How Australian schools are responding to the problem of peer victimisation in schools

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(iii) Summary

1. Introduction

Although there has been in recent years widespread and increasing attention paid in both educational and media circles to the problem of peer victimisation or bullying in schools, little has become known about how Australian schools and departments of education administering schools are reacting to the problem, that is, what they are doing and what is their thinking underlying their actions. The present study is intended as a contribution towards filling this gap in our knowledge and understanding.

This study may be regarded as exploratory. It seeks to provide qualitative rather than quantitative data based upon the expressed views of school and education department representatives and also upon the documentation they have provided describing their thoughts and actions. It draws upon information made available through interviews with representatives from forty schools in seven Australian states or territories and from six state education authorities.

2. Scope and limitations of the study

Although the schools selected for this project were diverse in nature and widely distributed geographically within Australia, they were alike in these two respects. Each had, prior to the inquiry, undertaken to obtain data about the nature and incidence of peer victimisation occurring between students at their school using a survey method; and each had employed a set of questionnaires that had been provided by the authors of this report over the last 6 years. Hence they were schools that had already demonstrated an interest in investigating the problem of bullying in schools and may therefore be regarded as being in the forefront of Australian schools in addressing the matter. Generalisations from this study can therefore only be made in relation to schools of this kind.

3. General and specific aims

Whilst the general purpose of this enquiry was to describe ways in which Australian schools and departments of education were responding to the problem of peer victimisation in schools, the special nature of the sample of schools was such as to direct our attention more specifically towards examining how the survey method they had each used had contributed to their perception of the problem of bullying at school and their subsequent actions in addressing it.

4. Method

The method of obtaining data for this study was through partially structured interviews with representatives from schools and education departments. Although the schools and departments participating in the survey are listed, no centres are identified in the report unless express permission was given to do so. Approval to undertake the study was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the University of South Australia and from each of the departments of education concerned with the schools. For the most part interviews were conducted in face-to-face situations in schools or at the offices of education departments. The exceptions were four interviews conducted by phone. Respondents were invited to provide any materials that helped to describe what the schools or departments were doing or proposing to do to address bullying.

5. The samples

The sample of schools was one of convenience drawn from a list of schools that had acquired and utilised the Peer Relations Assessment Questionnaires (PRAQs) between 1996 and 2002. In the package there are two versions of the questionnaire for students: one for those over the age of 8 years and one for those who are younger. In addition there are questionnaires for teachers and questionnaires for parents. In total there were 40 schools in the sample. The schools were located in the following states: Western Australia, South Australia, Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania and Northern Territory. The schools were diverse in nature, with representation from primary, secondary and kindergarten to year 12 schools. The bulk of schools were in the state system of education, but a number of non-state schools were included. Most of them were coeducational day schools, but three single sex schools and two with boarding facilities were included. The sampling was only slightly affected by the non-acceptance of schools to be in the study. Only 2 (less than 5%) of those approached did not wish to take part. Interviews with State Education Departments were conducted with representatives in South Australia, Western Australia, Victoria, Tasmania, New South Wales and Queensland.

6. **Findings from the schools**

6.1 Regarding the PRAQ

All of the schools reported that they had used the PRAQ survey instruments to obtain information about bullying from students, teachers or parents. In most cases all three groups had been targeted. Meetings were subsequently held with members of the school communities and the findings discussed. Reactions were varied, but for the most part staff members reported that they had become more aware of the nature and extent of peer victimisation in their school and had become more strongly motivated to counter it

6.2 Anti-bullying policies

Just over half (53%) of the schools provided documentation describing policies that they had developed to counter bullying. In some, but not in all cases, this had been done in consultation with parents and students. The policies of the schools were similar in some respects. They provided statements of the values they upheld in justification of their anti-bullying campaign and/or a description of the rights (and associated responsibilities) of members of the school communities in relation to bullying. Each of the policies provided a definition of bullying (these often differed between schools) and gave examples illustrating diverse types of bullying. Most schools included a description, sometimes in considerable detail, of how they proposed to deal with incidents. There was much variation in the intervention measures to be employed, with some relying exclusively on the use of rules and consequences and others applying counselling and problem solving approaches, such as mediation and no-blame methods. A number of schools advocated the use of both, some outlining the situations in which one or the other would be preferred.

6.3 Prevention

Some policies emphasised the use of preventative and educational methods of addressing bullying, for example, through including content about bullying in the school curriculum and/or through the training of students in relevant social skills, conflict resolution and mediation so they could help themselves and others in situations involving bullying. In some schools it was the policy to reward children for engaging in pro-social behaviour. Most schools recognised the need to monitor the operation of their procedures and review them periodically.

6.4 Discrepant views

Although not all the schools produced written policies, all of them described how they sought to counter bullying. There were diverse and, in some cases, conflicting views expressed. Some saw the problem of bullying as primarily a matter of behaviour management in which the appropriate method to be used was the imposition of sanctions. A number of schools related their approach to 'control theory' according to which students were encouraged to reflect upon their behaviour and make a responsible choice. Conflicting views arose primarily when some staff members preferred no-blame approaches and others preferred more punitive measures. Some schools were seen as struggling to accommodate these divergent views, in some cases seeing themselves under pressure from parents to impose punitive solutions.

6.5 Advice for schools

Most schools provided advice for other schools on the problem of peer victimisation. These included the need for openness to the issue of bullying, obtaining reliable information about bullying in one's school, a whole school approach, and a shared understanding of the problem and a commitment to address it. Strong leadership was seen as an important pre-requisite for effective action. Many emphasised the need to pay particular attention to the needs and perspectives of children. Some advised that

role expectations – of students and staff - and procedural steps in dealing with bullying should be made very clear. Others felt that precedence should be given to the promotion of compassion, understanding and moral thinking and the encouragement through example of pro-social and respectful behaviour. At a more pragmatic level, some schools drew attention to the need for more practical resources such as the provision of more counsellors and lesson plans about bullying for teachers.

7. Departments of Education

7.1 Consensus

The recent appearance of a national website to which all Australian educational authorities made contributions, enabled one to identify matters upon which there was general agreement. According to this source - supported by information elicited through interviews - bullying was seen as a significant problem by all of the education authorities interviewed for this study and in contravention of basic rights of members of the school community. Bullying and harassment were not differentiated. Schools were urged to take action against it.

7.2 Explanations for bullying

Bullying was seen as basically deriving from differences in power and evident when power was being abused. Explanations for bullying drew upon sociological theory and attributed bullying behaviour largely to exploitative or unfair relationships associated with differences in social power. Bullying and harassment were seen as occurring largely because of differences based on socioeconomic status, cultural and linguistic membership, religion, gender, sexuality and disability. Bullying on personal grounds was seen as playing a minor role and related to appearance rather than personality.

7.3 Divergences in emphases on what is to be done

Discussions with representatives from different education departments indicated that views on factors giving rise to bullying in schools and how bullying can best be countered were by no means monolithic. Emphases differed widely with antidotes to bullying including the provision of curricula that encourage critical thinking and link with student interests; developing understanding of the 'deeper issues' underlying bullying (by which is meant social injustice); encouraging the development of resilience in students; teaching skills of assertiveness, conflict resolution and mediation; empowering students to help others as Peer Supporters and members of anti-bullying committees working with school staff; promoting the development of 'social capital' and the forging of collaborative partnerships with parents and community organisations .

Most departments described Behaviour Management policies and the use of sanctions as consequences to deal with and deter bullying behaviour as important in dealing with peer victimisation. Generally, anti-bullying policies were seen as needing to be linked to

Behaviour Management. In one state such policies were seen as needing to be linked primarily to Student Support Services and the concept of a supportive school environment. There was little evidence in the documentation provided by state authorities of a recognition of no-blame approaches as a valid method of dealing with bullying incidents, although in discussion some departmental representatives acknowledged their usefulness.

7.4 Providing Supportive resources

It was noted that some departments are providing highly practical material, especially through websites, to assist schools in training sessions and in developing policies and curriculum material to address bullying. In addition, in some states workshops and seminars have been provided to meet the need for teacher training in countering bullying in schools. However, education authorities are not, in general, drawing much upon the increasingly copious high quality research and resource material that has been developed outside Australian education departments and which is being used by many schools in Australia.

7.5 Conclusion

After years of neglect of the issue of peer victimisation in schools, there are now many Australian schools and departments of education committed to tackling the problem. A wide range of complementary strategies are being employed, which include educational, counselling and disciplinary approaches. Whilst there is general agreement that 'a whole school approach' is needed and that educational means should be used to help prevent bullying from occurring, there are notable differences both between and within schools on the question of whether punitive or non-punitive approaches should be used to deal with children who bully others, or whether there is scope for both approaches to be accommodated. This is an area in which much more research and informed public debate is needed. This account of how peer victimisation is being addressed in some Australian schools is intended to be of practical assistance, especially to schools and educational authorities, in the development of more effective ways of tackling the problem.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background to the study

Peer victimisation or bullying, as it has been frequently termed, is an enduring problem, long recognised as seriously affecting the lives of many schoolchildren. There is, for example, an examination of the issue of school bullying in' Tom Brown's Schooldays ', a fictional account of bullying that took place at Rugby, a boarding school in England, by the author of this classic, Thomas Hughes, in the early nineteenth century. His graphic account of how Tom Brown and his friends were mercilessly bullied by older boys at the school, excited a good deal of public interest at the time (see Hughes 1857). Many readers expressed the view that this cruel and harmful practice should be stopped. Yet for nearly 200 years there was little or no systematic effort by schools and departments of education in any country to address the problem. The authors of this report, Drs Rigby and Thomas, were school teachers in the 1950s and 1960s. They recall that as far as teachers were concerned bullying was practically a non-issue. Of course, bullying went on, as it always has. Scarcely anyone mentioned it.

In the 1980s bullying began to emerge as an issue for schools. This was to a large extent due to the research undertaken in Scandinavia by Professor Dan Olweus. He defined bullying as follows:

> 'A student is being bullied or victimised when he or she is exposed repeatedly and over time to negative actions on the part of one or more students.' (Olweus, 1993).

