REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS BEFORE

GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE No. 2

INQUIRY INTO BULLING OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

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At Sydney on Monday 6 April 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. A. Catanzariti
The Hon. G. J. Donnelly
The Hon. M. A. Ficarra
Dr J. Kaye
The Hon. P. G. Sharpe

CHAIR: Welcome to the first public hearing of the Inquiry Into Bullying of Children and Young People by General Purpose Standing Committee No. 2. The Committee has decided to hold this inquiry in recognition of the life-long impact bullying can have on children and young people. We will look at bullying in a range of contexts, from bullying in schools to newer forms of bullying such as cyber bullying. The aim of the inquiry is to identify best practice approaches to reduce the bullying of children and young people and we are looking to examine successful approaches to addressing bullying in Australia and overseas and the evidence base for those approaches. We are not aiming to investigate specific incidents of bullying but those case studies might be useful in terms of giving a context to what we are talking about.

In terms of broadcasting, only Committee members and witnesses may be filmed. People in the public gallery should not be the primary focus of filming. Of course, the media must take responsibility for what they publish or what interpretation they place on anything that is said before the committee. We have guidelines in terms of the broadcast of proceedings, which are available from the Committee staff. If there is a need to pass messages, that is possible through the Committee staff. Anyone may pass a message to any of our witnesses or any of the Committee at any time.

SANDRA MARGERY CRAIG, Manager, National Centre Against Bullying,

ALASTAIR BARTHWICK NICHOLSON, Chair, National Centre Against Bullying,

HELEN LORRAINE McGRATH, Executive Member, National Centre Against Bullying, and

TONI NOBLE, Member, National Centre Against Bullying, sworn and examined:

CHAIR: We offer an opportunity for any of our witnesses to make a brief opening statement, if you would like.

The Hon. A. NICHOLSON: What I would like to do would be to briefly introduce and ask each of the witnesses to say a few words about their particular areas of interest. I would simply like to give some background to the National Centre Against Bullying and the Alannah and Madeline Foundation. The foundation was set up following the Port Arthur tragedy in 1996 and it is dedicated to the protection of children from violence and helping children who have been victims of violence. That was interpreted broadly, and I think correctly, to include bullying. In 2002 the foundation set up the National Centre Against Bullying and I was asked to chair it. I was then in my capacity as Chief Justice of the Family Court but I had an obvious interest in children and issues relating to children, which is I presume why I was asked. We have since conducted three successful conferences, which have been international conferences as well as national conferences, on bullying in Melbourne.

I regret to say that we are a Melbourne-based organisation. I regret it only in the sense that it has been very much a Victorian oriented organisation but only in the administrative sense. We have significant academic and other contributors from all States. Dr Noble, who is here today, is one of them from New South Wales. She has a significant reputation in this area. That is really the background of it. We have more recently taken an interest in cyber bullying because it is a very recent development. I think it is fair to say that we see that as another form of bullying. It is not different but it provides the scope to be more troublesome because it hits such a wide audience and also it has a degree of anonymity about it which means that people who perhaps otherwise would not engage in bullying of children and young people will use it as a method of bullying. So that is a new and difficult development.

In fact, we held a national conference on that the year before last. I think we were probably the first to get into this area and start looking at it but it needs a lot more attention. Probably the significant thing that we say about bullying—I think I can speak on behalf of all of us—is that it is an extraordinarily difficult problem to deal with. It is not one that can be dealt with with simple solutions. You really require a lot of evidence as to what you are doing and why you are doing it. There tends to be two reactions publicly. One is to say, "It has always been with us. You can't do anything about it," which I do not agree with. The devastating effects on people are such that that is just not acceptable. The other one is a very strong reaction of "Let's deal with the bully". Again, that is not a very useful approach, in my view, because it is more complex than that.

Today's bully might be tomorrow's victim, or the other way round. Children are subjected to pressures that often lead them into the situation. The real message I have been getting since I have been involved in this is that it must be a holistic solution. You do not just look at bullying as a particular problem. You look at a values-base educational approach and try to develop that, rather than targeting bullying on its own as a particular problem.

That is quite a difficult thing to get across to the community. Also there is an enormous amount that needs to be done in teacher education, because teachers are just not taught in teacher colleges to deal with issues of bullying and they should be. You also have a problem with parent education and getting parents involved, other than in a negative way, and that is equally as important. That is really hard because teachers tell me to try to get the parents involved is one of the hardest things they can do. Of course, they get involved if a child is accused of bullying or is being bullied but other than that they tend not to take too much notice of it.

I am now going to ask Professor McGrath to briefly deal with the definition of bullying and the general background to it. Dr Noble will also deal with the broader issue. Ms Craig will deal with a particular proposal of the Alannah and Madeline Foundation, which already has significant support. It is not an evaluation process but the model is similar to the SunSmart campaign in schools, and the idea that we want to promote is that schools will be rated in their attitude towards bullying and their programs. One of the problems with schools is that they

all have bullying policies that are in a drawer—and that is where they stay—but it has got to be something more than that. What we are trying to do, in effect, is offer schools several ticks provided they meet certain criteria. It is to be an ongoing program, which we think will make it more effective than it is at the moment. That is broadly the background. I will now ask Professor McGrath to make some comments.

Professor McGRATH: An important change from 15 years ago is that we now see bullying, as Alastair has rightly called it, as a social issue and not a personal predicament. Up until then it was something that people assumed would happen and it was unfortunate for the poor person who was on the receiving end but it was not necessarily a bigger issue than that. We now see it as a social issue, which is not just broader than the students involved but also broader than the school, and is part of an overall social issue presenting challenges for all of us in every context.

One of the difficulties we have had is the definition of "bullying". That is a fairly important issue because there is a danger of over inclusion if you take a very broad definition of what bullying is. It is generally agreed by most of the people working in this area that bullying has to have certain criteria: it has to be something which is intended to distress another; it has to be directed toward a specific individual or two individuals; it needs to cause distress; and it needs to be repeated, which is indicative of a persecutory orientation. Usually there is a power imbalance between the person who is being bullied and the people who are engaging in the bullying. That power imbalance might be one of age, size, how articulate a person is, or it might be to do with the social influence that particular young people have which is threatening and means they may be able to call in numbers to back them up in continuation of the campaign.

It is also quite difficult if you have schools and workplaces describing bullying as something that can be a one-off event. It is then almost impossible to address it and it becomes too much. When you have a six-year-old saying, "I was bullied at lunchtime because Amanda would not let me play with her". You can see why there is a tendency to say, "This is all too hard. Let's dismiss it." That is one of the core problems. I like to think of it as something that in 10 or 20 years we will look back on differently. I draw a comparison with smoking on aeroplanes. It used to be possible to decide when you got onto an aeroplane from Melbourne to Sydney whether you wanted to sit in the smoking or non-smoking area, and everyone thought that was good and it suited everybody. Now, we are in horror of the thought that that would occur on an aeroplane.

We are hopeful that in 10 or 15 years time we will look back on this and say, "Why did we not tackle this before?" The National Centre Against Bullying is leading the charge in trying at a national level to do that. But, as Alastair said, it is an extremely complex thing to challenge. One of the things we know from our research studies of best practice schools is that quite often although you have some similar components in a school which explains why they are having lower levels of bullying than other schools, they are doing it differently because of the nature of the school, the parent community, the students and other things that are in place. So it is not as prescriptive as some might like to think it is: it is quite complex. However, we do have some very clear directions as to essential elements as part of the picture.

I wish to pass around to each Committee member an overview of a classic model, which shows how complex it is and how when we start with school—as we do—we need to first of all ensure they get credit for all the really good things they are already doing in these directions but at the same time ensure they see the bigger picture and work towards ensuring that their school can put those elements in. That is why the cyber-safety initiative involving accreditation is seen by us as a really powerful way to try and get schools to seriously implement as many of these criteria as possible, so schools slowly become safer and safer. I now pass over to Dr Noble.

Dr NOBLE: My interest has been very much on how to develop teacher and teacher skills in managing and preventing bullying. That diagram summarises some of the key factors in the multifactor approach to preventing and managing bullying. I guess the focus that we have particularly taken is indicated on the right hand side—creating caring school communities. Research shows the best approach is a whole-school approach, where the focus is very much on building a caring and respectful school culture. What does that mean? It means that we have a clear policy about what bullying is and what bullying is not, we have clear management strategies, but we also work very clearly on building classrooms in schools where kids feel connected, feel safe, feel a sense of belonging, where we introduce teaching strategies such as cooperative learning, where kids learn the skills of working together, conflict resolution and building friendships so they are less at risk of being excluded, isolated, bullied. There are peer support structures in place across all school levels, within the classroom, and the whole focus is on building a positive school culture.

The Hon. A. NICHOLSON: I will ask Ms Sandra Craig to speak at this stage. By way of introduction I should say apart from being the Manager of The National Centre Against Bullying, she is a very experienced teacher and is still teaching. So she is across it in the practical sense.

Ms CRAIG: I come to you from both sides of the divider: from the research side, because I have been working on the research behind our implementation, but I also have 30-odd years in the classroom and I still work one day per week with very at-risk adolescents in a behavioural modification unit. I know all about bullying firsthand but it is good for me to know in a sort of academic sense. As you have seen in your document, the Alannah and Madeline Foundation is in the process of developing what we just call a cyber safety and wellbeing initiative. It does not have a name yet: It will soon. As Alistair says, it is based upon the SunSmart campaign and it is a multi layered cultural change program not only for schools but also communities. Our vision is that schools across Australia ultimately will adopt our program and the schools will then form a hub to reach out to communities. We began with a needs analysis. We looked at what schools were actually asking for. We sent surveys out to something like 600 or 700 schools. We got a relatively small number of surveys back, as you would expect, but from those surveys and from subsequent groups we were able to get quite a decent impression about what schools actually wanted.

We also conducted a web scoping to look at the sorts of resources that would be useful down the track. The project development phase is happening now. We are looking at developing a schools campaign which will be accessed via a web portal and linked with communities and businesses, industries, members of the public and particularly parents will also be able to access our program via that web portal. We are looking really at that. We have talked about good practice models. We are looking at the most recent research and evidence based practice on which schools can go forward. Speaking as a teacher what I always lacked was the evidence to actually inform what I was doing. I think teachers are caught on the hop. They are dealing with 20, 40 incidents a day, perhaps, depending on their role in a school. Unless that information is embedded in their own brains it is very hard for them to actually respond consistently, and that is what we are looking for as well.

Our model looks at partnerships between schools and communities, between schools and parents. One of the things that we find is that young people look at cyber applications in a slightly different way to adults. We want to close the gap between those perceptions. We will be looking at developing a curriculum, or directing schools towards appropriate curriculum for them to use. Schools structures and organisations, it is very important the way that schools attack such an implementation. It is no use whatsoever if just one person takes it on. It is very important that it is attacked at a leadership level and has buy-in from the whole school community.

Alistair referred to policies and plans, policies being shoved away in school drawers. We are looking at developing a system whereby schools will have to develop current and viable policies and plans and refresh those with a view to drawing in other members of their school communities, particularly young people because of course this implementation has a lot to do with young people and their contribution is going to be vital. Of course, we are also looking at pedagogical stuff, effective teacher practices. Helen and Tony have referred to cooperative work.

So it is really a blueprint for change in schools. It is complex as we have all said. It is not just a simple direction or a simple road map. It is like that diagram, it is a blueprint for schools to actually develop a plan. We are looking at a three-stage accreditation model. Schools are going to be able to diagnose, they are going to be given a tool whereby they will assess their school communities to see what is there, what is not. We think a lot of schools are going to be able to kick a lot of goals. They will be able to look at what they have done and say "This is fantastic" but it will also give them that framework into which to understand what else they are doing. Three stages: simple, slightly harder and then the bar will be raised considerably. So that is what we are doing. We think it will be successful for a number of reasons, particularly because it is not imposed on government down. So it is coming from the community, it is coming from the not for profit and I think as a teacher who has been through many changed processes forced upon me, or us, by government, I think this will be a substantial benefit to them.

CHAIR: Do you mind if the spreadsheet is tabled and included in our report?

Ms CRAIG: No.

CHAIR: When I talk about things like this, teachers say to me "Oh you are not going to give us something else to do? The curriculum is already crowded." When I visit schools I see teachers stressed and often there will be a well meaning non government organisation providing a one-off bullying session or it comes in

and does various good things. I will visit a school that has all of the policies you are talking about but bullying still exists there. How will you evaluate the success of introducing a whole school model? How will it roll out? Will groups provide sessions or is it an ethos in the whole school?

Ms CRAIG: There are a number of heads to it. It cannot just be a one-off as you say because the research proves very convincingly that one-offs are just no earthly good, well meaning but not useful. We expect this to be taken on and embedded within the policies and plans and curriculum and the way that people operate; that teams will be developed to give the sustainability down through time. It is a bit in cohort at the moment, it is a bit undeveloped. I cannot tell you how it will look when it is in schools but it will be, we hope, that there will be sufficient funds to support proper teacher development because I think that is always a place, a weak spot at which all sorts of implementations fail. Teachers just do not have the resources as you point out of time and information to go forward.

CHAIR: Will you have some sort of evaluative process?

Ms CRAIG: Yes, we expect there to be pre-imposed surveys. So schools will be expected to do a pre-survey a pre-evaluation of what is going on in terms of bullying and what they have put in place to address it and then 12 months down the track, or the next time they go for accreditation, they will access their climate once again and we are expecting there to be improvement over time. The accreditation, whatever it is going to look like, will be ongoing and incremental.

The Hon. A. NICHOLSON: I should add that this particular program, we have not mentioned it, but it is being strongly supported by the Victorian Government financially and also by Telstra and other business organisations. We are seeing it as a partnership with the commercial community and government to try to put it together.

CHAIR: It seems that we do well in getting children transitioned in terms of the beginning school years with peer support and all of those sorts of things, buddy systems et cetera, but we manage the transition to higher school very poorly. Statistically bullying seems to be quite significant in those early high school years. Is there collaboration between primary and secondary? How can we assist in that process with some of these programs?

Professor McGRATH: The transition year from primary to secondary is certainly one of the more at-risk times. There a lot of really good transition programs going on around Australia. We have identified some of them but I think it is much more complex because sometimes what happens is that children who are in year 6 together then move into year 7 in the same high school and the whole process continues. So the transition itself, whilst presenting some risks, is not the only risk factor in that context. Do you want to add anything to that?

Dr NOBLE: It depends so much on the school. That is really the bottom line. You can have schools side by side who are drawing from the same socioeconomic base, the same community, and it depends very much on what they have in place to build school culture in a positive way, what kind of peer support they have for year 7 kids coming into school and so on.

Professor McGRATH: We have seen some of the best. That is part of where we focus a lot of our research on. For example, the Victorian Government gave us data that allowed us to identify schools that were really very low in bullying. Yes, in one or two of them the transition programs were part of what was assisting those schools to do so well. In other schools, it might have been about a very strong behaviour management system in place that was a particularly important factor. The building of relationships was true for most of the schools that we saw that were best practice. But as Toni says, schools have their own flavour. It is more than just the population of families that they are drawing from. It is a question of what the leadership team is doing, in particular. We know that effective leadership and a strong belief in this kind of positive, respectable relationship building culture is a core part of it.

That in itself is easily said but challenging to do. So part of what we intend to do in this accreditation is to outline all the research: These are all the options that we now have some success in creating that kind of culture and that kind of culture will then reduce the levels of bullying you have got. I think an example would be helpful here. The principal of one of the schools who has done a brilliant job over the years in creating this kind of culture told us the story of how a student came from another primary school in year 5 and within a couple of weeks was doing a bit of the bullying of a particular student. The other kid took him aside and said, "We don't do that here." The whole culture had changed to one of "This is not acceptable. We treat each other with respect.

We look after each other. We don't all like each other equally but we collaborate and we don't do that to each other." That is the ultimate kind of approach that we are looking for.

I also should mention that we will be served in this overall campaign that we are developing by the fact that we also have a social campaign as part of the overall vision. So there will be television ads and social marketing, if you like, around the concept of cyber safety in general in regards to children's appropriate use of technology, but also obviously cyber bullying and bullying in general. It is an amazing area because if you look on the Web now there is an awful lot that started in other countries that we are able to draw some information from but will have its own uniquely Australian flavour.

CHAIR: I am pleased to hear that, because my next question was how to integrate a school-based program with a program for cyber bullying outside of school.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Do you think it has something to do with our generational and cultural changes—the Aussie attitude that you have to toughen up your kids, that they cannot be wussies or sissies? Do you think with the social change—parents, grandparents, community leaders, social messages—it is something about our Australian culture that we are supposed to be more resilient?

The Hon. A. NICHOLSON: I do not know if that is right. It is right in the sense that I think there is an impression that is our culture. Since I have been involved in this area and discussing bullying and talking about bullying, I have been absolutely troubled by the number of people in the community who will tell me that they have an adult child who is still recovering from bullying at school and perhaps may never recover. There are so many kids who are affected. You even know it in your own family. I have a six-year-old grandson who had to be moved from one school to another because he was a victim of bullying, and he is fine having been moved. It starts at a very early age and it is very troublesome. If that is our culture, I think we need to change it.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: In some of the discussions with people I know who have had children exposed to bullying, often between husband and wife or members of the family there is an argument as to what is bullying. One will say, "That is not really bullying. You are turning this child into a sissy." Even in that, the child is getting mixed messages. It is very confusing. There is not a lot of awareness of what constitutes bullying. What are the warning signs? What should parents and families be doing about it?

Dr NOBLE: I think you are right; there is an enormous amount of confusion in the community about what bullying is or what bullying is not. Whenever I talk to a group of parents, that is one of the big issues that needs to be clarified. Where Helen started, the importance of the key definition that everybody within the school community—parents, students, teachers and support staff—understands.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Why do we not have enough emphasis on this issue in teacher education? I would have imagined by now we would have recognised the dangers.

Dr NOBLE: I think it varies enormously from faculty to faculty. I am at the Australian Catholic University and bullying is addressed in a couple of different courses. I think it probably varies depending on people's interests.

Professor McGRATH: It is partly that, but again it is that crowded curriculum. We have only got so much time with students and everybody thinks that numeracy or literacy or something else is just as important. It may be a lack of awareness even among tertiary educators about the serious significance of it for our society. We know that children who become repeatedly engaged in bullying others have a much higher likelihood of criminal behaviour, of becoming workplace bullies and themselves of becoming depressed. It is clearly in some cases a lack of awareness on the part of some of the faculty.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: How do we get a national approach?

Professor McGRATH: The answer is the national system, the accreditation system that we are developing. The Commonwealth Government's National Safe Schools Framework also has made and will continue to make a significant contribution in this area. The National Safe Schools Framework is a mandated framework that all schools need to indicate that they are applying. It can be difficult to administer that. It originally came out in 2002 and there will be a new version available in 2010. That is another approach nationally, and it can only be done nationally, we think.

Dr NOBLE: The new National Safe Schools Framework is being revised because of the concern about cyber bullying. So that will be in the new national framework.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Alastair, in your opening remarks you made two assertions: that teachers are not taught to deal with bullying, and that policies in respect of bullying live in desk drawers and never come out.

The Hon. A. NICHOLSON: That, of course, does not apply in each case.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Of course you did not mean it to apply in each case and we did not take it that way. Has anyone done any work to assess, firstly, how much work is done in pre-service teacher education on bullying? We have had a look at the Department of Education and Training policy framework. Secondly, how much of the policies actually make it into the playground or the classroom?

Professor McGRATH: The first one, it is funny you should ask because that probably is our next research application from the National Centre Against Bullying. It is a kind of scoping study on how much is covered in tertiary education. The Australian Communication and Media Authority, with whom we have a very close working relationship, is currently developing professional development material and curriculum material for tertiary educators in teacher education faculties.

Dr JOHN KAYE: On bullying?

Professor McGRATH: On bullying and cyber bullying and cyber safety in general, the whole area. In terms of what happens from policy to practice, it is quite a difficult area to research. I do not think we can give you any data. We do know that there is some evidence that schools have more policies now than they ever did. For example, in a review of the National Safe Schools Framework Best Practices Grants Program that I undertook in 2005, we discovered that a number of schools policies are quite low before they implement these projects. That increased incredibly after they had completed their projects, but we have data from our needs analysis that that has increased even further across the national context. We certainly believe that the number of schools with policies is increasing. We do not yet have evidence to say that these policies are actually informing practice.

