REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS BEFORE

GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE No. 2

INQUIRY INTO BULLYING OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

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At Sydney on Monday 11 May 2009

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The Committee met at 9.30 a.m.

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PRESENT

The Hon. R. M. Parker (Chair)

The Hon. G. J. Donnelly
The Hon. M. A. Ficarra
Dr J. Kaye
Reverend the Hon. G. K. Moyes
The Hon. C. M. Robertson
The Hon. L. J. Voltz

CHAIR: Welcome to the second public hearing of the inquiry into bullying of children and young people by General Purpose Standing Committee No. 2. The Committee is holding this inquiry in recognition of the lifelong impact of bullying on children and young people. We are looking at bullying in a range of contexts, from bullying in schools to newer forms of bullying, particularly cyber bullying. The aim of the inquiry is to identify best practice approaches to reducing bullying of children and young people. To do that we are looking at successful approaches in Australia and overseas and the evidence base for those approaches. The Committee shortly will begin consultation in a variety of ways with children and young people to obtain their views on whether bullying is an issue and, if so, how we can best address the issue.

As to procedural matters, for the purpose of broadcasting the proceedings only Committee members and witnesses may be filmed or recorded. People in the public gallery should not be the primary focus of any filming or photographs. They will have to have their 15 minutes of fame another time. In reporting the proceedings of this Committee the media must take responsibility for what they publish or what interpretation they place on anything that is said before the Committee. Guidelines are available from the Committee staff. Any messages to Committee members or witnesses must be passed via the Committee staff. I ask that everyone turn their mobile phones to silent mode, particularly those that receive data messages, and keep them at a distance away from microphones because of interference with recording equipment.

SHARON AUSTIN, General Manager, Peer Support Australia, P.O. Box 498, Brookvale, 2100, and

SHARLENE CHADWICK, Training and Development Manager, Peer Support Australia, P.O. Box 498, Brookvale, 2100, sworn and examined:

CHAIR: I indicate that this morning the Hon. Lynda Voltz is substituting for Committee member the Hon. Tony Catanzariti. All other members of the Committee are present. I welcome Ms Austin and Ms Chadwick, who represent Peer Support Australia. Would you tell us in what capacity you appear before the Committee today?

Mrs AUSTIN: General Manager, Peer Support Australia.

Ms CHADWICK: Training and Development Manager for Peer Support Australia.

CHAIR: Would you like to make a brief opening statement before we commence questions?

Ms CHADWICK: Certainly. Peer Support Australia implements the Peer Support Program and has done so for almost 40 years in New South Wales schools. The program is an evidence-based, proven successful, early intervention and prevention program. Since 1996 we have been working in schools in the area of anti-bullying. Successful anti-bullying programs are those that focus on a whole school approach where students, parents and teachers have an active role. The Peer Support Program is integrated into the curriculum, hence that is why it is important that teachers and students have an involvement in the program itself. We are a not-for-profit organisation. We are a small organisation in that we have a staff of six, but we work on what we call a highly leveraged model where we have four training and development consultants that work across New South Wales and other States. We work with teachers predominantly, who then go back to their schools and work with the bulk of their student population. We conservatively estimate that we impact upon 200,000 young people in schools in New South Wales alone on an annual basis. However, naturally, being a not-for-profit organisation, funding has always been an issue for us over the last 40 years. We are funded or supported in part by New South Wales Health. In recent years we have received Federal health funding and Federal education funding. But as an organisation, ongoing, sustained funding is an issue for us to be able to continue to provide these effective peer-led programs and to address the issue of anti-bullying in our school community.

CHAIR: We have stacks of questions about your program and why you think it works. In the evidence we have had so far there has been lots of research about bullying and the development of programs to reduce the incidence of bullying, but the incidence rate seems to remain the same. I do not know about other Committee members, but it is not clear to me what needs to happen to make a difference and what is needed in terms of funding and rollout to effect that change, particularly with the different forms of bullying. That is the key issue that I am grappling with. Do you have a comment on my rambling question?

Ms CHADWICK: In terms of the evidence that the incidence of bullying behaviour has not necessarily decreased over a number of years, even though we have a range of programs available, comes from a lot of the research that indicates bullying behaviours are actually a learnt behaviour. Our young people are exposed to a whole range of areas in which they are learning inappropriate ways of basically having their needs met. School communities have a number of initiatives and programs in place to support young people if they are, in fact, on the receiving end of bullying. However, one of the key messages is that we cannot change what we do not acknowledge. Awareness raising is absolutely vital and crucial to effecting the impact of bullying behaviours amongst young people.

We work in a whole-school approach, which enables students, parents and teachers to be able to recognise that what is actually happening around people is in fact bullying behaviours. It is not a rite of passage, it is not character building and it is not just part of growing up. With the onset and the prevalence of what we now call cyber bullying, it has changed the face of how we actually respond to the incidence of bullying behaviours in our school communities. It has now taken a link where bullying is occurring more frequently outside of the school domain, yet the distress and upset is carrying through to the school domain. So, that is why in terms of rolling out effective proven programs it actually takes time because what we are about doing is affecting cultural shifts in our school communities, and that is not going to happen with a program that might run in a school for one term or a program that runs in a school one year and then we tick a box and say, "We've dealt with it." Sustained integrated programs are proven to be the most effective. The most effective intervention

programs are those targeted at younger-aged students. So that is why the Peer Support Program works on the preventative aspect. We work from primary school age through to secondary.

CHAIR: Does it concern you that the Department of Education and Training requires schools to have a bullying policy and program in place for schools but that there is no follow-up? The follow-up is very ad hoc, to be kind, as to whether schools actually do anything with that policy or whether it sits in the drawer. Is that a concern for you? You are not covering every school in New South Wales—I guess you would want to in an ideal world—but does that ad-hoc follow-up concern you?

Mrs AUSTIN: Yes, we are not covering every school in New South Wales and, yes, we would love to, but we would not like to see this program mandated in any school. We think the strength of the program is that schools themselves choose to take up the program because it is not an easy program to implement. There is a lot of commitment and work involved in making sure that the program is run effectively. So, we make recommendations as to what the school should do with regards to their policies and how they should follow it up and what reporting procedures they need to put in place. But, yes, of course it is of concern that some schools develop a policy and think they can tick the box and do not do anything else about it. So, I think we do believe that the Government should do something about making sure that those policies are followed through with.

CHAIR: My final question before I hand over to other Committee members is about the two views we have heard so far about the incidence of bullying. Professor McGrath told us that the school environment is much more influential on the incidence of bullying than what happens at home. Professor Ken Rigby said that in his view the home environment is as influential, I guess, as school. What do you think is the more powerful influence, if there is one?

Ms CHADWICK: I guess that is the ultimate question, if there is one. For younger students, probably the home environment is far more influential, particularly in the primary age setting. As students develop and move through adolescence their peers become far more influential to them. Most young people during the adolescent phase will believe and connect with their friends far more than they will with their parents. So that is why our programs are specifically targeted for those two age groups because their needs are quite distinct.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Sharon, you said that it is not an easy program. Do you wait until you are invited in? If that is the case, could you outline the teacher commitment and time involved? Is it true that we are not actually addressing the most problematic school environments? How better can we do it? I appreciate that I have asked many questions of you.

Mrs AUSTIN: The way we approach schools is that we market our program by sending out faxes to schools around the country. Schools then have a look at their priorities and decide that the time is right for them now to look at implementing a peer support program in their school because of whatever issues they may be facing in the school. Schools implement the Peer Support Program not just because they have some bullying issues; they implement for a whole range of reasons. This can be anything from wanting to put a leadership program into the school to wanting to put a program that will develop resilience among young people to improve the relationships in the school. So, there are many reasons why schools actually implement the Peer Support Program, but for us they have to decide that this is what they want to do before they put the program in place because without commitment of the whole school the program is not going to be successful. They are not going to do the kids any favours, they are not going to do us any favours and they are not going to do themselves any favours. So, they have to be really committed to the program before they decide to implement it.

In order to implement it, we run centralised training workshops where we train teachers to implement the program in their school. So we run something like 40 workshops a year at different locations around the country. Up to 16 teachers attend those workshops and we recommend that each school send at least two people so that there is not just one person driving the program in their school. At those workshops the teachers are provided with the opportunity to get an understanding of the philosophy and the underpinnings behind the Peer Support Program. They go through a series of activities that are designed to replicate the leadership training that they will then take the students through, and they get some opportunity to plan for the action that they are going to take when they go back to their school. That is a one-day training course.

After they have trained they return to their school and enlist other staff on board. They do awareness raising with the parents, staff and students. They then organise two-day leadership training for the potential peer leaders. In primary school this is every year 6 child. In secondary school we recommend that every year 10 child goes through the leadership training, but the number that are appointed as peer leaders depends on the size of the

year 7 intake because it is the year 7 students they work with. Once the peer leaders have received their training schools split up into small groups of 8 to 10 in number and the leaders are paired. Each pair of leaders works with a small group around a series of activities that are designed to develop specific skills—so, life skills and social skills.

As I said, the Peer Support Program is not primarily an anti-bullying program. It is a program about changing the culture in the school and developing positive relationships. So, we provide the students with modules that they work through. They are structured session plans that they work through around a whole series of focus areas. We have modules on relationships, on values, on resilience and optimistic thinking, on anti-bullying and particularly on transition because these are periods when it is recognised that relationships start to break down. The program runs once a week for a term. The students themselves are responsible for the organisation and management of that program, but they are actively supervised by teachers, and briefing and debriefing are a major part of the program.

You can see that it is a fair commitment from the school in terms of time, resources and handing empowerment over to the students. Not all schools are at a stage where they are ready to do that. It is also part of, I guess, a structure of a school. We would believe that the Peer Support Program does not necessarily stand alone. We believe it can stand alone, but we also believe that it supports what schools are doing in other areas around emotional and social wellbeing, around anti-bullying, around mental health. It supports all those mind matters programs and pastoral care programs that are already happening in the school. So, for a school that has already started to do some work around improving its culture, the Peer Support Program becomes like the backbone of the school so it can support all those other things it is doing as well.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Do you often think that the people who approach you to take up your program are the enlightened ones anyway and there is a whole host of other schools with terrible school environments that do not realise it or if they do they do not want to address it? What are your thoughts on making it mandatory, and I know you have got limited resources and you may not like it to be mandatory, but I think the problem is emerging now, and it is a big problem, with our technology and the racing speed of technology and the uptake of technology that I sometimes fear that what you are doing is so good we should make it widespread?

Ms CHADWICK: Philosophically, yes, probably it should be a mandatory program. We work on the fact that if schools are committed to something that it works far more easily. I come from a secondary teaching background and I have taught in schools and sometimes those programs that we were requested very strongly to run were not necessarily supported with professional development and training, were not necessarily supported with ongoing funding. Once the project finished and we ticked boxes and said we have addressed that over a period of time, there was nothing ongoing. So teachers went, "Well, great. Thanks for that. I'll just put it to one side."

I guess that is where Peer Support Australia and our board come from: we would rather schools make the commitment with their own choice, with the resources available to them, and we are more likely to get a long-term commitment from schools to be able to do that.

Dr JOHN KAYE: I congratulate you on your program. I get loads of positive feedback from schools that take up your program. Particularly for those schools, to pick up on what Ms Ficarra was saying, where there is a problem with bullying and they turn to you for help, they do have substantial results. How important is it in terms of the selection of the peer leaders? Is this a crucial thing or does it really not matter, the quality and capacity of the peer leaders?

Ms CHADWICK: The quality of the peer leaders is quite crucial, and that is why we do not actually work with students in schools. In Peer Support Australia our consultants work with teachers. Teachers know what the students are like. However, my experience in working in schools for over 10 years and in this role with Peer Support Australia for 14, is that some of the students that we may not necessarily think would be very good at being a peer leader because they are often doing the wrong thing or they have got a track record are the ones that shine through this whole process called peer support leadership. It is the opportunity that they have never been given before to prove that they can do something quite different.

What we are constantly doing in schools is encouraging schools to separate the behaviour from the person. Just because this is what I have done last week, last term, or three years ago does not make me who I am. The challenge in implementing our anti-bullying modules for schools is that teachers will often say, "But

hang on, that student in year 6 or year 10 is a student we know who engages in bullying behaviours, so we could not possibly allow them to be a peer leader." So we work through those issues with teachers, and essentially the peer leadership allows those particular students to develop skills that they may not normally have been able to develop.

So the quality of the leadership is important, but that is why we have support structures in place for teachers to be able to support these students every step of the way. It is not "Go off for half an hour and entertain yourselves and we will just sit over here and hope everything is working well"; it is an integrated program.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Do your modules actively address issues of homophobia and racism?

Mrs AUSTIN: No, they do not. Our modules do not actively address any issues of this type. They are skill development modules. So they are about developing skills in young people to help them address the issues they may face in their lives.

Dr JOHN KAYE: But presumably issues of homophobia and racism would come up, particularly in the high school version of your program?

Ms CHADWICK: The lessons that the students work through are highly structured. We develop them—say this; do this; this is an activity. Whilst there are discussion points where the students may end up going down a track, that is where we actively encourage teachers to step in. There are some issues that students are not equipped to be able to deal with. The peer leadership process is not empowering the peer leaders to become counsellors or people that students disclose information to. But in terms of the skill development, what we are about doing is teaching students the skills of acceptance, understanding, diversity, and within that there may be the implicitness of homophobia or racism and inclusivity.

Dr JOHN KAYE: What about the skill of empathy? We have heard a lot in this inquiry about the word "empathy". I think one person referred us to a crisis of empathy—that we have somehow or another through media exposure and other activities taken away the capacity of young people to empathise with other people who may be different to themselves. Is there an explicit focus on empathy?

Ms CHADWICK: Empathy is one of the key skills through our anti-bullying modules. It is also one of the key skills through a range of our other modules. If our young people are more empathic towards the needs and feelings of others, it may in some situations require them to just stop and think about what they are doing before they do it, or even after the fact—maybe that was not exactly the right thing to do. But that is a difficult skill to try and teach students out of context; they need examples of what being empathetic is. For a lot of students some of the skills that we are trying to develop and enhance in them they are not being exposed to outside the school environment. So that is the dichotomy: this is what we do at school but at home things might be different. That is part of lifelong learning for students, that there are some things that are different in different contexts.

Dr JOHN KAYE: That gets back to Robyn's question earlier on—the issue of bystanders and bystander behaviour during acts of bullying. We have heard a lot of evidence about the importance of bystanders and a lot of evidence about how we get bystanders to get involved and to interact. Your program would have specific impacts on bystanders in an act of bullying. Can you talk us through how that works and the significance of that?

Ms CHADWICK: We have a model that we use both through the primary and secondary modules called the bullying triangle. Schools of thought are that students really can only comprehend three or five pieces of information at any one time, so we use a three-way prong. That bullying triangle focuses on the people engaging in bullying, the students who are on the receiving end of bullying, but, more importantly, the people watching—the bystander element. The research is drifting between 80 and 90 per cent of students in any one school are aware that bullying is happening. It does not necessarily mean that they are observing it but they may be aware that something was uploaded or a text message was sent or whatever.

So it is about skilling those students to work with us as school communities, because less than 21 per cent of incidents of bullying behaviours are witnessed by adults in the school environment. So it is about using that core of students who are doing the right thing absolutely every single day but giving them the skills that reporting or intervening are worthwhile events to engage in. For primary age students we talk about reporting—if you see something that hurts you or if you see something that you feel is upsetting or makes you feel unsafe,

in terms of younger student language, then this is how you move through that. We need to skill kids on how to report things. Going up to a teacher at lunchtime and saying, "They're picking on me", is not necessarily the right way of articulating what is happening.

For secondary students, if we start encouraging them to report, we get this massive, "No, I'm not doing that, because if I report this is happening it will get worse", or, "If I report this is happening I will get done to just as badly. So I will just be a little hole in the wall." So that code of silence is quite difficult to work through in secondary schoolings, and the way that girls engage in bullying behaviours is another hearing altogether—and I can say that with expertise; it is a whole other issue. So what we are trying to do through secondary schooling is encourage students to intervene, and intervention can look like a whole range of things. We give them some strategies; they come up with strategies as well. The bystander is important but within that there are elements within those bystanders. Some are watching on because there is nothing else to do and it looks like it is a bit of fun. So this is why the term "social theatre" has been bandied about for a while.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: Yesterday was Mother's Day and all of our children with their children came home to say hello to mother. So I had the opportunity of having a bunch of teenage high school grandchildren around, and we had a long and serious discussion about cyber bullying. They tell me Facebook is much worse than MySpace because Facebook is used more by young kids who are stupid. They tell me it is worse because of the number of readers. If something happens in the schoolyard it is over and done with. However, now that it is done on Facebook or MySpace it is read by large numbers of people and the person concerned rereads it. I would like your reflections on that. Apparently the worst people are year 9 girls. Both Jack and Tom tell me they will sort out the person after school.

Each of the kids said that photos last forever. I asked them whether they knew of people uploading photos of their own bodies or pornographic-style photos. They said they were not really that bad, but photos are sent around quite a bit. The bottom line was that they felt there was no-one they could go to. Everyone referred to the problem you mentioned about not going to teachers or the principal. They wanted someone outside the school whom they or their parents could approach. I guess they were talking about some kind of cyberspace ombudsman.

Ms CHADWICK: Year 9 girls are a problem. That is why our program works with year 7 through to year 8 addressing the fact that students are starting to engage more in bullying behaviours in a secondary context. A lot of the research in Australia shows those spikes in the transition years. Facebook was launched five years ago, but it seems to have been around forever. Young people now interact and socialise through the Internet. Mention was made earlier about how rapidly technology is moving forward. Adults, in particular, and schools are finding it difficult to keep pace. Our peer support program is designed to assist students in understanding that regardless of whether they are uploading something, sending a text message, or putting information on a Facebook page, or it is happening at school, it is still inappropriate.

It is the broader social context in which we need to skill kids. We have to get across the message that what they are doing is inappropriate or not acceptable and we must give them ways forward. A lot of young people do not understand that once it is in the public domain it is there forever. I do not think that many young people understand that when they apply for a job in the future potential employers might check out their Facebook profile and ask whether the content is appropriate for a prospective employee. It is about educating students but also parents. Parents purchase the equipment or allow these young people to access these forms of technology. It is parent education in consultation with schools that is important. A great deal of the information that students load onto the Internet is not loaded at school. Schools have so many blocks, firewalls and so on that they cannot physically do it in the school environment. Having said that, there may be a brilliant little kid who is a hacker who can find a way through.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: And he is expelled when he is caught.

Ms CHADWICK: Yes. That will always be the case, no matter what. There is always one enterprising kid who will find a way around a procedure.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: To whom should the kids go if they have decided that the teacher or principal is not appropriate?

Ms CHADWICK: Ideally that is what the peer support program is establishing in schools.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: I found out that several of my kids had been peer leaders and had been through the program at primary school.

Ms CHADWICK: We are trying to develop those support networks in schools so that if students do not feel comfortable going to an adult or someone that they can trust, there is another student they can talk to about those issues.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: To whom could that student go?

Ms CHADWICK: We are encouraging schools to have an adult within the school environment to fulfil that role. Schools must recognise that they need procedures in place and that they should review the technology aspect of bullying behaviours on an annual basis to keep track of it.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: It appears to me that bullying behaviours are almost a societal construct. There is bullying in some form or another in many homes. It does not have to be aggressive bullying; there is controlled bullying. I went to school in the 1950s and 1960s and there was extensive bullying of anyone "odd" by the people who taught us and the children in the class. It did not necessarily relate to race or sexuality. "Odd" is a very good description and a great deal of the research uses it. Bullying is still a normal behaviour in the workplace. We are asking that young people do not indulge in this learned behaviour. Can you talk to that thought? I do not like it either, because I suppose sometimes I have been on one side or the other. But that is the world for me. How are we making it a different world for young people?

Ms CHADWICK: Bullying is a learned behaviour and students learn it in a range of areas. The family environment is significant, particularly because students are within that environment for at least four years before they enter formal schooling.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: It also happens after school.

Ms CHADWICK: The school environment or culture is also a significant contributor. Most students indicate that the crucial time is when they travel to and from school. There are many grey areas in schools around where their duty of care and legal responsibility end; that is, where the in loco parentis stops and where the parents take over. We often say to schools that if they believe young children are experiencing problems while they are travelling to and from school they need to take all care and responsibility to support them through it. The playground is also an interesting dynamic. It is about encouraging schools to do an audit of safe spots for students.

Students also learn this behaviour through the media. The games students play on the Internet such as PlayStation, Wii, Nintendo—that is the extent of my knowledge of the topic—are important. Sport is also an important contributing factor. We are endeavouring to develop and enhance those skills, but that needs constant reinforcement because there are other areas in which students are exposed to things that may not be appropriate.

Mrs AUSTIN: Education of the parent body is a vital part of addressing this problem as well. Many parents in the past have not realised the effect their behaviour can have on their children. One of the things we recommend as part of the program is that the whole school community is involved in arriving at a common understanding of bullying and what is affecting the children.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: I come from the country, and most of the schools that I know of in the region are very active in peer programs and the kinds of programs you are discussing. However, what goes on in their family home is totally different from what we are asking young people to deliver. How do you answer that? The family structures are full of bullying and violence and that is the basis of the behaviour that the young people are acting out on the bus on the way home.

Dr JOHN KAYE: How do you train students to go against what they are seeing at home?

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: Yes.

Ms CHADWICK: Time. We find over a number of years that if bullying is sustained and prolonged it then becomes a habit. They do not know what else to do because that is just how they resolve conflict, it is fun or that is how they get attention.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: It equates to power?

Ms CHADWICK: Power in relationships, absolutely. We are trying to skill kids so that they can recognise at school that this is how we do things—it may be different from home but this is how we do things—so that students are developing an understanding that there are different ways of being, that there are different ways to interact as they grow older, and that is the whole point, of developing your own identity and developing your own values. They can look at it with perspective and say what happens at home does not always have to be right and this is another way for me to behave. I feel happier when I behave this way, I am supported, I have more fun, my academic achievement is better, I do not have to do it this way. It is not easy but it can happen over a period of time, with a lot of other programs that we run in schools. I taught students through to year 12 that were not particularly literate and numerate, even with a lot of programs available to them. We are not saying that running a peer support program will stop bullying from happening; it will not. It will skill kids to be able to deal more effectively with it and create less upset within our school communities and have more positive school communities around that.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: Bullying is essentially something that is common in institutions. Whether it be school or somewhere else, it is an institutional thing. I wonder if there is a propensity not so much for kids not to understand technology but parents not understanding? Last night I was using Skype. My daughter was talking to her uncle in England and she pointed out to him that she had just taken a photo of him. He said, "What do you mean?" When you are live to live on Skype you can take a photo of what is happening at the other end of the wire. My eight-year-old returns her homework by email, because that is what the teacher wants, and they grow up in a world where information technology and overloaded information is commonplace. For us it is a new world order, but for them that is normal and they quite understand it. If you are part of an institution, bullying is part of that, and that is a fundamental problem, whether it is at school or later in life, wherever—a sporting organisation, a military force, a government department—when you are in large institution, a jail.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Political parties.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: Political parties, yes, Parliament. No, I am joking about that.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: That is not funny at all.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: It is true.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: It is this idea of coping in a world where institutions exist and bullying is a part of it. My daughter is in year 7 and has just done all the peer support thing, and I am more worried about her taking over the school than anything else. It is really about teaching them skills to deal with institutions. At the end of the day kids will act out at school. Kids who have experienced parents who are violent see violence as a way of resolving situations they do not understand. When there is a mob and they sense vulnerability they react to it. Is it not about teaching them to deal with that?

Ms CHADWICK: Bullying tends to be about relationship issues. It is about skilling kids to be more aware that what is happening around them is bullying. It is not just mob mentality, it is not just a way of growing up or a rite of passage—you know, this is what we do. What we are trying to do is encourage students to develop these skills for lifelong learning so they can deal with whatever conflict or difficulties or challenging situations that may arise further down the track once they leave school, or even at school.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Thank you for coming along and providing a detailed submission. On page 17 of your submission you said:

> In addition, the Peer Support Program is aligned with national frameworks including …

And it sets out a number of programs. Specifically, I wanted to talk for a moment about the national framework for values education and specifically issues of values education. In answering one of the questions you spoke about the culture inside schools. With the values education, which appears to be gathering some pace in education inside schools, how important do you think it is having values education inside schools and linking back to the types of programs you offer? In other words, if I put it another way, if you do not have values education in your school, do you think that in any way disadvantages or undermines the sorts of programs you offer?