Olweus carried out large and comprehensive surveys of bullying behaviour in Swedish and Norwegian schools and detailed the wide-spread prevalence of peer victimisation in all schools, both primary and secondary, and the damaging effect of bullying on the mental and physical well-being of substantial numbers of students. Most importantly, he was able to instigate and plan a large scale project to reduce peer victimisation in Norwegian schools, and eventually to report a reduction of self-reported peer victimisation of around 50% (Olweus1993).

During the 1990s there was an explosion of interest in bullying in schools, not only among educational researchers inspired by the Norwegian experiment but by an increasing number of schools, first in England and Europe, and a little later by schools in Australia and other countries. In 1995 the State Government of New South Wales began to promote the idea that bullying should be addressed in all schools. Other Australian States followed, providing guide lines and associated resources to counter bullying. At least one Australian Education Department is now insisting that all State schools must have a plan to deal with bullying. There has thus been in the course of the last ten years or so in Australia a transition from a climate in which peer

victimisation was ignored – and sometimes even denied as ever existing – to a gradually increasing awareness of the seriousness of the problem, and, more recently, the rapid mobilisation of resources aimed at stopping bullying and an insistence that schools take action.

1.2 Obtaining factual knowledge of bullying in schools

Numerous books, articles, web sites and videos have become available describing the nature and prevalence of bullying in schools (see Olweus, 1993; Smith et al; 1999; Rigby, 1996, 1997a, 2002a). However, such knowledge is no substitute for teachers getting to know what is going on in their own schools. Without such local knowledge, teachers may remain unmotivated to act and may even deny that bullying is going on between their own students. Moreover, without accurate local knowledge, efforts to reduce bullying may be misdirected.

Probably the best known survey instrument aimed at providing schools with knowledge about bullying between their own students was that devised by Dan Olweus in Norway in the 1980s. His questionnaire was subsequently adapted for use in schools in England by Professor P.K. Smith. However, because the nature of schooling and the language used to describe bullying behaviour differ cross-culturally, it was considered desirable to develop appropriate survey instruments specially relevant to Australian conditions.

The first Australian questionnaire to assess bullying in schools, the Peer Relations Questionnaire or PRQ, was devised by Rigby and Slee (1993). This measure was used widely in over 100 Australian schools and by over 38,000 students. It provided comprehensive base line data on the prevalence of bullying in Australia. It was reported that approximately one child in six in Australia was being bullied by a peer or peers on a weekly basis.(Rigby, 1997a,1997b).

Over time it was found that the PRQ was not of optimal value to schools requiring information about peer victimisation. It was relatively long, complex and required that the data analysis be done by computer. Most schools did not have the time or the facility to conduct the necessary analyses. They wanted information quickly. Moreover, it was desirable to gather data not only from students but also from teachers and parents. Accordingly in 1997 a new set of questionnaires was devised by Dr. Ken Rigby, known as the Peer Relations Assessment Questionnaires (the PRAQs). These were made available to schools through Dr. Barrington Thomas.

The PRAQs originally consisted of three measures:

- The PRAQ for older students (aged 8 years and older)
- The PRAQ for teachers
- The PRAQ for parents

In 2000 a fourth questionnaire was added: The Junior PRAQ. This is a questionnaire for younger students , recommended for use with students below the age of 8 years. Unlike the other measures, pictorial representations rather than words are mainly used to elicit responses from respondents. (A summary of the main features of the PRAQs is given in Appendix 1).

Unlike the results from the PRQ, the data from the PRAQs was not centrally collated to provide a data bank drawing upon information from a range of schools. Each school was responsible for conducting its own analyses. Assistance was provided to the schools in the form of tally sheets and forms for summarising the data. A manual was provided which included advice on the administration of the PRAQs. It was emphasised that responses were to be provided anonymously and the results treated confidentially. Suggestions were provided on how the results from the PRAQs could be used to increase awareness of the problem of bullying and promote further plans to counter bullying. In total, over 700 Australian schools have now obtained copies of the PRAQ package.

1.3 Purposes of the study

Although there has been in recent years a great deal of rhetoric expended about the unacceptability of bullying in Australian schools, there has been relatively little information about what is actually being done in schools to address the problem. We know that educational authorities have increasingly been encouraging schools to address bullying and suggesting resources they might use, but relatively little is known about their thinking and planning in this area. This report is intended to contribute towards filling such gaps in our understanding.

The contribution is based in part upon the results of interviews with representatives from schools that have made use of the PRAQs. As such, it cannot claim to be broadly representative. The participating schools were among those that were evidently motivated to find out more about what bullying was taking place among their students. They were schools that had come to believe that a questionnaire approach was useful as a step toward addressing the problem. It seems probable that the schools were, in a sense, more progressive than many other schools in coming to terms with peer victimisation. This may be seen as both an advantage to the investigator and a limitation. By and large, schools were eager to talk about their work in countering bullying and volunteered much useful information that could be helpful to other schools. At the same time, the method adopted in sampling only those schools that made use of the PRAQs could have resulted in a degree of distortion - if the findings are viewed as reflecting what Australian schools in general are doing. Our generalisations are therefore confined to what was found to be the case among a sample of schools that had, at some stage between 1997 and 2002, decided that it would be useful to survey one or more sections of the school community – students, parents and teachers - on questions relating to peer victimisation or bullying at school.

Whilst a major purpose of the study was to find out what a sample of Australian schools were doing to counter bullying, a further purpose relates to the idiosyncratic nature of the chosen sample. We were interested in issues associated with the use of questionnaires in this context. We were interested in the reasons schools gave for employing the PRAQs; how the PRAQs were administered and the results collated; what was done with the results; how staff reacted to what was found; and what actions (if any) were seen to flow from the findings. Our purposes were thus both general and specific. We sought to obtain a general picture of what some Australian schools were doing to address bullying; and we sought to examine specifically how the schools in our sample made use of a research instrument that was intended to assist in the development of informed and constructive efforts to stop the bullying.

A complementary aspect of this inquiry was an examination of the roles played by state Departments of Education in addressing the problem of bullying. Here our interest lay in not only discovering what was being done in directing and/or supporting schools in this area, but also in examining the thinking that lay behind the actions they were taking.

7 Method

2.1. Procedure

The method of obtaining data for this study was through partially structured interviews with representatives from schools and education departments. In order that the interviewees, the schools and the departments should remain anonymous, no names except with the express permission of those interviewed, were to be included in this report.

The procedure was approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of South Australia. Permission to conduct the interviews was obtained from the relevant education authorities. Consent forms were provided for interviewees to sign giving their approval to being involved in the interviews. (The text of the letter to schools soliciting their co-operation is given in Appendix 2).

For the most part they were conducted in face-to-face situations in schools or at the offices of education departments. The exceptions were four interviews conducted by phone either because of cancellations of appointments when the interviewer was in the area or because of large distances involved in travelling to distant centres. Interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes.

The interviewee in schools was in most cases the Principal. However, on some occasions a group of staff members were invited by the principal to join us. Similarly, interviews with education department representatives varied with sometimes more than one person present.

2.2 Issues raised

The issues raised with the schools and examined in this report were as follows:

- How the PRAQ was used by the school
- The reactions of the school to the findings from the survey, including subsequent actions to address bullying
- How the school was addressing the issue of peer victimisation through (i) preventative measures and (ii) in dealing with incidents of bullying
- What advice the school could offer to other schools addressing the problem of peer victimisation

There was flexibility in the interview to allow respondents to introduce matters that they thought were relevant to countering bullying in schools. Hence, somewhat different issues achieved prominence in some of the interviews.

Respondents were invited to provide any materials that helped to describe what the schools or departments were doing or proposing to do to address bullying. The interviewers were thus able to collect a good deal of information describing policies and programmes that had been developed and utilised in addressing bullying

With Departments of Education the issues discussed and reported upon in this report were as follows:

- How they saw the issue of bullying in the schools for which they were administratively responsible
- How they saw schools responding to the issue
- What roles they were playing in addressing the issue of peer victimisation in schools
- What support they were they providing for schools in addressing peer victimisation

As with the school interviews, opportunity was provided for interviewees to raise matters that they felt were relevant to peer victimisation. The departments were also invited to provide documentation that would help to explain the work they were doing in relation to bullying.

2.3. The samples

The population of schools from which the sample was drawn consisted of schools that had acquired the PRAQ between 1997 and 2002. Because of the impracticality of travelling to all the schools chosen in a random sample, a non-probability or convenience sample was employed. It was decided that schools would be sampled in Western Australia in the Perth area; in South Australia (with one exception) in and around Adelaide; in Queensland in the Brisbane and Gold Coast areas; and in New South Wales around Sydney and Newcastle. Schools in a variety of geographical centres were to be accessed in Victoria and Tasmania. Thus although schools were not randomly selected from all possible locations there was a wide geographical distribution, in which both urban and rural centres were included. The sampling was only slightly affected by the non-acceptance of schools to be in the study. Only 2 schools (less than 5%) did not wish to take part.

In total there were 40 schools in the sample. The bulk of these (31) were in the state system of education, but a number of non-state schools (9) were included. Most (37) were coeducational day schools, but single sex schools (2 boys and 1 girls) and two with boarding facilities were included. A summary of the geographical distribution and type of school (primary or secondary or other) is provided in Table 1.

Table 1

Location and characteristics of schools in the sample of schools

	Type of school		
	Primary	Secondary	Other*
Western Australia	3	0	2
South Australia	1	4	0
Victoria	2	4	0
New South Wales	4	5	1
Tasmania	2	4	0
Queensland	5	0	2
Northern Territory	1	0	0
	18	17	5

* Note: These were schools that catered for schools at secondary level and also for younger children, typically from kindergarten age.

Interviews with State Education Departments were conducted with representatives in South Australia, Western Australia, Victoria, Tasmania, New South Wales and Queensland.