Dr JOHN KAYE: This goes to the heart of one of the things that the Committee wants to look at. Are there barriers to collecting data on what is happening in schools and how effective it is?

Professor McGRATH: Yes.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Are those barriers just a number of schools? Or are there administrative barriers that the Committee should help you to break down?

Professor McGRATH: The obvious barrier is that schools still feel that, for example, if they collect information about how much bullying is going on that there is a danger that, (a) in doing so, and (b) in the figures they get, that they will look like a school with a problem with bullying. The reality is that every school has some problem with bullying and every school always will, because it is one of those moral development issues that their children go through. Schools can be reluctant to publicly share data, if you like. That can be a barrier.

We find that we get far more information from schools when we are supported by government. For example, the Victorian Government study that we did opened doors for us. That took down some of the barriers so that effectively we were given far more access to what was happening in schools than we could achieve perhaps from a university or a national centre base. Does anyone want to add to that?

Ms CRAIG: I was going to say that a barrier we found was that schools are now survey-intensive zones. A school might receive any number of surveys during a week. Recently, when we sent out a survey, we found that schools had been surveyed twice or more in the previous six months. They are reluctant to fill out another.

Dr JOHN KAYE: The reason I asked that question is that the Secondary Principals Council, who will be attending the Committee this afternoon, said in its submission that the survey data it reported looked like a lot of work is being done on bullying, at least in New South Wales secondary schools. It would be useful to get some kind of framework or understanding of how much is happening in schools.

Professor McGRATH: I will respond to that. That concept of the work that is being done in bullying is vexatious in a way, because sometimes putting in, say, three hours of curriculum on bullying is what a school thinks is "work being done"; whereas, we think it is far broader and more substantial than that. That add-on approach does not stack up when you look at the evidence. It is always tricky when comparing surveys, because you are not quite sure whether they are measuring apples or oranges.

Dr JOHN KAYE: That is a good point. Are there broad schools of thought about how one ought to address bullying in a school? Say a school has a bullying problem; there is the punishment and reward approach, there is the pro-social policies where you develop the student, and so on. Could you outline those broad schools of thought, or does it not work that way?

Professor McGRATH: I would say that we are at a stage where the broad schools of thought are coming closer together and we accept that. It is not a question of what you do or do not do. It is a question of when you do it and how you do it. For example, there is a role for a punitive approach with a student who has continued to engage in bullying, despite all of the earlier more-supportive approaches that have been used. On the other hand, if it is the only approach that a school has, there is a very limited arsenal to tackle the problem with. There are people who believe that restorative practices are the important first step.

That is where you do not mediate, but you sit down and clearly say that one person is doing something that is unacceptable, but it is much more empathically based so that the student who has been involved in hurting another student listens to a victim's statement and learns to have some sort of empathic response. There is a whole range from those more softly-softly approaches, which have some evidentiary support, right up to the suspension-expulsion-detention approach. It is more about which you do first, what is the order, more than which one works. Would anyone else like to comment on that?

Dr NOBLE: I was thinking that along with doing that the focus is very much on building whole school wellbeing; putting in the punishment restorative practices approaches without taking that multi-factored approach of looking at whole school wellbeing.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Debates continue on what should be done. What is the evidence base on which of those works and which does not? The Department of Education and Training has a large number of things it gives to schools to talk about bullying and they all look pretty sensible. The department's submission, the whole of the New South Wales Government's submission, was quite impressive except that it had no evidence base whatsoever. There was no discussion of what works, it was just a whole range of things that are done. Does the situation with the Department of Education and Training reflect what is going on generally? There are a lot of really good ideas and a lot of theory, and although evidence base is talked about a lot, there really is no evidence to say what will work in which set of circumstances.

Professor McGRATH: There is some truth in what you are saying. If you said to me, "Demonstrate that doing things in this order is the best way of doing it", I would be hard pressed to find evidence to show that. We have a collection of bits and pieces of evidence, which, woven together, provide us with a tapestry that gives us directions on where to go. For example, there are approaches called the shared-concern approach, which is often used in secondary schools whereby the group of students involved in the bullying take some responsibility for addressing the problem and then reporting in as to how they have fixed it and changed it.

In primary schools we have a support group approach, in which a group of students who are not necessarily just the kids involved in the bullying—they might be the particularly nice kids in a class—again work with the teacher to try to change the situation. Again, that really needs the kind of environment where it fits. You cannot suddenly wack it into a school that has a fairly cutthroat or competitive ethos rather than a cooperative relationship-building ethos. We have some evidence of each of those working sometimes in some context with some kinds of bullying.

That is where it is tricky, because it is such a variable thing in the way it is manifested, because schools are so variable, it is not very straightforward. Frankly, I do not think it ever will be because we are dealing with very naturalistic settings, we are not dealing with the tight laboratory conditions that you can use in some other studies. Schools change across time. You might have one school that for four or five years may have this well under control and has a lovely culture; and then there is a change of leadership, change of staff, and in a couple of years it has changed again.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Or a change of students.

Professor McGRATH: Yes. The cohort can make a difference as well.

The Hon. A. NICHOLSON: Could I make something of a legal intervention at this stage in the sense that one of the difficulties, and this is accentuated by cyber bullying, is where does the school's responsibility end? Where do the parents' responsibilities come into it? There is a lot of thought in Canada and the United States is that the school's responsibilities to extend beyond the classroom to the home. The basis of it is if you have children who are acting outside the school grounds in an offensive way to other children in the school, that will infect the school environment anyway. So, there may be a role for the Legislature here in the sense of defining the responsibilities of schools, because they are very vague at the moment.

I have brought along a book, a copy of which I have handed to the Committee staff. A Canadian academic has written this book and published it, it is called *Confronting Cyber Bullying*. Her view, and I agree with her, is that there needs to be a clear legislative statement as to what the school's responsibilities are. That will then lead the school to accepting more responsibility than it does at the moment, if you widen these responsibilities. On the other hand, there would be others who would say it is hard enough to control the kids in the classroom without doing it outside.

CHAIR: I think that has hit the nail on the head. I know the Hon. Penny Sharpe has got some questions.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Just specifically on that issue, in New South Wales at the moment we are about to roll out computers to every student from year 9 to year 12. All of our students from kindergarten onwards have their own email accounts; they are quite well fire walled and carefully controlled. But in terms of the legal issues specifically, it would seem to me that there is an increased legal responsibility from government and departments of education and training, given that we are providing the tools, which, in the past, were perhaps in the parents' home but now are very much owned and operated by the school.

The Hon. A. NICHOLSON: I think that is a very good point; it really accentuates the issue. But this has been a problem for years. In our submission we refer to a couple of cited cases well before cyber bullying. There was an English case that decided the school was not responsible for bullying on the school bus, which I have difficulty understanding. There is a New South Wales Court of Appeal decision which says that the responsibility of the school extends to protecting the children down the road and away from school. So it is a grey area which I think should be clarified, and I think that makes it more urgent, I think you are right.

Professor McGRATH: It is also about rights, because schools need to have that authority, as you said, to deal with something on Monday that might have occurred on Saturday involving, say, threats or harassment via a mobile phone or some other form between two students at the school and it needs to be addressed on the Monday because those kids are going to come to school and bring this back into the classroom; it is going to seriously damage the learning environment. There is obviously a potential issue of risk: is one person going to hurt the other on the school grounds? Is somebody going to overreact to what had happened and take action, et cetera? So there is a rights aspect to that as well. Would I be correct in saying that, Alastair?

The Hon. A. NICHOLSON: Yes, undoubtedly.

Professor McGRATH: And, again, the legislation is important in that area. I think South Australia seems to have gone down that track perhaps ahead of some of the other States in changing the legislation to ensure that, because parents are not always happy about that; parents often will say, "You have no right to intervene" in something that happened on the weekend, ending in the schools.

The Hon. A. NICHOLSON: At the risk of raising a contentious issue, we, of course, do not have a Bill of Rights in Australia, and in Canada and the United States there are. This actually raises a problem in this area, because there is lots of litigation that deals with freedom of speech issues in relation to the use of the Internet at home, and so on. We do not have that problem at this stage, so we could legislate without those concerns, presumably.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I wanted to ask about what evidence there is of what young people are asking schools, parents and others to do to stop bullying. What do young people tell us in the research? What

action do they want taken? We talk a lot about what we think they need; I am interested in what they tell us they want.

Professor McGRATH: Two things that stand out most is that they want to be taken seriously if they tell a teacher about what is happening rather than being dismissed as "Oh, it's you again". Secondly, that they want the school to act on it in a way which stops it but does not impair their social life. The majority of studies in this area have said that they would prefer an approach which is not punitive because that rebounds very badly on them in terms of what the other kids think, in terms of their future social coexistence and so on. They are the two strongest things.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: That leads up to my second and last question. What are the actions that we know do not work? We have got lots of things that we think work a bit and work in certain circumstances; are there clearly things from the evidence that just do not work?

Professor McGRATH: Interesting question. I guess in the area of cyber bullying it does not work to ban the technology. In our most recent study we have discovered that although the huge numbers of schools, for example, have a mobile phone policy that says you have to not have them turned on during the day, it never works—no-one is reporting that it is actually effective. So any kind of ban does not work and, again, the young people respond negatively to that as well. It does not work to go straight into a heavy-handed punitive approach first up because that seems to create a sense of resentment and does not improve the situation overall. What else do we say does not work?

Dr NOBLE: I was thinking in terms of the flipside, which I think is hopeful, and that is the evidence that says that kids are very uncomfortable if they see bullying occurring; that 80 per cent of kids who are bystanders and observe bullying or become aware of bullying issues are very uncomfortable with it. So I think a new area of research, which is a hopeful area in terms of reducing bullying, is to work on bystander support for kids who have been bullied.

Professor McGRATH: If you would like to rephrase that, what you are saying is it does not work to ignore the role of a bystander in the whole situation because sometimes they are encouraging it, sometimes they are taking part in it, but they are basically not doing anything, and that old saying of bad things keep happening because of what good people do not do is applicable there. So that is a positive in what not to do.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Just on the issue of bullying over time and bullying by children and young people over time, do we have any sense that it is worse than, better than or about the same as it has always been? I know it is a very difficult question to give any precise answer to with any specific detail, but I think we all, when we were young people at school, had experience of bullying and it is probably only as adults and looking back at it we see it for what it really was. It might have involved ourselves or others in the class. So it has been around for a long time. I am just wondering, do we have a sense that bullying by children and young people today is worse than it has been?

Professor McGRATH: I do not think we have any evidence to that effect, because it is terribly difficult to go back and do the comparison. It is a bit like trying to decide whether or not we have more or less depression. To some extent there was no agreed definition, no data was collected and, as you say, it was almost a norm, which is what has led some people to take the approach that, as mentioned before, it toughens us up— "it didn't hurt anybody in my time", but they do not know that; they do not know what the effects of it were at the time. So I would have to say we do not have any evidence to that effect.

We do believe that, say, some of the reality TV shows that are around may have made cruelty to others as entertainment viable. If you look at some of the TV shows and see that you can watch the pain of someone being rejected and told how lacking they are, if you can watch those and think that is normal then it seems perfectly reasonable if you are watching the same thing in the playground when someone else is on the receiving end. So we think that reality TV reduces children's capacity in that way, but we cannot be sure of that, we do not have evidence of it.

The Hon. A. NICHOLSON: I think there is a factor, though, in relation to cyber bullying, and I am using that in a broad sense, that has changed the picture, because the bullying remains, presumably, the same but the widespread nature of it is much greater, and it hits it home. You can take humiliating photographs of people and you can send them all around the school, all around a number of schools and all around the Web. There are accounts here of children—this book I am referring to in Canada—of a child being publicly ridiculed not only

throughout the whole country but internationally in relation to it. So that does add another dimension that you would not have had in the past. I think that is what is particularly troublesome.

The other aspect that I think is troublesome is that with cyber bullying it lends itself to homophobia and sexual bullying. I think that is one of the really worrying things about it, because it is anonymous, or they think it is anonymous, and you can say all sorts of things. I think there is a real problem there.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Which leads me to my second question, which in a sense you have started to make some comment about. The bullying that we are observing by children and young people is really in a broader context of our culture, and specifically popular culture, in the way in which people have attitudes towards other people in the way in which they should treat them with dignity and respect. We hear those words all the time and they roll off our tongues very easily. In the end the bullying of another person occurs because we do not treat that person with dignity and respect. It happens all the time with adults and in the popular media. Nightly in television programs, whatever time you watch, people behave poorly towards other people. Young people are obviously exposed to this in different ways. I am just wondering how, if at all, we can tackle specifically bullying by children and young people if there is not a broader discussion taking place about the cultural mores and attitudes of people towards each other.

Professor McGRATH: I think that is part of why we put the social campaign into this overall cyber safety initiative. We are hoping that over time that constant message of treating each other with respect, how bullying is basically cruelty and how you need to use the technology in a safe, respectful, resourceful and responsible way will start getting that message across. I think it would be terrific if there were more community campaigns of a variety of kinds to endorse that message because it is a lack of respect and it is about cruelty.

The Hon. A. NICHOLSON: I think perhaps there is another factor. There are all sorts of programs. One of the programs I have been quite impressed with—I declare an interest because I am a patron—is called Solving the Jigsaw, which operates in central Victoria to the west of Melbourne. It is not an anti-bullying program; it is a program in which for 40 minutes a week kids sit around in a circle in the classroom with a facilitator and discuss all their problems, not just bullying. They discuss the fact that they are worried that their dad is sick—all sorts of things. I have sat in on them a few times and it is really interesting. It is intended to be confidential. I do not know how confidential it is and whether the kids observe that or not, but it is really impressive. The kids who are different are asked to explain, for example, what their religion is and why they have certain views, if they want to. The other kids are encouraged to understand that.

It is a much more holistic program than the bullying program, but of course bullying comes up in it. It is run through primary school from prep to the end of primary school and there seems to be some evidence that the kids who have been through that program—I have certainly had secondary teachers in the Bendigo area tell me that they can always tell the kids who have been to the schools where this program has operated because they have a different approach to these sorts of things and will not put up with bullying. I am not saying that that is the only program, I am simply saying that programs that aim at the whole person are likely to be more effective than those that just target bullying.

The Hon. TONY CATANZARITI: What are the early signs of bullying?

Professor McGRATH: Of being bullied or—

The Hon. TONY CATANZARITI: Being bullied. What are the early stages of kids bullying—how old are the kids?

Professor McGRATH: We see examples of it at the preschool level, but at the prep level, the first year of primary school you would see it in irritability, withdrawal, not wanting to talk about what happened at school today when parents say, "What did you do today; who did you play with?" There is a sort of angry response rather than a forthcoming response. It can be quite difficult because some kids are very adept at not letting on because they feel ashamed. They sometimes think they have a problem, and that is part of the change we have to work towards to ensure that people who are the victims of cruelty do not think it is because they are not likeable or not good enough. They have to recognise that what has happened to them is wrong.

In terms of what you see in the playground, usually there is one child who is just a bit more antisocial, if you like, than another. Often that is a temporary stage; I am not saying it goes on forever. The child tends to

get other kids involved by doing things like blocking their access to games or kicking the ball away and things like that. It is often low level to start with.

The Hon. TONY CATANZARITI: That would not just happen. Would that be something that is possibly coming from the home?

Professor McGRATH: It is interesting. The evidence that the home is where it germinates is not particularly strong. There is certainly a little bit of evidence that says that attitudes at home make a difference. Again, reverting to the positive side, we know that one of the reasons kids say they do not bully is because they think their parents would disapprove very strongly of their doing it, so parental attitudes are very important. However, it seems that schools are the stronger breeding ground for bullying and that sometimes kids who still have those messages coming from home about how they should not be doing this will still engage in what is really a jockeying for social power. It is about a misuse of social power that children aspire to.

The Hon. TONY CATANZARITI: Do you think there is a need to establish a special school for problem kids or should it just be managed by the school?

Professor McGRATH: The research that is coming out now and informing what is happening in the Victorian sector suggests that those schools are not particularly productive and that the approach that should be taken is more within the school.

CHAIR: John Kaye is itching to challenge one comment.

Dr JOHN KAYE: I am not challenging that comment. Would you accept that the statement you made that it is mostly the school that determines bullying behaviour is a controversial statement? The Department of Education and Training and many other witnesses have said in the written evidence that it is the other way around—that families that are authoritarian produce bullies, broadly speaking, whereas those that are authoritative, that is they set boundaries—I think the expression used was that they celebrate the individuality of children—produce children that are less likely to bully.

Professor McGRATH: I personally do not believe that evidence is strong, so yes it probably would be an area of disagreement between several researchers and theorists. There certainly is a factor there of parental influence. For example, if a parent says things like, "It's a dog-eat-dog world" or "The weak get trodden on; that's the way of the world", that kind of stuff, that is possibly going to predict bullying. As I read it, most of the research would suggest that the school is the stronger breeding ground, not the school per se but what happens in the school and the way the school communicates those messages. This may reflect perhaps a lower level of influence on the part of, say, religious organisations. We think that schools to some extent have needed to take over some of the values work because children perhaps are attending Sunday school less and not getting as much religious education in school.

The Hon. A. NICHOLSON: There is some evidence of physical punishment at home having an effect on children using physical forms of bullying. I do not say it is terribly strong, but there is some evidence to that effect.

CHAIR: I know that we could sit for ages discussing this. What we need to do, if it is alright with you, is send you some questions and get some responses. Before we break for morning tea, I have a question that we are going to ask everybody. We do not like bullying policies that end up in drawers. We do not want this report to end up in a desk or in a drawer. We want it to be valuable. From that perspective, in one or two sentences, can you tell us what outcomes you think we should be aiming for in this inquiry?

The Hon. A. NICHOLSON: The first thing to note is that this is probably the first time, I think, that any legislature has addressed this issue in Australia. That in a sense is an achievement on its own. What it does, and what your report does, will have an effect not just in New South Wales but throughout Australia. That is an outcome I would like to see happen.

CHAIR: Thank you very much for coming in today. We will be in touch and if you have anything further that you would like to send us by way of information, please let us know.

Ms CRAIG: Could we leave this book, *Bullying Solutions*, with you? This is from the National Centre.

CHAIR: That would be great. Have you given us the other book you referred to?

The Hon. A. NICHOLSON: Yes.

Dr NOBLE: This table is from that book.

Professor McGRATH: That was published in 2006 so it does not refer so much to cyber bullying. That will be a new chapter.

(The witnesses withdrew)

(Short adjournment)

DAVID McKIE, Director, Student Welfare (Office of Schools), Department of Education and Training,

DEONNE SMITH, General Manager, Access and Equity, (Office of Schools), Department of Education and Training,

PETER ROBERTS, General Manager, TAFE Customer Support, Department of Education and Training,

PHILLIP MOORE, Commissioner for Vocational Training, and Director, Apprenticeships and Traineeships, Department of Education and Training

ALISON BENOIT, Acting Leader, Attendance and Discipline (Office of Schools), Department of Education and Training, sworn and examined:

CHAIR: Welcome to the first day of hearings for the General Purpose Standing Committee No. 2 Inquiry into Bullying of Children and Young People. Thank you for attending today. We have received a substantial government submission. Do you wish to add to that or to make an opening statement?

Mr McKIE: The submission contains information about the department's programs. Some of it is about good practice and examples of schools that are implementing it. It also deals with the policies the department has in place. The message is that bullying is not tolerated in government schools. However, it is a very complex issue and it is very difficult to eradicate. In fact, significant work must continue to be done. The submission outlines some of that work.

We are also part of a national approach through the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs. We are working to get information from different States so that schools have strategies that they can implement. We have more than 2,200 schools in New South Wales, more than 730,000 students and more that 50,000 teaching staff. Our program must also address local communities. We see bullying as multi-contextual; that is, it needs to involve the community, the parents and school body working together. It is a very relationship-oriented issue. It is also about the way that people interrelate with one another. We hope we brought those points out in the submission.

CHAIR: We all realise how complex this topic is and how much it is changing with cyber bullying. Schools tell us that they are over-surveyed and teachers are always filling out survey forms. Do you collect figures on the level of bullying in New South Wales public schools?

Mr McKIE: There is no centralised data on that. The department's anti-bullying plan for schools covers a number of issues. That is in one of the appendices to the submission, so I will not go through it now. However, an important factor is that schools must all have that plan in place. That means they must ensure that some key issues are dealt with. One is that the parents, the school community and the teachers really understand the many forms that bullying can take, from psychological to physical aggression to social. It is important that they have that in place and that they provide that information.