Ms CHADWICK: Essentially, there are key values that are linked to the nine core values that were part of the national framework for values education a couple of years ago. We work with most of our modules around respect and responsibility. The key is that every interaction we have with our students and teachers and parents in our schools are respectful and we take responsibility for our behaviours and actions. Then you are dealing at some level intrinsically with bullying behaviour. You are being more resilient, you are being more optimistic, you are developing those leadership capabilities. It is acknowledging that we are respectful and responsible in all our actions, regardless of whether it is Monday so this is how we treat someone simply because it is a Monday, or whether it is because of their background or a perceived difference. But values education does happen in schools. It may not be a particular curriculum area but it is those informal things that happen through school through a range of other initiatives and practices linked to wellbeing programs or linked to pastoral care programs.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: I am not familiar with the detail of the elements of your program but obviously people have differences of opinion and different points of view on a range of things, that is life, but at the end of the day you can still hold strong views that are different from other people's but still ultimately respect that person. Is that part of the program you present, that in the end people can have very different positions on things but ultimately you respect each other?

Ms CHADWICK: Yes. Essentially our definition of what bullying behaviour is in schools, or what it is not—two people with a difference of opinion is not bullying behaviour. In secondary schools that tends to be what happens more often—I have an unrealistic expectation of this relationship, I think we are really best friends but Sharon does not invite me to things so I get quite cranky about that so I am engaging in appropriate behaviour towards Sharon but Sharon says, hang on, we are not best friends we are just acquaintances. A lot of conflict that is unresolved in schools escalates into bullying behaviour. The preventative end is skilling kids to be able to resolve conflict and understand that we have differences of opinion around a whole range of things. It is coming back to the power, the intent and the frequency. If there is power or an imbalance of power in a relationship, that is about bullying behaviour. But two friends can have a disagreement, a difference of opinion. Two friends could engage in that banter and externally people might think that is a putdown but that is how we get along.

But a difference of opinion is not necessarily bullying behaviour and a lot of what we structure through the sessions makes it difficult for teachers because everything in our base definition—bullying is something that someone does to upset us on purpose—kids will go to teachers and say that everything that happens in schools was bullying. We need to educate teachers to not put their hand up and say, "Go away, that is not bullying." They have to stop and have the discourse with that child and educate them. The bottom line is the level of distress of that young student reporting is the flag for us. If a child is distressed we need to be seen to be doing something. Policies and procedures in schools exist. Students often do not know what they are or where to go to, and it is about reinforcing them, evaluating them and re-developing them frequently.

CHAIR: What is your advice to us in one sentence or so of what outcomes you think this inquiry should aim for so this is not a report that goes into a draw, so there are some outcomes that are deliverable?

Ms CHADWICK: One key outcome for us as an organisation would be that schools are more aware of the peer support program and the benefits to their communities. In order for that to happen more effectively for us, it is long-term funding that would support us to be able to continue the work that we have been doing for 40 years and to continue to do that for another 40 years. Long-term change in schools happens over a period of time. Cultural shifts take about 10 years and so we need ongoing funding to plan with confidence to be able to support school communities through the long haul.

(The witnesses withdrew)

IAN GEORGE BAKER, Director of Policy and Programs, Catholic Education Commission, New South Wales,

CAROLYN JEANETTE HADLEY, Education Officer, Child Protection, Catholic Education Office, Sydney,

LORRAINE DENISE WALKER, State Coordinator, Student Welfare Programs, Catholic Education Commission, New South Wales,

STEVEN LEMOS, Principal, St Marys, Georges Hall, sworn and examined:

CHAIR: Do any of you wish to make a brief opening statement?

Mr BAKER: I would just make a few brief comments and then, yes, we would be more than happy to engage in a dialogue with the Committee. I will make just a few comments about what the commission is and is not, and that will explain why we are moving as a group. The Catholic Education Commission, New South Wales, represents Catholic schools in New South Wales but it does not own them; it does not operate them. It is not a line manager in the sense that, say, Bridge Street might be for government schools. I can reflect a bit more on that through questions if you wish.

There are 585 Catholic schools in New South Wales, like everything statistical, depending on how you count them. Some of them are multicampus so there are more sites than that. Those schools enrol some 240,000 students here in New South Wales, employ some 18,000 teachers head count—there are different ways of counting teachers—and about 8,000 ancillary staff. That makes Catholic education the fourth largest provider of schooling in Australia.

We have provided a submission to the inquiry and I will not run through that except I would like to make a few comments in relation to section 7.4 of our submission. First of all, I would like to congratulate the Parliament on establishing the inquiry. Bullying is an issue of community concern and we acknowledge that. We also note that it is not a new issue. That does not in any way excuse the fact that it happens. We are very much mindful that bullying now can take new forms, driven by new technologies, and that obviously is a matter of community concern.

What do we think that school communities in particular can do about bullying? That is where I would just like to draw attention to what we have said in section 7.4 of our submission. There are a series of dot points and I would like to emphasise nine points. Schools should look to the education of their staff to make sure that staff understand the issues presented around bullying and harassment; schools should have policies to counter bullying and harassment; schools should look to their core business, that is, the school curriculum, and in the context of a Catholic school particularly their religious education curriculum, in addressing the issues of bullying and harassment; schools should endeavour to empower students to involve them in the solutions; schools should clarify the roles of various staff members so that staff members understand their particular roles in responding to incidents of bullying when it occurs; most importantly, schools must work with their parents, because bullying is a social issue not just a school issue—not even particularly a school issue; schools must have a focus on the wellbeing of the students; and schools must work with other agencies, and I am thinking particularly of health, often mental health, the Department of Community Services and, in some cases, the police. They are our opening comments and we are happy to take questions.

CHAIR: We have had a lot of evidence about different programs that are rolled out within schools. We have heard today about Peer Support Australia, and I know that they have some interaction with your schools. There is attention to bullying issues, but in spite of that the incidence of bullying does not seem to be reducing. Indeed, the evidence about cyber bullying seems to be that that new form of bullying is very much on the increase. Our Committee wants this inquiry—which has not been established by the Parliament but by this Committee—to result in a report that does not end up in a drawer but, rather, comes up with some long-term outcomes that lead to reducing the incidence of bullying in schools. What we would like to know from all our witnesses is how we should proceed, what outcomes we should be aiming for, and why the incidence of bullying is not decreasing, given more interest and effort from schools.

Mr BAKER: I will make a couple of comments and my colleagues might want to make further comments. The incidence of bullying begs the very difficult question of a definition of bullying. Bullying can cover a very wide spectrum, from the irritating to the criminal and life threatening. That is one issue: grappling

with trying to work out exactly what we are focusing on. The glib answer is we are focusing on everything. Also, bullying is mutating, and it is mutating into cyberspace. That is a very, very difficult issue for schools because some of the more alarming of these incidents of cyber bullying actually happened out of school time. The connection can be that the students belong to the same school.

We do not have the magic answer, but we are keen to work with the Committee. I suppose there are two issues: first, definition. Are we all talking about the same thing when we talk about bullying? Secondly, what is a reasonable expectation of schools in respect of bullying where the only connection is that the students are enrolled in the school but the bullying is happening at two o'clock in the morning.

Ms WALKER: I would like to add, continuing with what Ian has just said, a comment about the increase in the reporting of the incidence of bullying. I would like to table for consideration that that could be the result of better policies and more education of students and teachers. It is certainly the case that that would be reinforced by the national MindMatters program, which is a secondary school program that I am sure you know about. As they implement that program in schools, they find that they have a much higher level of reporting. I think that is an additional aspect to what Ian has said.

I would also like to go back to the definition. There has been some very interesting work, which the Committee may be interested in looking at when it is fully published. Deakin University, in Western Australia, has just done a very big research program into cyber bullying. I have seen some early data that is coming from it. I think the Committee would be interested in having a look at what that is saying. One of the things they suggested is that currently most of the information we are getting about the amount of cyber bullying is United Kingdom based and not Australia based. It comes back to that definition problem again. What they have been counting in is anything and everything, a one-off, what is known as a cyber attack apparently—I am learning this whole new language—but it is not classified as bullying. Bullying is something that they classify as ongoing, deliberate—all of those things. I think that would be very interesting data to have a look at. I thought I would like to add that to my colleague's comments.

Ms HADLEY: I might also add that in terms of resources to assist schools in reducing the incidence of cyber bullying, however they may be defined. An example for us in the Sydney Catholic Education Office was our attempt to have resources for NetAlert, which is a Commonwealth program, delivered. We put a proposal forward to get them delivered to all our students, to our staff and to our parents over a few months. They had to decline this; they could not assist us in doing that. I simply raise that, in terms of the programs that are available and the limitations to them.

CHAIR: I take your point in terms of what is bullying. With regard to monitoring the programs that you are rolling out within your schools, I was fairly alarmed to find that anti-bullying policies need to be in place in government schools. It appears from your submission that you have a similar sort of approach. How do you monitor that? Certainly in government schools that is not being monitored in terms of how well they are rolled out, or whether they end up in the drawer, or how they are implemented. How do you do that under the Catholic school system?

Mr BAKER: Policy is a school-based issue. Perhaps we will come back to how they might be monitored.

Mr LEMOS: At the local level, I guess we are talking now. Each of the schools has to record and track the bullying behaviours that are documented, that are rightly observed. The schools have had either their codes of conduct or their pastoral care policies revised so that there is some sort of system in place. At our school, Georges Hall, we have a system of behaviour cards. We have positive behaviour cards and other behaviour cards that track and monitor incidents of misbehaviour or bullying. To make sure that we do track it on one of our cards, we have a red card and there is a box to be ticked where the teacher has to make a judgement, according to the definition that we have, that this particular behaviour constitutes bullying. The details on the cards would have the student's name, details of the behaviour, and the box ticked. Those documents are kept in the student's file so they can be accessed at any time.

There is also a register that we can look at and say, "This particular child has had two red cards and they have both been for bullying. So we might call the parents in." Often we will get parents coming in and saying, "Look, my child has been bullied for the last three years." When we go back to the record we are finding that that might not be the case, that maybe there was some irritation or something that was happening but, as far as the school was concerned, it did not constitute actual bullying. Having that recording and tracking system is

very useful in being able to go back and say, "No, according to our records it has not happened. This is the first incident, and this is how we track it."

At the local level that is how it is working. If you came to my school and said, "Give me all your bullying incidents", we could pull them out. But we could also look at the register and say, for example, "They are mainly in stage three", or, "Very little bullying occurs in kindergarten", or whatever it might be. The nth question is: What happens with all of that? A suggestion would be to look at collecting some of that data and interpreting that perhaps as a system, as part of the Catholic education system. I think it is a very critical way of looking at it. It probably needs to be done either as a system or as a whole at the State level.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: We have heard what might go on in one school at a local level. What overall coordination does the Catholic education system have on tracking where you are at, and whether you have the latest programs that are effective? We have heard about the successes of the Peer Support program, although we are always limited with resources. Do you have a realistic picture of what is really happening, and do you think your policies are as effective as they could be? Do you think there are areas of improvement? I am not singling out the Catholic education system, because I went to a Catholic school. If it is happening in the public education system, with all the resources that are there, I am sure it is also occurring in the Catholic education system.

Mr BAKER: I will make a couple of comments and then hand over to my colleague Carolyn from the Sydney Catholic Education Office [CEO], which is one of our systems, and also to my colleague Lorraine Walker. I am not trying to evade the question but Catholic education is not centrally managed from Sydney. Of those 585 schools that I mentioned, I belong to either one of the 11 diocesan education systems in this State, which are geographically based, and there are also 48 stand-alone, self-managing schools—they tend to be large secondary schools. Our job at the commission is to provide coordination, to make sure that the people who are managing our schools are aware of the latest developments and trends. In fact, that is Lorraine's role: she is the state coordinator of our student welfare program. First of all, our role is an information role to make sure people know what is happening.

We would be the point of contact for State and Federal initiatives in the area. There have been a number of Federal initiatives, and we have referred to them in our document. Most of them date back to the Howard Government: the National Safe Schools, et cetera. We play a role in coordinating that, and that does have a statistical collection—I might note that statistical collection at the Federal level is about to be terminated—but when it comes to oversight of policies that is a matter for the local school managers. In that context, I will hand over to my colleagues to comment.

Ms HADLEY: The Sydney Catholic Education Office system of schools has annual planning and review and the results are published to the parent community. They are assisted in that with our regional offices, who then feed that information into our central office, and it feeds into our strategic overall archdiocese and planning. Schools would be reporting as part of that on any anti-bullying programs that have been implemented or prioritised for that year, and they would be feeding back to our central directors as to having been implemented and showing the evidence of its effectiveness as part of our compliance programs. Similarly, with our other systems—

Ms WALKER: I was going to add to that and say we have a student wellbeing working group that meets three or four times a year, and we always talk about and share what is happening across the dioceses. For most dioceses the bullying policy is part of the school review. So when they go out and do their review of the school they have to be able to show what policies they have in place, and the bullying policy is one of them. Another initiative that ties in with that is that some of our cluster schools, or a whole diocese, are actually involved in implementing MindMatters. That involves doing a school audit—which is done on line—and then at the office that information is amalgamated so they can identify for the schools what the particular problems are. There are systems in place, and I think they are evolving as we become more conscious that we need to have a systematic approach as to how we handle these issues.

Mr BAKER: If I could just make one other comment on data collection? It does take us back to the definition because otherwise we will all be comparing the proverbial apples and oranges. Also, I do not think anyone wants to repeat the problems that arose in reporting the risk of harm to the Department of Community Services [DOCS], where the Department of Community Services basically disappeared under a mountain of notification. Of course, now we are going to have the reporting of "significant" risk of harm. I might say I do not think any of us are quite sure what the definition of "significant" is—

CHAIR: There is no definition of that as yet.

Mr BAKER: What I am saying is, we do not want to replicate the same. There is no point going down the same road that we have gone down with the Department of Community Services reporting.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Firstly, I thank you for your submission, which is very detailed and contains a lot of interesting information. One thing I did not find in the submission was the issue of empathy and the modelling of empathetic behaviour. We have been told by a number of witnesses that one of the key problems we have is a kind of collapse in empathy amongst younger people. I would imagine it is very important in Catholic schools that empathetic behaviour is modelled?

Mr BAKER: Yes.

Ms HADLEY: Absolutely. That would be very key and pivotal to our ethos in Catholic schools. I suppose as a practical example we have extensive community service programs that run, particularly in the secondary schools, where it is about educating and assisting the students to develop their empathy and understanding in terms of offering service in the community.

Dr JOHN KAYE: As part of that, do you expect your teachers and school leaders to model empathetic behaviour?

Mr BAKER: Can I quote the concluding paragraph of our response because I think we are in heated agreement? We finish in paragraph 7.6 by saying:

> By responding to students needs, including spiritual needs, by building positive relationships, including fostering of family and community links, and by promoting student wellbeing schools can best address bullying.

I will stop there. On one reading you could say bullying equals a discipline policy, full stop. But we do not say that.

Dr JOHN KAYE: You clearly identify in your submission two key instances where bullying occurs: one is homophobia and the other is racism.

Mr BAKER: Yes.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Can you identify the steps taken within Catholic education to model empathy with respect to children who are identifying as homosexual?

Mr BAKER: Yes, and I might invite my colleagues from the Sydney Catholic Education Office to comment on that because it obviously is a real-life issue. I want to challenge, if it needs to be challenged, any assumption that somehow or other we Catholics promote the bullying of persons of homosexual persuasion. I now want to quote from the catechism of the Catholic Church. I quote from section 2358 of the catechism, which states homosexual persons:

> … must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided.

That is not to resile from the position of the Catholic Church and its schools on the Catholic understanding of family. That is not to resile from the Catholic understanding of family or from the Catholic understanding of sexuality in the context of marriage, but they are not mutually exclusive propositions and certainly no Catholic educator should be harassing, bullying or demeaning any person of homosexual persuasion.

Ms HADLEY: I do not know if I can add a great deal to that except to say that we would expect the respect for human dignity and human rights would be applied equally to any form of bullying that might be based on same-sex attraction, as it would on racism or any other distinction that might cause students to bully one another.

Dr JOHN KAYE: What impact did the statements by Archbishop Pell on homosexuality have on bullying in Catholic schools? For example, he said:

> The normalisation of homosexuality has substantially eroded the capacity of civil laws to cultivate or protect the moral ecology of society… Homosexual activity is a much greater health hazard than smoking.

Archbishop Pell is a leader of one of the dioceses that runs Catholic schools. If you are modelling empathetic behaviour and then Archbishop Pell says things that are openly hostile to homosexuals and homosexuality, is there not a disjuncture between what is being said?

Ms HADLEY: I can only respond to that by saying that we would make a very clear distinction between the moral rejection of certain behaviours and the acceptance and understanding of the person and respecting that person's rights and dignity within the school setting.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: I would like to ask Mr Lemos a question in a practical sense. The very excellent report from the Catholic Education Commission emphasised that handling bullying had to be a whole-of-school approach. I want to talk to you as a principal about that. I can see how you would work with staff, with students and with parents. Are there any occasions when all three are involved in a whole-of-school approach to the issue?

Mr LEMOS: Yes, we are actually having a parent forum in the next couple of weeks. The title of the parent forum is "Restorative Justice". We are implementing the principles and practices of restorative justice across our school to support our code of conduct. One of the things that we are doing is having a parent forum to look at how relationships can be restored, how they break down. It is an open forum for all our parents and all our students to attend. You are right; we tend to work with staff really well and our student bodies. I think that question about the empathy was important because we do talk to our students. We have our SRC, our student representative council, and we talk to them. Quite often we can get fantastic insights from them as to what is happening with bullying. To feel that empathy we need to talk to the students. In my case, I did not realise that bullying was as widespread in our particular school. After talking to the student I thought, "These are the sorts of things that they are talking about when they talk about bullying."

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: The advantage is that the students see it being modelled in the compassion and care of both the teachers and the parents.

Mr LEMOS: Exactly. What we try to do, because they are representatives—those students—they go back to the classes and they talk about it. They have that discussion, with the teacher as the leader, with the class. I think that is the key. Getting back to the initial question and your question, what can we do? I think we have really got to engage the students, give them a voice. Use their great voice and engage them in the process. Sometimes parents are left out of the loop, so engage them and include them in parent forums such as this. It is a one-off for us. We do communicate continually through newsletters, assemblies. I guess that it is a select group of parents who turn up to assemblies and read newsletters, but we are having that sort of discussion all the time. But a parent forum, as we are having in week four, is a real opportunity to talk about practices of restorative justice and to outline the rationale.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: Thank you, I appreciate that. Ms Walker, looking at some of the research, it would seem that bullies at school could become bullies in later life, particularly in institutional-type organisations, whether that is ambulance, police, army, politics. It is a learned behaviour. Is there any research of a longitudinal nature of which you are aware that shows that school bullying has a serious impact upon social behaviour later in life?

Ms WALKER: I think there is a lot of research actually that has come out that has shown that students who display bullying behaviour, first of all, have often been subjected to bullying themselves. Yes, you are quite correct: there is a very clear link that is showing that. Really, it is antisocial behaviour ultimately and often it is about the fact that they lack the social and emotional skills that are used to be able to deal with things in other ways. I think there is fairly extensive research around that. In America, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL] have a whole lot of research. They have done a lot of studies and they have gathered together all the mega-data. That would very much support what you are saying. That is why it is a real concern—particularly a child, a young person, who is indulging regularly and consistently. That is why there are programs at school, such as—as has already been referred to—the Restorative Justice program. One of the best things that needs to happen is that you have to confront and recognise that this is an issue.

To come back to that question of empathy, it is about getting together the person who is displaying the bullying behaviour and the person who is on the receiving end of it. You will notice I always stay away from that word "victim" because they are not victims. We want to empower them. We empower them in a Restorative

Justice program or other programs that are around to get together and through mediation to talk, to get the person who is bullying the other person to see how it is affecting them. That is one of the reasons why cyber bulling is so dangerous; they do not see that. It is to get them to understand that it is hurting and then to get them to be part of the solution. That is how the conversation goes, "I didn't realise John or Joe or Mary felt like this." Then you can say, "What do you think you can do about it?" It is a process of working through with the students together. It is not an overnight solution. I think that by doing that you are actually helping the person who is doing the bullying as well.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: You have alerted to this extensively. It is about society operating at many different levels using bullying as a control mechanism. In workplaces and in schools as a society we are saying this is the wrong way to go. Do you think young persons behaving like this at school are just experimenting with learned behaviour? Is unlearning that incredibly difficult?

Mr BAKER: Could I make a comment, and I imagine my colleagues will want to make some comments too, because you are touching on something that is very important? Bullying is not just a school issue. In fact, it is probably not even principally a school issue. It is a community issue; it is a values issue. Schools very largely reflect their society. If there are problems in schools, very largely there is a problem in society. When I say schools, I mean all schools—everybody's school. To address a problem like bullying requires a community response. It requires, obviously, particular responses in schools, but it requires a broad community response. It is the value of this sort of Committee, I would suggest: just raising it and making community awareness greater. It is about media images, parenting practices—all of that—if you are really serious about addressing bullying. To say the same thing from a different direction, if anyone is under the misapprehension that it is exclusively an issue for schools, then the problem will not be solved.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: You alluded a couple of times to definitions. It sounded to me that somewhere in your organisation you have defined what is a notifiable bullying incident.

Mr BAKER: At a school and a diocesan level. We do not notify at a State level.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: I was interested in the definition of those incidents.

Mr LEMOS: We use the peer support definition—that is, that bullying exists when there is an imbalance of power. We treat incidents that look at where there is an imbalance of power and we ask ourselves the question: Is this bullying? We use the principles of the Peer Support Foundation. Also, we stop that whole idea of being a victim. Because when bullying is in the media, when it is more prevalent and when it is topical, kids will be the victim; they will play the victim: " I have been bullied." So what we do is teach the kids according to that peer support program three stages. Step one is we say that you must say to the bully, or if you do not like a behaviour, "Stop it, I don't like", so that they are not playing the victim; they are not running every time. The second step would be, "Stop it or I will tell the teacher. That is what I need to do." The third step is it is reported to the teacher, "I am going to tell the teacher now." So we try to take that victim mentality away.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: Is the imbalance of power a value-laden issue in itself?

Mr LEMOS: We are all struggling to come up with a definition. For each school, without having a definition, it is very difficult to outline the parameters. That is the definition we use—something that is well used, something that is ingrained in our schools and the peer support group. It suits us at the moment. It is something that makes sense to us. We have discussed it at a staff level. When we were doing the code of conduct we put it to the parents and they thought that was a good way of expressing the whole idea of bullying. So that is what we are going with at the moment. But we would be open to further discussions of the definition.

Ms WALKER: Just to add to that, I think you have probably heard me, I have mentioned it a couple of times, I think there also has to be an ongoing nature to it; you have to distinguish between just a one-off.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: A quick spat and a real one?

Ms WALKER: That's right. There is also a deliberate intention to hurt, because that is also part of bullying.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: That is learned, is it not?

Ms WALKER: Yes.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: That happens at home and in the workplace.

Ms WALKER: Absolutely. I know that my colleagues sitting here could tell you, and I am not going to tell you anything you do not know, as teachers—before, when I was in my role as an assistant principal of a very large school, I was frequently subjected to bullying from parents who would be attempting to bully me to make some decision. So it is, as Ian has said, something that is not just a school issue, and, of course, it does come from home as well and attitudes from parents that young people believe that this is an appropriate way to act, and we are trying to educate them that it is not.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: You have a policy unit and then the actual choices for implementation of specific programs are done on a diocese or an individual school level, is that correct?

Ms WALKER: A local school basis, yes. Schools are best placed to identify what their actual needs are and what works best for them.

Ms HADLEY: Could I just mention also, there is a statutory obligation to report matters where peers pose a current concern of risk of harm to each other as well.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: That is a DOCS issue?

Ms HADLEY: Yes.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: I ask a question following up on the behaviour to stop it, stop the bullying, and that is what kids are taught. Far more important than that is that exclusion is used more as a way of bullying people and it is not something you can put your finger on, but you have the child who is eating lunch every day by themselves and even if you try to interact they are still eating lunch by themselves. So the idea of having cards—and I take note of you saying the parents have come up and said it had been going on for three years but you did not have that on record—

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: It is more subtle.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: Yes, it is more subtle than that, and that is the stuff that really hurts the kid. How do you actually deal with those things when you cannot put your finger on it but it is something that is obviously happening?