3. The use schools made of the PRAQ

3.1 The nature and extent of use of the PRAQ

Information about the use of the PRAQs was available from all but two schools where there had been a change in leadership in the school and records relating to the work done with the PRAQs could not be located. Most schools targeted students, teachers and parents with the questionnaires. There were some exceptions. One school thought it best not to survey parents as they might become unduly alarmed. Several schools did not use the PRAQ with students. At one school the reason given was that the students had recently completed a similar survey. At another school it was decided to use the longer, more complex PRQ because the staff wanted more "in-depth" information about student behaviour. A third school indicated that they thought it was preferable to obtain information from students through classroom discussions.

3.2 Reasons for the use of the PRAQs

A variety of reasons were given for the schools making use of the PRAQs. Some related to the concern that had developed in the school about the level of bullying: .

- The issue of bullying in schools had been raised by press reports and the school became interested in assessing what was happening among their own students
- Teachers suspected that "a lot of bullying was going at their school."
- General concern over the level of bullying in the school and the wish for an objective assessment
- A state-wide survey of parents had shown that substantial numbers of students did not feel safe at school.

Some schools indicated how the decision to use the PRAQs had come about:

- Pressure from parents
- Strong interest expressed by the school counsellor in discovering the facts
- Initiative provided by the School Council
- The school principal's desire to "educate the school community" about bullying

At some schools the use of the PRAQs appeared as a logical extension of work that had already begun in addressing bullying and as a means of developing further plans. For example, one school described their use of the questionnaires as 'a step towards

developing a school anti-bullying policy.' Encouragement was provided by at least one Education District Office that agreed to provide financial support for the project.

3.3 How the PRAQs were administered

In general, the following procedures were adopted. The PRAQ for students was administered in classrooms by teachers; the PRAQ for Teachers was provided to teachers to take away and return later; the PRAQ for Parents was taken home by students and returned by them in an envelope. There were some variations. At one school younger students (under 8 years) completed the PRAQ for Junior students, with the help of older students who read and explained the instructions that accompanied the pictorial representations in the questionnaires. At one school the PRAQ for teachers was completed at a staff meeting – and provided a 100% return rate, not always achieved when questionnaires were taken away. In some cases parents were contacted and returned questionnaires by mail.

One minor modification to the PRAQ for Students was made by several schools who added a question to locate more precisely where most bullying occurred at the school. At some schools there was prior discussion of bullying with junior students preceding the administration of the questionnaires to clarify what was meant by bullying.

3.4 Targeting of respondents

In general, the total population of students, teachers and parents were targeted with the PRAQs. However, some schools employed a random sampling procedure in selecting students and also parents to be part of the survey, for example every tenth parent or student was provided with a questionnaire.

3.5 Anonymity

For each of the surveys the anonymity of respondents, the schools and educational authorities was maintained. (At some schools there were a few teachers who were in favour of respondents providing their names and the names of those who had engaged in bullying).

3.6 Response rates

No students indicated an unwillingness to complete the questionnaire. Response rates for parents varied widely, between 10% and 90%. A response rate of 40% from parents of students at one school was described as "good." Among teachers the response rate was 100% in some cases, but as low as 25% in another

3.7 Collation of results

The collation and summarising of the results was done in different ways. Commonly an individual was assigned the task. In one case, a retired principal was hired to conduct, collate and report on the results. In some cases groups of teachers undertook the task, sometimes with the assistance of parents and/or students. In a few cases senior students, eg., Year 11 students, were asked to collate the results. The ideal of each teacher being responsible for collating results for his or her class was not reported by any of the schools in the study.

3.8 Dissemination and reporting of results

Generally, the results from the survey were presented by the Principal or School Counsellor at a staff meeting and a discussion ensued. At some schools copies of the comments provided by students were made available to the staff. (At one school, examples of the kinds of things students had written in answers to open-ended questions about bullying were placed on the seats of staff members before the meeting commenced). In one exceptional case, results were presented to the whole school assembly using a power-point method.

At some schools parents were invited to meetings at which the findings were presented and discussed. Newsletters were also used to inform parents of what had been found.

3.9 Reactions to the results

The bulk of schools showed a keen interest in the results from the PRAQs, and they were widely discussed and commented upon. However, there were schools where some teachers were resistant to receiving information from the survey, especially when, as sometimes happened, personal and critical comments were made about them by students. Some teachers thought that descriptions about bullying incidents had been fabricated. In one case, teachers stated that they already knew there was no bullying among children in their class. Some teachers expressed disinterest in reading student answers to the open-ended questions describing their personal experiences of being bullied.

However, most schools indicated that the results from the PRAQ were credible and had had a considerable effect on their school community's understanding of bullying, as indicated by the following reactions:

- The results had a huge impact. It was scary stuff. The thought was what are we going to do about this ?
- Most staff were shocked, unsettled and disquieted by the level of bullying
- The results were a real 'eye-opener.'

- There was surprise at the level of bullying, even though the level was average for the age groups.
- Does this really happen ?
- It was a surprise to the staff and led to a huge amount of awareness raising
- The PRAQ had a huge impetus. It made the staff realise that that bullying was a major issue in the minds of children.
- Results from the PRAQ produced an overall desire to face the problem in a unified way
- It was an excellent way to get things going.

At a few schools the general reaction suggests that the staff were not surprised by what was found.

- The results came as no surprise
- The results did not shock or stand out
- Data presented at the meeting (of staff) was what was expected
- There was not a 'broadly-based problem. Bullying was not endemic.
- The level of bullying at the school was about right. (This comment was made at a school where it was claimed that the incidence of the bullying was around the national average).

This latter comment suggests that the provision of national norms may lead to a school feeing satisfied if the level of bullying is 'average' – that is about one child in 6 is being bullied on a weekly basis. However, 'average' could be interpreted differently. One school resolved that it should do better than the national average.

Generally, the interviewees indicated that staff members at their school tended to make similar judgements and express similar points of view. However, differences between staff members were sometimes recognised. One principal commented:

> Differences were to be expected as my staff ranges from Larry the Larrikin to Attila the Hun.

3.10 Understanding gained from the results

Some interviewees commented upon some insights they had gained through examining results from the PRAQ for students.

- A surprisingly high proportion of students were not feeling safe at school. This was said to have created 'quite a stir.' There was disparity between teachers' views on how safe students were from being bullied and those of the students themselves.
- The comments made by children who had become distressed as a result of being bullied came as a surprise.

- The absentee rate due to bullying was much higher than expected. (Some 20% at this school reported being absent at least once due to bullying by peers).
- It was possible to identify more clearly those years in which most bullying was being experienced.
- Trouble spots were identified, for example on the buses.
- A broader understanding of bullying was achieved, as it was appreciated that indirect and social forms of bullying were prevalent at the school.
- There was a greater sensitivity to the fears that victimised children had about the negative consequences that would follow if they informed on those who had bullied them
- It was noted that many students were sceptical about the capacity of teachers to help them when they were bullied.
- Staff recognised that many students saw themselves as being bullied by the staff.

Information from parents who completed the PRAQ also contributed to an understanding of the problem of bullying. It was evident from many of the responses made by parents that they were grateful for the opportunity to take part in the survey which they saw as worthwhile. Teachers' understanding of the concerns of parents was deepened. However, several interviewees reflected that many parents appeared extremely punitive in their attitudes towards how bullies should be treated by the school. It was observed that parents were apt to think that nothing had been done to address a case of bullying if only counselling had been applied. Some staff felt that parents often held a somewhat narrow view of what constituted bullying, concentrating exclusively on physical forms. It was felt by some teachers that there was a strong need for parents to be 'educated about bullying.'

3.11 Actions flowing from the results from the PRAQs.

Some schools indicated that the results from the PRAQs had helped them, especially in motivating them to address the problem of bullying. The results from the PRAQ further legitimised what the schools were doing, for example, in urging students to report cases of bullying. Schools reported that outcomes from discussing the PRAQ results included the development of an Anti-Bullying Policy as part of Pastoral Care and stimulating the production of an "interpersonal skills program' as part of classroom activities. Some schools indicated that they had used, or would be using, the PRAQs a second time to monitor changes in the incidence and nature of peer victimisation.

It should be noted that in many of the schools work had already begun in addressing bullying. Some schools already had anti-bullying policies; some already had anti-bullying content in the school curricula; some were already applying systematic procedures to deal with cases of bullying. The role played by the PRAQ appears to have been largely in increasing awareness of the problem of bullying in schools, identifying some areas of special concern and in providing greater impetus to the on-going work of schools in

tackling bullying. The specific actions taken by schools to counter bullying are detailed in later chapters.

4. Anti-bullying policies of schools

4.1 Introduction

In at least one State in Australia, government schools are expected to have an anti-bullying policy or plan to counter bullying. The responsibility for producing an anti-bullying policy is located in the school. This appears to be well understood and accepted by schools, although one school representative opined that "it was a disgrace that schools had to develop their own harassment policy." Schools differed as to whether their policy should be part of a general Behaviour Management Policy or Discipline Policy or Social Welfare Policy or stand alone.

For some time a number of schools had had policies which specifically related to 'bullying' as distinct from other forms of anti-social behaviour. Other schools including much the same content have termed such policies "anti-harassment policies." Schools typically used the terms "harassment" and "bullying" interchangeably. Some schools reserved the term 'harassment' to describe aggressive or intimidatory behaviour directed towards individuals because of specified social characteristics, as in racial harassment, sexual harassment and harassment directed towards individuals with disabilities.

The terms associated with peer victimisation are thus being used in somewhat different ways, with some schools employing definitions and/or making distinctions in the formulating of policy which are not being made by others. Anti-bullying policies in the different schools sometimes contain different content. Some of these policies are located in one kind of document, some in another. In examining the anti-bullying or anti-harassment policies of schools in our sample our aim was to examine what the policies had in common and also how they diverged.