The plans they put in place must address how that bullying behaviour may manifest itself on the school site. It is really important that schools establish whether bullying is present, in what forms, where and how, and to do that in such a way that they can implement some of anti-bullying strategies and do the preventative work that is part of the curriculum through the various lessons conducted in the school, and also as part of their whole-of-government work.

More importantly, they then conduct surveys and examine that information to establish whether things are changing. On top of that, a school might undertake a certain number of program reviews. Schools undertake regular reviews of both their curriculum and management programs at a local level. Further to the reviews that a school might undertake they also look at suspension and at the reasons for suspension to establish whether some of them might be related to bullying behaviours and attendance levels. Some students might not be attending because of those issues.

Schools look closely at all those factors and plan in relation to them. We are continuing to work with the research that is being done nationally in Australia and internationally, and we focus on the different types of bullying, such as cyber bullying. As bullying is likely to be present we need strong policies, strong messages

and strong prevention programs at the school level. The types of approaches that are taken by schools relate to the issues identified at that school level.

CHAIR: You require schools to have a plan and to self-evaluate, but the statistics and data do not come back to the department. The department does not overview or evaluate the success or otherwise of those plans and it has no way of establishing whether those plans are being implemented, whether they are sitting in a drawer, or whether the survey merely confirms that a bullying plan is on the wall in the hallway of a school. You have no way of evaluating it and no data is coming back. Is that right?

Ms SMITH: Each school works in a network of between 28 and 30 schools, or what we call a school education group. Each school education group has a school education director [SED] who is the direct line manager of the principals in that network. Every term the school education director meets with schools to talk about student achievement, their processes and policies, and issues to do with evaluation and whole-of-school improvement. Each year the role of the school education director is to talk to the principal and view the policies but, more importantly, to talk about what is happening in relation to key policies in the school and to establish what evidence there is to show that those policies are working and what a school might do about it.

The data that we collect centrally relates to statistics to do with attendance, retention and suspensions but we do not keep direct information about bullying. The data that is collected by schools is quite school specific and the school's use of that data is important. For us to collect it centrally we have to have a clear idea about what we collect and what we do not collect, and we have to ensure that the information is consistent.

CHAIR: As we go forward it will be difficult to solve the bullying problems if we do not have the data to back it up. Did you say that the school education director meets with each school every term?

Ms SMITH: As a minimum the school education director meets with each school every term. When a school is experiencing issues a school education director would spend considerably more time with that school.

CHAIR: There has been some media discussion about serious incident reports. A recent article in the *Daily Telegraph* stated that the serious incident reports showed 346 bullying-related incidents in the four school terms to September 2008. When are serious incidents reported to the department and what sort of bullying incidents are examined in those incident reports?

Mr McKIE: A school would make an incident report when a significant issue occurred at that school. It might be an issue of violence and that violence might have occurred as a result of what the school regarded as a bullying incident. At the time that report might come into the department's central unit. However, that occurs in the more extreme cases. We want to ensure that bullying does not occur at all. That means we have to try to put programs in place at schools as early as possible.

We have to ensure that those programs are in the relationship section of a school's curriculum and we have to ensure that students are supported in schools. We have to ensure that students understand the difference between a disagreement with a fellow peer and the occurrence of bullying, which is a more relentless targeting to cause distress.

All those aspects need to be looked at and managed by the school. So, in a sense that level where the parents have conversations with their children to know how they are getting on at the school, where they are able to share that, but equally those who might be undertaking the bullying. In a sense, schools have to take a lot of information into account and probably the more extreme forms of that will end up being reported in the way you describe.

CHAIR: Perhaps you can take it on notice and come back to us with a sort of overview of the bullying incidents, so we get a picture of what we are talking about? Would you be able to do that?

Ms SMITH: Yes.

CHAIR: Schools tell us, and we are hearing in evidence from our witnesses, where the school's responsibility begins and ends and the duty of care that a school has, and at the same time teachers telling us that the curriculum is crowded and they have a lot to do, and bullying incidents occur on the bus or on MySpace or emails or texts or whatever. How much do you see the school having a responsibility and a duty of care for bullying incidents?

Mr McKIE: In terms of the types of approach the school has to take, it has to deal with those issues that are occurring on the school site and that are related to the school. Again, we know from the research around bullying that it is a relational issue. It does not just occur in relationships on the school site but also in families and communities that can come on to the school site. That is why the approaches need to be taken as a partnership with parents and the community to address that.

In terms of cyber bullying, and that is one of the issues, where does that relationship lie, because we know if students are using mobile phones or home computers, they are accessible on an almost 24-hour, seven days a week basis. However, we accept that technology has a major use in education. It has its benefits in education and it has to be used responsibly. We understand for some students and families, the child having a mobile phone is one of safety and they want their child to have that so they know where they are. So, it is not that all technology is negative; there are some strong positive aspects about that. So, learning to use technology such as computers needs also to be undertaken around the ways to use that responsibly.

As the students get older, more information about that responsibility needs to be introduced. But, to make that a safe environment, the department's systems have to have filters and a whole range of other processes in place to make that a safe environment. So, that we chose to accept there has to be training of people to use that responsibly. At the same time it is that partnership because sometimes those phones are used at home after the rest of the family has gone to sleep and there still may be some access to technology that is not always supervised by the family outside of school hours. So, it is that partnership approach.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: The training of teachers, given the increasing incidence of bullying and also cyberspace bullying that is already a problem and will grow, I am sure, in years to come, do you believe the teacher training syllabus at the moment is adequate? Can we learn anything from other States? Can we learn anything internationally? So, teacher training firstly?

Ms BENOIT: Pre-service teacher training is certainly important in equipping teachers with the skills to be able to manage any behaviour management incident, including bullying. Within the past 10 years there has been an increasing focus within universities on providing that effective teacher training, but certainly not in a co-ordinated and consistent way. So, some universities do prepare behaviour management around specific issues, including bullying, and others do not.

I think where the Department of Education and Training responsibility then comes in is now with the New South Wales Institute of Teachers, in ensuring that teachers are accredited with professional competence, which they all must be accredited at. There are programs in place there to ensure they have access to professional development. Those teachers have to undertake 100 hours of professional development over five years, and that includes in registered professional development courses, that we have courses in, that target behaviour management, including specific modules on bullying and addressing bullying behaviour in schools as well as teacher identified training and providing programs more broadly, which might be the Australian Communication and Media Authority's programs more recently around cyber bullying. It has a professional development component specifically for cyber safety. So, there is a range of approaches

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Do you think it is time to get a national approach and get your interstate colleagues involved, also with the National Centre Against Bullying—whose representatives are still in the gallery? Do you think the time has come to really drive a national approach and start from the beginning while we are doing all the other social campaigns and everything else that needs to be rolled out? That we have a whole-of-community, whole-of-government national approach to prevention?

Mr McKIE: There are a couple of national approaches already in place that are continuing. One is a project that has established the Bullying No Way website, which has all States and Territories working to identify programs to make them available and put them up on the web, and New South Wales is part of that approach. We have been part of a meeting called by ACMA at the Commonwealth level, all States, to look at this issue and how we go forward with that. So, those initiatives have been there and it is very important that the lessons are shared and material that we can get from both researchers as well as what is happening at schools and the evaluation of those programs in schools becomes well known and able to take – it is just with the complexities of the communities throughout Australia that a whole range of approaches need to be available and principals need to know where they are evaluated to be working.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: I would be interested in TAFE. We will probably concentrate 90 per cent of the time on schools but I would be interested to hear from the TAFE situation. Is there a perception that bullying in that environment exists and is it being handled well? Has it been identified?

Mr ROBERTS: I think there is an acceptance generally in our community that bullying occurs and we recognise it is part of our behaviour management strategies within the TAFE environment. We need to recognise the potential is always there in a large broad-based community that we have in a TAFE colleges. What we have in place at different levels is awareness that it may occur and it is not tolerated within the department from our staff and our students' point of view. That is an ongoing awareness that we have to deal with it. We need to be vigilant in our approaches and we have our internal policies regarding what we should do about it.

The students are aware that they have a responsibility not to bully and to report bullying if they see it occurring or if they are the victim of it, and also for our staff to identify that it may be occurring and then we have student discipline procedures that specifically identify bullying and what penalties or sanctions can occur. Also, we have a significant support structure within TAFE colleges including harassment coordinators in colleges, TAFE councillors in colleges, that support students and multicultural education coordinators at different levels, particularly for younger people. For example, students that come to TAFE from schools, and there is a significant number of them, have an identified coordinator who manages what we call TVET programs within the college. The students are made aware that if they have a problem, there is a go-to person within the college, apart from the class teacher, who can advocate on their behalf because they are in a different environment.

So, yes, we recognise that given it is a community problem, it is there; we have strategies in place to be able to deal with it. I think it is important that we stay vigilant, particularly in the cyber bullying area, and we are within the department as well. We do not isolate ourselves from what is happening in the department's response. It is a joint approach in the learning that goes on, particularly in the areas of new technology where we coordinate this through the Connected Classrooms Program particularly, where both TAFE and schools are represented. The research done in this area and the policies that have been developed are from the department wide—TAFE and schools. Has that covered it just broadly?

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Yes, thank you.

Dr JOHN KAYE: I would like to return to a question asked by the Chair. We reached a point where we had the school education directors gathering information from the 25 or whatever it is schools in their cluster—or group I think it is now called. Would it be fair to say that each of those SEDS would have a fairly good idea what schools were implementing policies and in which schools the policies were sitting on the shelf and nothing much was happening? Is that correct?

Ms SMITH: Yes, they would. They would also have other information, I guess, about how well the school is going generally to add to their sense of how successful the school is.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Roughly speaking, there would be 100 such people covering the 2,200 schools?

Ms SMITH: There are 78.

Dr JOHN KAYE: What attempt is made to collect and aggregate information from those 78 SEDS about what is happening, whether these policies are being implemented—because we hear anecdotal evidence that the policies are not being implemented?

Ms SMITH: I will have to take part of that on notice to look at information that we gathered earlier on about how well schools are implementing the bullying policy. I am not quite sure about the data on that, but I will just need to look into that. What happens at a regional level is not so much about the bullying policy per se but regions have a process for supporting schools that are struggling in a particular way. They will have a focus school program. What will happen at a regional level is that the regional director with the school education directors meets to talk about how well schools are travelling, I guess, and look at a range of data. From the range of data, including student learning outcomes, attendance and suspension information, they will target particular schools for focus support. Depending on the issue, that will mean focusing the regional resources on a smaller number of schools to try to accelerate an improvement. Sometimes that is around teaching and learning; sometimes it is around student welfare issues.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Let me approach this from another direction. In tab J of your submission—I congratulate you on the comprehensive nature of your submission; it made very interesting reading—you have a series of stories of schools that work; they are uplifting stories and they are great. Should there not also have been another tab, which was the anti-tab J, about the things that did not work? In New South Wales we have a tendency not to talk about the things that did not work, but in this particular case the things that did not work are as instructive as the things that did work. Is there any data about the programs, projects, policies, the things that went off the rails, did not work, and the consequences?

Mr McKIE: Alison might be able to add to this. I agree with your questioning because one of the approaches is that schools are supported by student services staff, student welfare consultants. The other layer where the school education directors are working to, they are working within regions, and we have 10 regions. Each of those regions has a student services team that is actually working with the schools to give them advice about what may and may not be working. Again, it is part of their learning and understanding about what is going on that gives them some ideas. So, in primary schools they would be looking at programs where a lot more parental involvement may in fact seem to be more effective in dealing with the issues. But in the secondary schools, it may be more complex to involve the parents directly in how that is done. So, it is not one approach. So, they are using understandings to see that maybe in fact a whole community approach may have a much stronger impact in the secondary schools. A lot of the actual teacher training and professional learning in the secondary would probably have a larger component. So, yes, they are looking at not necessarily what is not working but they are looking at where the research is showing us certain programs work in what context for what age groups and what ones might need to change as you move to older students. That information from the research is very critical in advising schools what to do.

Dr JOHN KAYE: I take you to page 12 of the Government's submission and the lines underneath, "The Intervention for Children and Young People Who Bully." I will read it to you, "These children"—these are the children who bully—"require support to find positive ways of gaining power and status within their peer relationships." The sentence above says, "The challenge is to redirect this leadership potential from the negative strategies of bullying to positive leadership skills and opportunities." I understand and support where that is coming from, but the way it is written seems to me to be a reward for bullying: "You're a bully, therefore, we'll find out ways of making you a school leader." That is not actually what happens, is it? If you would not mind reassuring the Committee that my interpretation of what is written there is not the reality?

Mr McKIE: I reassure! The issue is I think that it is important that just not negative consequences are focused on those who in fact are undertaking bullying behaviour. It is more complex than that because sometimes the students who in fact are showing bullying behaviour may also be targets of bullying in another context. They need support, they need to be able to change that behaviour. So, it is about consequences. Yes, it is not acceptable, it cannot go on, but they also need to have something go in that is addressing why that behaviour is occurring. So, we need to provide support to both the person who is the target of bullying and also the one who is undertaking the bullying behaviour. So, absolutely reassure that it is not there in the way you put it.

Dr JOHN KAYE: There are issues about positive ways of gaining power with which, I must say, I am uncomfortable, and I imagine it depends on how you measure power and so on. There are some fairly political things in there. Can I take you somewhere else for a minute? Suppose we have a school that has an issue with bullying. What additional resources are available to that school? I shall make it easier and say it is a secondary school. There are some specific problems with bullying arising in that school. What additional resources would be directed at that school to help it cope?

Mr McKIE: I think Deonne has mentioned some of the issues about the way regions might focus on a particular school, so I will not go over that. The regions have a broad student services team. That team can get allocated to a school on the basis of need. That might be support teachers behaviour; it may be the time of the student welfare consultants; it may be the way the school counsellors are working in those schools; depending on other issues, it may be their interagency programs—they might be working with another government agency in that area; it may be looking at the school liaison police and some of the work they may be doing. So, they would be looking at all that regional approach.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Are you talking about the home school liaison officers?

Mr McKIE: No, the school liaison police. The home school liaison officers are involved where there is an attendance issue and that may be an important one at a time, but in terms of crime-prevention type

workshops, certainly around cyber safety, the school liaison police may in fact want to go and talk to other students around that issue. They would harness across the region and in that community. There might even be non-government organisations that are putting in mentoring programs, putting in peer support type programs that might join in with that focus and work with that school. There is a range of departmental, community, whole-of-government resources that might come towards that particular school.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Does the department maintain its own team of experts on bullying?

Mr McKIE: At State office we have a unit, which is maintaining the watch on the research, taking place in a national arena and internationally - also working with the regions, giving advice to those student welfare consultants and support, and it is part of the student welfare directorate; in fact it is part of my directorate.

Dr JOHN KAYE: What is that unit called?

Mr McKIE: It is called the Student Behaviour and Attendance Unit.

Dr JOHN KAYE: In terms of the in-service training on bullying issues, we got an answer from Alison in terms of things that teachers might do, rather than in terms of compulsory units, which all teachers will be exposed to. Are you comfortable that that is an appropriate way to do it or do you think that the bullying problem, because of the impact it is having on public education in general, is something that ought to be compulsory within in-service training, if it was not present in pre-service training?

Ms BENOIT: It is a difficult one. There are compulsory in-service trainings around child protection education, which all teachers have to undertake in government schools, so certainly that is one aspect of compulsory training that occurs yearly in how to promote safe behaviours at school and how to report unsafe behaviours and deal with those behaviours within a child protection education context. There is certainly some compulsory component to that. There are also specialist teachers within schools, such as personal development, health and physical education teachers, who you would say have mandatory training around bullying behaviours, child protection behaviours, how to promote safety, recognise abuse, report abuse and so on, as part of that curriculum area. Certainly there are a number of initiatives within schools that have a compulsory component to the education. Then there are supplementary in-service provided if teachers need supplementary in-service.

As David and Deonne both mentioned, the student welfare consultants at the regional level are resourced to provide schools with clear information on anti-bullying approaches, which includes social skills programs and conflict resolution programs and they work very closely with schools to identify what their needs may be additionally and to help support those schools.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: My question is about apprentices and in particular apprentices who are going to TAFE one day a week and working in the workplace four days a week. On page 11 of the Government's submission it talks about the role of State Training Services to monitor the training contracts of apprentices. I am also aware—and I am sure you are very aware—of some really quite appalling examples of bullying that have happened to apprentices over the years; they often make media headlines and they are pretty ordinary. I am wondering what steps are taken by the Department of Education and Training in relation to monitoring those training contracts and what happens when an apprentice, if they are brave enough to actually reports bullying in the workplace?

Mr MOORE: It actually starts in terms of our involvement before they actually sign up for the training contract. At the time of signing the national training contract the apprentice or trainee, I do not think we can—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I meant both of them.

Mr MOORE: Apprentices and trainees, at the time they are signing the training contract, are given information on their rights and responsibilities, including things like the right to feel safe at work, et cetera, which includes the right not to be bullied. Also at the time of sign-up agency staff, who are actually contacted by the Commonwealth under the Australian apprenticeship system, reinforce that information in terms of a presentation to either a single or group of apprentices and trainees.

In terms of the employers themselves, yes, you are right, from time to time information of some pretty appalling bullying of apprentices and trainees comes to light. It is not always from the employer to the apprentice or trainee. Often, in fact, it is from co-workers, either older apprentices or current or cohort apprentices or other people within the workplace. We produce information that goes to all work sites. In fact, at the end of last year we produced a DVD that went to every employer of apprentices and trainees in New South Wales, which was primarily about their pastoral care responsibilities and how not to waste the resource of an apprentice or trainee and to try to make sure that that training arrangement went through satisfactorily.

In the event of us being aware of issues that might impact upon the successful performance of a traineeship or apprenticeship, whether or not that is related to bullying—and often it is a whole range of other causes—then our field staff become involved at that point.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Is the only trigger for involvement when the apprentices themselves say something?

Mr MOORE: No. The trigger for involvement can be when the apprentice says something, when their parent says something or from time to time the employer will say something; the employer will ask for help such as, "I have identified a situation of bullying in my workplace. How do I deal with it?" We also receive advice from various unions that they have become aware. They may have a member, so their member will advise them, they will advise us and we will then, in turn, conduct investigations. Depending on what happens with those investigations, it could simply be a matter, if it is a low level and easily solved thing, it can be a matter of discussion at the workplace level; it can be a matter of negotiation; it can be a matter of advising the employer what they should be doing and making sure, for example, that their supervisors are trained in identifying and dealing with issues of bullying. If it is a more serious issue, then there is a formal process that goes through.

If say, for example, where the party decides to take action against the employer, they will be referred to the vocational training tribunal and the vocational training tribunal has an employer, a union, a training representative and we chair it. Various measures can be put in place there, including the employer been declared as a prohibited employer. That, I suppose, is the ultimate sanction, which means that they can no longer employ apprentices and trainees and if it is a particularly serious issue, that apprentice or trainee can have their contract transferred to another organisation or can have their contract cancel and recommence that contract with another employer. There is no simple answer. There are lots of different stages of intervention that are possible.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: That has reassured me somewhat. This is a completely separate question. It leads a little bit on from what John Kaye asked about. Is there anything that the department, from its experience and knowledge of the variety of different bullying programs across schools, can tell us that you know definitely does not work? John asked a little bit about this. Are there elements of things? I just think that there must be this knowledge. When people at a school, for example, suggest an idea and all of you groan and say, "No, we know this will not work", I wonder if you could just tell us what those things are?

Mr McKIE: We believe that if it is simply just consequences that in some way are placed on the behaviour and there is no school-wide approach to it, we would know that that would have limited effect; we believe that if it was looked at only as a classroom issue, so that it was just a teacher working in the classroom with their children, it would have limited effect; that if it is looking at putting in some form of peer mediation of a very serious-type bullying situation, in fact it could be counter-productive because what you are doing is putting someone who has been exercising more social power in that sense back into a mediation session with no balance necessarily to that situation.

We definitely know from research that there are key issues that cannot occur. We know that mediation is a technique that can work only when there are very slight power imbalances. There are things that we would know that if they are applied incorrectly in a school, they would have maybe very limited or no effect. The cultural issues are very important, so techniques, such as circle-type techniques, that are used for people to be able to work through and discuss in a circle are useful in certain areas. We know that practices based on restorative-type justice and restorative-type situations certainly work in some cultural contexts and have broader application, so are useful for a whole range of issues.

