. - Living in a high socioeconomic community is a protective factor. The likelihood of violent behaviour decreased by 10% for each increase in socioeconomic quartile. - There was no relationship between socio-economic status and antisocial behaviour. - There was a significant variation in the prevalence of violent behaviour across communities even after controlling for socio-economic status, age, sex, alcohol use and individual levels for risk and protection – suggesting there are inherent factors within communities that influence the level of violence.
Output/outcomes:	The study resulted in a pathways analysis of risk and protective factors associated with violent and antisocial behaviours among young people. The analysis also examined the relationship between these behaviours and alcohol consumption. ARACY has now commissioned a discussion paper to inform national consultation (in early 2010) on evidence-based action. Note: The study's findings were cited in ARACY's submission to the House of Representatives *Inquiry into the Impact of Violence on Young Australians.* The submission also cites a number of other ARACY studies and reports that are relevant to the Inquiry's Terms of Reference and the submission includes the web links to them. The submission is available at:http://www.aracy.org.au/cmsdocuments/ARACY%20sub%20Youth%20Violence%20Inquirysub055.pdf
Information source:	Williams et al. 2009. *Violent and antisocial behaviours among young adolescents in Australian communities: an analysis of risk and protective factors*. Available at: http://www.aracy.org.au/cmsdocuments/violent_and_antisocial_behaviours.pdf

[1] For the purposes of the study, violence was defined as more extreme forms of aggressive behaviour such that the young person reported they had attacked someone in the previous 12 months with the intention of seriously hurting them, or they beat someone so badly that they probably needed to see a doctor or nurse.

[2] The classification of antisocial behaviour encompassed a range of behaviours (from stealing, to selling drugs, to being drunk or high at school) considered to be indicative of the young person defying social norms or engaging in high risk behaviours

Research Activity:	***Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence Study*** (ACBPS)
	Report released 2009.
Conducted by:	Child Health Promotion Research Centre (CHPRC), Edith Cowan University (Cross. D et al)
Purpose:	This study aimed to shed new light on covert bullying among school-age children, with the ultimate goal of identifying feasible, effective and sustainable policy and practice to address this phenomenon.
Who participated:	Data was collected from a total of 20,832 Australian students (from years 4 to 9) from over 200 schools and 456 staff. The data came from 3 studies: - Qualitative data collected (2007) from 84 students aged 8 to 13 - Quantitative CHPRC data (from existing data sources 2002-2006) from 13,330 students aged 8 to 14 years; and - Cross-sectional quantitative national data collected (2007) from 7,418 students aged 8 to 14 years and 456 school staff across 106 schools
Method/Structure:	- The ACBPS investigated young people's experiences with covert bullying including: the nature and types of covert bullying behaviours used by young people, how often and where these behaviours occur, and risk and protective factors that may inhibit or encourage covert bullying behaviour. - The ACBPS report presents a triangulation of the covert bullying behaviour data collected and draws on published theoretical and empirical evidence.
Findings/ messages:	Results from the study identified age trends in the occurrence of covert and cyber bullying. For example: - one in four students in Years 4 to 9 reported being affected by bullying - bullying was highest among Year 5 (32%) and Year 8 (29%) students - one in six students reported being bullied covertly - students in Years 5, 6 and 8 were most likely to report be bullied covertly - students in year 9 were least likely to report being covertly bullied - students said they were most likely to be covertly bullied by their own year group (91%) or students in the year above them (50%) - 7-10% of all students reported being bullied by means of technology with higher rates reported by secondary students and students from non-government schools - the percentage of students who reported they had been perpetrators of covert or overt bullying behaviours was highest in Year 9 (55%) and lowest in Year 4 (26%).
Outcomes:	The report's recommendations include strategies for schools and parents to prevent covert and cyber bullying: - Involve students, staff and parents in the development of a whole-school approach to understanding, preventing and dealing with bullying, including covert and cyber bullying. - Ensure the roles of parents, staff and students in preventing and dealing with covert and cyber bullying are understood and followed. Provide continual support to staff and parents in their roles through facilitating ongoing access to training. - As methods of bullying change with advances in technology, as is particularly the case with cyber bullying, prevention policies and procedures need to continually evolve. Regular communication with students will assist in understanding the prevalence of covert bullying, the forms it takes and the effect of changes to anti-bullying policies. - Address the root causes of bullying and associated behavioural issues. Educate and empower students with knowledge of the causes and implications of bullying and the role of the peer group in encouraging or preventing bullying behaviours. - Actions such as banning student use of personal technologies while at school have been found to reduce the chances students will report cyber bullying for fear of having their mobile phones or laptops confiscated. - Ensure spaces where technology can be accessed are highly visible to staff.
Information source:	Cross, D., Shaw, T., Hearn, L., Epstein, M., Monks, H., Lester, L., & Thomas, L. 2009. *Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence Study (ACBPS).* Child Health Promotion Research Centre, Edith Cowan University, Perth. *Available at:* http://www.deewr.gov.au/schooling/nationalsafeschools/pages/research.aspx