4.2 Availability to the researchers of anti-bullying policies

Although there has been considerable pressure on schools to produce anti-bullying policies, even to the extent of making it mandatory in some States, not all schools were able to provide a statement of their policy. In some schools policies were being formulated or modified. Documents providing statements of policy were available from 21 of the 40 schools. (An example of a school anti-bullying policy is provided in Appendix 3 with permission from Marian College school)). Eleven of these were from primary schools and ten from other schools, ie., those catering for secondary students or combined secondary and pre-secondary students

4.3 Overview of anti-bullying policies

Despite considerable variation in their structure, content and location, ie., as separate from or part of other documentation, the anti-bullying or anti-harassment policies generally contained these features:

- a statement of opposition to bullying behaviour and a resolve to eliminate it;
- an account of the values and rights of students which underpin opposition to bullying;
- a definition of bullying categorised according to types and with examples;
- an indication of what the school was doing to counter bullying.

However, they differed considerably in length and detail. For example, some provided detailed descriptions of curricula that had been introduced to prevent bullying. Some detailed at length precise steps to be taken when bullying occurred, whilst others described the actions they were taking very generally. In some cases, the policies were written primarily for students; in other cases, for staff. Some policies had parents in mind. When reading the policies, it was sometimes unclear to whom they were being directed. The focus in some policies was mainly on what students could do to prevent themselves from being bullied; in others the emphasis was on how the behaviour of bullies was to be changed.

Policies also differed in the extent to which they included a clear justification for the school having an anti-bullying policy and in the approaches taken to the problem. Some indicated a wide range of actions which they were undertaking to stop bullying, others relatively few. Some schools appeared to be committed to a "whole school" or even a "whole community " approach in which teachers, students and parents worked together, whilst others provided a much more narrowly based approach.

The process by which the policy was developed also varied from school to school. In one school, for instance, the policy was finalised only after extensive discussions with groups of student and with staff members. In some cases parents were involved in the development as committee members. On the other hand, in some cases the policy was the product of a committee of staff members and was subsequently ratified by the whole staff.

In describing and examining these policies the following categories were used:

Value statements of schools relating to bullying
How schools defined bullying.
Types of bullying identified
What schools committed themselves to do to do about bullying:
- Dealing with cases of bullying
- Reporting and record keeping
- Encouraging students to act appropriately when bullied
- Supporting victims
- Providing education or training to students about bullying
- Involving parents
- The promotion of pro-social behaviour by personal example
- Evaluating and reviewing existing policy

Availability of anti-bullying policies
Justifications provided for the anti-bullying policy

4.4 Value statements of schools relating to bullying

Most schools provided a simple statement indicating their opposition to bullying

- No form of bullying or harassment will be tolerated at our school
- Harassment, bullying and violence in all its forms have no place at _____
- Bullying is to be abhorred by all sections of the school community
- … bullying is unacceptable behaviour in both the school and the wider community
- _____ is totally opposed to bullying in all its forms: physical, psychological, verbal and non-verbal
- Bullying is unacceptable and will not be tolerated at _____

Some schools made a point of including other members of the school community in statements of opposition to bullying:

- _____ believes that the working environment for students and staff should be free from violence, harassment and bullying of any kind.
- _____ will, by raising students, teachers and community awareness, endeavour to produce a safe, harmonious atmosphere where bullying is recognised by all as 'negative/unwanted' behaviour

Other schools sought to link opposition to bullying to rights implying that bullying is unacceptable:

- Bullying, violence and harassment will not be tolerated because they infringe one's fundamental rights to safety and fair treatment
- The School believes very strongly that every student has the right to a safe, supportive and caring environment free from intimidation of any kind, the right not to be hurt, scared, made fun of or saddened in any particular way.
- Students are entitled to receive their education free of humiliation, oppression and abuse.
- Everybody has a right to be free of bullying
- Students have a right to have any fear they have treated seriously
- _____ respects the rights of all people, especially its students, to be free from all forms of bullying and harassment.
- Each member of the community is valued and has basic rights.
- Through Jesus's words' to do unto others as you would have them do unto you' and 'to love your neighbour as yourself' we are called to witness these Christian values: Every person at ___ has a right to be treated as an individual

and with dignity; every person at ____ has a right to feel safe; and every person at _____ has a right to learn, free of anxiety.

In some cases the emphasis was placed on a commitment to positive behaviours that the school wished to foster. Bullying was seen as being incompatible with the certain commitments, expectations and goals.

- _____ is committed to providing a safe and caring environment which fosters respect for others
- Respect for each other, courtesy, kindness and cooperation are expected and encouraged at _____
- At _____ we have the expectation that students have a right to be happy and safe at school and to be treated fairly and with respect
- Our school affirms the right of all members to work, learn and play in a safe and secure environment.
- _____ supports the philosophy of a safe and happy environment
- You have a right to enjoy your schooling, be part of a community where all students and staff feel safe and secure.
- _____ is committed to providing a safe and harmonious environment for all its members.
- All members of the school community are committed to ensuring a safe and caring environment which promotes personal growth and self-esteem for all.

One statement invoked both morality and the law.

- Harassment undermines the dignity of each person at ____ and is an infringement of our values and is illegal.

One school counterpoised rights and responsibilities. Students were seen as having these rights:

- To feel safe; to feel confident about reporting incidents of bullying; to have complaints listened to and acted upon; to be protected from victimisation; to know what consequences follow bullying.

And these responsibilities

- To treat others with respect and to look after one another; to report any incidents of bullying to staff; of staff - to treat reports seriously and take action; to protect victims and witnesses; to implement the known consequences of bullying.

Another school focussed on the general responsibility of staff:

- It is the responsibility of all staff to endeavour to uphold the rights of students to a safe and caring environment.

4.5 How schools defined bullying

There was considerable variation in the ways in which bullying was defined in the anti-bullying policies. The diversity in fact reflects the multiplicity of definitions of bullying that have been suggested by writers in the field.

Generally bullying was seen as a form of aggressive behaviour, rather than a desire or attitude. An exception was one definition in which bullying was seen as a 'persistent and wilful desire to hurt, threaten or frighten..' This view that what goes on in the mind of the potential bully regardless of whether the desire is expressed in action is consistent with an early influential definition of bullying suggested by Tattum (1993).

Some schools did not, however, distinguish between bullying and aggression in general, for example:

> Bullying and harassment are regarded as acts of aggression, causing pain, discomfort or embarrassment to another person.

More schools, however, associated bullying with aggression in which there was a power imbalance between perpetrator and victim, as in the following statements:

> Central to both bullying and harassment is the inappropriate use of power which deprives others of their rights.
>
> Bullying involves incidents where one or more students exert power or dominance over another.
>
> Bullying occurs when a person or group of persons deliberately and repeatedly hurt or frighten someone less powerful than themselves for no good reason.

Many schools saw the central feature of bullying as involving intimidation of some kind, as in the following:

> Bullying is the intimidation of a physical verbal or psychological nature of a less powerful person by a more powerful person
>
> [Bullying is] repeated intimidation over time…
>
> Bullying is deliberate, persistent, physical or mental intimidation…

The notion that bullying is deliberate and repeated, as in the last two examples, was generally endorsed by schools in their policy statements. However, one school did make a point of explaining that bullying could sometimes be accidental and non-intentional. Most schools did not include in their definition that bullying necessarily

involved a repetition of an act of aggression, although it is generally considered that bullying is typically expressed in repeated actions.

In defining or describing bullying many of the definitions indicate the effects or states of mind induced in the victim by acts of bullying. These included being distressed, hurt, frightened, disturbed, embarrassed, stressed, pained and upset. Fewer definitions refer to the state of mind of the bully, although one does so, at the same time suggesting the motivation for bullying:

> It [bullying] means putting someone down to make you feel better.

In general, the schools did not differentiate in their definitions between bullying and harassment. In fact, the terms are in places used together, as in:

> Bullying or harassment: physical and verbal conduct which is uninvited, unwelcome, intimidatory and/or offensive to the recipient.

There were two attempts to distinguish between bullying and harassment. One suggested that "harassment is a one-off or non-intentional form of hurt or harm from one person or group to another" whereas "bullying is a pattern of behaviour by one person towards another that is designed to hurt, injure, embarrass, upset or discomfort that person." Here the suggestion is that harassment is less serious, a view to which many (not all) subscribe. However, the notion that they necessarily differ in intentionality and repetitiveness is not generally agreed upon. A further attempted distinction suggests that "bullying is an on-going, wilful desire to hurt…" whilst harassment is "a perception by a person of being persistently disturbed, tormented, manipulated or intimidated." This implies that it is bullying if the perpetrator intends to hurt us and harassment if we think we are being hurt – presumably without there being any intention to hurt on the part of another person. Again there does not appear to be agreement that this is a useful distinction.

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4.6 Types of bullying identified

Each one of the policies included descriptions of types of bullying and/or examples of bullying behaviour. The most commonly used categories were physical, as in hitting or kicking someone and verbal, as in name-calling and teasing. Some schools identified as bullying the making use of intimidatory or derisory gestures. It was, however, widely recognised that other forms of bullying occurred. A variety of terms was used to describe non-direct forms of bullying, for example, indirect, relational, and social. The most commonly used example of such bullying was "exclusion". Some schools specifically included rumour spreading and graffiti writing. In several of the policies there was reference to extortion, threats, stalking or interfering with or damaging property as examples of bullying. Some described one form of bullying as 'emotional or psychological.' Only one school explicitly differentiated between one-to-one bullying and bullying involving a group. Finally, there were descriptions of

bullying according to the kind of prejudice they implied, as in racial, sexual and religious bullying

4.7 What schools committed themselves to do to do about bullying

On the question of what the schools were committed to do to counter bullying there was a good deal of variation between schools in the amount of detail provided and the areas covered. One cannot assume that the absence of information about a matter in a policy, eg., the use of the curriculum in educating students about bullying, implies that a school is doing nothing in this area. However, explicit references to areas of relevance in the anti-bullying policy of a school does suggest where its priorities lie. The main areas to which attention was drawn in most or some of the anti-bullying policies were as follows:

- Dealing with cases of bullying
- Recording of incidents
- Encouraging students to act appropriately when bullied
- Reporting and recording of bullying incidents
- Providing education and/or training to help in countering bullyingInvolving parents
- The promotion of pro-social behaviour by personal example
- Evaluating and reviewing existing policy

4.8 Dealing with cases of bullying

Some 85% of the schools produced policies containing information on how the school proposed to act when cases of bullying were identified. In some cases the description of what the school would do was general and brief. For example:

> All episodes of bullying and harassment will be dealt with. If you are bullying and harassing others, the _____ will
>
> - Counsel you
> - Detain you
> - Interview you and your parents

Others provided more lengthy and detailed descriptions:

> Those students engaging in bullying may expect one or more of the following responses:
>
> - Parents informed
> - Students referred to counselling or mediation
> - A penalty imposed
> - Freedom of movement restricted
> - Suspension

- Expulsion

Some policies described actions that suggested a highly legalistic approach, reminiscent of the "three strikes and you're out" method of dealing with offenders.