I think our research and our experience around that is trying to avoid approaches that are inappropriate and to make sure that we continue with our knowledge in the area. One of the most difficult ones, of course, is the new one of cyber bullying issues. While other types of bullying may be diminishing as the students get

older, certainly as students get access to that technology outside school in greater numbers as they get older, what might have been the traditional forms - are dropping off. Potentially now we may be seeing an increase looking at some of the work that might be there. There is that type of misunderstanding on this application of approaches that would have us concerned.

The Hon. TONY CATANZARITI: Could someone tell me if any surveys have been taken within schools with regard to bullying? If so, are there any significant differences from city to country-based schools?

Mr McKIE: We know that schools within the plan do undertake those surveys. Some of those are in the good practice examples and they are indicating the results of those surveys. They undertake surveys to evaluate whether they have made any kind of difference. There has been no departmental, centralised surveying in the sense that you may have meant, but it is certainly there at the school level. Again we have the region taking that lead to look at what is working with the different approaches to take, but we certainly do not have the full picture of that. We have continued to try to collect those good practice examples and examples of where we know things may not work, and that is an ongoing aspect. As we pull this in, we get a better idea of what is happening at the school level. That is a continuing work that we are doing.

The Hon. TONY CATANZARITI: Would the same apply to TAFE? Does TAFE do surveys? Is there any difference?

Mr ROBERTS: No, not specifically for bullying behaviour.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Thank you for your comprehensive submission. My line of questions relates to the whole issue of cyber bullying and related matters, and specifically the criminality of behaviour associated with such matters. I will nominate these examples. As I understand it, accessing someone's account and using it to send abusive emails is unlawful under section 308H of the New South Wales Crimes Act. With respect to the taking of photographs of an individual in a shower, for example, and transmitting it, that was a breach of the Summary Offences Act in New South Wales, section 21G. I understand that teasing and making phone calls or spreading rumours about someone online is an offence called intimidation under section 545B of the Crimes Act.

Ridiculing people in the chat room may be a basis for an individual to commence a civil action of defamation. Finally, harassing someone or making threats electronically was a breach of section 545AB of the New South Wales Crimes Act, and was also an offence under section 474.15 of the Commonwealth Criminal Code. I use those examples to illustrate the criminality associated with some of the matters we have been discussing over the course of the morning. Given that society has deemed the sections to the criminal behaviours, not just for children and young people but for society, how does the Department of Education and Training deal, to the extent that you do, in that context with children and young people in schools in a manner that underlines the very serious nature of the matter, given that these matters are deemed to criminal offences?

Ms BENOIT: I could answer that one for you. Certainly within a curriculum area, such as legal studies, in senior years that would be discussed as well in junior years in various curricular areas. But there are also additional resources within schools, such as mentioned before, the crime prevention workshops which are a joint initiative between the New South Wales Police and the Department of Education and Training. The focus of those workshops is on teaching people about the consequences of involvement in antisocial behaviour and criminal behaviour.

Certainly a range of those workshops targets that specific area. All New South Wales Department of Education and Training sites have policies in place to deal with disciplinary matters, such as inappropriate behaviour, and they have clear guidelines on how to report abusive behaviour electronically through their legal issues bulletin. They use their disciplinary process in applying consequences for that behaviour, but also in educating people about what it is they are doing and why it is inappropriate behaviour. It is a range of curriculum, extracurricular and disciplinary welfare processes that would take place.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: We would all hope that through education, development and formation of young people, they would come to understand that bullying as an act of whatever measure you would like to describe is not acceptable. We have deemed that certain behaviour is a criminal act. Is it explicitly taught to children in New South Wales that there are certain behaviours that really are deemed to be criminal acts in the State with very serious consequences? Is that explicitly taught?

Ms BENOIT: Whenever young people use departmental computers on site, they have to sign an acceptable use policy, which outlines what is the responsible use of that facility as well as the inappropriate use, including the possibility of criminal proceedings if they use that inappropriately. Certainly all students undertake to read and have explained to them by their classroom teacher what that acceptable use policy entails prior to using the services.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Page 4 of the Government's submission talks about homophobic bullying, which we have also heard about this morning and which was pointed out as being a serious issue. Specifically, the submission refers to the fact that schools are particularly problematic settings for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender young people. Could you tell the Committee what the department is doing in schools to address the issue of homophobia?

Mr McKIE: One of the issues we had in terms of the anti-bullying plan was to make it clear that bullying can include all forms of harassment and intimidation. In fact, we saw that anti-homophobia was one of the prevention-type approaches that may need to be undertaken in relation to bullying, if in fact it is detected, and to look at a particular site and a particular issue.

Again we look at some of the research that is undertaken about that. It is a very complex area because, like all forms of bullying, it is trying to create a climate where the young person feels free to report it and to be able to know who they report it to and what will happen once they report it. They are key aspects of the anti-bullying plan for schools—to make sure that occurs.

We have been part of training for staff in terms of a whole range of programs that may need to be implemented. We raise teacher awareness through cooperating with groups that may be putting on conferences to get those strong messages through. We look at training of our school counsellors in this area. They are specifically trained to deal with same-sex attracted issues and support, and to be able to put those into schools. The latest research out of Victoria to which I have access certainly indicates that schools need to be having a strong focus on anti-homophobia, that same-sex attracted young people were finding that more and more there were staff on site that they could seek support from. So there is a lot more work to be done on all issues of bullying behaviour no matter what form it might take, including racism and sexual harassment. They are all areas that a school has to be looking at: What is it specifically for us in this school, what are we putting into place, and is it in fact working?

CHAIR: I was thinking of the processes families go through when there is an issue of bullying. One parent said to me, "I feel like I am preparing my little soldier to go into battle every day, going to school. Parents take this on very much as a personal issue, because it is. They are dealing with the child consequently, and there are learning behaviours and all sorts of other things that manifest themselves. What happens if a parent is unhappy with the principal's response at a school? I hear about children being transferred to other schools because this simply does not work. I am wondering who takes responsibility and how that works, and further, whether the department has statistics on the movement of children to other schools as a result of this sort of issue, what action is taken in relation to it, and whether there are statistics on the level of home schooling. Is home schooling increasing, and does that have anything to do with bullying?

Mr McKIE: There is no centralised information about the movement of students in the way you describe, from school to school. Schools are now doing a lot more work on destinations of students when they leave one school for another. But I would have to take it on notice whether or not there is any particular focus as to the reason for that.

CHAIR: That would be appreciated.

Mr McKIE: In terms of the parents looking at an issue, it comes back to an earlier question, which talked about whether there are things that we know do not work. I guess we have probably moved on from it so far, but we would say that doing nothing and ignoring it is not a strategy that we would agree with in any situation. And certainly 15 or 20 years ago that may have been the type of information—it will pass; just do not react. We have literally gone past that, in the research and in the programs.

If it is occurring, again if the plan is there, the parent knows who the matter should be reported to, and it should be reported consistently. You are talking about a parent who obviously is hearing their child, hearing some of the issues about their child's concerns about going school. That does need to be brought to the attention of the school. As I said, there is absolutely no place for bullying in schools. When you define it as someone is

being targeted to create emotional distress, and to do that either as a once-off or in a format that can be exposed such as a cyber bullying to many people to look at as a single posting, it is behaviour for which there is just no place at all and everything has to be put into place.

If the parent is not satisfied with what is occurring at the school, they have at least two avenues. One is to talk to the student welfare consultant for that area, who is able to suggest and look at what is happening and try to link back to the school. The other is the school education director for that particular school. Either of those would be able to lock the action into the school. Again, it would be dependant on the particular situation as to what were the facts about why a student was moving school, but we would certainly hope that the way it was being brought up was being brought to attention.

I think your question also shows the complexity of the matter. Sometimes principals hear that report from that parent, or even from that child, but when they talk to the other child in question they may not get any information that collaborates that view. In fact, there may not be any adult teachers who have seen it, and they have to be sorting out and working that through. Having students who, we believe, in the main are aware of what is happening in the school as part of the school's approach, seeing that there is no such thing as dobbing as far as bullying goes—this is really behaviour that has no place, it is not fair, it is not anything you want to describe it as—and having the students able to say, "I am going to take action. I am not willing to be observing that this is happening," and to be part of the solution.

Our student representative councils at the school level do have a role in trying to involve students and taking the message. One of the attachments is a resource we have given to our student representative councils to look at the issue of bullying, to raise it—students raising it with students, to talk about the unacceptable level of it, and to have a role in it. But the idea of moving schools because of it would be something that we would hope is not occurring because of strong action taken at the school level, within those complexities.

CHAIR: You do not have any statistics on home schooling and whether that is increasing at all?

Mr McKIE: We might need to take that in terms of statistics on notice.

Ms BENOIT: Or the Office of the Board of Studies.

Mr McKIE: In terms of home schooling, yes, because the figures there would be the Office of the Board of Studies. I was thinking of distance education. You did mention home schooling. That is the Office of the Board of Studies, so they would be the ones that provide that but we could ask them for statistics on home schooling.

CHAIR: And whether they surveyed parents to know why that is occurring.

Mr McKIE: We could ask that question as well to them.

CHAIR: I would be interested to know.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: I was heartened by your comments about the student representative councils [SRCs] involving students in that proactive approach to formulating or augmenting your internal policies. How structured is that? Is that something that has been initiated recently, or is that something that will be rolled out? I would see that as a very positive approach involving the students and also the circle type environment where you get the various parties, whether they be parents, grandparents, whatever, in to discuss aspects of bullying.

Mr McKIE: Yes, it is a growing focus and involvement of students. As a general approach, we are trying to train the students more and more in becoming student action type groups, solution focus groups, giving them the skills. We know that students have great potential to come up with ideas that schools should be considering and to have more and more not only just formal processes for that to occur but in fact some of the training for that to occur. We still have a State student representative council which links back to the regions and links back through schools. We have a conference once a year where these types of approaches and programs are addressed at a State level and then the regions conduct a conference on the same topics. That allows us to have a strong focus. We did the one that is attached to here a couple of years ago but more recently the students have been working with the MindMatters group and have developed another resource for the students' use in

schools, which is about promoting connections, promoting relationships, promoting good resilience, good positive mental health too as part of the focus.

We are looking at how we can involve them more and more at the school level but also at a representative level to be aware of the issues. In terms of some of the issues and linkages, it is not only SRCs in schools; we also have groups that represent students from some of the schools in the various priority school type programs also meet and some of the schools also have junior AECG groups in various schools with Aboriginal communities. So there is that growing notion of supported student involvement in solutions for school issues and bullying is one of those issues.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: AECG is?

Mr McKIE: Aboriginal Education Consultative Group.

Dr JOHN KAYE: If I become the principal of a school you give me the anti-bullying plan for schools and I develop a policy for my school based on that and various other things and specific circumstances. Does the department then collect those policies? Does the department every look at those policies at a centralised level? If so, what do you learn by doing so?

Mr McKIE: We do not collect all of the 2,200 centrally but we certainly seek to get copies and work through the regions for ones that the regions want to put forward to us to look at. The department revised its discipline policy in 2006 and as a result of that the anti-bullying plan became part of the department's discipline policy. At that stage the schools were required to review their discipline policies, including that, and to in fact be discussing that development with their school education director. So in that case back at that period of time, it is time now to review and go through that procedure again. It also gives us an indication of the way of looking at the regions, looking at their plans across the entire region. Again, it also gives an opportunity for their analysis of those to be brought forward to us at the State level.

(The witnesses withdrew)

JOHN DALGLEISH, Manager, Strategy and Research, BoysTown, sworn and examined:

CHAIR: Welcome to day one of the Committee's inquiry into bullying of children and young people. Would you like to make a brief opening statement?

Mr DALGLEISH: BoysTown offers a range of services, one of which is Kids Helpline—the only national telephone and online counselling service for children and young people. A lot of our work in this area will be using the clinical evidence from that service to support that. I would like to congratulate the Parliament of New South Wales on establishing this Committee. The focus of BoysTown, through our services, is the children and young people many of whom we find have experienced bullying. We know from our work with those young people that bullying is a significant issue impacting on their mental health. In view of the seriousness of the issue, I congratulate the Parliament of New South Wales on looking at this very important issue which impacts on the lives of children and young people.

There are many incidents of bullying reflected in many different estimates and research and that material gives a variety of definitional issues that people use around bullying. But looking at some of the submissions that have been tabled to the inquiry; the one from The National Centre Against Bullying quotes figures—quoting Professor Rigby—that about 40 per cent of children and young people aged between 7 and 17 have experienced bullying. We know that those young people who have experienced bullying—from research internationally, nationally and through our own clinical work—both in the short- and long-term will experience anxiety, depression and loss of self-esteem and confidence. It has an enormous impact on school attendance and school performance. We know for the bully—again from international and national research—that unless the issue is dealt with they will continue to have antisocial behaviour, are more likely to engage in criminal acts with other children and young adults and also, in time, many will translate that bullying behaviour into relationships with partners. So the cycle continues and that is a significant economic and social cost for our community.

At BoysTown we believe to prevent bullying and to repair the impacts of bullying we need a multi-pronged intervention strategy. At an individual level, as we have said in our submission, children and young people feel powerless to stop bullying. They need to be encouraged to seek help. Again, in our submission, we noted that children and young people will tend usually, but not always, not to seek the assistance of parents, teachers and other adults and there is a whole range of reasons for that—embarrassment, fear that their concerns will be trivialised, a fear that they will be inadvertently blamed for the bullying because they are not tough enough or they did not stand up to the bully and they are all barriers to their seeking help. One of the ways in which we believe that a pathway can be built between a child or a young person and sources of help is through the telephone and online counselling service and also raising the awareness about those services across the youth population and school population.

It was interesting to note in one of the submissions to the inquiry that the Association for Secondary School Principals did not note that the Kids Helpline provides services to children in their schools who have experienced bullying. I think that reflects the issue that all services interacting with young people need to talk to each other, and interface with each other, and provide seamless transition to sources of assistance. That is something that we are very open to partner and have a conversation with. At a family level—and I noted before a question by the Chair—we know too through our Parentline services across Queensland and the Northern Territory that many parents feel powerless to help their children overcome bullying. They feel hurt by that, they want to protect their child and do not know how best to do that. Parents also need input and assistance to support and care for their children in overcoming bullying.

A practical example of what we have done in this area is that the Kids Helpline has a partnership with Optus and we have developed the Talk to Your Kids website. That website provides parents and carers with a practical guide on how to support children who may be experiencing bullying and how to promote Internet safety. It is these practical exercises where, through communication strategies, we give parents the tools and information to help them support their children, and that is the type of invention that we believe is quite effective in helping families support their children through that experience. The third area is in peer groups. In our submission we quote research that suggests there is no hard and fast boundaries between children who are bullying and children who are being bullied. Children can be bullied, can bully or be bystanders to that bullying. From our current cyber-bullying research we know that about one-quarter of the young people who replied to that research have bullied other children. It is a dynamic process: it is just not two different camps, because children go between those camps.

In terms of prevention, the issue is how do we build quality peer relationships? Since most children and young people are at school that needs to occur in a school context. We believe that is effective prevention in the development of quality relationships where children and young people develop social skills and empathy towards others to work through issues and to build up a culture that inhibits bullying emerging. But the bottom line for us is that with all the prevention programs that can be put in place—we know from research that many of those prevention programs lack empirical foundation, and even the best of those programs will not stop bullying altogether but will reduce it by maybe half—even if we put all those steps in place, we still have to be concerned for the child who is bullied because the impacts of bullying are so deleterious to that individual.

We need to have services in place to assist those children. We need to raise awareness and provide those children with information about where they can go to trusted sources for help and support. That is the key concern of BoysTown to work with the Government to look at ways in which children and young people in your schools across the State can learn about the Kids Helpline and can learn about the services we provide and can be encouraged to contact our services because we can provide a bridge for those young people to local sources of support which they need.

CHAIR: That is a very comprehensive introductory statement and you have echoed the views of many people. I want to refer to cyber bullying issues.

Mr DALGLEISH: That is a new emerging problem.

CHAIR: I know you have done research of cyber bullying. What are the differences between face-to-face bullying and cyber bullying? Is cyber bullying more damaging?

Mr DALGLEISH: Yes, we do.

CHAIR: What does the research show in relation to cyber bullying?

Mr DALGLEISH: The research in cyber bullying, it would be true to say, is still embryonic in form and that is because in terms of literature it is a comparatively new issue. However, if you look at the trend, 90 per cent of young people use the net so it is inevitable that young people will transfer bullying behaviour into an on-line strategy. In terms of the impact of cyber bullying on children, the impact is similar in terms of young people's anxiety, depression, loss of self-confidence from being bullied. However, our research, which is based on case studies we collect through our Kids Helpline service, indicates that there is a stronger correlation between cyber bullying and suicide ideation than between face-to-face bullying and suicide ideation. In other words, the emotional impact of cyber bullying on children appears to be greater than face-to-face bullying.

If you look at the research people put forward different views about why that would be. It would also be true to say that we are continuing to run our cyber bullying survey and we are hoping to get further data which we will publish shortly about that issue. If you look at the research that exists, people would say that cyber bullying has more of an impact on children and young people because it reaches a wider audience. A detrimental image of a child, a rumour about a child, a critique of a child and his or her behaviour, can be put on the Internet and can reach thousands, possibly even millions of people. The audience for the humiliation that the child experiences is bigger.

The second thing which may also worsen that impact is that there are no checks and balances because cyber bullying is virtual—it is in a virtual world– and the bully cannot see the impact he or she is having on the child so there are fewer controls on that behaviour and the behaviour tends to escalate more quickly than on a face-to-face situation. The third issue is privacy. Bullying can occur in a school ground and be location-specific. A child can be bullied by cyber bullying in the privacy of their home through the Internet or mobile phone. There are no safeguards for privacy, so the bullying behaviour can reach into the innermost private realms of a child or young person, and that is another reason why it may have a greater impact.

We are as an organisation very concerned about cyber bullying. We are getting an increasing number of contacts from children and young people about that. Last year we set up an internal system where we can track more easily those cases and we can look at and review our own intervention in relation to those contacts and also the impacts of those on children. We are very concerned by that. It appears that the impacts of cyber bullying can be much greater than face-to-face bullying at an emotional level, as we have said in our submission.

CHAIR: What are "empowerment counselling strategies" which is a great term?

Mr DALGLEISH: At a practical level it means that we do not believe that a child should change or can change their behaviour, appearance, culture or the things that may provoke bullying behaviour towards a child. A child should not feel that they need to deny their self, deny their culture or change their behaviour to stop bullying. We believe in inclusiveness which means that each child is an individual, has individual characteristics and they should not feel pressured to deny their individuality to stop an adverse effect. In terms of our counselling with children and young people we start from that basis. We do not say "Well, stand up to bully. If you do not do this behaviour therefore you might not be bullied." We believe that is wrong. We start with the individual child and we say that "You have value and worth and you should not feel that you are diminished by this bullying and you should not feel that you need to change your individuality to stop this from happening." So that is the basis on which we start our counselling. With the child or young person we then explore the issue from the child's perspective. We say "Okay, can you explain or describe to us what is happening to you?" Also, more importantly, "How does that make you feel? How does that make you act in that situation?" We use that information with the child, we reflect that, and we then look at "What are the practical supports in your environment you can use to stop this bullying?" Often that is, we encourage children and young people to talk to their teachers, to their parents, to their older brothers, to the trusted adult in their situation who can then act as a mediator for them in terms of stopping the bullying happening.

That I think is our point, that initially children and young people find it difficult to go to that trusted other adult to talk about that because they feel embarrassed by this bullying. Through telephone and on-line counselling where their privacy is assured and where they have control of that contact—if they do not like the contact with us they can just simply end the connection or put the phone down—they control that median. So they feel more confident in terms of talking to us and then we can act as a bridge to those practical solutions in their own environment that we then explore with them. That is what we mean by empowerment in counselling.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: For how long have you been running this very effective program? How is it resourced? I know you have corporate support but from where does your funding come? What is its capability to grow and partner with others? How have you developed? How do you assess the success of your programs?