Mr LEMOS: I think we are becoming much more aware of those types of bullying now, and I think the answer to that is really getting back to the students, talking to the student representative council and they are going back and talking to their peers. The teachers are observing incidents like that. That peer support document says that if bullying is happening and a student is watching it, they are still part of that whole process, they are still engaging in that, because if they are not stopping it or if they are not walking away—

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: The bystander.

Mr LEMOS: The bystanders are part of the process. We teachers are becoming more aware. So we say: What is happening with that child that eats their lunch alone? Are they just introverted and they want to eat lunch by themselves or have they been isolated? The teachers are becoming more aware of that. I think it has been a marvellous lesson listening to the students. I do not know if you are familiar with the ideas process; it is a process about bringing change in the school. We have an ideas student team and they are coming up with bullying issues as well. So we are getting that feedback that we cannot really observe, that we cannot get into from the students, and we are becoming more aware of it by talking to students and having those sorts of forums and conversations with them. But I agree, certainly the card system is something that deals with the obvious bullying, and this is something that we really need to look at and attend to.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: The other question I wanted to ask was about cyber bullying. I do not know whether it is taught in schools but why are none of these children worried about the impact of what they write and the way the Australian laws work in terms of things such as defamation? Is that a tool that we are using to explain to children that what they put on—?

Ms WALKER: They do not think it through. It is the same thing with cigarette smoking: "I am not going to die from smoking until I am 60 or 70. It doesn't worry me now".

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: But we teach children about smoking. What I am asking is: Are we teaching them about the impacts?

Mr LEMOS: They should, because we have an acceptable use policy and it is set out like a contract. The system that governs our school gives us a template and then the schools modify it and they have an acceptable use policy for Internet, for any sort of use—

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: Inside the school?

Mr LEMOS: In each school, yes, and outside the school, too, and they sign it. The kindergartens do not sign it, the parents sign it, and the teacher takes them through every item of that, which includes, "I must not send an email that is derogatory or is upsetting. I must not do it from home. I must not get on MSM chatline", and we are updating it each year.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: But do they sign something that says, "I must not send something like this because I know there may be actions that follow on from that"?

Mr LEMOS: We are hoping that the teachers would talk to them about that. As the teachers go through the policy and they sign it and they take it home, we hope their parents go through it as well. But we are talking about, "How do you feel when that happens to you?" That is what we always say, "Put yourself in that person's shoes getting a nasty email". The worst thing that happens is that they know someone else's password, they get into their email account and they say "You're a rat" but they think someone else has sent it. So we give them examples of that and we say to do something like that is like stealing—at the particular child's level—and we really charge the teachers with showing the kids and talking about the spirit of all of that and how hurtful it can be, before they engage in the computer technology. They are not allowed to get their password until that document is brought back and signed.

Ms WALKER: Just something I would like to add: When we were talking about the children who are isolated, I think it is worthwhile noting that a lot of work and research has been done on that and a couple of the programs I have been involved in related to drug education and also Kids Matter, which is the primary school mental health preventative program. There is a great little thing there where teachers do a survey of their class and the students list the top three people they would most like to sit next to. What happens from that is that it is put on an Excel spreadsheet and a little Web and it shows you the children who really need your help because nobody really wants to be with them, or you pick up that they are isolated. The purpose of that tool is precisely that we need to work with that young person to develop their social and emotional skills. It is a simple little tool but it works. So that is something that I think helps with the bullying situation. We are trying to come up with various ways of identifying—

Dr JOHN KAYE: Do you do that in all schools?

Ms WALKER: It is rolling out.

Mr LEMOS: The primary version is "If we are going camping and you have got three people in a tent, who would you like to have in your tent?" and it gives you a map of the social nature of the class.

Ms WALKER: There is a resource already for the early years of schooling that actually has that and shows you how to do it. We have been working with a lot of our schools—

Dr JOHN KAYE: Is that your resource?

Ms WALKER: No, it is a resource developed by the Commonwealth. It is called Resilience Education and Drug Information. It is the early years of schooling and it is all about social and emotional competencies, because there has been a big shift. This is the area that we need to be working in and it has been identified in the values area and in drug education and across a whole range of mental health areas. That is all my portfolio. So there is this real recognition about getting in beforehand to help give kids the skills to be able to speak out and to be able to come up and say, "I don't like the way I'm being treated" or, "Please, sir, I need some help." So it is

about giving them those communication skills. I wish it were a magic wand or a silver bullet. Unfortunately it is not, but it is a start.

Ms HADLEY: In relation to the policies, the secondary policies include issues of criminality involved; resources are used extensively with that. Also, I think for cyber bullying one of the issues is a sense of anonymity. I think they have a real sense of anonymity in what they do, much greater than they do in traditional kinds of bullying. We often say cyber bullying is bullying on high octane.

Ms WALKER: It is insidious.

Mr BAKER: Can I comment, too? When a school suspects serious incidents of cyber bullying and inappropriate use of technology, principals often descend into a very murky area of the law, particularly where—and this is an area we have not touched on yet—the bully does not accept that they are a bully and sometimes their parents do not accept that the bully is a bully and then want to start contesting the rights of a school to manage what they regard as private communications. If someone is doing it at two in the morning, if we have issued them with a computer—and we are all issuing students with computers—we have now raised some really thorny legal issues in schools.

CHAIR: What is the duty of care.

Mr BAKER: If you are getting to the sharp end of trying to use the law to discourage people, it does not apply to anyone under 10 years of age because they do not have the legal capacity. So there is not much point in waving the big legal stick. Then we get into the argument about who owns the computers and the information on them. Perhaps the Committee can help school principals through that legal minefield. There is also an intersection between State and Federal law. A principal might be trying to deal with a student and, indeed, the student's parents, who might say that it is their equipment and communication and they are aware of the Privacy Act so the principal can go away. The Committee has touched upon the fact that technology has brought schools into the intersection of some very complicated legal issues. The technology has arrived before the legal answers.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: It always does.

CHAIR: That is a very good point on which to conclude and with which the Committee will be grappling as it moves forward. It is certainly a big issue. Thank you for your evidence and your submission. The committee staff may need to clarify some issues. Communication is a two-way process. If there is anything you want to add or change, you may do so.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

(Short adjournment)

SHARON JOHNSON, Publicity Officer, Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations of New South Wales, Locked Bag 40, Granville, affirmed and examined.

CHAIR: Would you like to make an opening statement?

Mrs JOHNSON: Our organisation represents public school parents in New South Wales and covers more than 750,000 students in the State. We also represent the national body—the Australian Council of State School Organisations. We also have individual representatives on State committees, affiliates at regional levels and local P and C association members. We advocate on every level in public education, in particular, in New South Wales. That is the majority of stakeholders. As parents we welcome this inquiry and think it is significant and obviously timely.

CHAIR: You say that it is timely. A couple of things are happening and the Committee has received evidence about a number of bullying programs and raised awareness of bullying. However, the incident rate does not seem to be decreasing. That could be because there is more awareness and reporting. However, it has also morphed into cyber bullying and so on. What do you think is happening? Why is there not a reduction in those behaviours? Is it as I suggested that there is more reporting?

Mrs JOHNSON: It is timely in the organisation's opinion because parents have long known that their children get bullied. Some people might say that it is regressive and negative to refer to someone who has experienced bullying as a "victim". However, when your child is experiencing systematic bullying there is no other word for it. It impacts on their entire life and can derail their plans and aspirations and hold them ransom as a family outside the school community. As parents we have been beating our heads against a brick wall asking for and demanding policies to be put in place to protect our children, which is our job and goal.

Why is it continuing? It is continuing because we have not worked out the relationships involved in bullying. There appears to be a lot of research to support the incidence and the degree of cultural bullying that is occurring, but we do not necessarily focus upon the impact of positive relationships. If you do not breach people's rights, if you treat them with respect and are affirmative in ensuring that you are aware of your identity and role in the community, regardless of that community—whether it is the school or the broader community— you will inadvertently not engage in bullying behaviour. It is the very fact that the focus always tends to be on an incident, event, victim, person or perpetrator that seems to allow the bullying to manifest and grow. We are putting out spot fires, which is not effective in ensuring that a lot of people with a wide range of personal agendas can coexist peacefully. A school is a very complex dynamic. However, that is not reflected in the greater society, so we must ensure there is a mirror, that we are reflecting it and that it is suitable.

CHAIR: We have had evidence from two notable experts in the field. Professor McGrath told us that she felt bullying was dependent upon what happens in the school environment, and Professor Ken Rigby said he thought the home environment was more influential, or at least as influential. What do you think is the most powerful influence on bullying, the home or the school environment?

Mrs JOHNSON: The balance of power would be equal. As first educators parents have a great responsibility to their children. They are there in the formative early years. A great deal of research deals with the support which parents require and which should be put in place to help them to moralise or support values in the home, whatever they may be regardless of the opinion or value system. We must acknowledge that parents cannot keep their children separate from society. There is also the greater aspect of social community and then the school steppingstone. School and educational settings would be the third factor in a child's life. The child would engage in extra curricula activities with the family, but they would not be exclusive to the family. A church outing, a sporting activity, or even a shopping trip would expose a young person to activities other than in the home. The home is certainly a very important factor, but it is not the only factor.

By their very nature, children are inquisitive. A child who has experienced nothing but hardship would have no doubt seen or experienced kindness at some point before they went to kindergarten or preschool. That has an effect on what the child brings to school and what the school brings to the child.

One of the most important practices in classrooms is the pedagogy of the teacher. Sometimes a teacher imparts their wisdom and knowledge but they also become bullies themselves in the way they manage the classroom, and they demonstrate what bullying is by being punitive and sometimes by being unjust, whether that be right or wrong. It could be a situation where there is no alternative but to be unjust and make a very

arbitrary decision. Sometimes school hierarchies themselves establish the bullying model and serve to reinforce the behaviours that show success and what success looks like. It can be very confusing for young people to navigate what is good bullying, what is bad bullying and what bullying looks like. It is different from the home to the school to the shopping centre.

CHAIR: With cyber bullying and the apparent increase in cyber bullying, or at least the awareness of cyber bullying, a large proportion of it happens outside the school environment. Who do you think should have the duty of care for cyber bullying influences and incidents? Should the school be involved with that? Obviously schools and parents combined, but how should that be dealt with? Do you think parents have enough understanding of what the issues are?

Mrs JOHNSON: No. As an organisation we lobby and advocate that parents need to upskill themselves. Parents who manoeuvre their children to technology usually do so in the first instance by mobile phones and the need to know where children are at all given times. But now with the Government's commitment to laptops we see that that naivety that some people do and some people do not have technology ceases to exist. We know that at the end of this year students in year 9 will have laptops, so we have no excuses to delineate the duty of care at all. We need to have a partnership model. We need to know that as parents where the child is being bullied, or being a bully in the home, which is easy to do on the Internet. The school can be approached and some kind of consultation could occur. The parent would not be rejected outright as that is a private issue— a private matter to be dealt with at home—which would continue to feed the futile efforts of the parent to manage their own child. If it is a group situation certainly it is group bullying, which is that social and intrinsic bullying that is occurring more often, particularly with girls. In that instance, you would need the support of policies.

It is not only your own school, sometimes it goes across extracurricular activities, like soccer. Soccer games can have girls and boys from different schools coming together and that can produce some angst and bullying that continues at the game and outside the game. Also, cross-sectorial schools need to have a dialogue. It is not possible to manage it in one school if it is occurring across a whole community: it could be three or four schools, not just feeder schools. The dialogue needs to expand and all the schools need to have a common language and certainly a common ethos so that parents can be supported. It is one thing to identify it when it is occurring, but it is a whole other thing to get support and know how to deal with it appropriately so that you are not limiting your child from the technology that is their's—they own it and they are very well versed in it— without just being punitive. You want to build the esteem of the child and make sure it is a positive outcome and not always punitive.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: I am trying to get my head around what would be the limitations with your organisation or what you can do. For instance, we hear that much of the bullying nature, the escalation in bullying, occurs in travel time, to and from school. We know that a lot of the parenting models, family models, that exist predispose children to not understand what is positive and what is negative behaviour, and then we know that some schools are not handling the situation well at all. What can you do in your organisation? What is your involvement? What can you do? What are your limitations?

Mrs JOHNSON: We have extensive involvement, obviously. We have a commitment to improve on the opportunities for all students. That is where we have an advantage. We work not only within the DOCS framework in the early years and the family matters programs, the kids matter program and my matters; we work on delaying intervention and making sure we are preventative and not prescriptive in how we deal with policies around student wellbeing. We make sure we are open and we know what discrimination looks like because our claim in our preamble at P and C is that schools need to be inclusive, but it is not always just enough to just say inclusive. We have always said free, open and secular, but this year we have modified our preamble to say include a focus on humanity. The drive has always been to make sure we are there and open, but we have seen an absence of an absolute generosity of the spirit, and the personal acknowledgement that everyone has a right to exist in this very good citizen model that the Federal Government tried to push with its values education. When you ask "Is that a better model to bullying?", it absolutely is a better model to anti-bullying behaviour because it is a double negative and it serves no-one any good.

So our organisation feeds into any committee where there is a focus on positive affirmations of how citizenship and students should be. That goes from what is good parenting—early years interventions, making sure there is support for alienated and marginalised community members, making sure there is dialogue in all languages where it is appropriate and suitable. It goes from that very fundamental, menial, if you like, banal

almost, task to making sure we are talking to the ideologists and participating in summits and think tanks. We do not bring an expertise; we bring a passion though.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Thank you to the P and C for its submission. It is a great read and contains some important information for us. You were here, I think, during the previous evidence and you heard Mr Lemnos, the principal of a Catholic systemic school, refer to a story of a parent alleging there had been some bullying. He then went through the records of the school and came up saying there had not been any bullying. I ask you for your response to that in the context that there may have been a different working definition of what bullying meant between parent and school. Is this a problem that spreads into the public sector and is it something we need to worry about?

Mrs JOHNSON: I will address it backwards, if you do not mind. No sector has the monopoly on bullying and it is easy to see the beat ups in what would be the non-government sector: they are real and they do exist. But to say we would not have them in the public education sector would be naive and unsophisticated, and I would reject that.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Just to be fair, I was not saying that. I was asking whether the problem with the definition, is that something you experience with your parents?

Mrs JOHNSON: We would have a better definition of what bullying is because we were on the front foot from 1999 onwards initiating a lot of programs—it is something that has been dear to our hearts—to identify what bullying look like, because as parents we found we did not have a clear understanding of what it looked like. When academics and experts were derailing us and saying that we were bullies, we were rejecting that notion, and to be fair, we did not have a great concept of what that was. The definition of what bullying looks like is harder to come upon than what bad behaviour looks like because the bullying is inadvertent. To our organisation bullying is the catalyst that comes after something has occurred here. Unless bullying behaviour is deliberate—that would be malicious and therefore a criminal offence—it is just something that occurs when your behaviour does not suit. It is not necessarily antisocial behaviour; it is probably a little narcissistic, if you like. Children are certainly self-engrossed and some adults are as well. It is when we become too self-engrossed and we do not see where our role is in the greater society—whatever that community looks like—that this kind of outcome occurs.

Do we know what bullying is? In most instances we do because usually a punishment is attached to it. Part of the ongoing problem is that unless we are dealing with the behaviours and patterns that lead to the behaviours, and any underlying issues—academics always say that the bullies themselves experience some discomfort and they are not necessarily satisfied with their behaviour—we are not dealing with anything. Again, it reverts back to this spot fire. We are dealing with an issue, and some support and lots of resources could be put into an incident but you are not really addressing it because you are only ever addressing the bullying behaviour. We would like to see a more holistic approach looking at early years interventions: how the parenting model can be improved and how all people can access great community services and support. When you start with the first educators then you can start looking at the second educators and we might have success.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Can I ask you about homophobic bullying in the context of public education? We heard from the Government witnesses, and saw from their submission, that they have programs in place to address homophobic bullying. Is it the experience of parents that those programs are being implemented? And is it the experience of parents that those programs are adequate?

Mrs JOHNSON: In public education it has become the cliché, if you like, so luckily it is a very flavoursome, and provocative and sexy topic, if you like. We have embraced the anti-homophobic slant and we do it successfully. One of the minimal amounts of bullying that occurs in the public education system in New South Wales would be for sexuality. It tends to be more around gender and it tends to be more around academia and sporting successes than someone's private and personal life. I suppose something the Committee could look into is that sexuality does not seem to be such an issue. The only notion of sexual behaviour is in a derogative term and usually targeted at girls.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Are you basing that statement on data or anecdotally?

Mrs JOHNSON: Anecdotally and data, if you look at the successes of the conversations and the social discourse that occurs around the anti-homophobia conferences and the celebrations that occur around the books, the literature now says that there is no abnormality between what a family looks like. We have written that it is

nana, it is mum, it is dad, it is conventional or it is two mums or two dads. That has just kind of discreetly placed itself well into our schools and children are now well placed to see that families come in all different shapes and sizes and can be celebrated regardless of that. In our celebrations in our schools, within our policies, we actually get to celebrate not just Mother's Day and Father's Day, as would be the traditional conventional models, but we can celebrate Harmony Day and we celebrate "ourselves day" and we celebrate pride. I think it becomes intrinsic with that that we are doing that pretty successfully. There is always room for improvement, though.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: In the federation's statement that you put forward, I notice you are very much aware of the education department's policies and procedures and so on. I also pick up in some of the evidence, not from the federation but from other organisations, that there are many parents who are concerned that those policies and procedures are not followed up; that while they are there, they are either not implemented or else they are not followed up. What is the Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations doing to ensure that those policies are followed through?

Mrs JOHNSON: To us it is a very clear effort that parents need to help drive the policy. We are staunch in that it is not successful to be just spoken at; you need to be spoken with and consulted with, and if parents at the school are not engaged in actually helping to formulate the policy, it is no good just to wait for someone to deliver it to you and say, "This is what we will do." Parents need to talk about their real experiences in the home because traditionally and, again anecdotally, you know that there is a problem with your child long before it becomes obvious somewhere else. You can just pick up the nuances and that is always what we get. We get phone calls from parents who say, "I just cannot put my finger on it but they are crying; they don't want to go to school" That is with the younger students. With the older students there is truancy and it becomes a different issue—aggression.

The symptoms apparently appear traditionally long before the school can actually effectively place a policy. Parents actually need to help the school and support the school by saying, "This could be a greater issue. We need to have a dialogue around it and I need to be a part of that process because I know what is occurring outside the schools." School communities can have a really great understanding of the hierarchy of students in the school, but outside of that the reach is in the parents' domain and parents need to really work with schools as a partner to help their child succeed. Unless that occurs and the policy is appropriate, in effect it is just a document in a principal's drawer.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: Everybody is saying we really need a whole-of-school approach because many examples of bullying occur off the campus and after hours and there is a need to involve the faculty, the staff, the parents and the students. From the federation's point of view do you see much evidence that these whole-of-the-related-bodies procedures actually are happening?

Mrs JOHNSON: We do see a lot of evidence where whole-of-school-community approaches are effective and they are the schools where we do not actually have to go in and advocate, so luckily for us they do exist. What we do tend to see, obviously because we advocate for children's rights, is whole schools failing and when we say "failing", identifiers of that would be student suspensions and long suspensions without support to the home through other agencies of government other than education. We would also see the Inclosed Land Acts being placed on parents by principals and being used effectively as a management tool.

These kinds of indicators are actually indicative of a greater issue within the school because if you are breaking down the dialogue and you are isolating people, you are again demonstrating some role modelling that some could call bullying. One of the biggest issues is that sometimes in public education we have teachers who strike for whatever reason but our children are sometimes taught that anarchy is bad, so it is a redundant message. We had a lot of children challenging us, "Well, if striking is bad, how can this be an effective tool if you get what you want at the end of the day?" Children are very savvy and they are very clever in the way they can deconstruct situations to see how the win is placed and, unfortunately, it is a win-lose society for most of their purposes.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: Would not that very argument prove the case of the whole-of-school approach to the issue of bullying?

Mrs JOHNSON: It can demonstrate where it is effective and where it is not. Not all schools did strike in the last instance because whole school communities said, "This is where our focus should be." You also have examples where it is not just the student representative committee, the P and C and the faculty having their ideologies and then bringing them together. It is actually a collective think-tank where there is open and honest

discussion about, "What does bullying look like. If I yell at the top of the classroom, is that not bullying? If I hinder your right to go to the toilet, is that not bullying?" It is a teacher-parent dialogue at one level but it is also the child talking about how they feel because it is not just necessarily the action of the bullying; it is the perception of the bullying that matters.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: Quite often kids who experience bullying are perceived as weaker children. I am also concerned that there may be a susceptibility for where there is change that children become susceptible to this: the movement between infants and primary school, the movement to high school, the movement to a new school obviously and being the new kid in school. Kids can often become vulnerable because they are shifted from the class they know. As you progress through primary school—obviously it is unavoidable in high school because kids go to different high schools, particularly in city regions, not so much in the country—but with the progression through primary school the class changes every year. Do you have a view on this in regards to stability for the children?

Mrs JOHNSON: Yes, we do. We actually target this with our transition programs and not just orientation. Orientation to school environments is one thing but we talk about transition being something where you would deliberately sabotage a child's educational experience for the positive, where you would mentor, not with the peer support model of the old days of a younger student with an older student. We now say a successful transition would be a kindergarten student with a year 1 student so that buddy can then be there for a longer amount of time.

We have activities where children are being isolated. We implore teachers, as part of the policy making, to actually look at deliberate strategies to integrate through play being a very effective tool in younger years and also through tactile learning—textiles and design—and in the later years to actually create, if you like, false friendships so that there can be a greater understanding of differences in communities and diversity and acceptance of that and then less incidences of bullying. So just better behaviour.

The transitions do tend to affect school communities. Everyone would probably speak to a teacher after Friday lunchtime and if your kids do not get to go out and play in the playground, there would definitely be a marked behaviour in the afternoon. So there are effective tools and resources at our hands, being the real experiences in classrooms and then the experiences the child relays to the parent at the end of the day that can help support the policies and say, "This worked; this was successful".

Transition programs definitely seem to be the best way to go for helping students through not just the early years but the middle years and then the exit years. The exit years tend to be the hardest though because as apprenticeships, trade training programs and traineeships become involved in education, there seems to be a very blurry line between where the child stops becoming a child in an educational setting and becomes a maturer person with greater responsibility and yet is still so vulnerable to the experiences of the outside world, which can expose them to more incidences of bullying, particularly in the workplace, without necessarily the resources and the capacity to deal with that. That, in itself, is a transition area that really would need to have a lot of focus put on it, particularly around workplace laws and legislation. Children are not necessarily up to speed with what their rights and responsibilities are. They just know they are to go and show up. We need to reinforce that it is not a servant model.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: There seems to be this policy that it makes kids more dependent if they are not reliant on the same group all the time in school and that they need to work across the school.

Mrs JOHNSON: I am not an academic in the area and I am not sure of any research in the area but what we can demonstrate is that where whole school communities have an acceptance, understanding and a genuine wellbeing feeling that school community will be more effective in the learning outcomes. Positive behaviour for learning is one of the great pilot programs that has come from America now and is being implemented. That looks at what is good behaviour, what is good, what is behaviour, what is something that should not be done. That is actually signposted; it is clearly marked. It works across all ages, early years to secondary. It would be effective in the workplace. It is a good tool, and that would actually remonstrate that you get on with everyone because they have a right to exist in that school community too. It is not necessarily about making people get on and having everyone be harmonious; it is more about exposing the child and letting them prosper from the experiences of their peers as a whole.

CHAIR: You are speaking a little quickly for me. Could you repeat the name of the program?

Mrs JOHNSON: Positive Behaviour for Learning. It is an American program. In 2001 it was implemented in the western Sydney region through that Department of Education and Training. It was deliberately targeted and put into schools that receive generous amounts of government funding, because of cultural and low socioeconomic economic issues. This would hopefully target not just inside the school but also outside the school.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Following up on the earlier questions about the influence and impact of home and the school environment, I would like to have your comments regarding beyond the home and school—issues that go to culture, specifically popular culture, and its influence on young people today. Firstly, do you think it is having an effect on the mindset of young people in terms of the relationship among and between themselves, in the context of bullying and that sort of behaviour? Secondly, I would like your thoughts about how that is tackled. Given the ubiquitous nature of popular culture with young people today, perhaps arguably more than ever before, how is that tackled—or can it be tackled?