- Students found guilty of bullying or harassment for the first time will be interviewed and informed that their behaviour is unacceptable. They will also be told that any bullying of students who reported the incident is equally unacceptable. They will be counselled with regard to more appropriate behaviour. Appropriate action may include an apology, a commitment not to re-offend, and an explanation of the possible consequences if behaviour is repeated.
- A written statement of this incident will be kept on file in the student's records
- Students who are found guilty a second time will face detentions as well as a suspension warning and further counselling
- Students who are found guilty a third time face suspension from school.

Not all schools were committed to the use of "consequences." In describing how the staff will respond to bullying one policy contains the following description:

- The teacher will listen carefully to what you have to say. They will usually write down what your complaint is and ask you questions about the behaviour that is causing the problem. They will ask you questions about behaviour that may have occurred before this incident to get some background information.
- With your permission the teacher will interview the alleged perpetrator of the bullying by themselves and talk about what effect their behaviour is having on you. They will try to find out why this behaviour is occurring.
- The teacher will then ask to see both the victim and the perpetrator together so that each can express their feelings. The teacher will then try to have both parties propose and agree to solutions to the problem, so that each feels the bullying will cease.
- The teacher will then make an appointment to speak with you again approximately one week later to reassess the situation.

In some schools both problem-solving and punitive approaches were used. For example, one school indicated that different procedures could be used with students according to the ' severity and on-going nature of the case". There could be either counselling or consequences, described as follows:

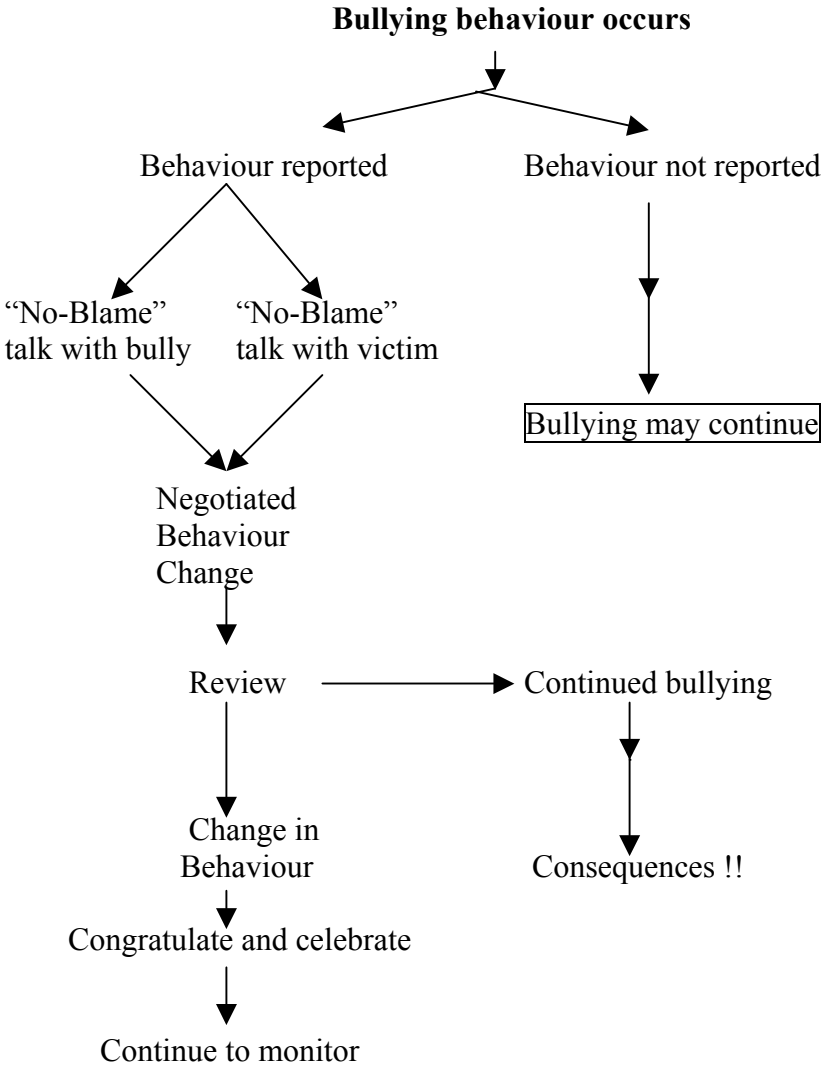
- Counselling: discussion, role-play to develop empathy, the No-Blame interview, The Method of Shared Concern, developing agreements/contracts etc.

- Consequences; used in conjunction with the school's Student Code of Conduct- time-out, isolation from peers, alternative recesses, withdrawal of privileges, detention, suspension, expulsion.

Some schools indicated how the two approaches were to be used in conjunction with each other, as in the following diagram:

Figure 1

Flow diagram on how bullying incidents were to be treated



A somewhat similar plan is indicated in another policy, with actions conceived as being appropriate for given levels of severity of bullying behaviour, that is whether of low severity, intermediate severity or high severity. The actions are also linked to people who are responsible for taking actions.

4.9 Detection of bullying, reporting and record keeping

For the detection of bullying a number of strategies were suggested

- Encouraging students to report incidents to teachers
- Requesting parents to report cases that came to their attention
- Close monitoring by teachers of bullying in classrooms and during yard duty
- The use of class and whole school surveys to identify groups most at risk and 'trouble spots.'
- The use of class sociograms to identify children who were most isolated from peers

Some schools provided detailed instructions on how incidents should be reported and recorded. To this end Bullying Incident Report forms were identified. For instance, one included the following headings:

- Notifying person
- Who is being bullied
- When does the bullying take place ?
- Where does the bullying take place ?
- Who is doing the bullying ?
- Other comments

More elaborate forms were provided by some schools in which detailed information about referrals could be recorded. These included (i) the observing teacher who names the bully or bullies and target or targets involved in the incident (ii) the grade supervisor to whom further referral may be made - who describes any further incidents and strategies tried (iii) a further step, a follow-up by the Grade supervisor, who may describe further incidents and (iv) a yet further referral to the Assistant Principal or Principal. The reports constitute a record to be kept by the school on the student's behaviour. Not all schools, however, believed that a permanent record of this kind should be kept indefinitely.

4.10 Encouraging students to act appropriately when bullied

This was a feature of most anti-bullying policies with some 80% of them providing some advice about what students can do, ranging from ignoring the bullying to acting assertively to informing a teacher. One policy contained this advice for students:

> Recognise that you can take positive action. Often bullies want a reaction. A solution can take time. Seek assistance and be assured that there are many people who will help. There is a range of possible options:
>
> - Be assertive, you have rights. State 'leave me alone.'

- Do not retaliate with physical or verbal aggression
- Ignore it. If you show you are not upset, the harassment may stop
- Laugh it off. Use humour
- Build your own protection by establishing friends
- Be smart about avoiding high risk places and times
- Talk about it with others who can help you decide how to handle the situation or they can take action, eg., your friends or family; the older students in the school, especially the House or School prefects; teachers, Pastoral Care Leaders, Heads of Houses, Counsellors, Chaplain, Nurses, Deputy Head or Headmaster.

Advice in the same anti-bullying policy is provided for students who witness bullying:

- Take action as the bullying occurs by saying 'leave him alone.'
- Report the incident to a member of staff as soon as you can. It is OK to ask for privacy and confidentiality, or make an anonymous report that will alert the staff to a trouble spot or a bullying incident.
- Offer support to the boy being bullied. Make suggestions about handling it. Encourage him to get help through an adult, a prefect or his family.

One policy stressed that students had three responsibilities in this area

- To 'tell' if they were being bullied or they see someone else being bullied – both at school and on the way to and from school
- To help someone who is being bullied
- To not bully others.

4.11 Providing education or training to students about bullying

Some 40% of the anti-bullying policies draw attention to the work of the school, for example through curriculum work.

A strong statement was made by one primary school, as follows:

All classroom teachers will be required to implement a core anti-bullying programme which must include these areas:

- What bullying is and what it is not
- Who are the bullies ? What do bullies do ?
- How we can deal with bullies
- It's OK to tell – asking for support
- Social problem solving

Another school indicated that there should be 'open talk (in classrooms) about bullying – what it is, how it affects us and what we can do about it.' And that teachers should teach children "the skills which will build their self-esteem and empower them to take responsibilities for themselves – and give them the opportunity to practise these skills."

Some policies identified curriculum areas in which raising awareness about bullying could take place. These included English, Health Education, Drama and Visual Arts. One policy required that: 'teachers will incorporate into the curriculum a personal development programme which may include role play, classroom discussions and cooperative activities to assist students to develop assertive rather than aggressive ways of dealing with situations of conflict.' Particular attention was directed in one policy towards the development of social skills involving the use of 'facial expressions, body posture and the use of appropriate words and phrases.'

4.12 Supporting victims

Emphasis was placed in some policies on the importance of providing support for children who are victimised. In one policy they are described as being typically 'fragile.' The need to offer support was seen to be the responsibility of both teachers and students. Teachers were asked to 'be observant of signs…' in children who were being bullied and to make efforts 'to remove occasions for bullying by active patrolling during supervision times.' Students were asked to offer support to victimised children.

4.13 Involving parents

A large majority of policies include references to the role of parents in countering bullying. Typical of many policies was the claim that "effective communication between school and parents is important to help eliminate bullying at school and assist the victims of bullying." Some schools indicated that it was their policy to provide 'information and education sessions' for parents on bullying. There was also mention of the use of newsletters for this purpose.