Mr DALGLEISH: Kids Helpline has been operating since 1991. Initially it was a telephone counselling service and then in the late 1990s, I think it was around 1999, we commenced online counselling through Web. Web means that a young person can go to our website at certain hours, enter the website, hook to a counsellor and then engage in a, if you like, real-time chat session with a counsellor. The other online medium is email counselling where a young person can email a counsellor a question and the counsellor will reply. That is not in real time. It might take days or even weeks for that chain to end. In terms of our organisation, we are part of Boys Town. Boys Town's Kids Helpline is one of a series of services that Boys Town runs. Our mission is to provide support and a voice for marginalised young people in Australian communities. That is our mission. What does that mean practically? It means we work with young people who are socially excluded and we seek to improve their inclusion into community life, be it through personal development, counselling services, employment services. We also run refuges for homeless families and also for women who are survivors and are escaping situations of domestic violence.

In terms of our funding base, that varies. We have both Commonwealth and State Government support for various programs that we run. In terms of Kids Helpline specifically, our main funding source is that we are independently funded. The Boys Town lottery that we run supports our works. That provides the majority of support for Kids Helpline. We also receive significant funding for mental health strategies for children and young people through the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing. We also received some State Government support from the Queensland Government and the Western Australian Government. In terms of New South Wales, we receive no New South Wales State government funding, even though we have contact with children and young people from New South Wales—it varies year to year—around 80,000 contact with New South Wales children and young people each year about issues ranging from family relationships through to child abuse.

In terms of our capacity to grow, we have a capacity to grow. Because we have telephone and online counselling services we have infrastructure in place that can potentially take more calls and deal with more contacts with children and young people. The limitation on our growth, of course, is counselling numbers. It should be noted that all our councillors are trained, professionally trained counsellors. We do not work on a

voluntary model. They are all paid, professionally trained counsellors. Many of them have a Masters degree in counselling and/or psychology. Even though that is an expensive model comparatively, we believe that provides the best quality services to children and young people. In terms of our ability to partner, we partner with a number of agencies now around issues to deal with children and young people. For instance, in indigenous communities we have just received funding from the Department of Health and Ageing to extend our reach to indigenous children and young people. We partner with many indigenous communities around Australia in terms of facilitating pathways for indigenous young people to our Kids Helpline services. So we are open to partnerships as long as they are driven by the need for the best interests of the children and young people that we deal with.

Dr JOHN KAYE: I want to talk briefly about the Peer Helper program. I am a little bit confused. Is this, "I am a kid, I am being bullied", and it is another kid within my school or someone my age?

Mr DALGLEISH: Not necessarily in the school but a peer is someone in that young person's network of peers, generally children of similar age. They may go to the same school, most likely they would, but they could go to other schools as well.

Dr JOHN KAYE: So it is somebody in my network?

Mr DALGLEISH: Yes.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Your image is that we train up young people or a large percentage of young people to be peer helpers?

Mr DALGLEISH: Yes, to each other.

Dr JOHN KAYE: In a way it is strengthening the social networks to make them more resilient to bullying?

Mr DALGLEISH: Or in other words, social capital of young people.

Dr JOHN KAYE: In this and all such things—and this is not my opinion but it nags at me—is there a risk that we are creating a climate of fear? The Department of Education and Training said that it will create special safe places at schools. Your suggestion is we train up all young people to counsel each other about bullying. Is there a risk that we are talking so much about bullying that we are creating a climate of fear?

Mr DALGLEISH: No. I would just go back a step. I do not think so. Why I do not think so is because our suggestion is about how do you improve the skills and capabilities of young people to relate to each other in an inclusive manner? We do not believe that you set up a segregated program specifically looking at how kids can counsel each other. It is more about a mainstream program that at the heart of it models and teaches children and young people to respect each other, to respect differences, to value diversity and to work through how they can show that in their daily interactions with each other. It should be something that is mainstream, that is general, because it impacts on the quality of life of children and young people in general.

Dr JOHN KAYE: To paraphrase, while it would have impacts on bullying, on ameliorating the impacts of bullying and on reducing the incidences of bullying, it is not specifically a bullying program, it is about building more capability?

Mr DALGLEISH: Yes, emotional intelligence and social confidence.

Dr JOHN KAYE: How do you see that being rolled out? Do you see it being rolled out through schools?

Mr DALGLEISH: I think the schools are the focus because that is where most children and young people are.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Being very mindful of the curriculum-crowding problem, what sort of time commitment would such a program take?

Mr DALGLEISH: That is a good question. Many teachers and school administrators would state that the curriculum is already full, so how can we possibly look at something new? I think the response to that would be that what we are talking about—and there are a whole range of programs that can put that into effect—is a very practical idea that would actually help educators achieve their outcomes with children and young people. Because at the current time one of the adverse effects of bullying is that children and young people do not want to go to school and if they do want to go to school they are so distracted by "When is the harassment going to happen to me today?" that they do not focus on schoolwork. Both international and national research is saying that children who are regularly bullied, one of the impacts of that is that they truant and that their school grades go down. In the United States—and I do not know about Australia, I have not seen a comparative figure—I have seen research recently where they suggest that one in five US students is truanting regularly from school because of reaction to bullying because they are wanting to avoid it[1].

Dr JOHN KAYE: One in five truants is because of bullying or one in five students are truanting because of bullying?

Mr DALGLEISH: One in five students are truanting because of bullying. That is recent research I have seen from the US. Unless you can do something about the school community, unless you can develop more positive networks between children and young people within a school environment, then that is going to undercut the efficacy of education. I really see it as very complimentary. In terms of your practical question on how many hours that would be, it depends on the program, it depends on the school and it depends on the school population. I do not think you can make a general response to that, but in principle these sorts of initiatives support education, because for those being bullied being able to engage in a positive way, the school curriculum is compromised anyway.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I am interested in what the young people who are participating in your survey and who contact the helpline want to happen in regards to bullying in general? Is there a specific difference in terms of cyber bullying about the remedies that they want to make it stop? What do they tell you they want to happen?

Mr DALGLEISH: They ring us for many different motivations. However, on the whole they would dearly like, and what we cannot guarantee them, of course, is that they would like it to stop. So they ring us and often they have not spoken about this with other people apart from maybe their friends and peers. That is a common response. Often we are the first adults that they ring about this problem and they say to us, "Can you stop that, can you help me stop this from happening". In terms of cyber bullying, again the nature of the bullying is, in my personal view, so much more insidious. We have young women ringing us to say that graphic and very inappropriate photographs, videos and so on are being distributed across the school community. Young women ring us and say that their identity has been stolen in such a way that someone is hurting them by sending adverse emails to their friendship circle, and things like that.

As well as children and young people wanting it to stop they also want an adult to understand their concerns and understand how that has made them anxious and depressed. They want also some strategies about how they can improve their own wellbeing, because bullying directly attacks a young person's confidence, self-esteem and self-efficacy.

Earlier a question was asked that I did not fully answer. We work with young people about differentiating between their self-worth and how they may feel as a consequence of bullying. Earlier the Hon. Marie Ficarra asked how we know that what we are doing is effective. This overlaps the question I am answering. Every year we do a client satisfaction survey of children and young people who use Kids Help Line services. We use Scot Miller's evaluation framework. He is a Texas academic who has done a lot of work with telephone online counselling services and we use his evaluation framework because it is evidence based. The key issues that we talk to young people about are, first, does the contact that the person has had with the Kids Help Line counsellor given the person ideas and confidence to be better able to control this issue in their environment; and the second thing we ask children and young people is whether they were satisfied with the contact that they had with the counsellor. That is more about the therapeutic alliance in the relationship that they develop.

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[1] Mr Dalgleish advised the Committee that he inadvertently misquoted the figure. Mr Dalgleish requested that the transcript be amended to note "One in five students are frightened during most of their school day and 7% of US eight graders stayed at home at least 1 day a month due to bullying".

We know, and it is noted in the submission, and it is quite gratifying to us to know, that more than 90 per cent of children and young people say that the assistance that we have provided them has increased their self-efficacy on the presenting problems. That applies equally to bullying. Children and young people are looking at "How can I can stop it" and "How can I feel better as a person, despite this experience that has been directed at me".

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: When they want assistance to stop, this is where cyber bullying becomes very difficult to manage. This morning the Committee heard evidence that there is an increasing duty of care upon schools, and that is appropriate given how much teaching and learning happens online both inside and outside the classroom. Do you have any sense of whether it is something that schools and parents need to do? Do you have any ideas about how we can encourage those young people to seek that support, particularly in relation to cyber bullying, where things can be done such as blocking individuals?

Mr DALGLEISH: Yes. There are various websites nationally that will assist young people in terms of managing Internet safety. The Commonwealth Government has a website, I cannot remember the name.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Is it Netalert?

Mr DALGLEISH: Yes. In talking to the Kids Help Line, that is in partnership with Optus. We had other information to assist children and young people to be safe on the net. The issue with cyber bullying is that it is not just the technology, it is the bullying behaviour itself. Interestingly, there has been a lot of debate about cyber bullying as a new form of bullying, and that different types of children and young people do cyber bullying compared to face-to-face bullying. These issues have been researched.

Our surveys show that for nearly 50 per cent of cyber bullying instances, it is really a continuation of the face-to-face bullying. The children know who the bully is and they have been bullied by this person in a face-to-face situation and that is now being extended online. It is not simply about how to be safe on the Internet, how to safely use technology. Those things are very important but the key issue is that this is bullying that is often associated with a pattern that has already been established and, really, you have to end the bullying behaviour itself to stop the cyber bullying occurring.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: My questions relate to the sensitive issue of bullying associated with sexual matters. The terminology issue is that it is hard to be very specific because obviously you have pressure and harassment.

Mr DALGLEISH: Yes.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: That can then border over into sexual assault, I suppose, in a criminal sense.

Mr DALGLEISH: Yes, certainly.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: In terms of the work that your organisation has done are you able to give any comment about the nature and incidence of bullying and harassment associated with sexual matters?

Mr DALGLEISH: Yes. I put it in the context that sexual material is meant to denigrate and is meant to harass the victim. In cyber bullying our research and other people's research shows that people bully in various ways, through emails, through chat rooms, through social networking sites. Again, it is a continuation of the power imbalance where someone with the power of anonymity in terms of cyber bullying is out to harass another person. Sexualised material, I believe, is extremely serious in itself but simply it is another form of harassment that fits a classic bullying pattern. Of course, in some situations we know also that paedophiles who wish to coach children and young people in terms of contact and sexual matters will also use the Internet for that purpose. So, this is cross-generational nature, but in terms of the work that we are doing, generally it is, again, about kids' peer group involvement, and sexualised content is another form of harassment, particularly towards young women.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Putting aside the cyber specific comments that was directed to, just generally speaking in terms of the helpline, people ringing up confiding in the organisation with respect to matters sexual, can you give us some insight into that in relation to claims of harassment and pressure being brought to bear by other young people upon themselves?

Mr DALGLEISH: Children and young people certainly talk to us about that from time to time. Our position is that in talking to a young person if we believe that there is immediate harm or risk to that young person, then we work with that young person to get their agreement to refer that matter to a statutory agency. We have an ability and an agreement with New South Wales police and also DOCS child protection agency where we can immediately refer a young person into what we call a three-way conversation with a police officer or someone from DOCS. So if there is immediate harm or risk to a child identified we then trigger that response, because we believe the first priority is to protect the child, and that is how we respond to this.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Is there much incidence of this or is it out of the whole scope of issues you deal with?

Mr DALGLEISH: Oh no. In any one year across Australia we have what would be classed as a duty of care, and my memory is that we have at least 560 instances where we would immediately do that action.

CHAIR: Would it be possible to provide us with that sort of information from a New South Wales perspective and comparative perhaps with other States?

Mr DALGLEISH: Yes. We are just about to finish our 2008 data analysis of Kids Helpline, so we would be able to give you a report in terms of New South Wales contacts and their nature.

CHAIR: That would be wonderful. In terms of New South Wales, you have talked about other States and their involvement with Kids Helpline. I constantly hear the story of not enough school counsellors in New South Wales and the ratio of school counsellors is pretty poor. I was wondering what feedback you might be receiving in that respect and do you think that school counsellors have more of a role to play in the whole bullying aspect than is currently occurring?

Mr DALGLEISH: I do not have specific information at hand about how children and young people in New South Wales have seen school counsellors. But in terms of the role we play with school counsellors, children and young people to respond to bullying, as I said before, research indicates that children and young people, for all the reasons I said before, tend not to go to adults in a face-to-face situation to seek assistance. So whether it is Kids Helpline or whether it is some other medium I guess what we are saying is that there needs to be some bridge between the face-to-face recourse children have in their own local environment and a child or young person themselves who are sitting there saying, "Look, I'm being bullied. I feel powerless about that. I'm anxious; I'm depressed by this. Things aren't going right in my family because of this. What do I do about this? I really don't want to talk to the adults around me; this is too embarrassing; I need something else to do", and that is the link that we can provide.

CHAIR: You mentioned capacity to grow. Do you see there is a huge unmet need here?

Mr DALGLEISH: Oh yes. In general, getting away from the bullying situation itself, there are a lot of social commentators who noted the increasing anxiety and depression of children and young people in our community. The Institute of Health and Welfare is one of those. This is not only a domestic issue; internationally we are finding the same things. In terms of Kids Helpline, the complexity of our calls is increasing every year. For instance, in terms of suicide calls, the number of calls we get from children and young people who have suicidal ideation has increased by something like 46 per cent in the past three or four years. So there is a huge unmet need in our community in terms of the anxiety and depression of children and young people. That is one of the reasons why the Federal Government has provided us with some funding to look at mental health strategies for children and young people through our telephone and online counselling.

So there is a huge unmet need. What we believe is that we need to talk to governments, to corporates, to the community, to other service providers about how best we can rationalise and use our resources to meet the needs of children and young people in the community.

CHAIR: Finally, we are asking nearly everybody the same question in terms of our report because we do not want it to be one that stays on a desk or in a drawer: What do you see we could be achieving with this report? What sort of outcomes would you like to see us come up with?

Mr DALGLEISH: I think if we can get an outcome where at each school across New South Wales there is an awareness of bullying and there is a dialogue between children, young people, educators, service

providers in their community about what each community can do at a local level to prevent and inhibit bullying emerging, I think that would be a wonderful outcome.

CHAIR: We will work towards it. Thank you very much.

(The witnesses withdrew)

(Luncheon adjournment)

MARILYN CAMPBELL, School of Learning and Professional Studies, Queensland University of Technology, affirmed and examined:

CHAIR: Welcome to the first day of our inquiry into bullying of children and young people. Thank you for your submission and for coming in today. Do you wish to make an opening statement?

Dr CAMPBELL: I would like to say that I have been a practitioner in schools for 30 years. I have taught early childhood and primary and secondary. I have been a teacher librarian in primary and secondary, a school counsellor in primary and secondary and I have supervised school counsellors. In the latter part of my career I have "retired" to university to inform the next generation of my wisdom! I suppose I have probably been invited because of my research and my expertise in cyber bullying. I understand about bullying as well. Of course cyber bullying is one form of bullying, but that is what I suppose I am famous or infamous for.

CHAIR: Thank you. Cyber bullying has been, as we thought would be the case, an issue that we consider to be most important. When we talk about definitions of bullying and about cyber bullying as opposed to face-to-face bullying, is it an extension of face-to-face bullying, the same thing or something completely different?

Dr CAMPBELL: I think the simple answer is that cyber bullying is bullying through technology. You can say either that it is a different form of bullying or it is a different medium of bullying with all the forms. I would tend to say that it is more a different medium that people use and they use it—I know it will sound silly—physically, because they threaten physical means: they fight, take pictures on their mobile phone camera and then put them on YouTube. There is a physicality to cyber bullying because young people have an online and an offline social life that is totally seamless. When we try to compartmentalise this and say, "This is cyber bullying and this is face-to-face bullying" it does not mean a great deal to young people. It is the same as saying, "Did you communicate with her?" What do you mean? Did I use the phone, did I see her face-to-face or did I use Skype? It is, "Yes, I communicated." I think it is about bullying and cyber is a medium where you can have physical, social, relational or covert bullying. All the different types of bullying that we know young people engage in have a form through the use of technology.

CHAIR: In your submission you talk about cyber bullying and bullying in general as a social problem that we cannot fix with technological fixes or with a legal solution. Can you unpack that a little in terms of where we go with it? As legislators we have to work out who is responsible for what and where, and the lines are very grey, particularly in a school environment. What is their duty of care when bullying occurs outside? Where do you see all this heading in terms of its resolution?

Dr CAMPBELL: One of the difficulties is that older people have not grown up with technology. We are the digital immigrants, whereas young people are the digital makers. We see that as a problem occurring through technology, so there must be a technological fix. I do not believe that. In fact, one of the difficulties happening in schools around cyber bullying at the moment is that cyber safety, which is a broader overarching type of concept, includes cyber bullying but also paedophilia, pornography, addiction and identity theft—the whole range of the dark side of technology. Cyber bullying is only one part of that. We have enough problems already in distinguishing bullying from aggression. We know that that is really important because there are different things we need to do to deal with bullies as opposed to aggressive kids who fight. That is already blurred and it is stopping progress in our attempts to reduce bullying in schools.

We are now confusing cyber bullying with paedophilia. Every time I am asked to go to a school and talk to parents they say, "We tell our kids not to put their name and address on facebook." That is good cyber safety. However, it does not have anything to do with bullying, because the person who is going to bully you already knows you. As a result, we have these newspaper quick fixes. What do you do about it? First you do this, then that, then that. It is not that simple. We would not be having this inquiry it if were. Governments all over the world would not be struggling with this problem if there were a simple fix. Bullying and cyber bullying are complex and deeply embedded social relationship problems. Therefore, I do not think that technology is a quick fix.

I am not a lawyer; I am a psychologist. However, I work with lawyers. The law is playing catch up in this area as it is in most areas of technology. That is the same with cyber bullying. It is a sad indictment of our society. We must say in a practical way whose responsibility it is. If we say that it takes the village to raise the child, unless everybody cooperates—that is, legators, leaders, including community leaders and school leaders,

parents, teachers and the kids—we will not be able to reduce the incidence of bullying. We cannot be thinking, "Who is to blame?" If might take a legalistic point of view and say, "So, Mary was really ostracizing John. She could not stand him; would not have lunch with him and called all "four eyes" continuously. She called him that "hairy four-eyed person". She was really nasty and got on the net at home and went for him again." Whose fault is it? Where do we look for something?

With cyber bullying we can no longer say that our laws and schools—in fact, our whole society—is built on geographical boundaries. We say in law "no trespassing" because this is the school grounds, the schoolyard and the school gate. It is a very geographically defined area. We say about our home, "This is my bit of property." Cyberspace has no geographical boundaries. This is one of the huge difficulties in law because, as members know, our law is built on common law and precedents. We have no precedents in this area. We have a huge underlying difficulty in our society with regard to our concept of a geographical boundary. I have a duty care if I am teaching in my classroom. Am I still responsible if I am down at the supermarket?

Cyberspace removes the concept that we have built the law upon and said, "You are responsible for the children here and you are responsible for the children there." If we try to divide that up, we will not get anywhere. If you ask me for my solution, I do not have one. It is in our society; it is what we think of when we consider the law and our responsibilities. We have divided up our responsibilities into different roles. I have a role as a teacher, parent and grandparent. But are they all the same role? Am I in one community? Probably not anymore. That is why we have specialised and done this. It is going to be a very difficult problem.

CHAIR: Clearly from your wealth of practical experience you have identified this as a really big problem, otherwise you would not have specialised to the point you have. I am interested in what you saw not working in the classroom from a teaching point of view and then from a counselling point of view. What is going on out there in the school environment? Perhaps that is where we should be working on these problems.

Dr CAMPBELL: Again the difficulty relates to our systems. In education we do everything in bulk. We do not have the luxury of educating individuals or small groups; everything has to be done in bulk. Everything has to be done in bulk and one size has to fit all, but of course it does not. We are talking about 20 per cent of kids who are involved in bullying and about 80 per cent of kids who are not involved in bullying. I am sure you have heard from a lot of other people about bystanders and the power of bystanders to be able to do this. The difficulty in schools is that we have a punitive society. Our punitive society believes that if it punishes people who do the wrong thing they will stop doing the wrong thing and it will deter other people from doing it. That has been shown not to work, but we still do it.

