

**Submission
No 25**

INQUIRY INTO BULLYING OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Organisation: Friendly Schools & Families
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General Purpose Standing Committee No. 2
Legislative Council
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Committee Member

Inquiry into the bullying of children and young people

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to this important inquiry.

The ACER Press, publishing arm of the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), publishes and distributes evidence-based resources for schools in Australia and overseas. ACER is an independent, not-for-profit organisation with offices in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth. ACER's mission is to create and promote knowledge and tools that can be used to improve learning.

Our belief is that making schools safe and friendly for students, staff and parents is fundamental to improving learning. Indeed one of the many negative effects of bullying is poor academic achievement – both for the student being bullied and the student engaging in bullying behaviour. When Edith Cowan University offered the distribution rights for Friendly Schools & Families Bullying Prevention Program ACER saw this as an excellent fit both in terms of the research basis of the program and the opportunity, when effectively implemented, to improve learning.

ACER took over the distribution of the Friendly Schools & Families Program in 2007. The program is based on six years of rigorous research conducted by Professor Donna Cross and her team from the Child Health Promotion Research Centre (CHPRC) based at Edith Cowan University in Western Australia.

The CHPRC is making a detailed submission to the inquiry. This ACER submission should be read in conjunction with that from the CHPRC. In support of their submission we would like to draw your attention to the features listed below.

The Friendly Schools & Families Bullying Prevention Program -

- The only Australian developed, evidence-based whole school program available
- Primary school focus – implemented in over 1000 schools across Australia
- An integrated approach based on addressing six key principles of success identified by the research – Policy Development, Ethos, Student Support and Management, Classroom Practice, Family Links and Physical Environment
- Provides close links to the **National Safe Schools Framework** key elements

- A whole-school community approach with an emphasis on the school, parents and wider community working together
- Based on the Health Promoting Schools Model, characterized by the interrelationship of three key areas:
 - Curriculum, teaching and learning practices
 - School organization, policy and ethos; and
 - School-home-community links.
- An approach that explicitly teaches students to identify bullying, adopt appropriate bystander behaviour and learn strategies to deal with bullying through classroom activities that cover all years of Primary School
- An approach that helps students to develop social skills so that bullying is far less likely to occur or be tolerated
- Availability of professional development to help schools implement the program effectively
- A survey service for schools to gather data to help identify priority areas as well as to measure effectiveness of the program over time.

A valuable insight into how the program works at a school level is provided on the enclosed set of three DVDs. Filming took place at Altona Green Primary School in December 2008.

1. Introduction: provides a snapshot of how the program is being implemented
2. Interview with the school principal: Karen O'Dowd describes the process the school went through – mentioning barriers, successes and sustainability
3. Classroom practice: translating the whole-school approach to the classroom – a Year 1/2 class participating in an activity on making friends

ACER actively promotes Friendly Schools & Families to schools across Australia as a best-practice program to reduce bullying. Take up has varied from State to State. For example, in South Australia over 50% of schools have Friendly Schools & Families in place, whereas in other States less than 10% of schools are using the program. Our recommendation is that such a valuable, Australian developed, research based program receives the recognition it deserves at a State and Federal Government level, and that every school be given appropriate support and encouragement to take up the program.

A representative from our company is available to provide oral evidence or further information if required. Thank you again for the opportunity to make a submission.

Yours sincerely



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ACER Press

Enclosed:
Information Booklets X 8
Set of 3 DVDs