Some policies provided detailed advice for parents on the issue of bullying, for instance:

- Encourage your children to discuss bullying as much as possible
- Contact the school if your child's efforts to deal with bullying do not appear to be working.
- When the schools attempts to prevent bullying do not appear to be working your assistance may well be sought. In cases of serious bullying you will be automatically involved.

Parents were, in some policies, advised to consider signs that might suggest that their child was being bullied at school. These included:

- An unwillingness to attend school..
- Complaints of stomach aches and headaches
- Unusual emotional outbursts or unpredictable changes of mood
- Lack of motivation in school work
- Personal items or equipment of the child going missing
- The child's clothing mysteriously damaged.

Not all schools, however, were keen on sensitising parents to their child's problem with bullying. One school made use of what they termed 'writing therapy', which consisted of having a child sit down and write about the bullying incident. By the time the child had finished writing, we were told, they were no longer upset and unlikely to tell their parents about it.

4.14 The promotion of pro-social behaviour

Some policies exhorted teachers set a good example, for instance by being 'role models in word and action all the time.' And '… treat all members of the school community with respect at all times." Rather than focus exclusively on inappropriate bullying behaviour some schools drew attention in their policies to the positive things students could do. One school suggested a reward system as follows:

> Recognition will be given to students who are third parties to instances of bullying and who act to stop bullying by appealing to our school rules of 'Be fair' and 'Be kind.' Special merit awards will be presented to those students at school assemblies. One such student will be selected each month to be 'Aussie of the Month.'

Another system to reward 'good' behaviour involved allowing those students whose names had not been recorded as having misbehaved to spin a wheel for prizes. Certificates were also awarded.

It was also considered important at most schools to encourage students to inform on others who had engaged in bullying. This could produce conflict in the minds of some children who might feel that it was 'unAustralian' to 'dob' on others. Teachers commonly saw it as their task to help children to distinguish between 'telling tales' and getting help for children who needed it because they were being bullied. They offered praise to children who acted appropriately in this regard. Children in some schools were also encouraged to act as 'good bystanders' by expressing disapproval when they witnessed bullying taking place.

4.15 Availability of anti-bullying policies

The policies, in some cases in draft form, were provided to the researchers by the school principals. They did not, in general, contain statements about the availability of the documents. There were exceptions:

> The Policy to protect against bullying and harassment is available on request by any member of the school community and the policy will be laminated and placed in all classrooms.

In one school it was noted, the policy was printed in the Staff Handbook. At several schools the Policy on Bullying was printed in the diaries which were provided for all students.

4.16 Evaluating and reviewing existing policy

A minority of schools (20%) included in their policy a resolution to evaluate and review their policy at a later stage. In some cases a date was set. In an attempt to operationalise how the evaluation would be conducted, one school proposed these criteria (i) the reduction of bullying behaviour as evidenced in class behaviour sheets and the playground book and (ii) demonstrations of coping strategies for dealing with bullying. Another school added that they would speak to parents who have reported incidences of bullying to find out if the problem had been resolved and also note whether there had been an increase in enrolments or requests for enrolment.

To date few schools have reported results from rigorous evaluations which have demonstrated a significant reduction in bullying following the introduction of measures outlined in their anti-bullying policy. An exception is a boarding school where the PRAQ was used before and after the implementation of the policy. The results indicated a statistically significant reduction in self-reported bullying among students. This occurred despite the fact that students had become more aware of what constituted bullying. Supportive evidence was obtained from records indicating that fewer students were reporting being bullied whilst at the same time more students needing help with interpersonal problems were approaching staff members.

4.17 Justification for the anti-bullying policy

None of the policies provides an explicit justification for the school having an anti-bullying policy as such. As detailed earlier, there are statements that bullying is "unacceptable" at the school and that bullying is inconsistent with rights that members of the school community share, for example, the right to a safe environment. These statements, however, could equally apply to a policy directed against violence that did not involve bullying.

Perhaps surprisingly, no references were made to any directives from Departments of Education urging or requiring schools to have anti-bullying policies. No references were made to the legal liabilities that schools may have in not dealing appropriately with cases of bullying, despite the fact that in one state legal action had successfully been taken against one school that was alleged to have failed to protect a child from being bullied at school.

There was nevertheless information contained in anti-bullying policies that drew attention to the problem of bullying as distinct from other kinds of inappropriate or anti-social behaviours. Some schools provided factual information about the incidence of bullying:

> "All schools experience bullying in various forms. It is estimated that 1 in 5 of all children between the ages of 5 and 17 are bullied each week in Australia"

Some policies drew attention to the effects on the victim's well-being:

> "Bullying behaviour affects the victim's feelings of self-worth which, in turn, hinders the ability to learn and interact socially and feel safe.'

The connection between bullying and criminal activity was identified:

> 'Bullying is related to other forms of anti-social behaviour, such as disruptive behaviour, community violence, vandalism and petty theft.'

As described above, many schools indicated in their policies that they were adopting specified approaches to countering bullying. In most cases, however, there was no indication why schools were doing one thing as opposed to another. There were no references to the demonstrated effectiveness of measures to reduce bullying, despite the existence of published accounts of interventions that had resulted in significant reductions in peer victimisation in a number of countries (see Olweus, 1993, Smith and Sharp, 1994, Petersen and Rigby (1997), Rigby, 2002b).

Nevertheless, some schools did include in their policies belief statements that could have implications for how they went about trying to counter bullying. For example, bullying was seen as a natural phenomenon that should be recognised as an inevitable part of child development

> Bullying will always exist because it is part of the social development that humans counter (sic) as they learn about power relationships.

The implication appears to be that children should be helped to learn about power relationships.

The same school saw bullying as having a clear function:

> Bullying behaviour towards others helps some students to meet their own power needs.

And:

> Perpetrators of bullying can be assisted to meet their power needs in more socially acceptable ways.

The implication, that children who bully should be helped to exert power in some other way, was not however, pursued in discussing the schools' responses to bullying.

Arguments based upon social psychological or educational theory were generally lacking in accounts of what the schools were committed to do to tackle bullying. Generally it was assumed that if negative "consequences" followed the breaking of rules outlawing bullying behaviour there would be less peer victimisaton. No connections were made with Learning or Reinforcement Theory. However, several schools drew upon the ideas of Glasser, sometimes called 'control theory' (Glasser, (1984); sometimes 'choice theory' (Glasser, 1988). Students engaging in bullying behaviour were encouraged to think about the consequences of the behaviours they had "chosen" and to behave more responsibly. The consequences were presented as being "logical" consequences, despite being imposed by teachers to discourage the behaviours. In some schools students were encouraged to reflect upon their bullying behaviour, in an appropriately named Reflection Room, and to consider whether such a choice was in their best interest.

Whilst some rationale was provided by several schools for the way they proposed to deal with bully/victim problems, there was an absence of any theoretical underpinning given in relation to other methods, such as Mediation and the Method of Shared Concern, both of which were being utilised by the schools.

5. Prevention of peer victimisation

Schools generally saw that the prevention of bullying was at least as important as dealing with incidents when they occurred. Preventative measures endorsed and practised by schools may be examined under the following headings:

- The inclusion in the curriculum of content intended to develop pro-social attitudes and skills relevant to coping with and/or helping others to counter bullying
- By modelling and rewarding positive behaviour.
- By promoting activities that engage students' interests in constructive ways
- By reducing opportunities for engaging in bullying behaviour
- By taking steps to resolve conflict before it becomes bullying.
- Work with parents

5.1 The inclusion in the curriculum of content intended to develop pro-social attitudes and skills relevant to coping with and/or helping others to counter bullying

Typically the schools sought to address bullying through the work done with children in groups, in classrooms and/or at camps attended by students and staff. In a minority of cases staff talked to students about bullying on a one-off basis in accordance with school policy. It was observed by some teachers that bullying was often a difficult issue to bring up in class, especially among older, senior students.

Quite often a good deal of thought went into preparing and giving a series of lessons which were intended to raise awareness about bullying and develop relevant skills in dealing with bullying either as the target of bullying or as a bystander wishing to help.

Here, for example, is a program developed for year 7 students as a subject in Health and Safety: It contained these elements:

> What is bullying ? Where does it take place? Why do people do it? What can individuals do about it ? What can groups of people do about it ? How do peers influence others ?. How may bystanders behave? The need to resist bullying. Agreed rules on how to behave with others. Strategies for defusing a bullying situation. How to be assertive and to say No ! Designing a poster to convey an anti-bullying message.

The authors of this program which was to extend over several weeks stressed the need to continually reflect upon how it was working, to revise if necessary and consider at what level(s) it could be best implemented.

Some schools reported that the process of educating children regarding what constituted bullying required a series of meetings, as there were many possible misunderstandings of the term. For instance, some students were unclear of the difference between 'fighting' and 'bullying.' Some were unaware that bullying could include indirect means such as exclusion. Small tutorial groups were seen as appropriate for exploring these concepts. At one school special emphasis was placed upon what behaviours were expected of them in their relations with peers. Contrary to what some students had thought, 'bossing around' younger students in a Boarding School environment was not to be regarded as a privilege enjoyed by senior students.

Many schools emphasised the importance of students learning how to behave when someone tries to bully them. In fact, some schools thought it was preferable to seek to prevent bullying in this way as opposed to instituting a 'zero tolerance' policy in the school. At one primary school it was argued that it should be recognised that 'when kids get to high school they will be bullied, so they should be prepared for life !' It was added: 'You can't put it in a document: Bullying is here, get used to it. But you can strengthen the skills of children to deal with it." To this end a number of schools had taught the so-called 'Hi 5s'. Each finger of a hand was used to represent one of a sequence of responses to being bullied: Ignore, Walk Away, Polite Talk, Firm Talk and Report.

How anti-bullying material could be presented occupied a good deal of attention in some schools. Telling students how they should behave was thought to have little value. The use of role plays, for example of situations in which a child was being shunned by others, was considered a better approach, especially when sensitively debriefed. In some schools a good deal of use was made of hypothetical case studies in order to raise awareness of bullying and harassment and to explore ways of responding to particular incidents, for example, in cases of possible sexual and racial harassment.