That is mirrored in the school where you have to be strong and you have to have zero tolerance. Principals have banged their hands on the table and said, "I am going to stamp out bullying"—really violent type stuff—because people in society perceive that if they punish children they will stop doing things. If we punish them and we are seen to be strong and to have good discipline we will stop this. Of course, the only problem is that there are not all that many bullies; there are more victims than there are bullies. However, we are not handling the bullies because we concentrate on the victims. I am not saying that we should not support the victims, but we make too much of supporting the victims when instead we should be trying to change the behaviour of the bullies.

I totally disagree with those who say, "We do not talk about anxiety, depression or bullying because everything should be about resilience, wellbeing and about being lovely. We do not name the problem and that cannot be included our talk." It would be nonsense to say that we can bully proof the whole school and parents can bully proof children. People are picked on because they are vulnerable. You cannot help it if you are homosexual. There is a huge amount of bullying about homosexuality; there is a huge amount of racial bullying; and there is a huge amount of bullying of kids with mental health problems, obese kids, and kids with red hair. It is not the victim's fault.

When I am training new psychologists I say to them, "If a child comes to you and says, 'I have been bullied' what would you do?" They say, "I will raise their self-esteem and I will show them how to stand up to the bullies." I then ask them, "What is your underlying message? What are you really telling them? You are telling them that it is their fault. If they had better self-esteem and they had been able to stand up to the bullies they would not have been bullied." That is the wrong message. Instead, the message should be: How are we going to help the children who have learnt to bully? I think there are two parts to that. One part is that very aggressive children come to a preparatory school or a kindergarten having learned from their families that if

they are aggressive they will get their own way. That happens in all stratums of society. We have domestic violence—

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Parliament is different from that?

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: It is the role of the underdog.

Dr CAMPBELL: They have learned to get their own way by being antisocial. Schools work with parents but some of those children learn to get their own way through antisocial behaviour. However, some of these children are still showing aggressive behaviour by the time they are about seven and eight. By that time they have figured out that if they are aggressive to most adults they will get a kick in the teeth; if they are aggressive to most children they will be beaten up; but it is really easy to take money off some kids in the tuckshop line. It is easy to belt up some kids.

There are some kids that they can make cry really easily, and that is so much fun and it gives them so much power. They then hone into thinking "I can get my own way. I have learnt that so-called aggression is wrong, but if I am subtle enough and if I pick as my target those kids who are far away from adults I will still get what I want." These kids go underground and they become wonderful bullies. If they are really bright they become boardroom bullies.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Or a party room numbers person.

Dr CAMPBELL: If they are not so bright they often end up in jail.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Or both.

The Hon. TONY CATANZARITI: While you are on that issue, are you suggesting that we have to deal with the first stage, that is, when bullying starts?

Dr CAMPBELL: There are two stages.

The Hon. TONY CATANZARITI: What triggers one kid to bully another? Is it because they do not want to conform, or is it because they want to show dominance?

Dr CAMPBELL: They lack empathy.

The Hon. TONY CATANZARITI: How do you deal with that?

Dr CAMPBELL: You teach them.

The Hon. TONY CATANZARITI: Why are we are not teaching them?

Dr CAMPBELL: Most people assume that children are born with empathy. Most people assume that if I bullied you, you would feel the same things. True bullies lack empathy. In a family situation they will bully their younger siblings and they might even bully their mothers and fathers in order to get their own way. It depends on the dynamics of the family. It also depends on the kind of school environment into which they go. They might go into a school environment where the school is perpetuating a bullying culture from the principal down.

Schools such as that invite me to go in and talk to them and I sit there thinking, "I do not want to work with these guys. You are abusing your power and you are saying that I am wrong. Why bother? I am going to charge you money to do this but you do not want to listen to anything that I have to say. I have seen you abusing your power in the school." I often think to myself, "How can I work there?" and I do not. Some schools still have an inbuilt bullying culture. What do you do if you have a child who does not read very well, a child who does not spell very well, or a child who has difficulty controlling his or her emotions? What do you do if you have a child who has difficulty with empathy? You remediate and teach.

Sometimes parents have that empathy but the child does not get it. We do not know why; human behaviour is complex. Children who started out like that might then go into a school that perpetuates it, ignores it, or lets it fester. I agree with you totally: we need early intervention, but only with the parents. We cannot

have any impact on children, especially when they are young, without involving their parents. Their parents might not understand what they are doing. Maybe the parents are sitting around the dining room table and saying, "I got that guy today. He is not working for me any more. I am really going to show him." They do not have that empathy. The bottom line is that it is all about money; it is not about people or about looking after staff. So, maybe they are the kinds of values they got from their parents as well, because bullying is intergenerational as well.

The Hon. TONY CATANZARITI: So, how do you teach the parents?

Dr CAMPBELL: That is a hard call, a very hard call. But if you can get the parents when their children are in the early grades of school, most parents are a little bit interested in school at that stage. If you try to get them by high school you do not have them any more. So, I suppose it is about using a wider brush than just all aggressive children—and you may as well use it with all aggressive children because some of those are going to go on to be bullies, not all of them. But, aggression in our society is not supposed to be tolerated either.

The Hon. TONY CATANZARITI: So you get to a situation where there seems to be a need to bring it out in the open more and get people to understand that this is happening? You get the parents to understand there has to be another way in the household? Is that a campaign that, say, governments should take on?

Dr CAMPBELL: They did it with domestic violence, very successfully. They have done it with AIDS.

CHAIR: How do you measure that the domestic violence campaign has been successful?

Dr CAMPBELL: I saw it. I am sorry, you would need an epidemiologist.

CHAIR: Statistically we are not sure as well. There is an increase in reporting. So we have to evaluate that. But I guess what we want to know with bullying as well how do we assess the level of the problem and the outcome of something if you roll it out across all children in New South Wales or nationally? How do you measure the success or failure of something like that?

Dr CAMPBELL: You can only take a sample, as one does. You can never do the whole population. What you will find is that, of course, you will get an increase in reporting but that only has to be a good thing. Especially with cyber bullying, you are not going to know unless the kids tell us and at the moment they do not tell us because we will make it worse, they feel humiliated and embarrassed that they have to lose their playground time to learn to stand up to bullies and have better self-esteem. Bullies do not get helped. It is like putting the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff. If we can try to look at what bullies do.

My second point is these are usually face-to-face bullies. But there is another time, another peak, that bullying starts and that is just before adolescence. Because, with adolescence, with the peer pressure and the social pecking order in adolescence a lot of kids will try out bullying behaviour. What happens is, therefore, in grades 7, 8 and 9 you get a peak of both cyber bullying and face-to-face bullying. This trails off in years 11 and 12 when a lot of these kids have tried out—I will be with Draco Malfoy because his dad has all the power, like Tom Brown, I will be his friend and I will hang around with them and I will not be touched by the bullies and maybe I will get some of his popularity.

As they grow up a little bit more, and they are basically empathetic kids, they think that is probably not the best thing to do, and this is where a lot of cyber bullying starts as well. The difficulty of cyber bully is the disinhibition. That is, you have a screen in front of you. So, kids will write things. I would be absolutely humiliated if I had to write down all the things I said about John in a note and give it to him—I know it is being recorded—but I am quite happy to say it to his face. But I am not going to write it down because I think that is rude and is a permanent product, but kids nowadays are exactly the opposite. Although they write something down but they will never say to their face, it would be so embarrassing, like, it would be so uncool. So it is a complete switch from what we think.

If we do not increase that reporting of cyber bullying—and I think that is a major education path there—obviously I think it is education, both in that first phase for aggressive children, involving their parents, but then I think a lot of education could be done in schools about cyber bullying and there are a lot of lovely little things on the net, like net alert, about cyber bullying, not just all the other things they do, around American resources, English resources, that we could use as a package for schools to teach about cyber bullying in pastoral care classes, in health and physical education and all of those kinds of things. Call me optimistic, if you

want to, to be able to get the money to put it in, but it is about stopping kids cyber bullying and I think that would be a significant way to reduce it—I do not think we are ever going to get rid of it—but in the past 30 years at least we have made a huge cultural shift. In the 1950s bullying was character building, it is good for you, it is a rite of childhood passage, everybody goes through it—"It made me tough, look at what I am today. I would not have been like this without being bullied at school." That kind of public perception, even though there are some people who still think that, has mainly passed. That is a huge public shift, which I think is great. I think more people are concerned about bullying. I think they understand the long-term consequences, and especially the long-term psychological consequences, not the physical.

I was talking to some second-year students and I asked them to say what was their worst experience at school. This guy who was 18 stood in the class and said, in front of all these people, "When I was in grade 5 I was playing soccer and I broke my leg. The principal came out and said 'Stop being such a wimp, stand up and get on with the game.'" He said the pain in his broken leg was nothing compared to the humiliation he felt from what the principal said him. He said, "That was my worst moment at school." He was almost in tears saying it. This was a guy who did not have any particular mental health problems, he was just a guy learning to be a teacher. But that stuck with him as his worst moment in school, being humiliated in front of his friends. I am sure that principal did not mean to bully him in that way. I am just saying that psychological hurt remains with people long after the physical is forgotten.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: You are called in as a consultant to work with schools that recognise they have a bullying culture?

Dr CAMPBELL: I would not say that. I would say they like to be seen to be doing something and that my talking to the parents might seem a good thing or my rewriting their bullying policy. At one school I said no, I will not. They said what do you mean you will not? I said because you do not own it then. I had already talked to their staff and had an hour of being berated that I did not know what I was talking about, about bullying, because they would not even agree to a definition for it. He said, "You write it." I said, "Sorry, no."

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Are these schools in Queensland, in New South Wales—they could be anywhere?

Dr CAMPBELL: They could be anywhere.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Yet, we get Department of Education and Training bureaucrats telling us they have all these wonderful policies and they are monitoring them?

The Dr CAMPBELL: Of course they do. I am not saying that all schools are like that at all. There are really good news stories about peer buddying systems. A lot is about a small independent school. Religious schools often have a different atmosphere to the school rather than a very large school. Often they have more of a pastoral care role and have a lot of things. I mean, to help victim kids, you put a social group around them. Kids are very altruistic. I have asked kids, "Look, I've got this kid in grade 5 here. You know, I am so old." They go, "Yeah." I say, "I'm not even a boy." They go, "No." I say, "I don't know how to help him, but kids are picking on him all the time. He seems all right to me, but obviously he's not. What's wrong with him? What's it mean to be cool as a grade 5 boy in the school? Will you help me?" And they'll tell me everything. Then I say, "Would you mind if you come and meet him." We get a group and I say, "Now, you don't have to be his friend because nobody can make anybody like each other, but can you just tell me, I'll come back and see you next week, and can you tell me what it's been like? Who's picking on him? What's going on?" Well, they will want to come back and tell on him and say what he did and what everybody else did. Of course, nothing happened because they were his little coterie of friends who were following him around all the time. He actually got accepted by these kids, who gradually came to know him. He turned out to be really good friends with this group and, of course, nobody picked on him because he had social support because he was not vulnerable anymore.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Why do I find your last statement unbelievably depressing: "Nobody picked on him because he was not vulnerable"? Is it just impossible to conceive of a schoolyard where people who are vulnerable are not picked on? Is it impossible to conceive of an educational program that will allow the lonely kid, the weak kid, the fat kid to be left alone? I should not have asked that question, should I?

Dr CAMPBELL: You know the answer.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Yes. Let me ask some serious questions. This morning we heard about the difference between cyber bullying and, if you like, face-to-face bullying or physical bullying. The suggestion this morning was that cyber bullying can happen in one hit because once you put something on the Internet it goes all over the place. Do you agree with that or do you think that the definition of cyber bullying should still have the intention of repeated activity associated with it?

Dr CAMPBELL: This is a very moot point in academia at the moment because if we say that the three main pillars of bullying are an imbalance of power, repetition and intent to hurt, once you use technology it seems to blur those distinctions. So, some people now are arguing and saying the repetition actually comes from the amount of people who watch it rather than this one person continually doing this.

Dr JOHN KAYE: So it is repetition of outcome rather than repetition of intent?

Dr CAMPBELL: Well, it is almost a repetition of intent as well, if you want to argue that way, because they know all these people are going to watch it.

Dr JOHN KAYE: But it is a one-off thing? I send an email that says Marie Ficarra is a nasty person. I put that out. It goes to a lot of people, but I only did it once?

Dr CAMPBELL: Being a practitioner probably more than an academic, I do not think that it is all that terribly important. One of the things I do in trying to provoke controversy in some of my workshops is to say, well, was it bullying when Princess Diana was killed? Was there any intent to hurt? Was there an imbalance of power? Was it repetitious? You can divide the room and some people will say something things and some people will say others. I think that for me it is not about the repetition; it is the imbalance of power. I think that it is the imbalance of power that is not most understood by most schools, parents and the community. The repetition part for me, if you say this was a terrible and awful thing, like the girl at Werribee—that was a one-off, if you want to say that—but it was so shocking that I do not think people would not say that it was bullying. I do not think that is as much a problem as the problem of the imbalance of power because what people do is that they think, well, I sent you a nasty email and you sent one back to me. So I sent another one to you, I then included Marie. So Marie, you and I all had nasty emails flowing back and forth.

Now, I would presume that there is intent to hurt and there is repetition, but is there an imbalance of power because you retaliated? To me the imbalance of power means that the victim becomes defenceless. You could argue a lot. You could argue about provocative victims. You could argue about victim bullies. But if we take the straight type of victim, they do not have any power. You are either bigger, you are stronger. You have some power that you are abusing over me. So, we know that developmentally kids can only understand some parts of bullying. Because there are three concepts, they cannot imagine three concepts all at once. So, they often miss out on the imbalance of power, or they will forget the repetition or they will forget the intent to hurt.

Might I say that some adults also have difficulty in conceptualising that there must be those three elements to actually call it bullying; they find it very difficult to distinguish between aggression and bullying. If we want to stop aggression, that is good, but it is not necessarily stopping bullying. If we punish somebody who is aggressed or if we do peer mediation, that might help, but peer mediation and punishment do not help with bullies, and that has been shown over and over again. Systemically what our schools are doing is punishing, and it does not work. But we keep doing it because we have to because it is the system, and we need to be seen to be strong. It does not matter that it does not work.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: The Committee heard evidence this morning that one of the different things with cyber bullying is that the bullies can become the bullied; they are actually interchangeable. The evidence suggested that young people had told this particular survey that 50 per cent of them had at another time been bullied, but they also had bullied other children themselves. I am wondering how that fits. You have given very strong evidence that there is a far more binary link around bullies and victims. Is it specifically an issue around cyber bullying that is blurring those issues? When you talk about specific things we can do for people and working with bullies in the beginning, I am unclear from your evidence where you see that blurred line between people behaving in both ways?

Dr CAMPBELL: There is evidence that face-to-face bullies have already been victims as well.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: How does that work in responding to that?

Dr CAMPBELL: How does it work?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Yes? Maybe I misunderstood. I thought you gave us very strong evidence that about 20 per cent of people are bullied and we need to give more support to bullies. From someone on this Committee, which will make recommendations about what governments should do, I am interested specifically in the issue around cyber bullying. We heard evidence this morning that the interchange between the bullied and the bully is that they can be the same people?

Dr CAMPBELL: Yes they can.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: How do we actually manage that?

Dr CAMPBELL: For me, I cannot see that makes any difference, if you have empathy training and social training with bullies and you show them how to get their own way without hurting other people, even if they have been a victim beforehand.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: You have talked about following young people treatment principles and not simplistic advice. Can you take us through the treatment principles that you think are the most important; I know you have an article on it but what are the key points?

Dr CAMPBELL: That was the one I did not bring but I think I can remember. It was about asking the child. A lot of schools and a lot of teachers are into solving, almost like detective work with bullies so a child comes and says, "Miss, so and so has been bullying me. I am really scared." And they say, "Who and where did it happen", and so they interrogate them. Then they say, "Okay. I'll deal with them now." And because they are very busy people in schools and this is a common method of solving fights and disputes, they apply this to bullying as well. Then what happens is that the victim is kind of left there. I go over and I get John and I make sure that he is suspended two days because he hurt Marie.

For me, that is not the way because I have disempowered Marie again. She was already disempowered when she came to me and I have further disempowered her. If I could take a little time and I know that teacher is very pressed for time and I know this method takes a little bit more time but I believe that it works better, I say to Marie, "Wow, I'm really honoured that you have trusted me to tell me this. You're really brave in doing that because I know you must be pretty scared about this and what's going to happen once you have told. How would you like me to help you?" A lot of teachers do not want to do that because they feel as if they have then lost their control back to the child, but it is like with reporting of sexual abuse.

Kids will report sexual abuse and you say, "You know we have to don't tell somebody" and they say, "No, I don't want you to." Even if Marie says, "I don't want you to do anything", et cetera, gradually talking with her you can gradually say, "But Marie, don't you want it to stop?" and that is the bottom line. And they normally then say yes. Then you say, "Okay, how are we going to do this?" Obviously with sexual abuse that is out the teacher's hands but it is that kind of sensitive, giving back the child some kind of control, that if they tell their father he is not going to say, "Tell me who's done this to you. I'll go and knock their block off". Parents are so concerned and emotionally involved, that is their first reaction and that is what happened with the two parents at Bing Lee a couple of months ago we went and bashed up the girl who was pulling their daughter. They got taken to court. It is not something that we want parents to do. Kids also fear what adults can do and in a school, teachers are incredibly powerful.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: When you take kids through that process, what do they want their schools to do? What do they want to happen?

Dr CAMPBELL: They are too egocentric worry about their school; they just want relief for themselves. It depends on the age; 15 and 16-year-olds will come and say, "Miss, I just needed to tell somebody. I don't want you to do anything. I just felt I had to tell somebody." "Do you want me to help in any other way? Can I check in on you or something?" If they are 15 and 16-year-old and I assess that the situation is not one of serious harm, I will say, "That's fine. You have told me. How do you think this will help?" "I suppose, just in case I can't". "So, you were trying me out. You were kind of figuring out if I was going to go off, or I was going to listen to you, or help you in the way you wanted to be helped?" "Yes". Kids do that. Kids go to councillors and teachers to try them out, "to see if they are to be any good; are they going to be nice to me. I'm not sure what I'm going to tell them. I'll tell them a little bit before I tell them the whole lot" type of stuff.

I would be quite happy with that. If it were a younger child, then I would probably say to them, "Who else can we ask to help? Who else do you trust? You have obviously trusted me. Who are the five people in your network that you can trust? Who else could we go to? Do you want me see the other kids? Do you not want me to see them? How are we going to go forward? What is going to be our plan?" And you include the child in the plan. The younger they are, the easier they are to move along with you—this is what I normally do—but I have included them so that they feel empowered that they can do something and the network then goes out in the school that the teachers can be trusted not to lose their block, not just to go off and punish, and then the retaliation comes back even worse.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: People talk about zero tolerance for bullying in our schools. How do we manage that? Do you have any suggestions about how we actually manage exactly what you just described, which is when a student comes to you and you do not necessarily do anything about that, other than open the door for further communication?

Dr CAMPBELL: I know it is complex behaviour. For me it is like a big telegraph day or something where mainly principals were in attendance and one said, "I have zero tolerance in my school." I said, "I wouldn't want to work in your school and have zero tolerance for anything. This is deeply entrenched human behaviour in our society and you are saying in your school you have no tolerance. That means you know it is going to be there, so therefore you have no tolerance for it. It is an untenable position. It is the same thing as saying you have absolutely no kind of tolerance for any kinds of fights." It is how we manage conflict; it is how we manage bullying; it is how we teach children; it is how we educate and socialise our kids. It is not about looking tough. It is not about recipes. I cannot just say, "This is what you say." You have to be an empathetic, caring person and hopefully our teachers and our schools are empathetic, caring people, but you cannot guarantee it.

There is no simple solution. It is about being empathetic to those kids and it is about embedding in our curriculum, without any add-on top stuff, with an overcrowded curriculum, about saying, "These are the ways that we can teach empathy when they are—stories; just reading stories to kids. How did the little pig feel when fox jumped on him? How do you feel about that? It is about thinking, "Let us look at the consequences. You have ended up here in my office because you were bullying. What decisions did you make along the way? I wonder if Lewis Hamilton had have thought should he follow team orders and lie to the stewards and then find out what it was? "If we drew a line, this is where your decision points were and this is where you ended up, if you could rewind the camera at what point would you have made a different decision?"

