

Submission  
No 1

## **BULLYING OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

**Name:** Mr Ben Blackburn

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Mr Ben Blackburn  
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Hon. Robyn Parker MLC  
Chair  
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 2  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Chair and Committee Members,

### **RE: INQUIRY INTO BULLYING OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

I write this submission in response to the self referred *inquiry into bullying of children and young people*, to be conducted by the General Purpose Standing Committee No. 2, to inquire into, and report on, best practice approaches to reduce bullying of children and young people, which was established on 4 December 2008 and subsequent call for submissions made on the same date.

International research from the United States<sup>1</sup> and the United Kingdom has previously concluded that the following personal characteristics can be generally attributed to children that bully:

- ❖ They watch more violent television at home;
- ❖ They misbehave at home more frequently;
- ❖ They spend less time with adults at home;
- ❖ At home, when they are disciplined, they face more forceful parental discipline;
- ❖ They have fewer positive adult role models;
- ❖ Bullies have diminished social skills and ability to adequately network amongst peers;
- ❖ They have fewer positive peer influences; and
- ❖ They get into more fights, due to their desire to dominate others through fear and coercion.

Empirical research studies in the United States and elsewhere on bullying and suggest that there are short and long-term consequences for both the perpetrators and victims of bullying.

Students who are chronic victims of bullying experience more physical and psychological problems than their peers who are not harassed by other children and they tend not to grow out of the victim role.

Longitudinal studies have found that victims of bullying in early grades also reported being bullied several years later.

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<sup>1</sup> A study conducted by *The Center for Adolescent Studies* at Indiana University; January 1995.

Studies also suggest that chronically victimized students as adults may be at increased risk for depression, poor self-esteem, and other mental health problems<sup>2</sup>.

For many victims of bullying, it's more than simply "*back to school blues*" – it's a dire situation.

Whilst many parents still dismiss bullying as "*kids being kids*" and remain unaware of the true extent of bullying and its long-term impact on victims, students in the past have become so depressed and unable to talk to anybody that they commit suicide in order to escape their pain.

We have seen some distressing examples internationally in recent years of teenagers committing suicide as a result of bullying, whether it be 'cyber' bullying via the internet or at high school.

As with a range of other complex social issues such as the growing incidence of child sexual assault and domestic violence in our communities, there is unfortunately no 'silver bullet' solution.

However, practical and community-based initiatives, such as **protective behaviours and personal safety programs**, can help to help reduce the incidence of playground bullying in schools by teaching children basic principles, such as '*Everybody has the right to feel safe with people all of the time*' and '*If you're having a no feeling or a warning sign, run and tell someone you can trust*'.

Protective behaviours and personal safety programs are generally delivered in schools by non-government organisations, such as Bravehearts Inc. which rolls out its "*Ditto's Keep Safe Adventure!*" personal safety show across New South Wales and Queensland schools teaching children from Kindergarten to Year 3 to keep safe from any unsafe situation, including bullying.

**In conclusion, I call upon the New South Wales Government to immediately increase by 25% its current capital expenditure on bullying prevention and personal safety programs within the New South Wales Department of Education and Training, in a practical move to help tackle the alarming incidence of bullying in schools and the devastating long-term consequences bullying can have on its victims.**

Furthermore, I wish to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of Members of the New South Wales Legislative Council on this Standing Committee who supported the establishment of such an important Inquiry and I wish all Committee Members well during their many deliberations.

Yours sincerely,

  
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**Ben Blackburn**

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<sup>2</sup> "*Ghosts from the Nursery, Tracing the Roots of Violence*", by Robin Karr-Morse and Meredith S. Wiley; Atlantic Monthly Press, 1997.

## APPENDIX 1<sup>3</sup>



***Kristina's Story - "Nice Girls Finish Last Too"***  
Kristina Arielle Calco - 12/26/89 - 12/4/05 (By Suicide)

*"If you think something is wrong, something is probably wrong.  
Go with your gut feelings".*

**Kristina's mum, Michelle Calco**

For whatever reason, in the wee morning hours of Sunday December 4th, Kristina lost her focus. The stage had been set and with such a frail and sensitive soul, she just could not bear the pain that had consumed her. **In that one tiny infinitesimal instant, Kristina made the choice to kill herself.**

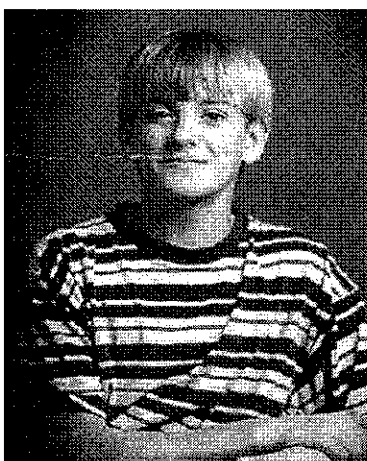
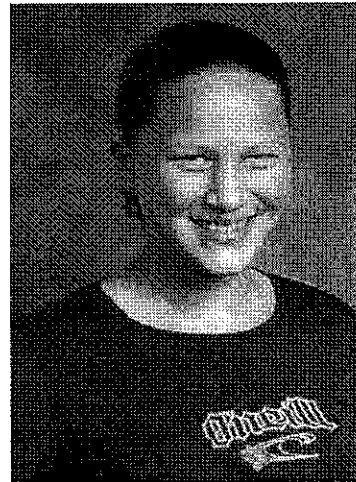
***Corinne's Story - "Just Go Home and Kill Yourself"***  
Corinne Wilson - 09/30/91 - 10/06/04 (By Suicide)

*"Don't be afraid of the school, the teachers or administrators.  
You must remember they work for you, and your children.  
If you don't stand up for your child, who will?"*

**Corinne's mum, Rochelle Sides**

The bullying came to a head on Oct. 6, 2004. ...one of the girls slapped her and called her a "whore." They said they wished she were dead and that she should "go home and kill herself".

**The day my husband and I should have been listening to our daughter perform at the rodeo... we buried her instead!**



***Jared's Story - "The scars never go away"***  
Jared Benjamin High - 09/23/85 - 09/29/98 (By Suicide)

*"It's your child. You must fight for him or her. No one cares like a parent cares ...a parent is motivated by love".*

**Jared's mum, Brenda High**

"Brutus" commenced to brutally assault Jared by picking him up and throwing him on the floor and pushing him against the walls...Several times Jared yelled for help calling, "Teacher, Teacher!" **But no one was there to help.**

<sup>3</sup> Photo's and story extracts taken from 'Bullycide in America: Mum's Speak Out' website at <http://www.bullycide.org/>.

## REFERENCES

1. A study conducted by *The Center for Adolescent Studies* at Indiana University; January 1995.
2. "*Ghosts from the Nursery, Tracing the Roots of Violence*", by Robin Karr-Morse and Meredith S. Wiley; Atlantic Monthly Press, 1997.
3. Photo's and story extracts taken from '*Bullycide in America: Mum's Speak Out*' website at <http://www.bullycide.org/>.