

INQUIRY INTO BULLYING OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Organisation: Ministerial Council for Vocational and Technical Education,
National Senior Officials Committee

Name: Dr Peter Whitney

Position: Secretary to MCVTE-NSCO

Date received: 20/03/2009

MCVTE-NSOC

Ministerial Council for Vocational and Technical Education
National Senior Officials Committee

The Director
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 2
Legislative Council
Parliament House
Macquarie St
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Director

I am writing in response to an invitation from the Committee Chair, the Hon Robyn Parker MLC, to make a submission to the Inquiry into the bullying of children and young people.

The Ministerial Council for Vocational and Technical Education (MCVTE) has overall responsibility for the national training system and is its key decision-making body. The Council is chaired by the Commonwealth and includes state and territory ministers responsible for training.

MCVTE is supported by the National Senior Officials Committee (NSOC), which consists of the chief executive officers of the Commonwealth and state and territory departments responsible for training. NSOC is chaired by the Deputy Secretary of the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. I am responding on behalf of the NSOC Chair to the invitation to make a submission.

Information about the Inquiry, and a copy of the invitation to provide a submission, were sent to NSOC members. I understand that the Commonwealth and New South Wales training departments (and possible some other jurisdictions) will be providing submissions to the Inquiry.

South Australia has provided some valuable input to the Inquiry, including the findings of several relevant surveys and an outline of actions being undertaken. I have included as **Attachment A** to this letter South Australia's input, endorsed by the Chief Executive Officer of the South Australian Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology, Mr Raymond Garrard.

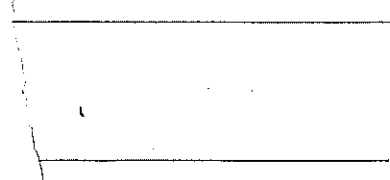
I hope that this material will be of help to the Committee and I look forward to the outcomes of the Inquiry.

Yours sincerely

(signed)

(Dr) Peter Whitney
Secretary to MCVTE-NSOC
20 March 2009

All mail to:



NSW Inquiry into Bullying and Harassment of Young People

Input from the South Australian Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology

The recent Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) survey conducted during 2008 in metropolitan and regional South Australia showed that one in three women and girls said they were most concerned about violence and that violence pervaded their lives through bullying at school, at work and within the family. A similar finding is evident in the National survey of young Australians, December 2008, which is the largest of its kind in Australia and is distributed through schools, libraries, universities, non-governmental organisations, youth organisations and on-line. The South Australian data indicates that bullying is the fifth biggest issue of concern for young people. The survey also shows that while a large range of resources are used for accessing information on the subject, including friends, parents, magazines, teachers etc, young adults are twice as likely to use the internet to access information than their 11-15 year old counterparts. Consideration therefore needs to be given to the importance of providing relevant information in an online capacity for young adult on this issue.

South Australia has taken the issue of bullying amongst young adult seriously and in late 2007, the South Australian Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology (the Department) collaborated with the Australian Bureau of Statistics to conduct surveys of those active in an apprenticeship and those who had recently cancelled an apprenticeship. Reports have recently been finalised on these surveys whose purpose was to: obtain information on the social and financial circumstances of 1st and 2nd year apprentices, the reasons for cancelling or considering cancelling their apprenticeship, their qualifications and experience prior to starting their apprenticeship and to inform policy and strategic responses to increase the uptake of apprenticeships, especially in skills shortage areas, and improve completion rates.

Key findings relating to conflict or bullying in the workplace for apprentices include

- 23% of cancelled Apprentices cancelled because of '*conflict or bullying in the workplace*'
- 21% of active apprentices who had considered cancelling their apprenticeship had done so because of '*conflict or bullying in the workplace*' and
- 32% of active apprentices, who started their apprenticeship aged 14-16 years, reported '*conflict or bullying in the workplace*' as a reason for considering cancelling their apprenticeship."

A number of Departmental actions are intended to assist in addressing and reducing the level of conflict and workplace bullying involving apprentices and trainees. These include:

- the recent introduction, under the Training and Skills Development Act 2008 (TSD Act), of an upfront employer registration process to allow departmental staff to better educate and inform employers of their roles and responsibilities in

relation to the training contract, including preventing and dealing with workplace bullying and conflict;

- the recent introduction, under the TSD Act, of an efficient and effective grievances and disputes process for parties to a training contract, including disputes over workplace bullying and harassment, through the South Australian Industrial Relations Commission. Both conciliation and arbitration are available under this jurisdiction. The Occupational, Health, Safety and Welfare Act 1986 also provides for workplace bullying matters involving employees generally to be investigated and an outcome facilitated by SafeWork SA inspectors and/or to be referred on to the South Australian Industrial Relations Commission for mediation or conciliation;
- apprentices/trainees and employers being provided with information booklets on the prevention and handling of workplace bullying and harassment;
- a free call (1800 673 097) consultancy service that allows apprentices/trainees and employers to seek advice in relation to their rights and responsibilities under the training contract, including in relation to workplace bullying and conflict; and
- commencing the development of a guide for supervisors of apprentices/trainees in South Australia, which will include information on preventing and handling workplace bullying and conflict.

While the Department has implemented a range of strategies targeted at trainees, it also has a number of initiatives which work with a wide cross section of young people. This broad strategic approach is designed to complement work currently being done by the schools and through the further education system.

The Office for Youth has also implemented a range of programs which improve personal development and equip young people through the development of leadership and resiliency to equip them when facing difficult situations. In particular, the Active8 program provides such skills and is delivered in secondary schools, community organisations and the local youth detention centres.

South Australia welcomes the approach taken by this committee and is keen to work in partnership with the committee to further develop policy, strategy and initiatives aimed at reducing bullying of children and young people.