It is about teaching kids that they have different choices and about how they can make those choices, given that they may be difficult choices to do at the time. It is about educating our children, and it is not just about schools educating our children, it is about families, communities; it is about everybody educating our children.

CHAIR: Thank you. The secretariat staff may seek further clarification or questions or you may have further input. Those communication lines are open. We appreciate your evidence today and look forward to coming up with a report that reflects some of your comments.

(The witness withdrew)

KENNETH RIGBY, Adjunct Research Professor, Division of Education, Arts and Social Sciences, University of South Australia, Magill Campus, St Bernards Road, Magill South Australia 5072, and member of the National Centre Against Bullying, affirmed and examined:

CHAIR: Thank you for attending on the first day of our inquiry into bullying of children and young people. The Committee provides an opportunity for people appearing before the Committee to give a brief opening statement, if you would like to?

Professor RIGBY: Yes, for about five minutes or so. I mentioned that my position is that of Adjunct Professor at the University of South Australia and that I am part of the National Centre Against Bullying. I understand that other members of the centre met with you this morning.

CHAIR: Yes.

Professor RIGBY: I have seen the submission and it seems to me that a great deal of what they said would be what I could certainly strongly agree with. I hope I am not being too repetitious in saying some of the things that I am about to say.

CHAIR: You are quoted as an expert in a number of submissions, so I doubt that will be the case.

Professor RIGBY: My background initially was as a schoolteacher, so I come as one who is very familiar with the school environment. I was a schoolteacher in England and subsequently in Australia. I worked as a guidance officer for a while with the Education Department of South Australia. Since about 1990 I have been very much involved in trying to understand and make sense of school bullying, in the course of which I have written a few books—nine books altogether—on different aspects of bullying, and a good number of articles, of which 30 or 40 have been refereed.

I have spent a lot of time in schools. I visit schools to be concerned with professional development and do consultancy work. I have been doing consultancy work with a number of government agencies, which include the Attorney-General's Department and the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations and the South Australian Education Department. I have also worked on problems with bullying in a number of different countries, either because I have been invited to speak there or because I have been given a consultancy to go over there. They include Singapore, Malaysia, Korea, Israel, South Africa, Italy, Ireland, England, Canada, and the United States, and in some places I have been lucky enough to be asked to come back. I have a fair picture of what is going on around the world.

What I want to do is perhaps briefly mention five points, which I think that I am particularly interested in addressing at the moment. My first point has to do with my concern that the problem of bullying does seem to have remained in some respects the same as it was when I first started in the 1990s. I did a very big survey in the 1990s which involved 38,000 students. On the basis of that, it was estimated that about one child in six was being bullied on a weekly basis. That figure has generally been accepted. Some of them of course were bullied very severely, and some not so severely. That is a general figure that is widely quoted. There has been no big study done since, but from the small studies that have been done, it does seem that the position is very similar—that one in six is being bullied on a weekly basis.

I have been concerned very much with the evaluation of interventions. I have written a good deal about it, and I am sorry to say that the consensus appears to be that the achievements have been quite modest. There has been not a great deal of success that can be attributed to actual programs that have been implemented in different parts of the world. The average that we came to—I worked with a number of colleagues in producing a book titled *How Successful Can Interventions Be?*—is around a 15 per cent reduction in bullying or reduction in the number of children saying they were being victimised—about 15 per cent. When you think about that, what does it mean? There were six children being bullied before the program was implemented and you have five children being bullied afterwards. We are not making very big inroads into the problem. I think we have to be quite honest about that.

It seems to me that most of the bullying is in fact being done by a small minority of children. There is a great number of children who are not involved in bullying at all. They may be marginally involved sometimes, perhaps as bystanders, but on the whole probably about 10 per cent of children are doing a great deal of the bullying, probably 80 per cent. Nobody has put a figure on it, but it is a very high proportion. I believe really we

ought to be working very hard on the children who are at risk, and that means of course starting very early, particularly through parent education. I will elaborate on this point later about some things that parents can do.

My latest book, *Children and Bullying*, I have written to try to advise parents on some things that they might be able to do, especially by working with schools. The evidence relating to the effectiveness of interventions in cases of bullying is somewhat depressing. In the 1990s in a large sample I found that while half of them said that they had been bullied at some point in time, and some quite badly, about 30 per cent of these said that they had told a teacher. They are more likely to tell their parents, and more likely to tell their friends, even more.

Of that 30 per cent, it was possible to get information about what happened next. On about half the occasions, students reported that there had been no improvement in the situation. The teachers are not really being very effective in dealing with actual cases of bullying. They are much better with younger children with above a 70 per cent success rate, but for about the 15s and 16s, it was about a 40 per cent or 45 per cent success rate. We have still got 10 per cent of children saying that things got worse—not necessarily because the teacher made them worse, but they got worse. That is a sad situation.

One of the things that I have been doing over the past few months, and I would like to talk to you about it, is trying to put together a book that looks at the different methods that teachers can use to deal with cases of bullying. There is no sure-fire way of doing it. It is valuable saying that it is a complex situation, but it is good that teachers should know that there are six basic methods. I do not think a lot of teachers do know that, and I would like to see this kind of information, which I would be interested in talking about, going into teacher training because it could be quite important. That is all I will say at this stage.

CHAIR: When you say that the six methods should be included in teacher training, you think it is the teachers who should be empowered with that information in the context of the duty of care and in terms of the school environment?

Professor RIGBY: Yes.

CHAIR: It should be coming from the teachers in the first instance.

Professor RIGBY: Yes, parents too obviously have a responsibility, but teachers especially.

CHAIR: You have been all over the world talking and researching this for a number of years. In New South Wales we hear that all schools are required to have some sort of anti-bullying policy.

Professor RIGBY: Yes.

CHAIR: It would seem there is not really any evaluation of that.

Professor RIGBY: No.

CHAIR: Do you see your six steps and what should happen in respect of interventions being reflected in any of the policies that schools are undertaking? I guess I am looking for a model somewhere where you see it working best.

Professor RIGBY: I think some of the methods—not so much steps but alternative methods, or in fact even supplementary methods—are being employed in New South Wales. I noticed recently that there was some interest in "fogging"—I do not know whether you have come across that term—which I believe is being pushed by the New South Wales education department, which I think is a pretty good move. "Fogging" is an attempt to empower the victim so that the victim can prevent the bullying from becoming a major problem.

Mediation is something that was tried very hard in New South Wales for a number of years. I think there is less emphasis on it now. But the main method of dealing with bullying has been the method that has been used for thousands of years, namely, the traditional disciplinary method. I was involved in an online survey recently in a number of different countries. It turned out that there was great similarity between the United States, Australia, Norway and various other countries. Seventy-five per cent of teachers and counsellors said that even with a mild case of bullying, with a bit of teasing and taunting, you have to come down on the bully; you have to use some kind of sanction, penalty or punishment to deal with the situation.

Personally, I do not think that that is right. I think there are some situations in which punishment is inevitable, and even desirable, with criminal-type behaviour—and there is criminal behaviour involved in bullying. There are situations in which sanctions are, I think, acceptable, and even desirable. But it is the main method, and I think on the whole teachers are not aware of the alternatives, and that is because they are not educated about them in teacher training.

CHAIR: You say that things have remained much the same since the 1990s?

Professor RIGBY: Yes.

CHAIR: We are hearing a lot about cyber bullying at the moment, and a lot of our discussion today has centred around it. If things have remained the same since the 1990s, does that mean that cyber bullying is just another form of bullying and it is not impacting on the total incidence rate? That seems to fly in the face of what we hear anecdotally.

Professor RIGBY: Clearly, the advance of technology has resulted in new means of bullying, and this has almost certainly resulted in a general increase. But I think we have to bear in mind that traditional bullying makes up three times more than the cyber bullying, and very often the children who are being cyber bullied are being bullied in traditional means in the school. So there is an increase, I think, but it is not such a spectacular increase that one might suppose.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: You said that there is a lot that parents can do.

Professor RIGBY: Yes.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: You talk about preventative measures that you are about to publish in your next book. Without pre-empting anything that will be published, can you give us a few clues as to what we can include in our recommendations to make this inquiry relevant?

Professor RIGBY: I try to make a distinction between preventative and interventional. It is a false distinction in a way, because if you are intervening very well you are also preventing, and if you are preventing very well there is no need for any intervention. But there is a broad distinction between the two. I believe that many of the things that have been said for quite some years are very desirable—for example, having a good anti-bullying policy which is well supported. I think agreement by members of staff regarding the policy is important; otherwise the policy really does not get implemented. Surveillance in school is terribly important. Working in classrooms with children to educate them about bullying is also very important. My emphasis really is on what can be done when bullying occurs. I think parents, too, need to understand what can be done. Sometimes parents misunderstand what schools are trying to do. Sometimes parents know better than schools about what possibly could happen, and therefore should try to influence the schools. Do you want me to talk a little bit about what parents can do?

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Yes.

Professor RIGBY: Again, we make a distinction between what parents can do to make it less likely that a child will be bullied and less likely that the child will be a bully. It seems to me that there are methods of reducing the likelihood of bullying, starting quite early. It seems to me that securing attachment to the mother or the father as a care giver is very important, and our research is showing this. When children are very insecure as infants or babies, they are more likely to find it difficult to relate well with students at school as a result of being bullied. So, helping parents to become more attached or bonded to the children is important.

The other one is the use of childcare facilities. I think sometimes childcare facilities are not being used wisely. Sometimes children at too young an age are sent for too long a period into the childcare centre. Sometimes, of course, childcare centres are not as good as they should be. I think under two years of age, the ratio in Australia is 1:5—one carer to five children under the age of two. Maxine McKew, the Minister in this area, said it should be one in three, and most of the experts agree. It is not good.

Tasmania has a ratio of one in four. That is an improvement. Some people say it should be one in four. It has become one in four here. There are some schools in New South Wales which are better than that, one in three. We have to improve the quality, not just the quantity, of childcare facilities and advise our parents to use

them as wisely as they can. Some children are very vulnerable. Therefore, that has to be taken into account when childcare facilities are used.

Beyond that, we have all kinds of things that can be said about the nature of parenting as children get older. We know from the research that where you have heavy, cold authoritarian forms of parenting you are likely to produce a bully. Some children are more inclined to bully; some children are more predisposed to act aggressively, and especially they are at risk if there is this cold, authoritarian way. Children need to be controlled, obviously. I am not arguing in favour of permissiveness on the part of parents at all; that can be very dangerous. But I think where there is, "Do this because I tell you to do this", without giving any reason, with a tremendous amount of control and, most importantly, where the child feels negative about the parent, it does not help the parent; there is not that kind of loving relationship. Under those conditions, we know from research that bullying is likely to be greater. Of course, some parents model bullying—there is bullying in the family and some children copy that.

Some parents are neglectful, and they do not seek to control their children when they ought to be controlled. As I said, some children are extremely aggressive and need more control than others, and some parents do not seem to care very much about it. There is another factor that is relevant to children who become victims. It is true that, through some predisposition, some children are very timid and anxious and they are more likely to be bullied; they are born that way. But there are some parents who are overcontrolling; they do not allow the child to have a range of experiences that are necessary: to meet other kids, meet other families, and develop the necessary social skills. There is overprotection, or spoiling as we used to call it, which I think is important.

Those are the sorts of things that I think relate to parenting, and I have tried to explore them in the book. Then, of course, there are lots of things that parents can do that are sensible, if the child is being bullied. The book develops that as well. Broadly, it means making sure you have done everything, first of all to explore the options that the child might have, rather than marching them off to school immediately. Some parents, as you probably know, go up and sort out the bully themselves, which is disastrous, or try to confront the parents, which is almost as disastrous. It is a very bad strategy. But working out what are the options for the child and then, once you have realised that the options are not really working, if necessary going to the school—not in a confronting way—and saying, "We have a problem. I understand the child is being bullied. This is a worry. How can we work together over it?" Again, most of the book looks at how schools and parents can work together. Some schools are not all that sympathetic to parents, to be honest, and they do not want the parents to come to the school, and some parents are extremely paranoid about the school. So getting the two sides together is very important.

Dr JOHN KAYE: You suggested that inappropriate ratios in child care are leading to bullies later in life. What evidence do you base that on?

Professor RIGBY: There is a lady by the name of Anne Manne who wrote a book called *Motherhood: How Should We Care for Our Children?*, who has related to the evidence. Steve Biddulf in England has also provided some of the evidence.

Dr JOHN KAYE: So there is peer reviewed evidence to suggest that is the case?

Professor RIGBY: Yes.

Dr JOHN KAYE: In your paper you say that little research has been reported on the effectiveness of the different kinds of intervention. Then you say that teacher pre-service and in-service to fill in the gaps we urgently need to promote better training of teachers at both pre-service and in-service levels by giving them access to these different intervention strategies. In giving them access, you are proposing that we give them access to intervention strategies without knowing which ones work and without an evidence base to say what is working and what is not. Is that a dangerous thing to do?

Professor RIGBY: I sometimes feel a little cynical about the term "evidence based". There is not a great deal of evidence that strongly supports any particular method. The commonsense approach, which I hope I am taking, is to examine each of the methods and seek out what appears to be most relevant to the particular kind of problem. There is first, the kind of problem. We do tend to think of bullying as being at the extreme end of the continuum. Most bullying is teasing, taunting, excluding, which is not particularly severe, yet it is nasty to some children, extremely hurtful to some children. So we have to look at that. We also have to look at the

extreme end of the continuum where we are looking at people who assault others or completely isolate—that can be even more destructive—a particular individual. So we have to look at different methods according to the actual case of the bullying.

Also, I think we have to look at the readiness of a particular school to adopt a particular method. I am keen on some of the methods that some schools are not so keen on, for example, the support group method and the method of shared concern. Those two methods are important when they are used in the right circumstances, but if the school is not going to adopt those methods they are not likely to be successful. There are many different methods that I think will work if you work hard at the method and there is agreement regarding it. Some methods are useful in some situations but not others. Take restorative justice, which is one of the things that is being promoted a good deal. I believe restorative justice is a move in the right direction. I think it is particularly useful if the child is remorseful, if the child has a feeling of shame attached to what he or she has done or can be brought to feeling that what he or she has done is not right, can reflect on what he or she has done and how this person has been hurt. In some situations—quite a lot of situations—children will in fact respond well to the restorative justice approach, restorative practice approach. In some cases I do not think they will. In some cases you have a person who is not accepting any responsibility for what is happening. Therefore we have to work in a quite different way.

Dr JOHN KAYE: In terms of intervention—I am an engineer—do you think it is possible to write a flow chart that would guide a teacher to the appropriate intervention strategy for a particular situation, a particular school, a particular type of kid?

Professor RIGBY: I think something along those lines is possible but I think the first stage is to get teachers to understand the rationale underlying the different methods and how to apply them and then reflect upon the circumstances in which they are most likely to be effective. And that cannot be done quickly, and it cannot be done easily through a flow chart. But eventually I think, once it is properly understood what the pros and cons are of these methods—I am afraid this is not being done. I talk to new teachers very often and ask them, "What did you learn in your university education training?" Many of them say, "Very little". I was talking to Marilyn Campbell just before I came in and she said, "We give one lecture on it. I give it." One lecture and this is of very little use.

Dr JOHN KAYE: You mentioned both pre-service and in-service training on these issues. Many people argue that pre-service training should be kept to the basics, get teachers into the classroom where things become real and then deliver these sorts of lessons as in-service training. Do you subscribe to that theory?

Professor RIGBY: No. I think do both because I think after you have been teaching a while certain things become more relevant at that stage, but I would do both. I would make sure there was an understanding of the alternative methods and then later on hopefully revisit the schools or be invited to schools that were interested in understanding more about it.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I found your submission compellingly depressing because of the lack of results in terms of a lot of effort going in for little reward and kids still being harmed by this. One of the strong things was that you talk about this method devised by Pikas. This alerted me because I had read another submission where I noticed a few schools had mentioned this was a method that worked for them. Can you outline to the committee what is involved in that and, if possible, perhaps give a case study of how a school has adapted that well? You do not necessarily have to name the school unless you want to. Can you take us through what is involved in that and what you think particularly works and under what circumstances?

Professor RIGBY: I do not think the Pikas method or the shared concern method would apply to all cases but in some cases it seems to me quite relevant. There are two methods that are similar. One is a support group method, which involves talking to the victim, finding out how that person is feeling, why that person is so distressed and then coming to the people who have been doing the bullying, plus a few other kids who can be expected to be very supportive of the victim, sharing information to that group, getting each one of them to make a suggestion as to what they would do or commit themselves to what they will do and then leaving the kids to work it out but of course monitoring the situation. I mention this first because this is similar to the shared concern method, the difference being that you begin by talking to the individuals who have been identified as the kid doing the bullying and sharing your concern about what has been happening. It is a fairly confrontational method.

Having said that, you wait to see whether in fact they acknowledge that this kid is having a bad time, not acknowledge that they have done anything—it is not a non-blame method— but when they have acknowledged that, yes, the kid is having a bad time, one says what can we do about it. Then you elicit some actual steps they will say, we will see you again and see how things are going. Once individuals in this group have started doing something and you have evidence, then you can bring them together - the three or four bullies or ex bullies or suspected bullies - and then you can start formulating a plan with them about how they will meet with the victim, who will come in—of course, a victim does not have to and just occasionally the victim does not want to but usually the victim will with proper persuasion—and at that meeting you work out what a good solution would be.

I have been involved in a study supported by DEEWR, and it has involved me in collecting data from 17 schools in Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria and Tasmania. All schools felt the shared concern method was a good idea. Therefore some of them were biased in favour of the method. Fifteen of the 17 produced good results. There were two that were not all that good.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: If I can just stop there, this morning we talked a lot about, you can learn a lot from the things that do not work as well. Can you explain why you think in those two schools—

Professor RIGBY: Yes. I know why one of them did not work; because the teacher who used the method made a big mistake. Instead of talking to the boys individually—by the way, it is usually used in secondary schools but sometimes in primary—she thought she could sort it out by meeting with a group. It is very difficult talking to three or four children who feel quite naturally justified in what they are doing, rather than talking one-to-one. So there must be some kind of training to be able to work one-to-one with these people, without blaming them and without getting into a rage—which is what you feel like doing sometimes—but listening to them and putting to them the matters of concern, and it usually works.

Yes, I think we can learn something from when things go wrong. Sometimes the situation is a very difficult one. For example, I can give you a case study of a bullying, which began when an Australian boy was continually making fun and jeering at Italian kids. He was calling them wogs and being really quite nasty and destructive. So some Italian kids, in an Italian neighbourhood, decided to bully him. I heard mention of the term "provocative victims" and there are provocative victims and they are really quite difficult to work with because they are partly to blame. Most kids are not to blame if they are bullied, but 10 to 20 per cent are bully victims— sometimes they are in the role of the bully and sometimes they are in the role of the victim. I actually think the Shared-Concern method is the best one when you are trying to deal with that sort of situation. But it was a tricky one and it was not handled that well in this case.

So those were two that did not work all that well but the bulk of them were like a dream. If I could just mention one of them that involved a teacher who had been bullied by some students on an excursion—actually it was at a special school that this happened at—and the teacher was bullied badly and he was, I must say, very brave in agreeing to be involved in this. He was eventually brought into the final meeting after the students had got to understand the harm they had been doing. It seems to me that it can work even when teachers are the victims and teachers are the victims from time to time.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Is there any evidence that we are experiencing more, the same or less levels of bullying in schools involving children and young people than has been the case in the past?

Professor RIGBY: I do not know of any evidence. The best study I know of was done in the United Kingdom by Peter Smith and a colleague, where over a ten-year period they monitored the extent to which victimisation was occurring. Some people say that the more you talk about bullying the more bullying there will be but in point of fact—

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: The more reporting of?

Professor RIGBY: The more reporting, exactly. There was a slight reduction over a ten-year period. That was before cyber bullying came in. My guess is that it has stayed much the same but there has been no big study in Australia. The small studies have come up with this figure of one-in-six, which I mentioned earlier, which is very similar. By the way that figure depends upon the age group that you are looking at. If you are looking at the first two years of secondary school there tends to be rather a lot of it. It is coming down actually in primary. It goes up again and then comes down again. So the age of the child is important and there are fairly

big differences between schools, so you need a big sample to be sure. I think the situation has not changed very much but there is a great deal more awareness, of course.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: It can be articulated that there has been—and some of the people who have given evidence have touched on this—a reduction or diminishment of empathy that people exercise towards each other these days?