The use of drama as a means of addressing bullying played a highly significant part in the work of some schools. Acting companies were on occasions invited to schools to perform plays about bullying. These included the Brainstorm Company with their play, 'Sticks and Stones' in New South Wales and 'The Old Socks Company' in Victoria. A particularly innovative approach was employed in several schools in Queensland utilising the services of the Fair Go Company. The actors in this group consisted of two women, one of whom played the part of a bully, the other a victim. They came into the classroom as "new students" before the teacher arrived and played out a severe harassment scene among the students, so convincingly that the students were generally unaware that it was an acting performance. Of major interest were the reactions of the bystanders, many of whom spontaneously cheered on the aggressor. Subsequently, in debriefing, it was possible to examine how the reactions

of many of the students had facilitated and promoted the bullying. In addition role-plays were conducted on how children who were targeted could cope more effectively with the "stage bully."

Some schools reported having used the Mindmatters program for High Schools. This includes material and exercises designed to raise awareness and develop skills relating to bullying. The difficulties of implementing the programme was stressed by one school where it was abandoned in several classes, despite a recognition that it contained "some excellent ideas."

Whilst not directly addressing bullying, some of the programmes and lesson content were seen as relevant to countering bullying. These included the development of social skills, such as assertiveness and making friends, especially among children with low self-esteem who were easily victimised. In one school sessions were provided in which attention was paid to how students could become more resilient and thereby "bully-proofed." One interesting program for girls focussed on issues associated with body image and the harm to individuals who are ridiculed or disparaged for not having the socially approved body shape. There were programs that focussed on anger management. This was seen as particularly relevant for students whose bullying behaviour derived from their emotional and impulsive nature. Notably lacking in most curricula addressing bullying were programmes explicitly directed towards developing greater empathy among children, although some teachers reported reading stories that engendered sympathetic reactions towards others. Some schools also saw their emphasis upon cooperative learning as developing social attitudes that were likely to prevent or reduce the occurrence of bullying.

In some schools Peer Support activities were encouraged, with older students being trained to work with younger students as part of classroom activity directed towards developing a better understanding of social issues and interpersonal relationships. However, not all schools found this process constructive. One school reported: 'talks by students proved to be a trial for those doing it.' It was stressed that good training and careful monitoring is needed if such programmes are likely to be effective.

In fact, not all schools felt confident that staff talking about bullying with groups of children would be helpful. The staff in one school found that talking to a Year 10 class about bullying had been counter-productive. Talking about bullying as 'the abuse of power' had encouraged some students to feel more powerful and proud of their supposed superiority. Some classes, it was felt, could 'hijack' such talks – that is, use them to further their own anti-social interests.

5.2 Modelling and rewarding positive behaviours

It was widely recognised that how one behaved could have a stronger and more lasting influence than what one said. Teachers often reminded themselves that their

actions as role models could help to determine how children related to others. At one school teachers made this resolution:

> "We choose to speak respectfully even when students do not speak respectfully to us."

At several schools children who behaved pro-socially were rewarded for such positive behaviour. For example, under a so-called Politeness Program, polite actions were acknowledged and rewarded with a $2 voucher for use in the canteen. At one school one week was declared 'a kindness week.'

To the extent that children feel supported by their peers they were seen at some schools as less likely to experience bullying. So-called 'buddy' programmes were employed in some schools. For instance, in one school children in Year 6 teamed up with kindy children. According to the school Principal 'the big kids loved it.' At another school, however, the younger children preferred their 'buddies' to be only slightly older than themselves, that is, from Year 2.

One school emphasised the need for all children in Year 6 to have a leadership role in their class. A parliamentary system model was used, according to which Year 6 students put themselves forward for specified offices, if they felt they qualified. The children were encouraged to 'self-assess' against certain criteria such as 'not putting other people down.' The class then voted children into such offices as captain, vice-captains and prefects. All of the remaining children received badges to say they were also school leaders. Different qualities were focused upon in different years. For example, in kindergarten it was 'caring, e.g., putting your lunch box away; in Year 1, courtesy; in Year 2, commonsense; in Year 3, 'being a good friend'; in Year 4, 'sportsmanship; Year 5, 'leadership.' It was felt by the Principal that this procedure would encourage responsible and self-reliant behaviour, and would reduce the likelihood of bullying.

5.3 By promoting activities that engage students' interests in constructive ways

A view commonly expressed was that boredom could give rise to bullying among children. Moreover, it was evident to some teachers that some students at least were ill-prepared for engaging in engrossing play activities during recess, especially towards the end of recess or the lunch break. As a result some primary schools sought to involve students in activities that would keep them occupied. These included the following: Free swim aerobics, tap dancing, skipping, handball, touch ball, chess, gardening and photography.

In some schools students were encouraged to produce posters to promote anti-bullying programmes. One slogan used by several schools was: 'Bullying is not cool'. In some schools students were invited to script and perform in plays addressing the problem of bullying.

5.4 By reducing opportunities for engaging in bullying behaviour

Some schools emphasised the need to reduce opportunities for bullying. It was recognised that close supervision of student behaviour during breaks could discourage inappropriate behaviour including bullying. At one school careful planning was undertaken to ensure that all relevant areas of the school environment were monitored, especially those seen as posing greatest risk for vulnerable students. This involved allocating teachers to supervise within specified areas rather than "places in general." One school provided these instructions to ensure rigorous monitoring:

- Teachers will be in classrooms at 8-30am
- Teachers will move to their classrooms promptly at the first siren at 10.57 am (sic) and to line up at 1-17pm (sic)
- No students inside during lunch hour
- No loitering outside canteen, toilets or library.
- Teachers monitor high risk areas while on duty, ie. the canteen, toilets, playground equipment, trees, etc. (It was added that a bully map was to be provided to ' more correctly identify high bully areas').
- Actively patrol while on duty.

Attention was given also to the problem of bullying that took place when students were moving from one part of the school to another between classes. One "solution" was to increase the length of class periods so that there would be fewer movements between classes. This change also enabled some teachers to get to know their students better and form more helpful relationships with them. In another school, the school hours had been changed, so that school would start earlier. It was believed that the new school hours from 8-30 to 2-30 would have an impact on bullying because before, some children had a one and a half hours wait before school began.

A further restructuring to minimise the opportunities to bully was undertaken in a boarding school. The inclusion of Year 8 students with senior students had led to many of them being bullied by older students. By including Year 8 students in a setting with younger students the overall level of bullying was reduced. A major reduction in bullying occurred at this school when senior students were no longer required to fulfil roles in which they 'directed' younger students to carry out certain tasks, such as cleaning up and going to bed. Their powers to discipline younger students were removed. The opportunities to bully – and feel justified in doing so – no longer existed.

Finally, it was recognised that bullying often took place outside the school, for example in coming to school and going home after school. Some schools directed the students' attention to the location of Safety Houses in which students could seek refuge if they were being seriously bullied. The frequently reported problem of

bullying on buses was of concern to some schools and efforts were being made to empower senior students with authority to identify 'problem students' and to discuss the problem and possible solutions with bus drivers.

5.5 Taking steps to resolve conflict before it becomes bullying.

It was generally recognised that some conflicts escalated into bullying, particularly when one party was more powerful than the other and it seemed to be in the interest of the stronger party to persistently dominate and upset the other. Schools generally saw the value in making use of mediation procedures in situations in which conflict had not, as yet, become bullying. However, once bullying was taking place, the possibility of a mediated solution seemed less likely. Some teachers reported using mediation procedures successfully and saw this approach as most desirable, at least as a first step - to be abandoned if not working, and replaced by the use of sanctions directed at deterring inappropriate behaviour.

The use of mediation by students proved to be controversial. Some schools were very positive about it, one describing it as 'exciting and successful." Another reported that it had been used between 70 and 80 times during the year and it had usually been successful, with only one known failure. At that school mediation was conducted by teams of two students with a counsellor sometimes sitting in. However, some were much less positive. One school reported that they had tried it and it was "not a real success." Peer mediation training, according to one Principal, was all right but not very effective. Only a few cases, he said, seemed to lend themselves to it. 'Teachers', he added, like to solve things quickly and concretely and Peer Mediation is a bit touchy-feely.' . At another school it was felt that ' it takes too much time for the students and in the majority of cases it would be taken over by a staff member.' Another school at secondary level found peer mediation 'a considerable drain on time.' However, that school was prepared to go ahead with it – if good training could be assured. It was felt that there was also a need for a 'school culture that recognises its value and supports it' before it could be really effective.. Some schools believed that mediation could be effective only at senior levels, as a high level of maturation was needed to understand the principles of peer mediation and apply them. At one school it was reported that 'peer mediation was not much used, except with older students, more so with girls.' It was felt that 'girls use it more than boys because they are more sensitive.' At one school whether mediation was to be used in a school was referred to the Student Representative Council. They were reluctant to support it. It might be OK, they conceded, but not with our friends. Friendship overrides.'

Among younger students so-called Peacekeepers were sometimes selected and trained to help with students conflicts. Again some schools reported that this approach was useful, especially if students were trained and guided to help others to work out ways of resolving conflicts themselves rather than imposing solutions. That peacekeeping did not always work out well may be illustrated by a comment from one school:

> The peacekeepers … were turning into little Hitlers, for instance yelling 'Get out of there – you know you shouldn't be there.' They have blue shirts. Parents think it's wonderful but teachers think it's legitimised bullying'

And again:

> 'The peacekeepers are not supposed to intervene but they take on the role of mini teachers. There is a bum bag of stickers to reinforce kids… and the Peacekeepers say: 'You want a sticker - you'll have to do what I say.'

The need for effective training and careful monitoring was all too evident.