Mrs JOHNSON: We would always argue that popular culture, particularly in the media, being one of the main streams, and now with social networking being incredibly popular—and now we are on to Twitter, so it is not even social networking now; it is even beyond that—we do see that it exposes children. But we do not necessarily see that it is always negative. These are tech-savvy, dynamic young people who are insatiable for their appetite of knowledge. They are not as snobby, if you like, as some of us older generations. They do not necessarily have to have rigour and integrity to what they are reading; they actually just like to consume.

I think our approach at the federation is to say that we need to be mindful of this and we need to regulate it to a degree—with marketing specific things for appropriate ages, with making sure that classifications are relevant, and with trying to regulate what happens in our homes, for example by not making digital bedrooms, and softening the exposure that our children experience. But, at the same time, we need to find a balance to that. There is nothing wrong with the environment that they are living in and there is nothing wrong with what they are consuming; it is actually their world, not ours. We need to make sure that we are giving them positive reinforcements that how they are doing it is fine. We just need to give them the tools and resources to navigate their way through it—to come out the other end better off for it.

The experience need be no different from any experiences that we had as children in our education; it just needs to be—not stringently guided, but certainly we need to have a dialogue that maybe we as parents and adults are not comfortable with because we are not necessarily so much so into their world. But this is the generation of "clicked on", full stop.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: I take your point that there is obviously this savviness amongst young people to use information technology in all its manifestations. I have heard the argument put before about the cognitive development and maturity of young people today. There is an argument that they may not be as cognitively mature at the same age as perhaps they were a generation or so ago. Is there an inherent tension here that potentially adults can almost surrender the ground to young people on the basis that we are not particularly comfortable with this, and certainly not as savvy, and therefore we should let them use it at will? Adults are obviously very influential in terms of young people and can play, arguably, more of a positive role than just broadly guiding them.

Mrs JOHNSON: With respect, one generation being better than the other is a discussion that I have no—

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: I did not say "better".

Mrs JOHNSON: Did you say cognitive improvement, or cognitive regression?

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Cognitive maturity.

Mrs JOHNSON: There is nothing to demonstrate that that is a win. It might be all right to have children be a little bit retarded in their cognitive measures for a little bit longer and keep them at a pace, particularly if they are not mature enough to use these facilities. It does not necessarily mean mature, and it does not necessarily mean that they are on their own. I think when we talk about "savvy", we are talking about the fact that they can engage in a world that is now global, and that is a positive. They can have instruction on a mechanism that is smaller than all the devices on the table and actually learn and have an educational experience from that. That is a positive. Connect the classrooms; open up learning streams for students who are otherwise

not able to do aerodynamics. If you are living in Broken Hill, we have opened the world up to them and we are showing them diversity through the technology.

We need to be very mindful when we are saying to them that technology can be bad and they can be bullying with it and it can be a weapon. It is also a wonderful tool that they are just lapping up. You have to be respectful and mindful of that. When you see a child learning and engaged in a way that makes you envious, you realise that technology is actually a good thing for their cohort—perhaps not for us. As parents, that is where the guidelines need to be balanced. We need to make sure we are not being fearful and letting our own inhibitors stymie them.

CHAIR: If you could answer this briefly, perhaps in a sentence. What do you think the outcomes of this Committee should be? The Committee has established this inquiry; it has not been established by the Government. Therefore, we want to come up with something that has sustained outcomes that are useful, rather than another report that is on the shelf gathering dust. What does the Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations say we should be doing with this?

Mrs JOHNSON: I think we should stop looking at bullying as incidences and events. The Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations would advocate that we need to look at positive behaviours, and rights and responsibilities in respect of citizenship. When we get that down pat, and when we have harmonious relationships, self-esteem being a product of that, the events and incidences will subside. Where you have issues in the home, we need to have support from interagencies, not just education, to make sure that parents get a clearer understanding of what effective and good parenting looks like. We need to make sure that we have funding, and we need to make sure that resources are not just pieces of paper and documents. We need to make sure that there is a really great sense of goodwill that will carry wanting to be better and not wanting to watch and not wanting to walk away, but wanting to just all be. I think effectively we will then become proactive instead of reactive. It would be nice if the Committee could see something that way.

CHAIR: Thank you for your evidence. The Committee may be in touch with you to clarify issues you have raised in your submission or in your evidence today. That is a two-way opportunity, of course, if there is something you want to translate to the Committee. You will have a chance to look at your evidence as well.

Mrs JOHNSON: Thank you.

(The witness withdrew)

Ms KITTY RAHILLY, Research and Evaluation Coordinator, Inspire Foundation, and

Ms JOANNE DEGNEY, Program Manager, Inspire Foundation, affirmed and examined:

CHAIR: Would either of you like to make a brief opening statement?

Ms RAHILLY: Thank you. The Inspire Foundation wishes to thank the Committee for allowing us to come along and talk to our submission. The Inspire Foundation recognises that cyber bullying is a problem that needs to be addressed in order to ensure that the information communication technologies are contributing to and not harming young people's mental health and wellbeing. However, based on its research into and experience in working with young people in online environments in relation to cyber bullying, the Inspire Foundation has found that the evidence base in regard to the level, impact and possible interventions for cyber bullying is significantly lacking. The few programs and policy approaches to cyber bullying and other online safety concerns emphasise restrictive approaches, which advocate limiting young people's access to the Internet and information communication technologies.

Based on its extensive experience in working with young people to develop effective programs that are aimed to improve young people's mental health and wellbeing, including the STRAIGHT Up program which specifically addressed online safety issues, the Inspire Foundation has issues with the efficacy of restrictive approaches for the following reasons: the Internet and information communication technologies are an integral part of young people's lives, and will only increasingly be so, and therefore restrictive approaches are neither sustainable nor credible; and the Internet and information communication technologies have an important role to play in improving young people's mental health and wellbeing as an enabling factor or a setting for health promotion, therefore restricting access to it is not only an ineffective way of addressing the issue of cyber bullying but will result in there being restrictive access to many positive aspects of online activity, such as self-directed learning, civic engagement and social connectedness as well as help-seeking behaviour.

As our submission has therefore outlined, the Inspire Foundation proposes the following strategies be implemented to address cyber bullying: a harm minimisation approach to be taken, the aim of which is to increase knowledge, understanding and skills of young people in regard to cyber bullying so that they may cope with the issue in a self-directed way; and a peer education model to be adopted to improve the relevance and credibility of such harm minimisation approaches to young people, therefore making such strategies more likely to be implemented by young people in a sustainable way. Once again, thank you for the opportunity of speaking to the Committee and we would now like to discuss our submission about cyber bullying with you.

CHAIR: I have learnt two new terms today. I have realised that my son has a digital bedroom—he has multiple digital things going at once—and cyber attacks. The Committee wants to grapple with the whole issue of bullying but specifically when talking about cyber bullying I would like to flesh out a sustainable way of monitoring cyber bullying given that if young people do not have access to digital communication they shortly will. A number of websites are being developed on a range of topics, such as Talk to Your Kids, Bullying. No way! and Kids Helpline, and the National Centre Against Bullying web portal. Is there coordination between those organisations as to what is going on with the different sorts of advice and support given, and is rigorous research being undertaken to follow up what happens? I am concerned that just as there are individual bullying programs happening in schools, and one-off you beaut whatever today, we might be doing the same thing with the issue of cyber bullying.

Ms DEGNEY: Anecdotally there is a lot of duplication going on in the sector so there are a number of different programmatic initiatives and awareness initiatives. One initiative formed by the Inspire Foundation, and co-chaired by the Telstra Foundation, 18 months ago is called the Technology and Wellbeing Roundtable: a consortium of organisations from non-profit academic and industry who are all working in the space and believe that technology is an enabler of young people's wellbeing. We meet quarterly. In those meetings it has come to our attention that we are separately working to ensure that young people are safe online but there is a great need for coordination and knowledge brokering, so we are leveraging both the programmatic and research expertise that we individually have as organisations.

CHAIR: As a State Government Committee we are endeavouring to get outcomes but who best should be monitoring and taking care of those issues? Do you think it should be a national body or should it be State based? How do you think it should work?

Ms DEGNEY: I do not necessarily think it is an either/or. I think that cyber bullying is a complicated problem that lives in a number of different settings so I think an approach from both the State and Federal level would be important.

CHAIR: Cyber bullying has had more media profile lately. From the focus groups that you engage with, is there more awareness in the media of the issue or are the incidents increasing? Has it morphed into a more serious issue?

Ms DEGNEY: I do not have any accurate data that I can draw on to say whether the incidents have increased—that is one of our problems. I do agree that the reporting in the media has increased significantly. In the focus groups and workshops we did through the STRAIGHT Up program in 2007-08 with young people there was already a great level of awareness that cyber bullying did exist, and quite a sophisticated level of understanding by young people about what constituted cyber bullying and what strategies they could use to minimise it.

CHAIR: Cyber bullying occurs mostly outside the school environment, and can be as a result of students from the same school or from different schools or communities and problems then manifest within the school environment quite frequently. Who should have the duty of care to deal with those issues? How does a school in which these issues appear deal with them?

Ms DEGNEY: I think the duty of care question is a difficult one. Is it the duty of care with the service provider? Is it with the location where the technology is provided? You are accessing something from home or from a mobile device or from school. My question, as opposed to duty of care, would be: How can we have consistent support and resources for young people so that we are all giving them the same message at home, at school and from service providers?

CHAIR: Do you monitor and evaluate the Reach Out! website?

Ms DEGNEY: Absolutely.

CHAIR: How do you promote the awareness of the Reach Out! website?

Ms DEGNEY: The website was founded in 1996 in response to the growing rates of youth suicide in Australia. Jack Heath, our founder, realised there was an opportunity to use the Internet to reach a great number of people anonymously, and it is also a space that young people were adopting really quickly. The website has a number of different functions. There are fact sheets and interviews. There are also referrals to other support services. If you are a member of the Reach Out! site we also have community forums where young people can gain support and advice from professionals but also from a community of young people to support them. They are very heavily moderated. We also have terms of use on the site and guidelines as to how young people can stay safe and what they should disclose and what they should not. That is the same for the ActNow website. We promote through channels where young people are online and also off-line—so through other sites, like student ed. We have a program called the Reach Out! Teachers' Network where we work in partnership with teachers to use Reach Out! to deliver curriculum content in classrooms. So there are a number of channels.

CHAIR: And you evaluate?

Ms DEGNEY: We evaluate almost every element of the program. We are looking at reach, the number of young people who access the site; the time they spend online; the pages that they access. We also do yearly user profiling to look at the impact of the service on young people, and we also have external evaluation.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: It seems that you concentrate mainly on young people. What are we going to do to influence parents? It is a vexing issue: family life, the basics where children learn their behaviour. Then there is the issue of parents, for generational reasons, not being up to speed with the Internet, unwilling to come up to speed, restricting kids' access and being reactive. It almost requires a social education of adults as well. Do you have any thoughts on that, because you are tackling the other end very well?

Ms DEGNEY: To be honest, it is something I am still struggling with. Through the course of our work I speak to a number of parents and deliver social networking 101 and spend lots of time talking to parents about the sites that young people use most frequently, what the positive elements of those sites are and what the risks are. But you cannot do a two-hour workshop with every parent in the State. So one of the things that we have

been thinking about is: How do you encourage young people to initiate a conversation with their parents instead? They are the ones that have the information and the skill base and great media literacy. How do you encourage young people to be a point of connection and start the conversation with their parents instead?

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: I think about my own family and friends. Has anyone ever tried to encourage children to bring their parents along to a workshop structured at their level?

Ms DEGNEY: We certainly have not.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Technology is moving so quickly and it scares a lot of people. Even some of my colleagues are scared of Facebook, which we are encouraged to use to communicate our messages to young people. I feel for parents in that way. Good luck.

Ms DEGNEY: Thank you.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Congratulations on the work of the Inspire Foundation. I know that particularly in rural and regional areas it has had a huge impact on many young people who have been teetering on the edge of unthinkable things. It is fantastic.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: I helped raise a lot of money to establish it with Jack in the early days.

Ms RAHILLY: Thank you.

Dr JOHN KAYE: I want to go through a couple of features of your submission, which is very good. You refer to the oft-quoted US Internet Safety Technical Task statement that the online risks "are not radically different in nature or scope than the risks minors have long faced off-line, and minors who are most at risk in the off-line world continue to be most at risk online." That statement in a way normalises cyber bullying and puts it in the same space as other kinds of bullying. However, is it not true that there are some aspects of cyber bullying that are completely different to face-to-face bullying, particularly the depersonalisation of it? You do not get the feedback; you cannot see the impact you are having. Although it is an oxymoron, there is unintentional bullying. For example, we have all sent emails that have had the wrong impact on people. Firstly, is it not a whole new world of bullying? Secondly, is it not true that regulating cyber bullying both in a parental sense and in a legal sense is far more difficult than regulating face-to-face bullying?

Ms RAHILLY: To turn to the first part of your question, we put that in this statement in order to contextualise cyber bullying as a complex issue that is related to both off-line and online and therefore needs to be approached in a dual way. We ourselves do not have the evidence base to say whether there are completely different aspects of it.

Ms DEGNEY: The feedback we have had from young people in the focus groups is that, yes, there are elements of cyber bullying that are actually more pervasive. I think we need to develop new strategies to support young people to manage those and mitigate them. But young people's take was that it was not greatly different in scope from what happened in an off-line world.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Scope in what sense?

Ms DEGNEY: I think the impact from the young people we spoke to—I'm not saying more generally but the young people we spoke to in the focus groups—was that their experience of the impact of bullying face-to-face and the impact of bullying online was similar.

Dr JOHN KAYE: That is interesting. It is good data for the Committee, but it does run counter to what one would think and perhaps what we hear through the media. Going to your harm minimisation approach, to summarise it in a nutshell, you cannot tell kids not to use online media so you have to inoculate them against the adverse impacts and the temptation to use online media in an adverse fashion. Does that work uniformly? There will always be people who slip through. But do you have a measure of how many people slip through a harm minimisation approach and end up being either adversely affected or engaging in cyber bullying?

Ms DEGNEY: No, we do not have any data on it at all, unfortunately. We have data on the impact evaluation from the workshops that we ran, which employed the harm minimisation and the peer education

approach. That was overwhelmingly positive. But we have not done any longitudinal tracking on it at all. I would agree with you that in any approach there are going to be young people who do not take this strategy on board and use the Internet in a negative way.

Dr JOHN KAYE: In terms of being bullied and not letting it get to you, can you briefly walk through the strategy for that and how it works?

Ms DEGNEY: The workshops were not so much around not letting bullying get to you but how you create awareness of what is an appropriate way to engage with people on line. How do you protect yourself from being bullied? We were not so much looking at addressing bullying behaviour but more around how you ensure that you minimise situations where you actually do suffer bullying.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: So you accept that bullying exists and then deal with a person's skills to handle that situation?

Ms RAHILLY: Yes.

Dr JOHN KAYE: What do you do? I am a lonely kid. I have an online existence. For example, somebody starts to put on my website, "She became cool in term 4 of year 8 and became really popular. That has all changed now. People are starting to not like her very much and getting annoyed at her." That is from the event of last week. If I am the "her" in that sentence how do I cope with that? What is the harm minimisation response I should have to that?

Ms RAHILLY: A really important part of the harm minimisation that we are talking about is also that it is integrated with the peer education model and that young people have support coming from other young people. When we were talking in terms of strategies for that, it is knowing where to go for information on— what we were talking about—what is appropriate behaviour, but also how you might be able to address it. We do not have the evidence or, as you were saying, there are many programs out there that are looking at what kind of strategies they can be. But at this stage—we will just talk about it in terms of a general approach to it—it is using other people who have either been through the experience or understand the experience to coach, to mentor, that sort of thing.

Ms DEGNEY: We also flag strategies, and, again, through the peer education models. So it is getting young people in the group to canvass what they already knew: things like comment blocking, restricted access to social networking sites, reporting conduct that they thought was inappropriate. They were all things that young people flagged and that we endorsed as positive behaviours.

Dr JOHN KAYE: So you reinforce those behaviours, which are group responses. What about the girl of whom it is said, "The biggest try-hard in year 9"; everybody apparently hates her? The girl in question reads this and it is an arrow straight through her heart. What do we do in a harm-minimisation world—which I support strongly—to fix that kid's heart and to give that kid back the confidence that a comment like that online would no doubt take away from her?

Ms DEGNEY: I do not know the answer to that question. I would like to know it because if we did we would be using it in our programs. But it is not something that we felt was in the scope of the workshops that we have delivered to date.

Dr JOHN KAYE: I personally strongly feel it is important that if we are going to run harm minimisation, which I think we should, one of the things we need to do is strengthen kids for getting those sorts of comments, how they personally deal with them internally and how they recognise that "It is just a bitchy comment that has been made to me and it's not really about me. I am who I want to be".

Ms DEGNEY: From an Inspire perspective, one of the things I would try to emphasise to the young person is that there are communities of young people who will support them and who are not going to engage in behaviours like that, and probably direct them to somewhere like our online forums.

Dr JOHN KAYE: So what you are saying to that young person is "Stay away from the forums where these sorts of remarks are being made about you", or are you saying to that person when they receive a remark like this there is a place they can go and take that remark and say, "Look, this has been said about me. What the heck do I do?"

Ms DEGNEY: I would not advocate that they not go there because there might be information in that forum that is useful and it might not all be bad. But I would rather provide them with resources and support so that they could make the decision where they wanted to go.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Turning to the issue of online homophobic bullying and online racist bullying, I have heard anecdotally from teachers that it can get pretty vicious at times, with accusations specifically directed at young boys who are not particularly testosterone ridden and who tend to be the focus of some fairly hard-core homophobic-style bullying. Is that showing up in your focus groups?

Ms DEGNEY: We have not done any focus groups specifically on this issue at the moment. We are currently undertaking work within the foundation looking at young men's behaviour online and also same-sex attracted young people. So it is something that is down the track for us, but we have not dived into any research on that.

Dr JOHN KAYE: The evidence suggests that a lot of youth suicide, specifically in rural New South Wales, is related to issues of same-sex attraction and is exacerbated by the bullying of people who are same-sex attracted. Is that your experience? Is that Inspire's understanding?

Ms DEGNEY: I would be hesitant to say completely yes. I would be more comfortable referring you to our director of research and policy who is pulling the position paper together on this. But yes, anecdotally, all of that information does come to us. What we are trying to do is speak to young people and look at a wide variety of research.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Could you take that question on notice and get back to us with a written response?

Ms DEGNEY: Yes, of course.

Dr JOHN KAYE: I guess where I am going with that is there are some people, and I think I am one of them, who are expressing concerns about a new wave of rural youth suicides that could be in part triggered by online bullying of same-sex attracted young men, particularly—they seem to be more vulnerable than young women. Do you think we are prepared for that to happen? Are we doing things to minimise the risk of that happening? Are we putting in place the programs, particularly a harm-minimisation program, to specifically address vulnerable young males, in particular, who are already very vulnerable because of their same-sex attractions or their lack of overtly masculine characteristics?

Ms DEGNEY: You are not just talking about same-sex attracted young men but young men more broadly?

Dr JOHN KAYE: Largely same-sex attracted young men, particularly in rural and regional areas, which is where we know there are a lot of youth suicides. Are we putting in place programs that protect these kids?

Ms RAHILLY: I think that is something Inspire is looking into with our Reach Out For Boys work, because it is that issue that every organisation faces in engaging young men online. Therefore, in the same way when we talk about doing the harm minimisation we think it is about reaching them first to get those strategies to them.

Ms DEGNEY: And also ensuring with the programs you are delivering—because we do know that young men are less likely to engage in help-seeking behaviour—how do you reach them in the first instance? How do you deliver programming that is going to destigmatise help seeking and direct them to the right services? It is a challenge.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: I am wondering what sort of performance indicators you are using for your yearly review on impact. How are you measuring that?

Ms DEGNEY: How are we measuring impact?

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: You said, "We do a yearly review on impact".

Ms DEGNEY: Yes, we use profiling studies on both websites. They are a point in time.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: How do you collect that data?

Ms DEGNEY: Anonymous online surveys, both members and users of both websites.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: What is your response rate like?

Ms DEGNEY: It varies from year to year. I cannot quote the numbers for Reach Out or ActNow off the top of my head but I can provide the reports to you if you are interested.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: Can you tell us approximately how many of your users are rural, percentage wise?

Ms DEGNEY: I cannot off the top of my head. But, again, I can provide that data to you.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: I think that would be useful.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: In your submission, I am not sure of the page number—effectively, page 4—dealing with harm minimisation, those who perpetrate the bullying are those who are minded to be the protagonists in instigating the bullying. Is the position of those people, though, that they should not do that? There is harm minimisation in the context of those who are the persons who receive the bullying behaviour but for those people who are the perpetrators are you involved in dealing with those individuals or programs associated with that? In terms of trying to persuade and influence and ultimately have those people change their ways there is no minimisation of that bad behaviour. Is it a case of : "No, you should not be participating in that, it's wrong"? Is that how it is handled?

Ms DEGNEY: One of the reasons why we decided to use harm minimisation and peer education is that, as we will have all experienced as young people at some point, you do not like grown-ups telling you what to do—particularly in an online space. Young people have expressed concern that there is not the same level of media literacy in adults as there is in young people. So through the workshops we were getting other young people to disclose what they felt acceptable online behaviours were, and using those models of appropriate behaviour rather than us saying what was and was not right. In our experience of the workshop that was a successful strategy; that is, getting other young people to determine what was appropriate and safe online behaviour rather than us suggesting what was or was not.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: Are they encouraged to answer back and to participate?

Ms DEGNEY: Yes.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Obviously we have all been at school and perhaps have been either the subject of bullying or have even participated in it. There is a degree of teasing and carry on at school—not that I am condoning it—but when it is face to face at least at some level it is seen as part of what kids do. I am not trying to minimise its importance or significance; I am simply noting that we may have done it ourselves or been the victim of it. With respect to online bullying, a statement is a statement. There is no nuance or bit of a smile that goes with the comment that otherwise in the playground might have been part of the carry on. That is what makes this so much more insidious. There is no way that an individual who is the victim can discern whether it is simply someone teasing.

Ms DEGNEY: I agree. It is a challenge on a number of levels and one that will be important to research but at the same time difficult to research. In our experience young people do not contextualise the difference between face-to-face interaction and technology-based interaction because they have always done it. Therefore, the communication codes are quite fluid. That makes the determination of what is and is not bullying online and offline that much more complicated.

CHAIR: Do programs such as *Gossip Girl* and the highlighted incidents or trends have an effect on the level of cyber bullying that occurs? It seems that sometimes those sorts of programs can glamorise the idea or promote the notion that people might do that. Do you track those things?

Ms DEGNEY: We have not tracked it.

CHAIR: You moderate your online interaction. Is there enough ability for young people to moderate their own cyber interaction or are they aware of the ways they can self-moderate by activating privacy settings? Does that need more education or is there enough capacity within social networking sites to do that now?

Ms DEGNEY: Yes and no. Most of the social networking sites have clear guidelines about how to moderate the privacy functions on a profile. They all have to have information about how to report inappropriate conduct. I do not think you can over communicate the safety message to young people. If it happens consistently over a number of settings, that will not be a bad thing.

CHAIR: Is there any way that we can be really sure that as new technology or social networking sites are developed all of those controls are included? Is there an overall authority that says you must have these things on your site?

Ms DEGNEY: I do not know. I imagine they are governed by privacy laws, but I do not know the ins and outs.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: You said that the impact of face-to-face bullying is equal to the impact of cyber bullying. I would imagine that cyber bullying, because of the number of people who are aware of the comments that may have been made about a person, could have a much more profound effect. Are you picking up that the person who is being bullied realises just how many people are aware of it and may share that negative opinion of them?

Ms DEGNEY: Without the research and without long-term research into the impact on young people I would be hesitant to say one way or the other.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: We are getting lots of positive behavioural messages conveyed in the mass media—in television and movie commercials. I am talking about messages with regard to treating your girlfriend with respect and the terrible effects of smoking. Do you think there is room for positive social messages to be conveyed at a national level and money to be spent on programs so that everybody in the community can get the right sort of message about the proper way to treat one another and to use the Internet effectively and positively? Do you think there is a place for that?

Ms DEGNEY: Absolutely. It is our experience that the Internet and associated technologies can have a significant impact on young people's mental health and wellbeing and that there is scope for change. I absolutely advocate that.

CHAIR: One of our terms of reference is to look at models of good practice around Australia. We want to ensure that our report does not end up on a shelf gathering dust. We have self referenced this inquiry; it was not referred to the Committee by the Government. We also want to look at best practice overseas. From your experience are there some good models or do some countries do it better? Are there places we could refer to as doing something we should adopt?