Research Activity	***Behind the Scenes: Insights into the Human Dimension of Covert Bullying***:
	Report released 2008. Research funded by DEEWR
Conducted by:	The University of South Australia and Flinders University in partnership with *The Coalition to Decrease Bullying, Harassment and Violence in SA schools* and *Learning Technologies.*
Stated purpose:	To capture the real life experiences of individuals exposed to covert bullying (victim/ perpetrator/ bystander/ teacher/ parent).
Who participated:	Students and adults from school communities in South Australia participated. The sample includes: Government, independent and catholic schools; both genders; semi-rural and metropolitan schools; teachers, counsellors and principals and parents of children with special needs (Asperger's Syndrome).
Structure:	Participants' stories were digitally recorded and the stories were analysed – [narrative and thematic analysis].
Findings/ messages:	- Covert bullying is predominantly driven by the power vested in friendships and relationships. Covert bullying is readily transferred to cyber space though cyber bullying can have over and covert dimensions. - The experiences and impacts of covert bullying are not the domain of any one group of stakeholders (student, parents, teachers or counsellors); are not specific to either gender or confined to either city or rural communities. - The boundary-less nature of cyber bullying highlights that covert bullying is now able to cycle between home and school. - Some students discount or deny the impact of covert and cyber bullying, while for others it means being unable to face attending school or even changing schools.
Outcomes:	The Report was provided to DEEWR. It offers practical strategies for students, parents and teachers. It makes calls for reviews of existing policy and practices and consideration of the legal responsibilities of schools, together with the need of shared educative responsibilities between parents and schools. The recommendations include: - that a team or consultative group of young people be convened to inform school communities, government and policy developers about cyber space; and to help develop their won codes of conduct and contracts of acceptable behaviour. The gathered stories about bullying were placed on a dedicated website so they can be listened to and downloaded as a resource for schools: www.cyberbullyingstories.org.au
Information source:	Spears, B. et al. (2008). *Behind the Scenes: Insight into the Human Dimension of Covert Bullying*, Hawke Research Institute for Sustainable Societies - University of South Australia Centre for the Analysis of Educational Futures - Flinders University, SA. *Available at:* http://www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/NationalSafeSchools/Documents/covertBullyReports/Behind%20the%20Scenes%20-%20Insights%20into%20the%20Human%20Dimension%20of%20Covert%20Bullying%20-%20Final%20Short%20Report.pdf

Research activity:	***Cyber bullying: An evidence-based approach to the application and reform of law, policy and practice in schools***
	A three year study which commenced in 2008. Currently in progress.
Conducted by:	Lead researcher: Dr Marilyn Campbell, from QUT's Faculty of Education A joint collaboration involving QUT, Macrossans Lawyers, Queensland Independent Education Union, Queensland Teachers' Union, Brisbane Girls Grammar, Brisbane Catholic Education, Queensland Chapter of Australian & New Zealand Law Association and Emil Ford & Co, Lawyers.