Professor RIGBY: Yes.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Perhaps it can be argued that our culture popular culture has contributed to this?

Professor RIGBY: Yes.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: The claim has been made that since reality television programs have commenced some of this behaviour is attributed to that. Do you think that these broader cultural issues, in that they provide a setting for society, have implications in this discussion about the issue of bullying by young people?

Professor RIGBY: Yes but the problem, of course, is it very difficult to know how it will change the culture because it is such a big thing. The media is an important factor in this. I do not know what kind of legislation would be appropriate but I personally would like to see a great deal less violence in the media. But it is not just violence; it is watching films in which people are manipulating and upsetting and putting other people down, which is important. If I may say so, I think one of the unfortunate things that does happen—dare I say this—that looking at parliamentary procedures or business on the television, I must say a great deal of bullying is being modelled at that stage. How you overcome that I really do not know.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Do you have any comments about any changes in what appears to be a propensity of bullying by females in Australia?

Professor RIGBY: There has certainly been a great deal of noise about it.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: That is what I am endeavouring to get out. Is that popular comment or—

Professor RIGBY: I think so. The figures I have seen do not indicate that there has been a colossal rise in violence and vicious behaviour by girls. To a large extent it is a media beat up, I think.

CHAIR: What outcomes would you like to see the Committee achieve as it prepares its report? What would be the best recommendations the Committee could make?

Professor RIGBY: There are lots of statements made about "Bullying must stop. Stop the bullying." I am not really sure that statements of that kind, which sound good, are really going to change much. I am more concerned with recommendations that sound, perhaps, quite small but can have an effect. One of the things that occurs to me is that very often what is supposed to be done in schools is not being done. Some schools have excellent anti-bullying policies and programs and some do not. What I would like to see is every school being expected or required to indicate on the web, through their school site, what they are actually doing about bullying. I do not think this means a massive increase in resources because many schools are doing it already but some schools are not. I think if parents and others knew what the school was being committed to it would really help a lot.

I am encouraged to say that because I have been in touch with the state of New Jersey's legislative body and they have done this. They have found that it has made quite a difference. It seems a very modest proposal but I think it is one that can easily be implemented and at the moment I am trying to persuade the South Australian education department to do this. It reassures parents to a large extent that the school is actually doing something. Of course, once you make a statement as to what you are actually doing there is a greater likelihood to do it.

CHAIR: That is a good recommendation. The Committee discussed earlier with witnesses about schools having a bullying policy in place but the question is how we see those polices are implemented. I am concerned by the second part of that. I am wondering how you would get that information?

Professor RIGBY: It is very hard because if you are too stringent about what are the requirements, if you are saying "Here is a whole set of points. Now give us detailed information about how many people have been seen about bullying and what you have actually done" and so on, I do not think the schools will do it. I found in Connecticut that they have been trying very hard to get the schools to say precisely what they are doing and the schools are saying they are not going to do that. It has got to be realistic and therefore I am saying one realistic step in the right direction is to get schools far more public about what they are actually doing maybe along the line it becomes possible to monitor them in a more minute, detailed way. The other recommendation is trying to get much better eduction training provided in teacher training. This is part of the recommendation of the national safe school framework and it has never been carried out. There is very little research I am trying to get people to help to do this, to find out what precisely is being done. But I believe I know from the groups that I take that in many universities perhaps nothing has been done about it and it needs to be done.

CHAIR: The committee may be in touch with further feedback and questions as it goes forward. Thank you for coming all this way.

(The witness withdrew)

(Short adjournment)

CHRISTINE MASON, Secondary Principals Council of New South Wales, sworn and examined:

CHAIR: In what capacity do you appear before the committee?

Ms MASON: I am a member of the executive of the Secondary Principals Council of New South Wales and I look after student services.

CHAIR: Do you want to make an opening statement?

Ms MASON: I thank everyone for listening. It is nice to have an attentive audience for 45 minutes. It is an area that is of concern for all of us and every member of our society, in particular, the principals that I represent. The Secondary Principals Council provides support for principals and recognises that the main purpose of principals is to build safe and secure environments for children to come to so that they can learn most effectively. I have heard quite a few comments earlier today. I would have to say from getting the responses to the survey that I put out amongst our principals that there is a great deal of concern and commitment to implement recommendations or strategies that make a difference and that look after our kids.

CHAIR: What is being fed to you by your principals about the incidence and level of bullying? Today we have talked about cyber bullying. Do your principals tell you that the incidence level of, and the type of, bullying changed? Are the numbers of reports static or has it increased?

Ms MASON: When I constructed the survey I built it around the framework of this inquiry so I cannot really answer the question about whether incidents have increased. One of the pieces of information that I gathered from the replies was that there is bullying in schools amongst a smaller percentage of children. When I hear statements like "zero tolerance" that is really relating to the very overt forms of bullying, perhaps involving the violence. But from listening to people earlier today and also from the surveys I got back there are so many levels. It is so complex, the issue of bullying, and there are so many interventions that are meant at all different stages that need to happen to deal with it effectively. So bullying exists, certainly, but it is wrong to create the impression that it is rife amongst the large majority of children because it is not. That is not what I gleaned from the surveys that I got back.

CHAIR: You issued a survey amongst your principals and got back information?

Ms MASON: Yes, I did.

CHAIR: Are you surprised that the department appears not to follow up on a number of those issues? My understanding is that schools have got policies and have to have bullying policies in place but there is not the follow-up from the perspective of the department in a general sense; it is up to individual school education directors [SEDs] to see what is going on in their region to get feed back on the success or otherwise of those policies?

Ms MASON: The department has been restructured into regions and there is a great deal of focus put on regions managing their own area, and I think that is because of the size of the organisation when there are more than 2,000 schools. So it does not surprise me that there is not a central collection of that data. As a principal I know I have been asked to submit my school's discipline policy and also an anti-bullying plan. I believe that all principals would have been asked for that by their SEDs.

CHAIR: Is there feed back on the implementation and its success or otherwise?

Ms MASON: That would come through our principals assessment review [PAR]. We have a meeting each term with our SEDs and that information would be gleaned from individual SEDs with the principals that they supervise. I am not aware of any centralisation of that information.

CHAIR: In your submission you mention that student, staff and parents have got training from outside agencies. What sort of training? What agencies provide that training? How useful is it?

Ms MASON: Much of it is organised by the school's professional learning team. As a principal I would be aware of what is happening in my school and therefore I would target professional learning that is suitable for my school community, as would be the case for all principals. When I got the surveys back—and I

think in the survey you received today—people tap into a large number of organisations. I think a lot depends on where you are and what is available to you, and the location in which you live. Significant ones that I think many people would tap into are the mind matters and the department's No Way Bullying website. Also the anti-bullying policy that has been mentioned is quite comprehensive and easy to follow and it gives quite precise information to schools about what they need to do. The whole focus of it is doing it with your community. It is not just to get a policy out there; it is the process of doing it with your parents and teachers so that they can support what is in that plan.

Dr JOHN KAYE: I want to talk specifically about resources available to schools in developing their anti-bullying strategy. It seems from the Department of Education and Training or the New South Wales Government's submission there is a vast array of material that is thrown at principals when they come to develop their anti-bullying strategy. Do you think there is too much material and that it would be easier if it were narrowed and the principals would not have such a hard time if the choices were made more simple for them?

Ms MASON: If there was evidence that supported some strategies more than others I would say yes to the question. But what I have heard and read is that the strategies are not supported by evidence as being effective. Therefore, having a range of options for the vast number of schools in New South Wales that are all so different gives people more options to choose what suits their community. I can see an argument for and against what you are suggesting.

Dr JOHN KAYE: The department's policy, as it is transmitted to principals, is quite broad in what it allows them to do. Do you think that is appropriate and in no way makes it difficult for principals to make good decisions about anti-bullying policy and strategy in their schools?

Ms MASON: I think there is room for more direction from the department about strategies that would work. If this inquiry were to come up with that, I would think that would be worthwhile for principals.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Once a strategy is developed, are principals in general, as much as you can comment on this, happy with the resources that are available to implement the strategy? Are there specific targeted resources that ought to be provided to schools to help them implement the strategy?

Ms MASON: I know that all secondary schools would appreciate an increase in counsellor allocation to schools. We would like to see a 1.0 counsellor allocated to every secondary school that has a deputy principal attached to it. At the moment it is nowhere near that. I also am aware that there is a place for some training of teachers before they enter schools, and some training during the process of learning the craft as a teacher is also something that needs to continue.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Christine, you have identified specifically school counsellors as playing a key role in anti bullying. Some schools have deputy principals, student welfare or head teacher student welfare. Do they also play a role in implementing the anti-bullying strategy?

Ms MASON: They do. I think if you have access to a trained counsellor/psychologist within your school, the teaching body could get support from those people as to good strategies or how to implement strategies to support students who are being bullied or who are perpetrating the bullying behaviours. I think both. There is definitely a need for more training of teachers but access to counsellors and psychologists would also be of benefit to schools.

Dr JOHN KAYE: As to assessing the effectiveness of the strategy, I presume schools will by nature be reflective on their strategy and ask questions about how good it is or whether it needs to be improved. Are there formal points in the process where the strategy is assessed by the school?

Ms MASON: That would vary from school to school. There is no requirement on us to assess strategies rigidly unless we make it part of our annual school plan. If it is a target in the school plan, then, yes, you are required to have some evaluation and put that in your report based on the year's work. Some schools would be doing that, but it is not a requirement of all schools.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Do you think it should be a requirement of all schools, provided the requirement was connected with resources to do so?

Ms MASON: We are focusing on the issue of bullying now. It is serious and it has a serious impact on those who are affected by it. But schools have so much on their agenda and what they need to deal with. I think it depends on an individual school and the identification of the issue of bullying in that school. There may be some schools where it is not an issue at all. But another school might have a serious issue and then, yes, I would make it part of the school plan and put resources into solving it and professional learning.

Dr JOHN KAYE: We heard this morning suggestions about various programs that ought to be introduced into schools to strengthen social network, individual self-esteem and so on. Does the New South Wales Secondary Principals' Council consider that we are already at the point of curriculum saturation and pushing something in will require something else to be pushed out?

Ms MASON: What tends to happen is more things get pushed in and nothing gets pushed out. I would have to say that the Personal Development Health and Physical Education [PDHPE] curriculum, a significant component of that, does address building self-esteem and communication strategies for children both in the primary and secondary. So it is there in the curriculum already.

Dr JOHN KAYE: The PDHPE course is compulsory from years 1 to 10, is it not?

Ms MASON: Yes.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Every student in a New South Wales school, public or private, would study PDHPE from years 1 to 10 and that class would have all those ingredients?

Ms MASON: Yes. I think one of the issues to consider is that that is a teaching component of the curriculum and to measure the effect of teaching explicit curriculum as against modelling appropriate behaviour as well. Schools do both. It is in the curriculum. Whether or not the things in the curriculum can be improved, there is always room for improvement. There could be a refocus on what is in the PDHPE but there is a substantial amount there already.

Dr JOHN KAYE: That is a question, of course, we should direct to the Board of Studies?

Ms MASON: Yes, probably.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Thank you very much, Christine.

Ms MASON: You are welcome.

The Hon. TONY CATANZARITI: You took a survey of all your principals?

Ms MASON: Yes.

The Hon. TONY CATANZARITI: Did any indicate in their survey, or did a question in the survey relate to which age groups were more problematic?

Ms MASON: I did not have that in the survey that went out. When I created the first survey, I did have it focused on different years. But in the interest of getting very busy principals to respond, it was made more general a question, so it referred to students in years 7 to 12. However, I would support what I have heard here today that the prevalence is from years 7 to 10, most definitely. It starts to ease off in years 10, 11 and 12. I think in years 7 to 9 part of it is to do with students' needs to belong and they will do whatever it takes to get themselves belonging to a certain group. That is part of the reason why kids do not challenge it when they see someone being the victim of bullying behaviour.

The Hon. TONY CATANZARITI: What dialogue do you have with parents of the kids, both the victim and the perpetrator, whenever it is a problem?

Ms MASON: I can answer it from my position as a principal, and I would safely say that many others would do the same. If I have had an incidence of bullying I would contact both sets of parents and counsellor resources would be put into place to support both. In relation to the child who was the person perpetrating the bullying—I have one instance I am thinking of as I am talking about it—there was no cloudy issue over whether the other person was responsible or not. This child was given extensive counselling over a period of time and

that was part of the consequence before he was able to rejoin the group for face-to-face activities. You need to know that I am in the distance education school and the students come in and stay in a hostel for weeks at a time with their peers. The point there is that schools would access their school counsellor and would provide support to both the bully and the victim and that support would be designed for the person to recognise their behaviours and what they could do differently to move beyond that. I have seen growth in this particular student that I have in my mind as I am telling you the story.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: On page 1 of your submission you referred to some of the resource documents that are available. At point three you talk about the values in the New South Wales Public Schools document. I am generally familiar with that, but not specifically familiar. I am not sure whether you have the level of detail at your fingertips. Within that value statement, is there reference to bullying per se, or specifically with respect to bullying? I do not mean to put you on the spot, but if you are not sure the Committee can check that.

Ms MASON: I do not think there is. You would have to check it. From memory, the values document is about supporting values in public schools. As a principal with my school community we go through processes to identify the values that are important to us, then we look at our processes in our school to model those values, both through the student forum, through the parent forums and through teaching activities and so on. There is not an explicit link to that document and to the bullying behaviours.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: That document picks up the respects and responsibilities values?

Ms MASON: Yes.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Given that is an overarching document in terms of an enunciation of the underpinning values, and to that extent not meant to specifically deal with individual issues, do you think notwithstanding that, that it might be useful to elaborate within that document the issue of bullying? Amongst all those documents, does that one actually carry some more significant weight in terms of public education in this State?

Ms MASON: It is very much an underpinning document about values, yes. The danger for me in putting something explicit in there about bullying is that it is coming from the negative end, whereas the values as listed include value and diversity, to express it in a positive way.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Yes. In any event, there are explicit document which deal with anti-bullying as you say in point one.

Ms MASON: Yes. And the first two documents refer to the values in schools document.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Arising from your survey and what you know as a principal, what are the key barriers to implementing anti-bullying in schools? What do principals lament the most when they are trying to move on this issue?

Ms MASON: There is a sense of frustration about the strategies that are available to us not always working. You would pick up on that in the latest document that I have given you. People are very genuine about wanting to see bullying behaviours dealt with appropriately, but it is such a complex issue and its prevalence is, and I think it was Professor Kenneth talked about it at different levels, the more overt. You need different strategies all along the way.

I believe the key to it is establishing the values and developing your relationships within each school that give you the connections and the trust that is necessary to deal with bullying behaviours. There are many students who do report behaviours to teachers, and they do it to the teachers that they trust. I have been aware of teachers, once having that information, not really being confident about how to address it—what can we do? I think that is the real issue, lack of confidence in what works.

The Hon. TONY CATANZARITI: For clarification, your council, the Principals' Council, is that city based or State based?

Ms MASON: It is all of New South Wales secondary and central schools. Central schools go from kindergarten to year 12. Secondary schools go from year 7 to year 12. There is a difference between what we

see in bullying behaviours in secondary students from primary schools. I would advocate for early intervention, because working with families is a key strategy for all of us, teachers, students and parents, to develop more of an understanding of what bullying is and what needs to be done to combat it.

The Hon. TONY CATANZARITI: Did you get many responses from country people?

Ms MASON: Yes, I did.

The Hon. TONY CATANZARITI: Is there much difference between city and country in the survey?

Ms MASON: There were some differences, based on living in a community where everyone knows everyone, or a community that may have a value that belongs to that community, or a culture. The same thing happened in some Sydney schools where there might be a prevalent culture belonging to an area of Sydney. You could see that in the responses. If you are asking about the incidence of bullying, I could not comment on that in the way the survey was structured. I do not know if there are more in city school or more in country schools.

CHAIR: The Committee has heard a lot of evidence about transition periods being the key point where bullying increases, particularly with year 7 going into high school, that period. Have you noticed any difference, although you may not have enough information on this, in those schools in the country or some central schools or schools that have students from all of those levels from kindergarten to year 12? Is there a difference in bullying at those schools where there is not such a marked transition?

Ms MASON: I cannot comment directly on that from the basis of the survey, because I did not ask that question. Most of the principals were from year 7 to year 12 schools. But I did notice in the responses that a large number of strategies are directed at year 7 students. There seems to be some indication that when students enter year 7 in a new school there is a reshuffling of the power, particularly when a lot of primary schools come together. You see a bit of a spike in bullying behaviours during that period. Schools are clearly very proactive in looking at the transition and also in bringing in strategies specifically for year 7.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: In your submission you note that there are some non-government, non-departmental agencies that have been very successful in some of the programs that they run.

Ms MASON: Yes.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Have you seen that yourself? Or has that come from the survey or from your colleagues? Where do you gain that stand?

Ms MASON: Mostly from the survey responses. Sometimes police liaison officers. Some principals mentioned how terribly effective they were, but a small number said that they were useless. Again, it varies on the school and what is available in that school's local area, and probably the personalities as well.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Do any non-government programs stand out?

Ms MASON: The ones I put in the table on the last page, where I have numbers beside them, were the ones that people mentioned most often in their survey responses. That might give you an indication of their being used most often, and, therefore, people would have an expectation that they were more successful.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Today is the inquiry's first public hearing. The Committee has heard that training of teachers is not what it should be; that it is superficial and partially revisited; it could be much better; that some of the programs in place in schools are just "tick the box" and may not be rolled out properly. There seems to be a need for a better coordination of a whole of Department of Education and Training, perhaps a whole of community, approach. What would you like this Committee to recommend? Are there significant messages that you would like us to bring forth?

Ms MASON: I did jot down some points during the day while I was thinking. I think the teacher training—I personally do not know what the teachers are trained at in university; all I see is the young teachers that come to me, and they are fantastic. When they first come into a school their focus in secondary is usually on their KLA because they are trained in key learning areas. Understandably, if they are a mathematics teacher they are focusing on that subject to begin with. There are points of time limits to target that training, so give them some time to come into the school and develop a sense of what teaching is about. What they bring to it from uni

is important, but then once they are in school we need to provide additional support for them and quite specific instructions for them, if you like, if they do identify bullying behaviour. I think that is really important, because the teachers are the ones who are interacting face to face with the students; they need to know what support is there for them to support the students when something like that is happening. I would recommend something there—a focus maybe in the third year of teaching.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Do you think enough is done to increase the awareness of whole-of-school communities? I know it is hard in high school; we have heard that if you do not get parents in primary school you are less likely to get their attention in high school. I do not know whether you have got thoughts on that?

Ms MASON: Again, it varies so much from school to school and community to community. Many schools are very successful in getting their parents. I think the key is to work with parents in a positive environment; so, getting them in where you have got relationships and trust built. Then when something does go wrong you have got more of a chance if it does go wrong, because often when you have got positive dynamics working it does not. That is the way to increase a positive environment that is healthy for everybody. It is hard because bullying is endemic in all levels of society. One of the most prevalent places is in the home, and we see that acted out in students' behaviour and sometimes you meet the families and you can see that there is help needed there. So I would come back to the early intervention strategies when families are first starting, when the children are very young, probably positive parenting programs would be beneficial for people.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Do you think there is a value in giving children behavioural—not lessons—sometimes they do not know because of their home environment or factors beyond their reach, perhaps behaviours that they may take as the norm are not really acceptable or positive for them as they enter into their lives and eventually into their careers. Do you think that there is room for a bit of psychological teaching?

Ms MASON: Definitely. It was what I was saying earlier: there is a balance here between explicit teaching about positive behaviours, about the modelling, and I think underpinning it you have to have the relationships where the students trust the teachers and also have the opportunity to build trust in their peers. That is the environment that you need to build in a school to eliminate bullying behaviours. I believe it is a standard that we can aim for, and I think there are positive things that we can do to get there.

CHAIR: On that positive note we might finish today. Thank you very much for giving up so much of your time and coming a significant distance; we really appreciate it.

Ms MASON: Thank you for the opportunity.

CHAIR: We might be in touch with further questions as we progress, because this is day one. Certainly we are all going away with all sorts of thoughts in terms of what to do. We appreciate it very much, thank you.

(The witness withdrew)

(The Committee adjourned at 4.05 p.m.)

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