Ms DEGNEY: Yes. Through the technology and wellbeing roundtable we established a relationship with Rachel O'Connell, who was the chief safety officer at Bebo and who now works at AOL. Rachel established the Irish technology and wellbeing roundtable, which involves a group of organisations that have developed some best practice guidelines for social networking sites. The United Kingdom Internet safety node has also done a significant amount of research to establish best practice approaches. I believe it has a set of guidelines available as well.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: In the early 1990s Inspire was playing an educational role with adults. Is that continuing?

Ms DEGNEY: We are doing it through the programs. The Reach Out Program has two additional elements, one of which is Reach Out Pro. That involves working with first-contact professionals dealing with young people and helping them to develop the resources and skills to use technology to improve young people's mental health and wellbeing. A similar program is run for teachers. We work to develop curriculum content. Through the ActNow Program we have a strategy where we partner with organisations in the community sector to help them to develop their capacity to use technology to have greater engagement with young people.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: The Committee has already heard evidence of parents of schoolchildren who do not know where to turn or what to do. There seems to be a gap.

Ms DEGNEY: We have been asked on an ad-hoc basis to do a number of professional development sessions, again for first-contact professionals and parents. They seem to be increasing in number.

CHAIR: Your funding comes from private sources. Do you attract any government funding?

Ms DEGNEY: We get some funding from State and Federal governments. We also receive funding from trusts and foundations and through regular giving.

CHAIR: I have noticed there seems to be more cyber bullying lately now that mobile phones have the capacity for videoing, messaging, et cetera. That seems to be the new flavour—where a bystander is filming an incident and then transmitting it. Are you noticing a difference in cyber bullying with mobile phone usage? Essentially, everybody has a camera and a video camera in their mobile phones these days. Are you noticing the difference in the way young people are using those?

Ms DEGNEY: I can give you some data around that. Obviously the number of young people who own a mobile phone is significant but the number of those who own a device that is convergent or that has 3G capability is not as large as people think. That said, as technology becomes cheaper and plans become more accessible, that will increase. But no, we have not done any.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Are you suggesting that a significant number of young people have phones that cannot take videos?

Ms DEGNEY: The data I have had access to suggest that price is still an issue when it comes to convergent devices.

CHAIR: Will you take that question on notice and give us that information? That would be very useful.

Ms DEGNEY: Yes.

CHAIR: Is there anything you want to add? We are obviously looking to engage young people, and with your assistance hopefully that can take place. We are looking at a variety of ways in which we can engage young people, and hopefully as members of Parliament we are engaging young people all the time. But I wonder whether there anything else you think we should be aware of or should take on board.

Ms DEGNEY: From an organisational perspective, I reiterate the fact that we, through our experience and research, know that technology has the capacity to improve young people's mental health and wellbeing. So while acknowledging that cyber safety is an important issue that should be addressed, I would be concerned about any approaches that looked at restricting young people's access, and also to emphasise the importance of involving them in the conversation because they are very literate. So, how do we develop child-friendly policies that will make sure they are safe but also that they can flourish and make the most of the opportunities afforded to them?

CHAIR: We have been presented with some information from Inspire today. Are those documents publicly available?

Ms DEGNEY: Yes.

CHAIR: We may be in touch for your assistance in our reach-out to young people and also to clarify or expand on any of the information you have given us today. Thank you.

Ms DEGNEY: Thank you for the opportunity to come and talk with you.

(The witnesses withdrew)

(Luncheon adjournment)

GILLIAN ELIZABETH CALVERT, Commissioner, New South Wales Commission for Children and Young People, affirmed and examined:

CHAIR: Welcome to the afternoon session of the inquiry of General Purpose Standing Committee No. 2 into bullying of children and young people. Commissioner, the Committee offers you the opportunity to make a brief opening statement before we have dialogue.

Ms CALVERT: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to take that opportunity. I am very pleased to appear before the Committee today. I see that you have heard evidence from a range of researchers, experts and stakeholders. I am sure you have heard very important and interesting information. I also note that you are going to be meeting with some children and young people, and the commission is very pleased to assist you in doing that, but also in doing that to encourage you to test ideas out with them, as well as just gather information. It is important to do both the gathering of information from children then also to test what you are planning with children. I encourage you to take that opportunity with the children and young people you will be meeting with.

As you know, the commission has a broad mandate to promote the wellbeing of children and to represent their interests in New South Wales. We are quite unique in that function. We were established 10 years ago and for the past decade we have been speaking with and listening to children and young people about issues that concern them, and bullying is one of the issues they have raised with us in a number of forums. Our focus is on representing children and young people, and conveying what they have told us about their experiences. I think this gives us our point of difference with some of the other groups that the Committee would have heard from.

My role here today is to provide you with information about what children and young people have told me about their lived experience. The concept of wellbeing is a central focus that informs all of our work for children and young people in New South Wales. In 2001 we spoke with vulnerable children and young people during the inquiry into the best means of assisting children and young people with no-one to turn to. They told us that they wanted the commission to concentrate on ways to prevent them from becoming vulnerable, not just to focus on helping them once they were vulnerable. They invited us to build a community that supports the relationships that underpin the wellbeing of all children. Our focus on advocating for wellbeing is a direct response to what they have told us.

Over the past 10 years the most consistent message I have received from children and young people is that relationships are crucial to their wellbeing. We have had conversations probably with more than 1,000 children who have shared their experiences and stories with us, and regardless of where they come from, how old they are, what their gender is, what their race is and how vulnerable they are, their relationships with their families, their friends and their community are the number one thing that impacts on them. We explored this in more depth in 2004 when we spent 1½ years talking with and listening to 126 children about what wellbeing meant to them and we were interested to see how their experiences differed from adult understandings.

Certainly, children raised bullying with us in our conversations with those children in 2004. They have raised it with us in a number of subsequent forums that we have had with them. Certainly when we spoke about their experience of work, children spoke to us about bullying and harassment. One 16-year-old shared with us and said, "Ignoring me, pushing me around, not letting me go on lunch or toilet breaks." When we drilled into that research with those 126 children, we explored with them their relationships. If relationships are at the centre of children's lives and the things that are most protective for them, then bullying is the antithesis of wellbeing. The children told us that bullying was the singularly most powerful experience at school that undermined their sense of wellbeing.

I know that a number of programs have been developed and implemented over the past 10 years, and a range of approaches have been developed to address bullying. We do have much better community awareness about bullying and a wider suite of responses available for responding to bullying in schools and workplaces. Things have changed, responses have improved, research has increased and bullying still happens.

At this point it is important to point out that bullying is not unique to children and young people. They did not invent this behaviour. Adults bully, and are bullied. Bullying is now recognised as a problem in many environments, such as workplaces and sporting codes. There has been a great deal of focus on bullying in children and young people at schools. That is important, because schools are where children spend so much of their lives. But I also note that a report released last week released the findings of an online survey into staff

bullying in Australian schools. That summary reported that almost all the staff in schools experienced some form of bullying during their employment. Even in schools, that place where children spend all of their time, bullying is not unique to children and young people.

For me, this finding raises questions not only about the relationship between environment and behaviour but also about the kinds of behaviours we are modelling to our children and young people in our schools and our communities. As adults we have a responsibility to model appropriate behaviours and ways of interacting with one another, as well as providing safe environments that allow for children and young people to grow and develop to reach their full potential.

Research clearly demonstrates the negative impacts on children of being bullied. It is apparent from the research that being bullied threatens a child's sense of agency, security and positive sense of self, and has a profoundly negative impact on them. It also seems from the research into children who repeatedly bully that being a bully is not conducive to wellbeing either. In order to understand bullying we need to consider the context or the environment in which it occurs, which is between people big and small.

It is really tempting to get caught up in defining what bullying is and what should be done about it. When we were preparing our submission we thought deeply about how bullying has been defined and how this informs approaches. Our adult understandings of bullying have been informed by research, which has defined bullying. I am sure by now you are familiar with the accepted definition of bullying as a form of aggressive behaviour that occurs in the context of a power imbalance, is repetitive, and is intentionally injurious. We are going to use this definition, but we are doing it knowing that in our experience there are often differences between what the child understands as bullying and what the adult understands as bullying.

I also think it is easy to get distracted and focus on bullying as the problem, and spend our energy trying to work out what constitutes bullying, what behaviours make up bullying, what is in and what is out, where we draw the line between being mean and being abusive, how fighting differs from bullying, how often bullying happens, and how we should respond to incidents of bullying. The problem with getting caught up in these sorts of definitions and trying to work out what is in and what is out is that it is what we call a deficit approach. It is an approach that focuses on the problem, not on the solution. I think it is all too easy for us to focus on what we do not want to have happen, rather than thinking about what it is we would like to create. We need to focus on solutions to bullying and what it is we are trying to create, rather than what we are trying to get rid of. Our culture values competition and ambition, and we instil these values in our children. Anyone who has contact with school-aged children will also recognise that that young life is also a competitive life.

How do we encourage and support children's wellbeing and their development of relationships in the context of that competitive life? How do we support children to develop their own ways of dealing with conflict, and how do we support healthy competition, tolerance and inclusion? I do not want to give the impression that responding to bullying events is not important. It is important to address bullying. The daily experience of isolation, humiliation and suffering is not one we want our children to experience. The challenge, as I see it though, is for us to develop a holistic approach to bullying, one that encompasses prevention as well as responses to bullying. How do we support children's healthy development? How do we build protective factors, and how do we respond to bullying? We need to do all three of those things, not just respond to incidents of bullying. I will quickly go through each of those.

CHAIR: About how long will this take?

Ms CALVERT: I thought that if it is very long, perhaps you could table it.

Ms CALVERT: I will certainly focus on the first two, because I suspect you have heard more about bullying than you have about supporting children's development. What is interesting is that aggressive behaviour is part of being human and part of healthy development. In fact, children show signs of aggression very early on in life. It is an important part of our capacity to survive. Very young children routinely demonstrate aggression in the form of biting, kicking and screaming. In fact, the time we are most aggressive in our lives is at the age of around about two. It does not impact on us so much because they are little and we can manage them. Those behaviours when a child is two are not as bad as if they display those same behaviours when they 14.

As we get older we learn to curtail our physical aggression and regulate our emotions. That is what growing up is about: teaching children not to be aggressive and hostile, and the essential ties between the

caregiver and the child are important and underpin this. If we are to support children's healthy development so they do not grow up to be aggressive, we need to look at what happens in those early years. That is why we talk about the importance of supporting children's healthy development.

The second area I will focus on is enhancing protective behaviours. School is where children spend their time and try out new behaviour and learn to do things. It is the place where they can observe what adults are doing. The thing we have also found out about bullying in talking to children is the importance of friends in being a protective factor in that bullying. Friends help you to deal with bullying and help to protect you from being bullied. One of the underdeveloped areas that we think the Committee could explore is ways in which we can build children's relationships. How do we help children who find it difficult to make friends to make friends and then sustain that relationship? When we talk about the importance of enhancing protective behaviours that is what we are talking about.

The third area is how to respond to the bullying event itself, and I am sure you have heard quite a lot about that. For us it is those first two areas that we think are underdeveloped areas in our response to bullying: promoting healthy development in children and the enhancing of protective factors, if you like, against bullying. In conclusion, what we would say is that in responding to bullying it is important that we have a holistic understanding and response to bullying, and that we take a solution-focused approach rather than continually trying to spend our energy in a deficit-based approach or trying to focus just on the endpoint. We need to look at those early things which will promote development in children and which will enhance the protective factors against bullying in children's lives, in their families and in their schools.

CHAIR: In your submission you said the first step in intervention is getting reliable data on what is occurring in schools and what harm it is doing. Clearly a definition would be useful before you can obtain data. I have been surprised to find that the Department of Education and Training requires schools to have an anti-bullying program but does not centrally collect any feedback on the rollout of those programs. So in terms of statistical analysis we have no knowledge of what is going on. Should not schools be required to provide feedback and should not the department be the central point to provide that sort of statistical feedback?

Ms CALVERT: If we were to do that properly, there would need to be a way to incorporate non-government schools as well, both the Catholic education system and the independent schools, because one-third of our children do not attend Department of Education and Training schools. So if we were to look at data collection, it would need to cover all schools, not just the Department of Education and Training schools.

CHAIR: The Catholic Education Commission said they do have some data collection.

Ms CALVERT: You would want your data to be comparable between the various school systems, so it would need to be agreed on data in my view. This is where some of the problems are in defining what bullying is. Because if you spend all your time trying to work out what you do and do not capture, you can in a sense go down blind alleys, if you like. What I would encourage the Committee to do is think about what it is the Committee wants to do with the collected data? Once you know what you want to do with the data then that will help you work out what information should be collected.

CHAIR: Your submission says that is essential.

Ms CALVERT: And it is. We would be suggesting that it is probably as equally important for the Committee to collect data about children's friendships and some of the protective factors, if you like, that we have talked about, as it is to collect information about bullying. If you have a school that has low levels of aggression and hostility, then that is probably as important for the Committee to know as what levels of bullying there are in the school—because I suspect the two will have a correlation. Yes, we do want to have data collected but the question is what data, and then what is the purpose of the data? That is the discussion that I think is the one that is worth having.

CHAIR: We have had different experts or researchers in the field of bullying give us presentations. There is a view from some, for example, Professor Helen McGrath that the school environment is more influential, and then Professor Ken Rigby, another well-known expert, says the home environment is equally important. Incidents of cyber bullying, for example, take place outside the school environment but would have an incredible impact on the school environment. How do we balance those views? Do you think there is a more important influence? Is it the home or is it the school?

Ms CALVERT: I think I would probably have to say it depends on what point you are talking about. If you are looking at the point at which you are trying to promote healthy development in children as a way of preventing bullying down the track, then quite clearly the home environment is what is critical. Because it is the home environment that teaches you how to regulate your feelings and helps you stop being that aggressive two-year-old and become a somewhat more socialised and self-regulated four and five-year-old. When we look at the work that has been done on the antecedents to aggressive behaviour then home and family life is what is absolutely critical to reducing aggressive behaviour in children. In that sense the home is what is important.

However, if you are looking at a particular bullying incident in a school setting, then what the school does and how the school responds to that is critical. We know that from those schools that have much more success in dealing with bullying versus those schools where there are high rates of bullying and they have less success in dealing with it. I think it depends at what point you are talking about in the prevention or in the intervening early response to the bullying incident continuum. I do not know that a lot is gained by saying that one is more important or less important than the other. I suspect both have their role to play and both are critical. If both are not attended to, then we will not turn bullying into the rare event that we would like it to be.

CHAIR: Cyber bullying has had a lot of media profile lately. From your conversations with young people do you think it is on the increase? Do you think that children and young people are enough aware of the ways in which they can protect themselves and what they should or should not be doing in terms of the legality of their interactions in cyberspace? Do you think parents are aware enough? What should we be doing about all of that?

Ms CALVERT: In terms of prevalence we see cyber bullying as an extension of bullying rather than a new threat. It is behaviour that has been around from a long time that has just got a new platform, if you like, or a new environment. There are two pieces of research I will look at. Our Wellbeing research found that children knew cyber bullying happened but they did not think it was very prevalent—that was in 2004. More recently we spoke with 1,500 children in our MobileMe research and what we were a bit surprised about was that only one person out of the 1,500 children surveyed thought that they knew someone who had been bullied.

When we went to the kids and said to them, "Are you being bullied on phones or do you know people who are being bullied by phone?", we got an almost nil response. How transferable that phone research is to cyber bullying and the Internet we do not know. The research was done a couple of years ago. So it may well have changed in the previous two years. But that is the most up-to-date research we have got, which would suggest that it is much less of a feature than you would think if you are using the media as your reference point. We would certainly recommend further research into that area around cyber bullying so that we do get a much more realistic understanding of what we think the prevalence is, rather than anecdotal. Having said that, when cyber bullying happens it can be devastating, as all bullying can be, because it just can get to so many people so quickly.

In relation to ways of dealing with it, kids already identify ways of dealing with threats on the Internet. When we spoke with our young people's reference group in February, they said their ways of dealing with cyber bullying were through using the technology to block contact, to get police involved if it is phone bullying—that is often something you can do because there is a record of the transaction—giving people a rejection line rather than your own phone number, getting new phone numbers and changing your phone number. They had a number of responses in their repertoire that they put forward as possible solutions to cyber bullying. They did not want filtering. They were divided on filtering mechanisms because they said that the filtering can have unintended consequences on the use of the Internet and that, overall, the advantage of the benefits of the Internet far outweigh the bullying costs for them. Their access to schoolwork and research, their social networking, their opportunity to enhance their existing relationships through using those social networking sites gave them the connections and friendship networks that kids identified were the things that were often protective against bullying.

When we spoke with kids about ways in which they dealt with bullying, they said they will often use friends and that if you have got friends around you are more protected from being bullied. Those social networking sites can enhance your friendships and, therefore, be protective of bullying. As far as do parents know how to do those things, if I am any example the answer is no. There is room for parents to know a lot more about the Internet. In particular, one of the things we suggest is that parents spend time with their kids asking the kids to show them, asking the kids about it, which in itself also builds relationships between the child and parent and, again, we know is protective against bullying.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: In terms of strong messages, I am surprised when you talk about your own research, even though it was two years ago, that you did not have a higher incidence. I think you said it was a nil incidence of bullying.

Ms CALVERT: Yes.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: I am very surprised about that, given what we hear about SMS messages and now mobile phone devices connected to the Internet. As you say, it may have changed. Is anyone reviewing the research out there or examining where our research needs in New South Wales should be?

Ms CALVERT: Certainly arising from the phone research we would say there needs to be more up-to-date research done and to look at that question about whether or not our finding is still the case. I would also extend that to looking at the Internet.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: And mobile devices?

Ms CALVERT: And mobile devices. Also, in doing that research, I would want to look at what kids found were positive about those things as well because we do not want to get distracted by the technology and think that the problem is the technology. The problem may not be the technology. The problem may be the way in which we are using it. As I said, again, it is more about the technology providing a new arena in which bullying can occur. It is the underlying bullying that we have to address.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Do you think we have sufficiently comprehensive definitions on bullying? What constitutes bullying behaviour, from the point of view of the recipient, usually children and young people?

Ms CALVERT: I am reluctant to spend a lot of time trying to define what bullying is because we can spend all our resources trying to work out whether something is in or out. Really what we should be doing is trying to respond to the problem. My observation in talking with kids—and some kids have said this to me, and again I do not know how widespread it is—they will label some behaviours as bullying that probably do not fit with the definition of bullying. So things get caught up in a definition that probably was not intended. If I can do a parallel example, think about child abuse and what has happened with our child abuse definition. We now have a lot of behaviours caught up in child abuse, a lot of kids being captured in the child abuse response that really were not ever intended to be captured by the child abuse response. They do need support, they do need intervention because they are vulnerable kids in struggling families, but they do not need the statutory child protection response.

I think we need to be careful the same thing does not happen with bullying. Yes, there is some severe bullying that needs a strong response. But probably what we need to spend far more time doing is focusing on things like sustaining and managing friendships and helping kids manage friendships. How do we do conflict resolution in schoolyards? How do we promote resolution of conflict? How do we deal with competitive behaviour, the sort of everyday knocks of playground and school activity? I do not want that stuck into the definitions of bullying because you capture kids you do not want to. But the other thing you do, which is just as important, is that you then, in a sense, dilute the serious end of bullying and you can trivialise bullying by capturing things in it that you do not want to. Bullying is a serious issue and we do need to respond properly to those serious events. But there is a whole lot of stuff before that, other behaviours, that you would not want to capture in bullying. It is part and parcel of growing up and life in the schoolyard that we need to support and develop and help them manage.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: Commissioner, I want to ask you about another aspect. I appreciate very much your comment that bullying is the antithesis of wellbeing. I can understand that friends help protect young people from bullying. It is all part of peer support. I am concerned about those who are also seeking to get approval by being in the gang, by being in the attackers, by being in the bystanders rejoicing in the scene, because they also want to belong.

Ms CALVERT: Yes. That is why there is a whole level of work that we can do about enhancing the protective factors against bullying. If kids generally are helped to understand about in crowds and out crowds, if kids generally are helped to understand and work their way through how you form friendships and the way in which friendships operate, then you are hopefully decreasing the likelihood that the normal everyday world of kids and schools will not escalate into really exclusive rejecting, isolating behaviours that then do become

bullying. It is about looking at the things before they become bullying and trying to interrupt that and stop that. What can we do before we get to that point?

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: The early intervention.

Ms CALVERT: Intervening early and not only intervening in a sense of stopping it, but building up the positives. How do we give kids the skills to deal with friendships? How do we give kids the skills to negotiate their way through group dynamics? How do we give kids the skills to be competitive in a positive way?

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: My question is a bit convoluted and I am going to make a statement first. What this inquiry is doing is putting up societal questions, not questions about behaviour in schools. Those of us who are a bit older and perhaps all of us came through the school system in a fairly tight, bullying way. Some people turned into different kinds of persons because they were isolated, et cetera. Do you think it is possible that the young persons in schools are testing out the learned skills that they have got from home and watching society; that the changes that happen to them as they get a bit older are about delivering bullying so the bullying is less reportable and more acceptable in the work environment, where it is all the time, and the defence skills are for defences that those who are subjected to bullying actually develop so that they can cope in the environment, and are we asking through this whole process—and I know we are all involved in trying to stop bullying in schools—for some sort of normalcy obsession? Are we trying to change the societal construct that we come from? Have you got any ideas on the big picture of why these questions are sitting in front of us now? Is that too heavy?

Ms CALVERT: I certainly think that bullying happens in places other than schools in children's lives, and when we have spoken to them about where it happened, work is an area for young people where bullying happens—we know that from our work research. I think that 48 per cent of kids who were working reported that they felt harassed at work either by customers or co-workers or managers. I think sport is another arena in which bullying takes place, and the way in which some sports are run and coaching—

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: The basics of sociology, I remember.

Ms CALVERT: —can feel very much like bullying at times. I think, as I said earlier on in my opening address, bullying is not something that is limited to children, it is not something children invent; it is something that is throughout our entire community, and to some extent if we are to help children tackle bullying I think we as adults have to tackle bullying ourselves as well.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: So we want societal change?

Ms CALVERT: I think we need societal change if we are to support children in being able to reduce the incidence of bullying in their lives.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Just to follow up on that, for societal change—I know we have had some really positive behavioural and societal changes in the areas of anti-smoking, domestic violence and so forth—do you think that there is a case now for the Federal and State Governments to have a look at those mass media messages? You go to the movies nowadays and you hear it; you pick up a magazine or you see it on TV—it has come to that. The benefit of that for the whole community is societal, behavioural, positive reinforcement?

Ms CALVERT: I think that in some ways we are already doing some of that. If you look at things to do with domestic violence and child abuse we are saying hurting other people is not an acceptable behaviour. If you look at the way in which we deal with road rage, there are laws against road rage, and that is a form of bullying, if you like. So I think we already do it on the edges—

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Not in terms of the Internet we do not, not in terms of that major part of our life. We are not saying that these communication vehicles are an important part of a method in which we should respect one another.

Ms CALVERT: I think it would be really handy for adults to get the message that it is not acceptable behaviour to bully, just as I think it is important for children to get that message. In fact, if we give it to adults it will make it easier for children to take it up.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: Learn to do it by manipulation instead.

Ms CALVERT: Manipulation can be another form of bullying—and a very gender specific form of bullying.

CHAIR: The topic is huge and we are looking to come up with some outcomes and a report obviously that is not going to be left on the shelf. Thank you for your evidence today. Unfortunately, we are on a tight time schedule. As you know, we may come back to you to clarify anything that has been raised today. Also, we are looking forward to having ongoing discussions with young people, which we appreciate your office helping us to coordinate, because it is obviously vital that we have that dialogue.

Ms CALVERT: As I said, if there is some opportunity for you to test out your proposals with kids, that would be a really valuable thing as well, because often we think we are saying the right thing and then they can say, "No, you've forgotten this bit and therefore it will have this impact". I would really encourage you to take up that opportunity as well. Thank you for the opportunity today.

(The witness withdrew)

DONNA SHARON CROSS, Professor, Children Health Promotion Research Centre, Edith Cowan University, 2 Bradford Street, Mount Lawley, Western Australia, affirmed and examined:

       CHAIR: Thank you for coming a considerable distance to give us this evidence today. Before we start we have an opportunity to hear an opening statement, if you wish to make one.

       Dr CROSS: Perhaps just to contextualise the research that I will refer to during the day, our research centre for almost the last 10 years since 1999 has been doing work looking at face-to-face bullying and in the last three years with more of a focus on cyber bullying. During that time we have tracked children across different age groups. All of our work has been randomised control trials, I guess, the gold standard in terms of research. We have longitudinal studies so we can monitor how behaviour changes over time. We began with work with primary school children and then moved to high school children. We began with upper primary because that is when bullying peaks, certainly in Western Australia, but since we began we have also now collected prevalence data nationally and we can see that around age 10, 11 appears to be the age that more children bully and more children are bullying others than any other age. Then we followed to secondary school where you see the second major peak that happens when children transition from primary to secondary school.

       Our work then went on and looked at early childhood and we have a project called the Children's Aggression Prevention project, and that project was to look at the antecedents of that bullying behaviour: If we were to work with children who are highly aggressive and who are being marginalised by their peer group, could we make a difference in the longer term to the extent to which they engaged in bullying or were bullied as they moved through school? We have two other studies that looked at higher risk children. We have an Aboriginal bullying prevention study that we are running in the mid-west Murchison region of Western Australia, and that study was to look at bullying amongst Aboriginal children and what are schools' specific needs to address how Aboriginal children perceive bullying, and particularly what sorts of skills teachers need to support those children if they are bullying or if they are being bullied, and which are the most harmful forms of bullying for Aboriginal children.

       Similarly, we also looked at children who were obese, who, again, in our early work were shown to be highly targeted, but particularly students who moved from being bullied to bullying others. Clearly, there is an issue, as no doubt you have noticed in the submissions you have received, that children who are bully victims are highly troubled children and need a lot of support. We had hoped that we might be able to stop that trajectory of children who were being bullied because of their body size converting over to engaging in bullying themselves.

       Lastly, we have three large studies looking at cyber bullying. I guess we came on to this as we added another section to our face-to-face bullying data and we started seeing young people describing about three years ago these forms of bullying that they were experiencing on their mobile phone or through the Internet, and then we continued to pursue that to try and understand that a little bit better. Over that time we have probably undertaken six large studies that have given a fair insight into what is going on.

       CHAIR: That is fascinating. It will obviously be useful for the Committee to draw on that research when preparing its report. You referred to intervention at different ages, very early intervention and peaks. We heard evidence today about year 9 girls being particularly involved in bullying, perhaps more in cyber bullying. Is there an age at which you see intervention being more useful or should it be rolled out across all ages?

       Dr CROSS: Prior to cyber bullying the answer would have been much more straightforward than it is now. As I said, there are two peaks. One is at the year 5/6 level and it is related to a sociological change that young people go through. It is nothing to do with the school; it is simply the way the children are developing and recognising the power of the peer group. During one study we picked up children in year 4 and tried to take them through that hump to see whether we could ameliorate the effect on them. We found that it was too late even at year 4 and that we needed to start much earlier. It was not sufficient to work only with the children in year 4; we needed to engage the entire school.

       While the year 4 children were getting good quality classroom activities and the entire school structure was changing, they were going out into the schoolyard with other children who were not getting that content. We found that it was essential that there be some common understandings and skills that were imparted to all children across the school. There also needed to be work with their empathy and other attitudes towards bullying. They needed core content that was developmentally appropriate for children in those early years.

My recommendation is that it should be done as early as possible with face-to-face bullying. Then at key points where it peaks, I would suggest some strong boosters—that is, just prior to years 5 and 6 and again just prior to transition. Transition is different from the earlier peak in that it is purely about children shifting schools. Each time schools bring in a new or large group of children, so bullying will increase in that environment. It is naturally occurring in Australia, where different States have children transitioning at different ages. In Western Australia children move from primary to secondary in year 7, so we see the peak in year 8. In other States such as Victoria the peak is in year 7. That is because kids have nice, settled social groups and then all of a sudden a large group of children comes in and mucks it all up. It takes a while for the children to work out the hierarchy again. In doing so they need to assert their negative and positive behaviours a little more than they would otherwise.

Cyber bullying does not have the two peaks, where there is a bit of a trough between upper primary and secondary. Cyber bullying follows age and increases accordingly. We monitored an increase of about 2 per cent a year in a recent large study. We do not believe it is necessarily age related; we think it relates to access to technology. Obviously, as children get older they have increased access. We have observed the year 9 phenomenon that was mentioned. However, we do not see it in face-to-face bullying; we see it in cyber bullying and amongst girls. Although boys are still engaging in a fair amount of cyber bullying, they tend not to talk about it as much as girls do. According to what girls tell us they are certainly spending much more time online. Whether that is true is not clear. Our work involves self-reporting. However, it is an issue for girls in years 9 and 10.

CHAIR: As always with these emerging issues, it concerns me that we will end up with a certain amount of duplication, not only in research but also in the rollout of different programs. What coordination is there between the research that you are doing, Ken Rigby's research and the work being done by various other experts? A number of Internet programs and websites have also been rolled out to address cyber bullying. How much coordination is there between the research and the rollout of those sorts of programs?

Dr CROSS: That is a good question. There are two types of research that we need to consider. First, there is epidemiological research, which provides information about the factors contributing to cyber bullying and so on. Secondly, there is applied research, which examines what sorts of interventions are effective in schools, community settings and so on. A lot of applied prevalence studies have been conducted in respect of bullying in Australia. However, there have not been many studies of applied intervention assessment. That is largely because that research is hard to do. While many resources have been provided to schools and produced ad nauseam, particularly about cyber bullying, almost none relies on empirical evidence to support their usefulness.

In fact, according to our research, some may be counter-effective; that is, they may have iatrogenic outcomes—which means there is positive intent but the effect is negative. People go in with the right idea but, sadly, it turns bad. Examples of that are programs that focus too much on supporting the victim instead of trying to change the behaviour of those perpetrating the bullying and those being affected. I ask members to imagine that we have 100 children who are being bullied and 20 children doing the bullying. If we helped perhaps 50 of the bullied children, they would probably develop some skills and would benefit from that intervention. However, we would change none of the behaviour of the 20 doing the bullying. In fact, that would intensify the bullying of the other 50 who were being bullied, who are probably the most vulnerable. There must be a very balanced approach. Sadly, because it is easier to work with children who have been victimised than it is to work with the perpetrators, many programs emphasise that component.

It is really important that programs are based on good quality empirical evidence and that the writers are accessing that information. People in the United States have taken an interesting approach to addressing this issue. They have the blueprint program. Any program proposed to be implemented in schools that the proponents would like to be supported by the Government—not with funding but with an acknowledgement that it might be useful—must meet a certain set of criteria. On that basis other schools can go to a list of schools that are considered to have blueprint projects, which helps their decision making because they are pretty much buried in the available resources.

CHAIR: That is interesting.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Do you believe that the research you have conducted to date and other reputable research has been implemented in government programs well enough?

Dr CROSS: Some of it has. We recently collected data from 7,500 children across Australia and in all jurisdictions—country, metro, primary and secondary. We had a very good stratified sample. We found that schools were doing a terrific job at addressing overt, obvious bullying but not covert bullying, for obvious reasons. It is harder to work out whether it is bullying. Forms of bullying have changed. We now see much less overt bullying than we did in the past. Schools have been effective in implementing evidence to support changing physical bullying.

We need more training of teachers to recognise covert bullying, how it feels and that it is more harmful than overt bullying, and what to do if a child reports that they have been bullied in covert ways. Sadly, teachers have considered it less harmful and have told children that it is not a problem. As a result children stop reporting it and the behaviour becomes much more subversive. Schools have selectively taken out those things that are easiest to implement because they have low skill levels. I do not mean that in a negative way. They need good quality proactive training pre- and post-service.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Do you have much interaction between your department and the education system in Western Australia or other States? Do they recognise that this is an area in which they could develop more effective programs and provide better training for teachers? Covert bullying has come up in today's evidence. The Catholic Education Commission said that they thought that was a deficiency they had to address. I am sure the public education sector agrees. Is this an area in which you can provide guidelines for the training of teachers to pick up this behaviour and perhaps to do more to prevent it happening?

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: And they were talking about exclusion of individuals.

Dr CROSS: Yes. In Western Australia we have a very close relationship with our Department of Education, as well as the other sectors, Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia and the Catholic Education Office. I think that is an advantage of being in a smaller State, pretty well everybody knows everybody. We have been involved in rewriting the policy from the education department's perspective and I have also rewritten the Catholic education and the Independent schools policy documents on the basis of the data we have collected from the research we have done. We have also rewritten all of the background information that is provided in the policy document for schools. We have provided exemplas or examples of what we think are high-quality policy statements that include issues relating to cyber bullying.

We have been given advice that will protect schools from litigation associated with cyber bullying which is a challenge we will have in the future following what is going on in the United States at the moment where schools are being asked to take responsibility for bullying that is often happening in home environments. That kind of contact we have had substantially. Since this very large study nationally and the work we have been doing in other States I have also been working with other departments of education or through principals associations to help support school leaders—who have had another issue fall in their laps to deal with—and to help develop capacity around addressing this issue.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: With the rollout of computers, it has been mentioned today that legislation to help schools, principals and teachers cope with the usage of these computers, that guidelines, regulations, legislation is lacking and they see it will be a problem in future when they have to take action against a bully who owns the material on both computers and communication messages that have been sent via those communication devices. What do you think about this possible legal minefield?

Dr CROSS: A wonderful study is being done in Queensland at the moment led by Marilyn Campbell. It is an Australian Research Council linkage project. She and several lawyers have been looking at some of the implications of cyber bullying and what schools need to be doing to address this phenomenon. Similarly, other work has been done in other countries. A lady in Canada has done extensive work on Canadian law and implications for schools. What seems to be the fallout is that if children are bullying other children in their homes on home equipment, it is not the legal responsibility of schools and schools could be considered exempt. Just because they are talking to other schoolchildren does not make it the school's responsibility.

However, if schools have a laptop program where the laptops are provided by the school and young people are using the laptops at home and bullying on those laptops or they are bullying through the school portals or in any way are connected to equipment or software that the school provides, then it opens up the school for litigation. However, the lawyers we are working with in Western Australia and the one supporting

Marilyn's work in Queensland have talked about what schools need to say and what sort of information needs to go home to parents that parents and children sign about whose responsibility these issues are.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: That has not been put in place yet in any schools you know of but it has been developed?

Dr CROSS: I think schools have lots of versions of that at the moment but I do not think many of them have taken legal advice regarding the extent to which that would protect them fully. Most information technology departments that we are working with at the moment have a form that goes home and which both the parent and child sign.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Has it been tested yet?

Dr CROSS: No, not in court. In the United States there have been two cases. The outcomes of those found that the school was not responsible, but many others are going on at the moment.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Thank you for coming along today, Professor Cross. I wanted to go right back to the definition of bullying. The kid who is just unpopular and has no friends is not being bullied; he just does not have friends. The kid who has been in a cohort friendship group and is systematically shunned and expelled from the group is being bullied. There is a lot of space in between. Can you talk us through when bullying ends and the natural social phenomenon of people finding, not finding, forming friendships, not forming friendships, how that all works?

Dr CROSS: I like the definition you just provided a moment ago. It is a really good challenge. The technical definition of bullying, as we would define it to young people before we ask them whether or not they have experienced these behaviours, is that we would say there has to be intention to hurt you. Were they deliberately going out of their way to hurt you or did they do something that hurt you but was accidental? In addition to that, did it happen again and again with intention is the second-most important criterion. Together they are considered bullying. I might treat you really badly today, and I might have done it deliberately, but if I did it again tomorrow and I did it after the teachers had pointed out to me that that behaviour is inappropriate— maybe I thought it was appropriate because my parents do it—then there is definitely an intention element to it. The repeated part is important because it is the repeated element that contributes to the greatest amount of harm to young people when they are bullied. It takes it from being aggressive, inappropriate, poor behaviour that should not happen in a school environment to behaviour that is really starting to hurt a child psychologically, physically, socially and, of course, academically. They are considered two of the factors.

Another is the power differential. I find this awfully difficult to define because we had a group of year 2s who were bullying a group of year 6s. It was four girls who were standing outside the school gate at the start of the day as these boys would walk into the school. They told us they were being bullied but they would not tell us who or why, because of the shame associated with that. We just observed these boys a while to see what was going on. We saw these year 2 girls saying, "I love you so much" at these year 6 boys and they followed them into the school saying, "I love you, I love you, I love you." An outsider would think that does not sound like bullying, but the girls were doing it with intention because they knew they were upsetting these boys. They did it every day and they were trying to do it even more to embarrass them. But the power differential— what power did those girls have? Often you think of physical size or whatever else. It is fairly difficult to define. But clearly these boys were really traumatised by it. It took quite a lot of work to get that changed. The third element was Norwegian researcher Dan Olweus' definition that many people worldwide have adopted to define what is appropriate.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Another question in a slightly different direction: The issue of cyber bullying and homophobic and sexual harassment. With the advent of cyber bullying I understand we are seeing a lot more overtly sexual material, a lot of sexual harassment material—both boys against girls and girls against boys—and a whole lot more homophobic material out there. Are you concerned that the shift of bullying from face-to-face to cyber bullying is going to reignite a whole new wave of homophobic bullying?

Dr CROSS: Yes, we are. We are quite concerned. I was listening to the last person when she was presenting about the difference between cyber bullying and face-to-face bullying. If I can just take a step back before I answer the question. Clearly, cyber bullying is largely the exact same behaviours you see in face-to-face bullying, just being delivered through information technology, but it is the information technology aspect that changes what this bullying is doing, according to the data we have collected so far. There are three key elements

that young people say to us why this bullying is different. It is different because they say it is anonymous. Fifty per cent of the children we have studied in large surveys of 3,000 or 4,000 children have said they do not know who is doing the bullying. They say they are sure it is someone who knows them because they know things about them that a stranger would not know, but they do not know who it is.

Of course, that creates an enormous amount of paranoia. They go to school and see a bunch of children laughing—they are the ones, they are laughing at me—and they are laughing at something that happened in the schoolyard, but the children become much more tense as a result of it. There is the 24/7 access. Young people leave their mobile phones on all night under their pillows and every time they hear a beep they wake up and look at it. The messages are crude. Even if they turn their phones off and then turn them on again, it is there. There is the broadscale humiliation. I would be embarrassed now amongst all of you if I was bullied right now, and my mother, my grandmother, everybody could see.

Those combination of factors, we think, wind up the toxic nature of cyber bullying, and I am sure other people have mentioned that as well. Young people tell us that it is the anonymity that really seems to break down any forms of inhibition, so young people who say to us, "I would never bully anyone face-to-face" are telling us they would do it by cyber means because they cannot see someone's face; they do not know the extent to which it is hurting them. So they tend to use inappropriate language and highly sexual language; language that obviously increases perceptions for homophobia through this technology much more easily than they would ever do it face-to-face. That is not to say that they are not doing it a lot face-to-face as well, but they tell us they would use it more so, and they also tell us they would be way nastier than they ever would be face-to-face. We have two levels: we have children who are now doing it who would never do it face-to-face—and it is only a small percentage. Most children who bully face-to-face also bully by cyber means, but there is just this extra group who are jumping in. They are often children who have been victimised at school who cannot get back so they use the Internet as a means.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Who have been physically victimised?

Dr CROSS: Have been victimised, in any way teased, humiliated. They will use the Internet as a way of regaining status.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: Professor, I am very interested in the way traditionally bullying has been exposed and limited for periods of time. I am thinking, for example, of Flashman and *Tom Brown's Schooldays* and how that had a profound effect upon bullying in public schools for a period of time. I think of the obese boy at school who loved pies, Billy Bunter, and how that had an impact for a period of time, and I think of Charles Dickens likewise. Here, through literature, bullying as a behavioural learned pattern was limited because of social pressure. Should we be looking to do much the same today? How are we going to get that essentially?

Dr CROSS: Yes. We have to shift the social norm and I believe there are lots of ways that can be done, and I will come back to that. I think one of our greatest challenges is that adults perceive that bullying is a natural passage of youth; that it makes kids tougher and as a result they will be better adults if they are bullied. We have to shift that attitude. We ran a social marketing campaign in Mandurah and Bunbury and we compared a whole series of media messages that we delivered through the radio and through print. We thought television would contaminate our two groups. Those messages were, first, that no-one is born a bully; it is learned. Someone in the environment is modelling it. If your children have this behaviour, somebody is showing them how to do it.

The second tier of the campaign was that for people who are bullied, the hurt lasts for a long time. There were a few case studies of children to try to get that message across. The third tier of the social marketing campaign is that there are things you can do about it. If you watch it and you do nothing, bullying increases. There were those kinds of strong messages. We were able to change the attitudes of the parents who received the program, again through telephone contact, by a small percentage. It was a very low investment social marketing campaign. We just wanted to see whether we could shift some attitudes around this issue.

I believe that if we had an awareness-raising campaign—and I heard someone previously mentioning social marketing campaigns and clearly we have shifted the norm in terms of tolerance of smoking behaviours in Australia—we can shift the norm around bullying as well, and we have already started to see that in schools. We see in schools that have well-organised, good-quality programs, that children do shift their norm around particularly being bystanders, their rights and responsibilities.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: It would certainly help if we could get the adult perception changed?

Dr CROSS: Exactly.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: So social marketing could work in this case?

Dr CROSS: As long as there is good backup with education. I think sometimes there are social marketing campaigns that release the trigger but you have the training for adults.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: Good education.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: That holistic approach.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: That is very interesting. Thank you.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: In relation to that specific issue, the social marketing for domestic violence has been relatively successful because now socially it is unacceptable in most societies in Australia for domestic violence to occur, but the reality is that a lot of domestic violence, particularly in country New South Wales and western Sydney, has gone underground and in a way is worse. How do you actually deliver these social marketing programs? It would appear from what we have learned that bullying is definitely a learned process; teach people how to be cleverer at it, not something to be reported or noticed—covert, as you said earlier.

Dr CROSS: There is a lot in your question. I wonder if I could pick off the first part of it. There was a domestic violence campaign run in Western Australia led by a man called Donovan. The campaign was so successful because it picked up on what was the most salient issue for men who were violent with their spouses or partners, and that was if your children see it, the effects it will have on your children. At the time this campaign was set up, I was working with them on the periphery. We found we did not set up enough call centre phones because so many wives or husbands called in as a result of that social marketing campaign because we picked on something that was very salient—and obviously there have been lots of campaigns that have not been successful around domestic violence because the message has not been salient enough.

I think within bullying we have to spend a lot of time with young people to work out what are the most salient messages for them. For the young people we have worked with so far, the biggest issue to them is that, "I don't really care if other kids I don't know are being bullied but I really do care if my friends are bullied—people that are close to me—but I don't know what to do when my friends are bullied. I'd like to see really cool people who I think are cool, just giving me little ideas that don't ruin my popularity but still give me a few tricks that I can try." That is only obviously a trigger; just that cool people do this and that cool people stand up for others.

We had a survey that we ran that we looked at attitudes of children towards bullying behaviours. There was a pro-victims scale and a pro-bully scale and we asked lots of questions about, "How do you feel when someone is being bullied? Does it bother you? Would you like to do something about it?" Almost all of the children, over 80 per cent, said that they hated seeing someone else being bullied, over 80 per cent said that they wished they could do something about it and fewer than 20 per cent said that they could do something about it. But 90 per cent said that they really respect somebody who does do something about it, that the status of someone who could step in and positively help that person was really high.

So we played on that within a school environment. We talked about those attitudes to try to shift that normative base. Within that school environment—and it had to be a school environment that already had all the issues in place: a quality policy, parents engaged, a curriculum, an ethos, and all of the things that make up an effective whole-school program—they were able to shift that normative behaviour around bystanders stepping up because they gave bystanders some ways that they could step up. That does not mean to get in front of a child who is doing the bullying and put themselves at risk but more how to help that person get away and obviously to demonstrate to the person bullying that this behaviour is not tolerated. We said to children at an absolute minimum, "Don't watch. If you can't do anything else, just move away because it is the watching that is what the person bullying is doing" and there were a whole series of steps that I will not go into that we provided.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: The power structures within our society—and I am not accepting this as good but normal—are often based on bullying behaviour within the home, the workforce and society. Through the school system we are trying to change the power structure?

Dr CROSS: I think we are showing an alternative power structure, that there is popularity to be gained. There is a very nice piece of work that has been done by a lady by the name of Christina Salmivalli out of the University of Turku, Finland. She has found that people who bully frequently are perceived by lots of children to be popular. She gave a list of children in the classroom to other children and said, "Tick all the children's names who you think are popular and then tick the names of all the children who you like." The children who bullied a lot were often ticked as the most popular children but no-one liked them. Almost none of them were listed as children who were liked. A house of cards really is what these children were standing on. Trying to get those children to see that that behaviour is not liked, it is actually feared, and if you want to be popular—which is clearly what most children are telling us they want to be—they need to find other ways to get that popularity, not by using aggression in inappropriate ways. There is a long way to go. I am not suggesting that is a solution overnight but it is certainly a step that children are willing to take on.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: As a society, we are not taking on this issue for some control purpose, are we, to make everybody nice?

Dr CROSS: I do not think I am suggesting that, no. I just want people to treat each other with respect. Not treating each other nicely, with respect, I think is what we are doing. I see those as different.

CHAIR: With regard to your work, if it is okay with you we would be interested in more information, particularly in relation to the marketing campaign. If there is something we can have a look at, that would be fantastic. In terms of various programs that are successful and otherwise, it seems that a number of schools have one-off programs, or there are outside groups that come in, and therefore the school is able to tick a box and say, "Yes, we ran an anti-bullying program one day for year 3 and one day for year 6", a one-off type of thing. I wonder what you feel about those sorts of programs in terms of their success. Should they be accredited or should we do away with them totally? We have had lots of evidence about needing a whole-of-school approach. What do you think about some of these programs?

Dr CROSS: To get an effect you need an adequate dose. For example, if I have a cold I need the right amount of medicine to get rid of that cold. A one-off visit to the school might make me feel better for the day but it will not get rid of my cold. It needs to be sustained; it needs to be across all year levels. What we learned from our very first study, called Friendly Schools, was that we did not give a big enough dose to the school. We only worked with a pocket of children, and we only touched on helping parents. Our second study is called Friendly Schools Friendly Families, because we recognised we needed to spend a lot more time with families and, obviously, the whole school in bringing them up to speed.

I am not advocating for our program; I am advocating a whole-of-school approach that is sustained and that is an integral part of the way the school operates. It should be clear to the school how the principal and the administration team feel about this behaviour, and what teachers will tolerate and what they will not tolerate, so that there is a total understanding of what is being done within the school and it is consistent. It might not be the standard that we would all like to see, but at least there is some consistent response that children can expect to receive if a behaviour is performed within a school environment.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: Following on from that, what about working with other groups other than schools—for example, children's groups, sporting groups, clubs, and so on?

Dr CROSS: We have been working with coaching organisations because, obviously, a lot of bullying goes on with children's sport. We have done that mostly because we would like to see most people singing from the same hymn sheet to young people. If you say, "While that behaviour is tolerated here, it is not tolerated here", it is just too hard for children to work out what is going on.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: It is okay for the schoolteacher but not for the sporting coach?

Dr CROSS: Exactly. In a number of the coaching accreditation programs that are going on, we have asked that in addition to learning how to shoot a basketball correctly you should also be talking to children about the way they engage with conflict in the sporting environment and the way they should be behaving. There is a

willingness. It is going to take a lot of push from all agencies to get involved. And other agencies, such as Scouts and Brownies and so on, have always been open to those sorts of activities. But it is trying to get the deliverers of those activities to consistently provide them. The deliverers change very often. So, unlike teachers who will also change obviously within schools, often the leaders of these groups are different coaches at different times, so it is very hard to get those messages across. I think it is essential.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: I hope at some time we can tackle parents of children who are engaged in soccer competitions and so on.

Dr CROSS: Absolutely.

CHAIR: With regard to children reporting and working with bullies, we have had evidence that there is a lack of understanding of who to go to, or that there are not people to go to within the school environment. In New South Wales we have school counsellors; I think the ratio is one to 1,000 in high school and one to 1,500 in primary school. A secondary principals association suggested we need to have more counsellors as one of the highest priorities. What do you think about that?

Dr CROSS: I think that having trained school counsellors is essential. Some of the restorative techniques that are necessary when children's behaviours have become very poor and need some support often require skilled counsellors—ideally, intermediate skilled counselling, in the sense that if they have to go out and find a provider outside the school, the message is diminished. So, providing that is really important.

We have a study called Kid Plus that we are running in Western Australian schools at the moment. We started investigating what other teachers or support staff within a school could young people use in bullying situations, or in just general pastoral care. In the study we looked at who is the typical support structure within a school. In Western Australian schools there is a school nurse in every secondary school and for a few days a week in every primary school. There is also often a chaplain, and sometimes there is a police officer, and there can be some other house leaders and so on. So there is that team of people. But when we asked the young people who they would go to if they were bullied, often it was none of those people that the children listed.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: A favourite teacher?

CHAIR: One of their peers?

Dr CROSS: Very much so. Often they said they would not go to a school counsellor because they do not know who they are and they would not feel comfortable about revealing a lot about themselves to that group. In the study we are looking at training those teachers who are nominated by the majority of young people as being other people in the school that young people could go to, and giving them techniques like motivational interviewing, a technique that pushes children through ambivalence. If you can work with them to talk more about what is going on in their lives rather than judging them, it is a very effective approach. But it requires a small amount of training to get the teachers to do it. We found that that was another way, and that it was important not to overload teachers again. These teachers were asked if they were willing, and they were. They said, "Kids come to me anyway, and I would like to have some more skills. So you are not going to add to my workload; you will actually help me so that I have a broader scope of skills."

Similarly, we started training more teachers within the school with a technique known as a method of share concern, which is one of many restorative techniques that are out there but the one that we think is working the most effectively in schools. A lot of the teachers were starting to use it when they were on duty at lunchtime, so that the problem that was developing did not escalate. Often you can nip a behaviour early.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: There is an immediacy in that.

Dr CROSS: That is for sure. Clearly, more children bully out of classroom time than they do in classroom time. Where there are teachers who are in that supervisory capacity, there are different things that schools have done, with time-out benches and so on, that take the pressure off the need for school counsellors at higher levels and give more teachers more confidence about the sorts of things they could be doing in the school environment.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: I have a follow-up question with regard to counselling. What do you feel about telephone counselling and online counselling that is offered? Are the services utilised? Do young people see them as effective? Are they funded well enough?

Dr CROSS: Are they funded well enough? I think in the schools I have been working in that have those strategies in place they appear to be funded well enough. They have a problem, though. When schools move from children telling verbally to children going online and being able to report, for example, bullying that is going on, in trying to get some support around that, there is usually a very high influx of children who will try it. Schools are often not ready. When we are working with schools we ask them, "Get yourself ready. Have every staff member ready in the first couple of weeks because a lot of children will report." If those children report and they do not get a response—the sort of response they would like—they will stop doing it straightaway. So schools have to resource themselves heavily for that initial period, and then of course it will flatten out and there will be a nice even flow. But if they do not do that front end well, they have really wasted the resources.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Have you seen any good examples of schools that may have done it well?

Dr CROSS: Yes, I have. I am sorry, most of my examples are Western Australian. Sadly, many of them are non-government schools. I think that is just because they have perhaps more money that they can put into some of these activities. But there are certainly some very effective models. I think what we are seeing is that more children are willing to tell. I think that is an important first step, especially for cyber bullying, because they are online anyway so it is easier to report something then.

CHAIR: To whom do they report it?

Dr CROSS: It is usually a monitored site, and typically it is the director of student services, or whoever is the pastoral care leader, or the pastoral care team within the school, who watch that site if any children submit—

CHAIR: That is not bullying off the school campus?

Dr CROSS: It can be both. Young people could be reporting through the school portal while they are at school during the day. But in a lot of schools that do not really give the children time to do that during class time, they are reporting things that happened that day at school.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Would you be able to give us any information on where you think those programs have been successful and the things to be aware of when you set up and so forth? It would appear to me that many young people would like to use the online system, because they are so used to doing everything online, if it is monitored well and followed up. Is there ever a face-to-face follow-up with the consent of the young person? Does that ever happen or is all the counselling done online?

Dr CROSS: Very often it goes to face to face quite early, depending on how they are responded to and if they can trust that it will not get out of their control. That is the difficulty most young people have with telling: it will get worse—that is their fear.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Can we talk briefly about the way that anti-bullying policies are developed here in New South Wales and get your feedback on it? Basically each school has to develop their own anti-bullying statement or policy. It is left up to the school to do that—

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: The school community.

Dr JOHN KAYE: In many schools this comes down to a small group of teachers who have that responsibility. In theory it is supposed to be across the whole school but often that is where it ends up. A school that has a problem with bullying can choose from a variety of programs and resources out there, and they get some support from the school education director. The school education director is—they used to be called cluster directors but I am not sure what the Western Australian term is—a leader across about 10 to 15 schools. That is basically it. That is basically where it goes to from there. If the school education director has some concerns they can step in. There are some other resources schools can draw on but it is basically left at the school level, which means every school has its own policy and every school is more or less implementing their

own program or choice of their own programs. Do you think that is the right way to go or do you think we would be better off in the New South Wales public education system having a slightly more prescriptive process? Where we have a smaller menu of choices for schools and we can then better develop each particular item within the menu so they work better?

Dr CROSS: I think there are probably some layers to my answer, if I may. First of all, the National Safe Schools Framework is a guideline for all schools in Australia, in terms of what needs to be addressed within their school-based policy, and I think there is some funding attached that encourages schools to comply. That is quite solidly evidence based but it is very broad. I think for a school that said, "Okay, that is the framework and now I have come up with a policy", it would just have headings and no idea of what to put underneath them. That is all that the framework provides. I hear that is going to change, and if you would like to know more I can tell you about that. The next problem is that schools are so different. For schools working with our Aboriginal bullying prevention program, a policy such as we had put in place in the Applecross primary school in Perth would have no place in those schools. If we were very prescriptive about policy structure I think schools would feel their hands were tied in terms of how they would respond.

I have a suggestion. We developed and trialled a capacity assessment tool, or a diagnostic tool, that allows schools to look at—in utopia this is what a school that could prevent bullying would look like—how it was going, which things it was doing already and what it was not doing, and then sending them to resources to help them in those ways. If they had a particular need identified in a school that might be unique, that may need some tailoring to ensure that their policies were in line with that, the tool would allow them to diagnose a difference and then send them to a resource. If you had something like a blueprint program here in this State you could then set up these resources that appear to have the quality evidence to support them. Obviously you could go to others if you wish but we could save you some legwork. That tool would send them to the things they need. Many of the schools have a policy that is okay but there are very weak links in it. A good quality diagnostic tool would help them do that.

Once a school has a policy in place they then have to implement it. We often see that there are huge levels of implementation failure—a terrific policy but no-one knows it. We go into a staffroom and ask the staff, for example, "You are on duty at lunchtime and this particular incident happens, each of you write separately what the policy of the school is if that happened to you while you were on duty." There would be 50 different answers. Clearly the staff does not know what the policy says and when new staff and relief staff come to the school they should be given a card that says what happens when they are on relief because often they are put on duty. For that implementation there are many of these around—we have one that we developed with Phyllis Gingiss out of the University of Houston—and this tool allows schools to assist their capacity. I have now got a policy in place so what capacity do I have for delivering this? Again schools can then pull out those elements they are weak in. What staff have they got—?

Dr JOHN KAYE: These are self-administered diagnostic tools?

Dr CROSS: Yes.

Dr JOHN KAYE: They are flowcharts?

Dr CROSS: Checklists, yes.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Checklists that you work your way through?

Dr CROSS: Yes. An algorithm really, or a flowchart that shows—

Dr JOHN KAYE: These are publicly available documents?

Dr CROSS: Yes, we have produced them. There are other examples but we have one, yes, that we make accessible.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Could you provide the Committee with the diagnostic tool of Professor Gingiss on capacity and yours on policy?

Dr CROSS: We have adapted the tool of Professor Gingiss to an Australian version, so I can give you both.

Dr JOHN KAYE: If you could, please. That would be good for us to see. Thank you.

CHAIR: Earlier we were talking about the rollout of programs and how public schools in New South Wales are required to have these policies but there is no centralised collection. Do you think it should be a recommendation of the Committee that there should be some sort of centralised collection?

Dr CROSS: I do. I think it should be a very strong recommendation. Schools are just buried. They tell us every day there is a new resource that comes across their desks. They need some mechanism to filter that—and there has been in the past. At the time the Better Health Commission report set out that there should be a national curriculum for health education, but instead of that there was a set of criteria that was developed to evaluate health education resources across Australia at that time and a directory was put out, which was in hard copy in those days. A set of criteria was developed collaboratively—everyone agreed that was what they wanted the standard to be. Resources that met the criteria were then publicised for schools on a regular basis—quarterly or something like that—and it appeared to be quite helpful. That was called the Health Education Lifestyle Project.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: Madam Chair, are you talking about collecting data on implementation or incidents?

CHAIR: Both. There is no data collected on either the incidents or the implementation of programs and feedback.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: That is a different question.

Dr CROSS: Yes, I am sorry I answered that—

CHAIR: That is not centralised?

Dr CROSS: Yes.

CHAIR: Schools may be doing different things and the school education person with the responsibility for 10 schools is supposed to check up on that, but then there is no feedback from there to the department or to any centralised place?

Dr CROSS: Yes. If I could just speak to a report that I cannot give you the details of, but this study that we did with 7,500 children obviously had a huge sample from New South Wales. The New South Wales data—while I cannot tell you what it was—was very different to the rest of Australia and the issues around bullying. When that is released—and maybe the Committee could help to release it from the department—

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: Which department is holding on to it? Federal or State?

Dr CROSS: Federal: the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. The data in there gives a very clear snapshot of face-to-face bullying, overt, covert cyber bullying, what teachers are feeling about each of those factors, and a very nice snapshot last year of what was going on in New South Wales schools. It would be a really important starting point perhaps for the Committee's resource because I do not think there is a more current sample, certainly not a larger sample, that can be compared with the rest of Australia. You can pull up New South Wales data and say relative to everyone else or relative to other States that are similar. I think it would help the Committee a lot.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: But it is not identified by individual schools, is it?

Dr CROSS: Oh no.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: Which is what the question is.

Dr CROSS: I know it is.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: Destructive.

Dr CROSS: Sorry?

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: Not your study. I have a perception that collecting data on individual school sites is destructive. What do you feel about that?

Dr CROSS: I do not understand why you need to have the schools named.

CHAIR: Schools are required to have a policy. No matter what that policy is, there is follow up to determine the success or failure of that policy or even if that policy is manifested in some sort of program. That is important is it not?

Dr CROSS: I certainly think you need to have ongoing data collection so you have some understanding of what is happening across the State that you could break up by sector, age and so on. I think it is very destructive to have it by school name.

CHAIR: I do not think anyone is suggesting that.

Dr JOHN KAYE: I would not be so brave, Chair.

CHAIR: For the purposes of this inquiry we will not go down that path. Professor Ken Rigby said to us that teachers need to have a strong background in research and that very little training is given to teachers about bullying and how to deal with it effectively. You have talked about teachers being the go-to people needing more training. Professor Rigby particularly said that bachelor degrees had very little information in relation to training on bullying and that in-service training is quite limited. Do you think there should be a greater component on bullying in teacher training? Should there be more support for principals? Who should provide ongoing training? Should it be individual schools or should it be rolled out as an in-service program? Do you think there is an unwillingness to engage in it or is it just a lack of funding?

Dr CROSS: I will start with the last one first and work back through them. I do not think there is an unwillingness. From our experience working with schools, schools are really keen to build their skills. Part of the problem, certainly in Western Australia, is that they cannot find enough teacher relief, they do not want to leave the school and they do not have many resources to put into paying for that training. They really are in need of help, particularly around cyber bullying. I think it could be a bit of a tipping point for principals. We are getting so many calls from principals who are saying that they just do not know how to deal with cyber bullying, and they do not know what they should be doing if it is happening out of school but is washing back into school the next day. They clearly need some support around what they should be doing.

The bachelor programs in Western Australia, South Australia and elsewhere that we have recently done a small study on demonstrate there is almost no content that addresses bullying. It might be a guest speaker. We have managed to force ourselves into the bachelor program that runs at our university, but they kind of put up with us rather than have it fully integrated. We go and do all the training. It is not seen as an integral component. I think that is possibly because of the crowded curriculum. There are all these other things that they need to address, without a sense of what effect that is having on children if they do not get good quality education in this area. I believe there needs to be good quality pre-service and post-service training, it needs to be a sustainable model that is delivered through our district offices in Western Australia—I am sorry, I do not know the equivalent in New South Wales—

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: Regional.

Dr CROSS: —where there would be regional trainers who are given regular skills, a sort of a train-the-trainer model. We have been using a three-day train-the-trainer model that we have used to roll out the Friendly Schools and Families Program because it is complex. There is so much that schools need to do at a whole school level and a classroom level, and that really does take a minimum of three days to train a trainer who then can work individually at schools and coach them into putting strategies in place.

CHAIR: We are short of time; we understand your timetable. Finally I will ask a question that we ask most witnesses who present to us so that we end up with a useful report. What do you think our Committee should be aiming to achieve with this inquiry?

Dr CROSS: A report that someone will read.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: We do not want them to read it; we want them to implement it.

CHAIR: We want practical outcomes that can be implemented. We do not want the report sitting on a shelf.

Dr CROSS: I thought about that before I came. I feel there is a whole series of levels at a State level that you would want to see being delivered. I think some very clear policy directives from the State are very important, in the same way as the National Safe Schools Framework at a Federal level, particularly around covert bullying; giving very practical ideas and pro forma that help schools. I am not sure if your report is going to school systems. I am not sure who your audience is.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: Parliament.

Dr CROSS: Releasing funding to increase the training of teachers pre-service and post-service in a sustainable model that is increasing capacity around those areas we talked about; and some effective practice guidelines that are evidence based. That might be your blueprint criteria. Very clearly, what do we know? There is a lot known about this now. You can put those guidelines together quite well and there are a number that have already been produced. I feel that it needs to include monitoring its effectiveness over time, so in some way you are monitoring student behaviour in the longer term. Then recommendations at a school level, the sorts of things that are needed to help schools diagnose the issues that they should be addressing; supporting principals and administration teams to do that; and, of course, encouraging a whole-of-school approach and putting incentives in place for schools to adopt all those elements that we talked about before. School design, we have not talked about this but it occurred to me that not enough thought is going into how schools are built. Our study has shown that there are certain things that you put into a school that increase the likelihood of bullying, such as the way that you design lockers and the width of alleyways.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: The width of passageways with lockers in them.

Dr CROSS: Yes.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: Road rage.

Dr CROSS: Yes, it is road rage in a school. We are working with architects in Western Australia to think about what schools need to look like. Just by their very structure we can reduce the amount of antagonism or opportunities for kids to do stuff that are hidden in terms of organisation and supervision—user-generated content, and encouraging programs to be delivered to schools that allow schools to adapt to suit the needs of children. All these pre-canned programs that go into schools that create scenarios where kids have to do exactly that scenario have no relevance whatsoever to what these children are experiencing in their outside school environment. There are lots of curricula that allow flexibility. For social inoculation to occur it has got to be real experiences that these kids have opportunities to practice with.

CHAIR: Thank you. We are enormously grateful to you for giving up your time and coming so far to visit. We wish you lived in New South Wales. The Committee staff may wish to get in touch with you to hear more about the programs that you have touched on today. Thank you for the work you do and for enlightening our Committee and our process. We hope you have a safe trip home.

Dr CROSS: I am very grateful. I wish our Government were doing the same.

(The witness withdrew)

(Short adjournment)

CHERYL PATRICIA McBRIDE, Chairperson, Public Schools Principals Forum, Sarah Redfern Public School, Guernsey Road, Minto, and

BRIAN CHUDLEIGH, Deputy Chair, Public Schools Principals Forum, PO Box 743, Kiama, affirmed and examined:

CHAIR: I welcome you both here today. We appreciate the time that you give to the work that you are doing. Before we open our dialogue we have the capacity to hear a brief opening statement, if you would like to make one.

Mr CHUDLEIGH: Perhaps more of an explanation, if we could. We have provided a folder for you and perhaps I could spend a few moments making reference to the contents therein. Some days ago the Public Schools Principals Forum conducted a very brief two-day statewide survey just to ascertain what are the current views of, particularly, primary school principals, given that the Public Schools Principals Forum is primarily an organisation for primary school principals, albeit there are many secondary schools principals who are sympathisers and will often respond to our surveys.

The survey attracted more than 500 responses on Thursday and Friday of last week. We asked just three questions and we have turned the computer off now. We collated them at the weekend and we figure we have got a trend that we can share with you, and that trend we have set out on a one-page summary immediately inside the folder. You can see there the three questions that we asked in the survey: "From your observations, anecdotal evidence, has the level or incidence of bullying increased in our schools in recent years?" We are asking there for principals to not only comment on their own school but on their observations of others and what they hear. "If bullying is occurring in your school what is its most common form?" and " How seriously do you rate bullying as an important issue currently in need of attention in our schools?"

The 500-plus principals have told us the following: 60 per cent of them reported no evidence of an increase in the level of bullying, but 40 per cent reported that they believe the level of bullying to be on the increase. However, 50 per cent of those respondents indicated this was not the case at their school—the school down the road but not their school. That is pretty common. About 57 per cent of the principals listed bullying, however, as a high priority. It was a little bit confusing here: On the one hand they were saying no, it is not happening in their school but it is a high priority, and I think that reflects the fact that they are concerned per se about the wholistic issue of bullying wherever it might occur, which is a good thing.

The most common forms of bullying they report are as recorded there—remember this is primary school: teasing, name-calling, exclusion, intimidation, and we are seeing the beginnings of the cyber stuff in the abuse of mobile phones and personal computers coming through and a lot of concern being expressed. That is probably the issue that most principals, even primary principals, are mentioning in their anecdotal notes that they have recorded on the bottom of the surveys; they see that as an emerging issue and one that is very difficult to combat. There were some things there that occur commonly throughout the responses and they are listed there for you.

Principals and teachers in all schools, they are telling us, need to remain vigilant—even in those schools where we are happy that bullying is not excessive—and that we need to develop positive cultures where teachers and students model and share respect for each other. That is a strong theme and we will promote this too, if given the opportunity today, that we are not so much fixated on seeing the solution to bullying to be found in magic programs or quick fixes or mandated policies even in many cases, albeit that that might be appropriate for cyber bullying, we see it being dealt with through a shift in culture in the school, one that develops, as we are saying, mutual respect for one another.

A further theme: Increasing levels of aggression and violence in society is placing ever-increasing pressure on schools. This is particularly apparent in television programming and media reporting. Principals feel very strongly about that, that it is very difficult to combat it, even in the sports arena, football codes and so on, where there is a lot of on-field violence, especially the physical stuff. Many principals blamed excessive and deliberately dramatic media reporting for the possible perception that the level of bullying in schools is on the increase. They are saying that the media in general is too quick to seize on any issue, any example, and in many instances, principals feel, blow it out of proportion, and they are concerned—we, of course, speak for public school principals—about the injurious impact that that may well be having on some public schools. Many

principals called for increases in the level of resourcing and support for schools, and particularly in the form of school counsellors.

Could I refer you to the last document in that folder? It is a report prepared by our principals organisation in 2006-07 when we then ran a statewide survey on the adequacy of the school counselling service in schools, and you can read for yourself later that the bottom-line finding was, of course, grossly inadequate and we have made a series of recommendations there that are yet to be enacted. We will be very keen to see, hopefully, this inquiry pick up on that because many, many principals are mentioning the need for proaction on the part of school counsellors, particularly in those cases, which we will again mention later, where children perhaps have low esteem, where they are not resilient to bullying and they need the specialist support of counsellors.

Finally, many principals are saying yes, this bullying stuff, especially cyber bullying, is so difficult to monitor and protect. The best protection, in fact, for all children and for all individuals is the building of resilience; they want to see that sort of focus in schools. Principals have mentioned programs that they use, and we have included some examples of them in the folder. Principals have also mentioned older students mentoring younger students and the use of police liaison officers, which apparently occurs in the St George region. I think that is a reference to the police region. I have named a school that has implemented a program that we are not familiar with. We have done that because, of course, these are positive issues. The principal is using a program called "Circle Time", which she reports on very positively. Edith Cowan University also has the Friendly Schools and Families Program. I am sure that the person concerned would be happy to discuss that further.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: Professor Cross, who developed it, has just appeared before the Committee.

CHAIR: I would like to unpack some of the things you have talked about. Professor Cross also suggested that we look at the blueprint program that has been developed in the United States. We will obtain more information about that. Perhaps the department has information about successful programs and what works in a variety of ways and at different levels so that schools can pick off the shelf the program that best suits their needs. However, most of the evidence presented today suggests that it needs to be rolled out as an all-school policy—

Ms McBRIDE: Absolutely.

CHAIR: —rather than as a one-off program. Do you think something like that would be useful for schools?

Ms McBRIDE: Good examples of best practice where it has worked with a specific group of students—either victims or bullies—would be useful. However, you have hit the nail on the head in terms of looking at a holistic program. It needs to be something to which the entire community is committed. It should involve parents in building the program and, of course, training of teachers. It is also important to include children in the decision-making process about how it will be implemented in the classroom on a day-to-day basis. It should not be a one-off session with a teacher saying, "Today we are going to do the rock and water program or the resilience building program." This is something we do every day and it is reflected in everything we send out. It is in our communications to parents, our three school rules and whatever, so that when we are talking through their behaviour they can identify it for themselves from what they have been taught and also given what is happening around them.

Some of those breakaway programs are useful. We do need to work specifically with some students. Self-esteem is a big issue from the bully's perspective and the victim's perspective. Not many bullies have high self-esteem either. There should be different programs for specific groups of kids as a useful adjunct to culture building. That is a time-consuming process. It takes a long time to embed, but once it is there it is very strong. You can see it in operation in schools and playgrounds. It is evident in the way the children respond to one another and to the adults on the campus.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: Do you have any evidence that parents are becoming much more involved in issues? For example, do they expect you to be more protective of their girls in the sporting arena? Do they not allow the kids to sort things out? Do the parents become involved immediately?

Ms McBRIDE: There is anecdotal evidence that some parents—not all—have become extraordinarily protective of their children. Ironically they are the children who often become victims because they are not learning how to handle normal confrontation.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: Or resilience.

Ms McBRIDE: Yes. That is how we become resilient people and learn how to handle normal confrontation. Sometimes bullying and normal confrontation are in the eye of the beholder and sometimes parents never want their child to become involved in anything. That removes the decision-making from the child and, of course, the child then becomes dependent upon the parent to fight their battles.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: I suppose the media is making parents much more sensitised.

Ms McBRIDE: Absolutely.

Mr CHUDLEIGH: That is exactly what principals said in the survey—that parents are reacting to the attention being given to bullying and seeing even minor issues between very young children as examples of bullying, particularly the parents of the child who comes off second best.

CHAIR: We have had a lot of discussion about the definition of bullying. It is said to be a power imbalance and it must be an ongoing rather than a one-off issue. It is complicated, particularly in relation to cyber bullying.

Ms McBRIDE: It is, but not everybody sees it that way. We have had a long-term program in our school. I spoke to the senior students about their latest perceptions of what has been happening recently at school. I asked them what bullying is all about and they listed all the usual features such as teasing, exclusion and so on. It took a while for them to articulate it, but they did say that it must happen more than once and there has to be a response from the person it is happening to. That definition has become so expanded that one-off name-calling, exclusion or whatever else has been included in that incredibly broad definition.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: I like the frank comment that it is "not because there is an epidemic but because we have emotional parents, crusading researchers, media that sensationalise anything and stupid politicians".

Mr CHUDLEIGH: I hoped you would read that.

Ms McBRIDE: That was from one of our more passionate colleagues.

CHAIR: I was surprised that in evidence the Department of Education and Training recommended that all schools have some form of anti-bullying program in place. However, the monitoring of the success of those programs, the rollout, whether they sit in a drawer or whether a program sits behind the policy is left to the school education directors. There is also no collection of statistical data. I am not driving at bypassing schools; I am referring to feedback being provided to a centralised body—the department ideally. You did a survey and 500 principals responded, which is an amazing result. However, that information is in the ether to some extent. Do you think there should be centralised reporting of some of these things?

Mr CHUDLEIGH: I would be loath to talk in statistical terms because principals then become buried in the minutia. We would come up against the finer definition of what is bullying. We find this happening even now with reporting of what we affectionately term "critical incidents". What is a critical incident to one principal will not be to another. We are often amused when we look at some of those statistics. They frequently ring alarm bells for the system that are not addressed. For example, statistics on critical incidents might show two or three schools in a group of 20 that have a high number of reports but the reports for the rest of the schools in the same group are much lower. It tells us something about how the principals and staff in those schools are coping or not coping. Our system does not see that as an alarm bell and it does not move in. I think they are right and that the effectiveness of such policies, like all policies, should be monitored in the first instance through the school education director. The evaluation of those policies needs to be anecdotal. If we ask people to note and count incidents of bullying that will cause problems.

CHAIR: That is good information. Does that heightened awareness then increase the level of reporting, as it does with domestic violence and other issues?

Mr CHUDLEIGH: Yes. We think that is what you would get, and even more so if you wanted to have schools count every incidence of bullying.

Ms McBRIDE: But the question of evaluation is really important. Unless schools are proactive, I do not believe a lot of them activate anti-bullying programs at all.

CHAIR: It becomes a tick-a-box situation.

Mr CHUDLEIGH: Yes.

Ms McBRIDE: I think so. But it is such a part of the culture of the school and there are obvious symptoms where bullying is becoming a problem in a school. You see it in suspension data and you will see it in your other data—whatever consequences you have for particular instances. You will see those things starting to increase. That should be reported on in some way, shape or form—not the number, but questions should be asked about how it is going within a school; absolutely.

Mr CHUDLEIGH: Too often our system is driven or motivated by a need to be seen to be ticking boxes, responding legally and putting in place legal protections, and so on. They see they can wipe their hands clean. Once the policy is in place every school is required to do this, that and the other. We could not be further from that position as principals. We do not see that is the answer to bullying at all. You cannot mandate an end to bullying. We firmly believe it is this cultural shift that is required. How do you bring about a shift in school culture? We need to do more work, particularly with younger principals in that area. What does a principal—a leader in a school, supported by their staff and engaging their community—need to do to shift the culture of their school? All the time we are on about leadership, not just the principals but the significance of the leadership team in a school. If you want to change a school you do not do it by pouring ever-increasing buckets of money—albeit that can be great. You do it first and foremost by changing the nature and quality of the leadership in a school.

Dr JOHN KAYE: I need to apologise. Unfortunately I have to leave early so I am going to jump my place in the queue. Thank you very much for that. To pick up on your last point, the school leadership is doing a remarkable job because your survey shows that in 80 per cent of schools, the school leadership, the schoolteachers and the community have contained or reduced bullying?

Mr CHUDLEIGH: Yes.

Dr JOHN KAYE: That is quite a remarkable outcome—

Mr CHUDLEIGH: It is.

Dr JOHN KAYE: And it runs totally counter to the headlines—for example, the Sunday before last, "Crime wave in NSW schoolyards" when there was a 8.5 per cent decrease in crime over the reporting period.

Mr CHUDLEIGH: Yes.

Dr JOHN KAYE: What role do you feel an increase in school counselling numbers would have? Can you answer that question by explaining what role school counsellors play in reducing and containing bullying? Can you explain how going from one school counsellor to every 1,500 students, which is an extraordinarily high number, to one school counsellor for every 850 students, which is still an extraordinarily high number but not quite so extraordinary high, would help to reduce bullying?

Mr CHUDLEIGH: If I could start, the first issue you will see on page 3 of our report of August 2006 is under the heading, "Role of the school counsellor." You will see there are three components to the role: clinical assessment, crisis intervention and proactive preventative counselling. Our survey at the time revealed that the time of the vast majority of those limited number of councillors is being spent on clinical assessment. In other words, they are locked up in a room on a one-to-one basis with a child, undertaking formal assessments using diagnosis tools. Very little time is left for councillors for crisis intervention and virtually nothing for

proactive counselling. We make a recommendation in here—and the Government could do this now without spending more dollars—that:

> As the school counselling population ages, instead of replacing them with fully fledged, fully qualified nine-year qualified school counsellors—

Because they have to be four-year trained teachers, they have to have two years minimum practice in schools and then they have to have a four-year psychology major, so they can administer these clinical assessments. We are saying have fewer of those across a cluster of schools perhaps. They undertake the formal assessments—

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: Like they used to.

Mr CHUDLEIGH: Yes, and replace them, as people retire, with lesser-qualified people who would be more social-work orientated. Other groups, other educational organisations, would argue that they need to be from a teacher background. We do not. We believe they could be a social work type person: lesser trained, lesser qualified, cheaper to pay, cheaper to train and we get more on the ground working proactively with families and kids, and looking at the root issues involved.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: May I intervene? That system is also being promoted within the prison system, and is working.

Mr CHUDLEIGH: Is it? Great.

Ms McBRIDE: And we have seen it work. The last time we had an increase in the numbers of school counsellors was in the early 1990s. When you think about the incredible movement to include a lot of special needs children in our mainstream classes, every one of those children requires an up-to-date assessment from the school counsellor. I have been a principal long enough to remember those days before all that occurred. I am not saying that is not a good thing; I think it is a great thing. But it has had its downside, particularly in severely disadvantaged schools where we could have therapy groups for abused children, we could have therapy groups for kids whose parents were incarcerated, and we could have development programs with school counsellors. They have gone because the counsellors are too busy testing the children so we can get funds to support them in mainstream schools, et cetera.

Mr CHUDLEIGH: It is a self-defeating thing.

Ms McBRIDE: We want to return to that real adherence, to looking at the welfare issues around a child, and we need experts in that area. If we could move into that, that would make a very significant difference. As we said before, it is not just the victims who have self-esteem issues; it is bullies as well.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: You would have to create a new industrial title, would you?

Mr CHUDLEIGH: Yes, you would.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: Otherwise you will end up in a huge industrial brawl with those doing it currently.

Mr CHUDLEIGH: Yes. Clearly there would be one organisation concerned about it, and that is always going to be a sticking point.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: Not if you created a new title, surely.

Mr CHUDLEIGH: There would be ways around it. Just as clerical support aides, for instance, teachers aides who work directly with children—

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: Yes, it took ages to get them.

Mr CHUDLEIGH: Exactly, but they do not have a teacher background.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: And teachers of children with special learning difficulties.

Mr CHUDLEIGH: Yes.

Dr JOHN KAYE: I was inviting you to address the role of school counsellors in addressing bullying.

Mr CHUDLEIGH: Again, we briefly say probably the majority of primary educators are what we would loosely call "developmentalists", and we all believe that from the cradle we progress through a series of recognisable stages of development. Most primary schools are four-sevenths at least of kindergarten, year 1, year 2, probably year 3 and some of year 4, and have their students predominantly at the very early stages of development where they are. As parents I am sure you are all well aware of the egocentricity of young children. We think a lot of the behaviours they exhibit are quite normal and natural behaviours. The fact that they want to push into line, the fact that they cannot take turns, the fact that they want to tease, et cetera, are really just examples of the behaviour normally expected of them at that stage.

That is why primary schools are into the education of the whole child—the physical, the emotional, the intellectual and the cognitive. It becomes obvious as children begin to transit—and as educators we help them transit—from these egocentric stages, when we work beyond the academic and cognitive areas, we begin to see children who have issues with probably what is loosely called esteem, centred on the affective domain, how we as individuals feel about ourselves, how we perceive ourselves, how we see ourselves interacting with others, whether we feel confident or are lacking in confidence, and whether we feel secure or insecure, et cetera. All of those things begin to have an impact on the growing child.

We believe proactive counselling, together with teachers, can identify those students, and it is those students—and you have all mentioned resilience this afternoon—who need direct intervention to help them build their resilience, and to help them to gain strategies to cope when someone says, " You have a big nose" or "Your mum is fat," or whatever. They do not run away and cry; they learn a strategy of coping with that and knowing it is not a sign of their insecurity but a sign of insecurity in the bully. The school counsellor role, we believe as principals, can be particularly beneficial in that area of esteem building but also then, of course, working with the bully and helping the bully see the reasoning behind their behaviour and trying to help the bully see where they are coming from too. But we need time for the counsellor to be able to do that, and presently they just do not have the time, in the vast majority of schools, to get into that proactive work.

Ms McBRIDE: Self-esteem programs, anger management programs and programs for parents as well are really important—the most important and consistent person in a child's life is really closely in line with what the school is doing, so it is a real augmentation of the whole school program in lifting the culture of the school.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Obviously bullying is not the only reason why we want to increase the number of school counsellors in primary schools in New South Wales.

Mr CHUDLEIGH: No.

Dr JOHN KAYE: It is one of the drivers.

Mr CHUDLEIGH: Yes.

Dr JOHN KAYE: You are convinced that if we went to 850—

Mr CHUDLEIGH: To that ratio.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Whichever way we did it—whether we did it by taking the assessment burden off school counsellors and bringing in people who were not trained teachers to do that work or whether we did it by spending the additional $20 million to get the additional school counsellors—are you convinced that would have the desired outcome?

Mr CHUDLEIGH: Absolutely. We would suggest strongly too, as an organisation, that this sort of investment could be phased in, as was the class size reduction program of the Carr Government, which was phased in over a period of four or five years. We would be prepared to accept that that could happen with the school counselling service.

Dr JOHN KAYE: And it would have similar consequential savings, both in the school—

Mr CHUDLEIGH: Yes. But we would have to look at the model, because if you now wanted to suddenly reduce the pupil-counsellor ratio from 1:1,800 to 1:850 you could not possibly do it because the counsellors just do not exist. Under the present model it would take, as we said, nine years gestation period to train them. So you would have to look at the model, first, to ensure that you could actually get the people in the schools and, second, to ensure that from Treasury's point of view you could make the dollar go further. I think it is actually a very attractive proposal for government. It is not often that organisations such as ours come to government and say, "We have got a way that you can make your dollar go further. You don't have to spend much more and you could really help us."

Dr JOHN KAYE: In terms of the resources that are available to schools when they are writing their anti-bullying policy and when they come to implement their anti-bullying policy, can you identify the gaps and what needs to be done to help schools write a really good, appropriate, tailored anti-bullying policy and then to implement it to make sure that it is not just a piece of paper but actually is integrated in the way the school operates?

Ms McBRIDE: I do not know that it is actually going to cost a significant amount to support, in all honesty. The anti-bullying policy becomes a part of the student welfare program, which is just a normal part of the development of the school and would be inculcated right through everything that you do in terms of curriculum development, parent participation and policy development. It is the sort of thing where you do your teacher training and your normal staff meetings; your parent training would happen in P&C school council meetings and then the student content being taught in the classroom comes through the personal development health and physical education curriculum. It is not an expensive thing to do but it is time consuming and there has to be an absolute will and commitment to ensure its success.

Dr JOHN KAYE: I meant resources in the sense of programmatic resources that might be made available to schools. Are schools given sufficient guidance and examples of what they could be doing?

Ms McBRIDE: They are: they are given a framework from which to work and then they are given plenty of examples of best practice in other schools and other States, et cetera. So there are some good models there to be used. As I think Robyn spoke of before, you can have that model, pull it out and somebody else writes it and it goes into the bottom drawer. It is the whole time-consuming element and the absolute will to make it work that are the real costs in times of human endeavour.

Mr CHUDLEIGH: I make the comment that we have to be careful that we do not compartmentalise and that we do not see a bullying policy here, a student welfare policy here, and other curricula policies here. As primary educators we are very much holistic in our thinking and we cannot isolate one issue from another so that even when you are teaching mathematics or English, there could well be bullying involved in that because you are interacting with students, students are interacting with students in groups and so on, and all the time a good teacher is constantly teaching anti-bullying stuff—appropriate social activity, if you like—as a perspective of everything they do.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: I am interested in following up the mentoring suggestions and how this works in practice. I assume you want to do a whole-of-school approach with staff, students and parents. I am aware of peer leadership and so on with students themselves. How do you go about mentoring the other two groups: staff and parents?

Mr CHUDLEIGH: With the students, for a start, one way it is done effectively is to link up whole classes. My former school, for instance—which was a large primary school—shared the same site with a high school so we were very fortunate. This happens a lot now; it is quite common. But it gives you the opportunity of pairing up children of high-school age with primary-age children. It is wonderful for a smooth transition from year 6 to year 7 and so on. It is common in primary schools for a year 6 to be palled up with a kindergarten child and so on, and the teachers involved find regular opportunities throughout the week for the two classes to come together to share activities and to engage in activities together.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: Does that help cut that spike in bullying?

Mr CHUDLEIGH: Yes, it does. You get a buddy and a protection thing being set up. If a little fellow has a problem he can run off to his older buddy—not that the role of the older buddy is to go in to bat for him—

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: Maybe.

Mr CHUDLEIGH: Maybe sometimes you need to sort that out, of course, but it can be very helpful. To extend it into the wider community is a challenge.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: Is it problematic?

Mr CHUDLEIGH: It is. We have a lot of mentoring happening formally and informally amongst teachers and amongst principals. Principals like ourselves do a lot of that. Cheryl does a lot of that mentoring. Other colleagues of ours do mentoring of younger, new principal colleagues—that is very common—and teachers mentor teachers. The leadership in schools, we see, as both formal and informal. The formal leaders are those who carry the badge—the principal, the deputy principal and so on. Many teachers identify others in their ranks whom they see as outstanding models and whom they model their own practice and behaviour on. Whether you like it or not, you could be identified by other staff members as a mentor, and teachers seek those people out. That process happens automatically whether you want it or not. But if you are a smart leader, of course, you encourage it and nurture it and even find ways of rewarding that in some way.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: In the same way as you can get some parents onside.

Mr CHUDLEIGH: Yes.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: To start using their influence in parents and citizens meetings.

Mr CHUDLEIGH: Absolutely. You do a lot of that in your multicultural community through your Pacific Island groups, your Aboriginal groups and so on, do you not?

Ms McBRIDE: We do. We have a council of elders who may or may not be formal or informal elders but people who have identified themselves who are prepared to bring onside other cultures, particularly when there are language barriers, and to interpret not just language but ideas and policy, et cetera, to families who may not come to school frequently because they are working or whatever else.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: Cheryl, if I could push you a little further on that, we are aware that bullying occurs sometimes between various ethnic and racial groups, particularly in some areas of Sydney. You are well known for your work in that area. Are we able to reduce the incidence of racial tension so that bullying does not occur, say, between two racial groups? We have had quite a bit of press on that.

Ms McBRIDE: Are we able to do it? I have seen it happen, absolutely. We will become really narrow and parochial here: I look at the Campbelltown area, where there are large groups of Aboriginal families and Pacific Islander families. One or other of the community actually exited some parts of Campbelltown because there was such a clash.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: Earlier in my life I set up a thing called the Pacific Islander Youth Educational Support Program [PIYESP] in Bankstown.

Ms McBRIDE: You know exactly what I am talking about then. I have seen an absolute coming together of those cultures in a community, with the will and support of church elders, families, teachers and schools getting together and really making that work. In fact, I think the Macquarie Fields riots could well have spilled over into the Minto riots—it was on. We knew it was on. With mobile phones, the messages were going across: "Okay, we have done our bit. Minto is next." Those people I suggested got into the schools, directly with the children through the churches et cetera, and I think that prevented a second great calamity. Those community members, including the police et cetera, have worked together to really nurture good relationships, and that sense of wholeness is very evident there.

Mr CHUDLEIGH: You do a lot of it through cultural activity too, do you not? I have seen a lot of it at Cheryl's school. It is wonderful. It is very common to see Aboriginal dance and Islander dance all happening together, but each dances in one another's dances and plays—

Ms McBRIDE: Absolutely. Often I think that primary kids have an awful lot to offer the rest of the world. You can see 23 different nationalities together. We have a new community coming in who are Muslim, from Bangladesh, a growing community. Our kids are just so well aware of one another's cultures and

understandings that you will see an Aboriginal child, a Pacific Islander child or a Cambodian child standing alongside a kid who is not drinking or eating for Ramadan, to make sure they are okay in the playground. There is that solid understanding of, "We are here together."

There are three school rules: care for yourself; care for one another; care for our school. They are just the simple sorts of things that you keep moving through your community all the time. I hate to be really narrow, but that happens everywhere. When you say to children, "What are you doing? What are our three school rules? Do you think there is something wrong here?" they will say, "Yes. I am not caring for somebody else." And if a five-year old can give you that—

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: Well, why do they lose it?

Ms McBRIDE: Because they lose the culture. I do not mean ethnic culture, their ethnicity. They lose their culture of wholeness and nurturing. That is when the supports start to disappear, along with the will, the commitment, et cetera. It goes somewhere, or it is not there in the first place.

Mr CHUDLEIGH: Listening to Cheryl I am reminded that another possible strategy could be identifying best practice in schools like Cheryl's that are outstanding examples of best practice. They could be identified quite easily by our system. We could actually investigate what is going on in those schools, seeing what it is and why it is—why there are those levels of harmony, what is it that Cheryl and her staff and community are doing there that is perhaps not happening somewhere else.

CHAIR: It is clear the minute you walk into a school what sort of environment it is. It is very easy to assess that.

Ms McBRIDE: That happens from the time a person meets the ancillary staff person at the front desk. It is not just about the teachers; it is about all those support people that—

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: Whole of school?

Ms McBRIDE: Absolutely, yes.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: With regard to the school counsellor issue, in country areas professionals like social workers are incredibly difficult to come by. In fact, they hardly exist.

Ms McBRIDE: Yes, as are school counsellors.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: I understand your issue. Your idea to replace professionals like social workers would be very good, but we do not have them in the country. Often they come to country areas straight out of university, they do their couple of years, and then they go off to the city to a better job. The plan to increase that number from that skill base is very difficult.

Mr CHUDLEIGH: That is why we started agitating long before this report was written and why we keep bashing away at the door over this. There is a huge time lag, and if we do not get started soon, with the average age of school counsellors around 54—

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: I understand your counsellor issue, and I accept that to be a given. I am simply concerned about the solution.

Mr CHUDLEIGH: There is a supply issue, and again it requires training. I think a social worker degree is a four-year degree. I know that the University of Western Sydney trains social workers.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: And Charles Sturt University. There are quite a few.

Mr CHUDLEIGH: That is right. It is not that we do not have the institutions to train them. Perhaps we do not have sufficient demand. If our system worked to focus more on the inclusion of such people in our counsellor network, perhaps that would encourage more to enrol at the universities, and employment for them when they graduate, and it could happen that way. But, as I say, if we do not get started, and the longer we are delaying, the harder it will be to find them, yes.

Ms McBRIDE: Perhaps we also need to look at some form of incentive for those people, some sort of supplementation. I believe it in teaching as well. If you are going to teach in the most challenging, difficult and complex circumstances, there should be some sort of incentive to add to what would be a normal wage. It might be additional professional development or transportation assistance, or something like that. But if we are asking people to do social welfare work and supplement the work that the school council does in some of our most challenging areas, we need to recognise the complexity of the task.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: We have a social construct within the entire society where bullying, in some form or another, must be covert but certainly very powerful is a norm. Many of us older people grew up through that system. I would like to know your thoughts on why the education system is suddenly the place where it is to be removed.

Mr CHUDLEIGH: Because that is where I think society at large sees all our ills will be cured. There was an educator by the name of Barry Dwyer, who sadly died a few months ago. He was a senior Catholic school educator and a wonderful thinker. We once had him speak. In fact, we had him speak at the inauguration of our association about 12 years ago because we liked where he came from as an educator. At the time he shared with us something that he had done just in the previous few months, and that was that he kept a notepad by his bed. He said that when he went to bed he would listen to the news and the radio and so on, and each time he heard a reference made, evening and morning, to a problem—from sun safe to bicycle riding, to tree climbing, or whatever—always the solution was: "The schools should fix it." He made a note of this, and he shared the list with us. It was just staggering. He had noted something like 150 in several months, where issues had arisen and the solution was seen to be found in the school. It is the cheapest solution—

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: And it is because we think every generation brings new hope.

Mr CHUDLEIGH: Yes. But I think it makes politicians feel happier to say, "Well, what's the solution? We'll fix it in the schools."

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: I do not know that politicians invented this. I think we have been sucked into it.

Mr CHUDLEIGH: Well, they seem to say it a lot. But it is the cheap option; it is a cop-out.

Ms McBRIDE: And lots of organisations say, "This is an important issue to our organisation." How do we implement it? We put it into the schools. That is why our curriculum has become so expanded. We need to reclaim it.

Mr CHUDLEIGH: And then they want to hammer us about declining standards in literacy and numeracy. That is why we stress that whatever you come up with for schools, it should not be seen as an add-on. It should be seen as a holistic perspective of what schools do every day of the week. It is part of what they do but, more importantly, how they do it and how they interact. That is where kids are going to model appropriate behaviours and respect for one another.

Ms McBRIDE: In fact, many schools have been doing good jobs in this area long before the necessity for the anti-bullying policy came about.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: I want to ask you about societal awareness programs changing the culture of our community—from parents, to teenagers, to kids. You go to the movies and you see messages against domestic violence, smoking, binge drinking, and so on. We have now become used to being educated and our behaviours being modified. Do you think this is a positive thing to help you with what you are doing in the schools?

Ms McBRIDE: Yes, I think it is. It is interesting that you have mentioned it. I wanted to get a word in about cyber bullying. Until I spoke to the kids more recently, I always thought that that was a secondary issue, that it concerned older kids. But when you talk to the youngsters, it is beginning to infiltrate for them as well. I think we really need to get some messages out there—not subliminal ones but real messages—telling them this can happen to them, or if they do it to somebody else, be aware that there are some really severe consequences. The cases that we do read about in the media are blown up—whether they are out of proportion or not is another matter—but you have an enormous amount of sympathy for what a 13-year-old, a 14-year-old or even a 12-

year-old might have done in terms of putting something on Facebook or communicating a photograph or movie or whatever else. The cyber bullying issue is so permanent.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: It is massive and it is ongoing.

Ms McBRIDE: It is huge and it does not go away so it can come back to you graphically and without any loss of detail 10 years or 20 years later. We do need to start working with our younger students as well to be aware. You know, the young girl that sent her nude photograph—I mean that poor kid and that poor family, what that is going to do. It will stay with her for such a long time through just really an impulsive and silly decision.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Parents analysing the way that they behave in their own homes?

Ms McBRIDE: Yes.

Mr CHUDLEIGH: An example of the reverse of what you are getting at—and you are talking about the positive impact that these educative programs can have, and we agree they are great—can be seen in sport, particularly in rugby league. Let us not bag rugby league because it is great game, but I coached young boys in rugby league 30 or 40 years ago and at that time a student of primary age in particular would never have dreamt of reaching out to strike another opponent or would never have dreamt of questioning the referee, and a parent on the sideline would never have dreamt of calling out or running on to the field or of being abusive—

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: Or a coach.

Mr CHUDLEIGH: Or a coach. That has now changed and I ask you why. I think we all know why. Because every Friday and Saturday night the kids are home watching the television and they are seeing their heroes on television doing exactly that. That is an example of the reverse impact, which proves what you are saying is correct.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: We need to reinforce those messages.

Mr CHUDLEIGH: We do.

CHAIR: Who should monitor the cyber bullying that is emerging in primary schools with mobile phones, Facebook and MySpace?

Ms McBRIDE: We were only talking about that on the way in. Who can monitor it when a child is sending a text message at midnight under their pillow or has their laptop on the desk next to them? That is really a family issue but again it is a whole of community responsibility because the effects can be so devastating. All we can do is work with parents and work with the children to make good decisions and be aware of the ramifications of the decisions they are making.

Mr CHUDLEIGH: Most primary schools would have policies in place discouraging mobile phones at school. They would require some sort of permission or an approval from the principal for the child to bring it at all and then they would insist that it not be turned on during the day. But, of course, that does not prevent the child from using it inappropriately out of school. Obviously there is a place now for specific educative programs on the use of mobile phones and computers. I actually asked my young 11-year-old grandson about this last night—for is advice on what we should say today. He is the school captain at his school, which is a low bullying school and a very peaceful place he tells me—I believe him, of course. I asked him about this sort of bullying and he said it does happen. He also said when they do have cases of obvious violent bullying at school it inevitably emanates from the cyber bullying that went on the previous night. So if one gets in touch with this one then the next day they go and sort it out. So it is cyber tonight and face-to-face physical tomorrow.

CHAIR: There is a lot in this issue and the Committee is getting more questions than answers.

Mr CHUDLEIGH: Good luck.

CHAIR: The Committee is attempting to achieve a good outcome. The committee secretariat might be in touch with you. Thank you for your time today and for the information you have presented. Your advocacy, as always, is much appreciated.

Mr CHUDLEIGH: Thank you, much appreciated.

(The witnesses withdrew)

(The Committee adjourned at 4.55 p.m.)