5.6 Work with parents

As reported earlier, some schools had involved parents in work related to bullying, for example, in completing the PRAQ for parents, in collating survey information with staff members, in participating in meetings and in assisting in the development of anti-bullying policy. This work helped to bring the school community together and was thought to be contributing towards preventing or reducing bullying. It was evident in some interviews that some teachers believed that bullying behaviour at times developed through inadequate parenting and dysfunctional family life. One principal was reported as often personally visiting the homes of his students, seeking to understand the difficulties they were experiencing and establishing constructive and helpful relationships with families.

6. Dealing with bullying incidents

A good deal of emphasis was placed by schools on how cases of bullying were dealt with. In some schools, the process was outlined in the anti-bullying policies (see Section 4)). In discussion with school representatives there was some exploration of the kind of approach being taken by the schools to the question.

None of the schools was prepared to ignore bullying. There was some variation, largely in emphasis, upon responsibilities for acts of bullying. Responsibility was located mainly in the perpetrator, the bully, and actions were to be taken to discourage the perpetrator's behaviour. It was generally acknowledged that home backgrounds could play a significant part, and school principals frequently related the prevalence of bullying in their schools to family factors, such as dysfunctionality and the modelling of aggressive behaviour by parents. Indeed, some were inclined to see bullying in their schools as "imported" from the local community. Some schools saw bullying as a "natural" phenomenon, to some degree unavoidable, which some students needed to learn to overcome. Whatever explanation was offered, however, the main response that schools considered appropriate was the application of 'consequences' when known rules, such as rules against bullying, were broken.

6.1 Consequences

'Consequences' was the key word that came to mind when most schools considered what was to be done with students who engaged in bullying others. Sometimes the word was linked with 'logical,' as in logical consequences. It was difficult to determine in what sense the word 'logical' was used. Generally it seems to have been used to imply what was considered 'reasonable' or 'fitting.' For example, if a person prevented someone from enjoying a 'right' – say to be free to play a game, it could be seen as reasonable – and in a loose sense 'logical' – that he or she should be deprived of the freedom to enjoy whatever the victim had been deprived of, ie. being part of a game. Such a 'privilege' was to be taken away. The analogy with sport was taken at some schools as far as to involve literally giving an offender a red card. It was conceived as reasonable, even logical, to take liberty from those who took liberties.

In applying consequences to offences in this way, no distinction needed to be made between bullying and any other kind of offence, such as stealing, fighting or burning the school down. The problem identified by some schools lay in defining the precise rule that was broken when more subtle, but equally or more hurtful, forms of bullying took place, for example, the repeated use of disparaging gestures, staring annoyingly at someone, not acknowledging someone's presence, rumour spreading, deliberate and repeated references to obscure incidents calculated to embarrass or upset someone, the deliberate isolating of individuals by turning their friends against them. Such actions were acknowledged by teachers generally as constituting elements in bullying behaviour that could give rise to a good deal of distress.

Generally, however, the consequences relating to physical bullying were seen as more severe than those relating to non-physical bullying. One school listed instances of physical bullying as follows: hitting, physical violence, shoving, biting, pushing and fighting. (The inclusion of 'fighting' suggests that the criterion according to which an imbalance of power is needed to identify bullying was not used). Non-physical bullying included these behaviours: exclusions, put-downs, swearing, teasing and name-calling. Whilst informing parents and counselling were seen as appropriate consequences for both physical and non-physical bullying, being sent to time-out immediately with the possibility of suspension/exclusion was applicable to physical bullying only.

Many schools had adopted a policy of imposing graded sanctions. Typical of such grading from least severe to most severe was the following:

- Talk to the children involved about the incident and remind them that such behaviour is not acceptable. Comfort the victim and point out to the perpetrators how he or she feels.
- Warn the bully of the consequences of further incidents
- Inform other staff of the incident and record it. Monitor the behaviour of the children involved following the discussion. Try to give the bully some tasks to do or some responsibilities, or praise him/her for doing something right.
- If the aggression is repeated, separate the offending child from the group for 'time out.'
- If the child continues to bully, make an appointment to speak to the parents/carer. Remind them of the policy and ask for their cooperation in stopping the child from bullying other children
- If none of these sanctions succeed in stopping the child from being aggressive, he/she may be excluded – either from the playground or from the school for a short period of time.

Not all schools interpreted 'consequences' in a relatively narrow way linked to the infraction of defined rules. 'Consequences' could, for example, include being counselled or being involved in a process of mediation. In viewing 'consequences' in this way, schools were going outside the discourse that has been traditionally associated with 'consequences' in the context of behaviour management. This extension of the meaning of the term did not satisfy all the schools. Some schools were happy to see' consequences ' as a synonym for sanctions or even punishments.

It was possible then to distinguish between (i) schools that saw the appropriate way of dealing with bullying in the traditional way - when rules are broken negative consequences follow - and (ii) schools that have extended the meaning of 'consequences' so that it can be said that when a bullying act is identified a non-punitive consequence may follow. Both types of 'consequences' may arguably fit within a Behaviour Management Policy.

Few schools were prepared to use the term 'punishment' to describe how they were prepared to treat students who broke rules, including those who bullied others. There was a desire on the part of a number of schools to see the consequence that befell the bully as having been brought on by his or her own behaviour, the school being merely the mediator between action and destiny. That the school arranged for things to be done or not done to a student under the given circumstances was neither here nor there. The student chose to bully.

The text of a so-called Programme Bullying Reflection Sheet used at one school makes this clear. Part of it reads as follows:

> I understand that my choice of behaviour is bullying. If I continue this kind of action, it may lead to my parents being contacted and ultimately suspension.

It continues: 'I understand that my behaviour will be monitored for the next two (2) weeks by …….'. The student is asked to sign the document.

To bring home to the student responsibility for his or her action some schools reported that they had engaged students in a discourse to encourage the student to consider carefully the options that were open. This approach was based closely upon the work of the educationalist, Ed Ford (see http://responsiblethinking.com/) and followed many of the principles of Control (or Choice) Theory developed by William Glasser (1988) A Responsible Thinking Room is set up, especially. There the bully (and other offenders) sits with pen and paper under the guidance of the Responsible Thinking Teacher considering options - until a decision is made, and the Responsible Thinking Teacher is satisfied that a clear plan for subsequent action had been documented. The bully may then be admitted back into the school community from which he or she has been temporarily excluded. If the bully has decided that bullying was the way to go – an option presented to the bully – well, in a sense that was OK. The parents would be called in and an alternative courses of action considered. In those schools employing this way of dealing with bullies, suspensions or exclusions were said to be extremely rare. The author of this method, Ed Ford, claims that it is 'a unique discipline process that is both non-manipulative and non-punitive'.

Notably this approach did not include a consideration of the relationship between the alleged bully and others with whom he or she was involved. Neither was the issue seen as a moral issue, not a matter of 'right and wrong' involving a consideration of the harm that ensued. Nobody got angry about anything. The central feature lay in encouraging students to make an informed decision about where their best interests lay.

In practical terms this approach required a carefully developed procedure operated by a person capable of relating effectively with students in such a way that they saw

their best interests as coinciding with what the school desired. Because such a role is demanding and can take up a good deal of time, the schools in which the system was made use of employed a full-time teacher relieved entirely from teaching duties.. Judging from the responses of other staff members interviewed where the method was used, this approach was extremely effective in reducing the number of disruptive incidents in the school. Teacher comments at one school were:

> 'I now enjoy teaching for the first time in 10 years. I know I can deliver without disruption'
>
> 'I would not teach in a school without this process.'
>
> 'The school without this process would be a jungle.'

Moreover, it was claimed the operation of this method enabled teachers to feel in control of things, less under pressure and more capable of tuning in to the problems of students and addressing difficulties they were encountering in relations with their peers.

6.2 Criticisms of the "consequences" approach

Some schools preferred to treat bullying as a problem for which the use of clearly defined rules and consequences was not the only or the most desirable way of responding to bully/victim problems. It was pointed out at one school that children who bully others have often been punished more than enough by parents and need to experience a different sort of treatment. It was also argued that it was difficult or impossible to specify rules to cover all the ways in which a person could bully someone, even though all bullying behaviour needed to be confronted. Further, it was said, monitoring bullying behaviour was often exceedingly difficult. A person who had been punished for bullying someone could persist in bullying in subtle ways which were practically impossible to detect. According to one Principal, punishing a bully was counterproductive: "It is no good banging the bully over the head because he will just go out and do it again.'

In one school the Director of Student Welfare stated: "I don't apply 'consequences' because then the bullying gets driven underground; but the teachers say: 'Why didn't they get detention ?' The Director took the line that 'if a bully says he's sorry, then you forgive.' Here, as elsewhere, there were differences between staff members on how cases of bullying should be dealt with.

It was acknowledged that students who had been punished for bullying someone, were often strongly motivated to seek out and hurt the informer. Providing adequate protection for the likely victim was thought to be beyond the resources of some schools. This encouraged some schools to explore alternative ways of dealing with bully/victim problems.

6.3 Alternatives to consequences

As stated earlier, the notion of 'consequences' was expanded by some schools to include counselling approaches. However, for most schools 'consequences' implied the use of sanctions. Alternatives to the use of 'consequences' in this sense were used at a number of schools. These include two approaches that have been developed specifically to deal with incidents of bullying. These are the No-Blame Approach, proposed by Maines and Robinson (1992) and the Method of Shared Concern devised by the Swedish psychologist, Pikas (1989, 1999).

6.4 The no-blame approach

The major features of this procedure were set out by one school as follows:

- Interview the victim

In the interview the first objective is to discover, in general terms, what happened and who was involved. It is not intended that there should be a detailed investigation of the incident or incidents or an attempt made at this, or any subsequent stage 'to get to the bottom of it'. The focus is to be on the feelings of the child who has been victimised. The interviewer seeks to get permission from the child to tell the bullies how he or she feels about it. It is emphasised that the bullies will not be punished and that there is no reason to be fearful of informing. To provide a graphic account the child is asked to describe his/her feelings, if possible, in the form of a piece of writing, a poem or a drawing.

- Convene a group meeting.

This is to include the bullies, but also any colluders or bystanders; about six to eight is ideal. The victim is not included.

- Communicate to the group how the victim feels

At the meeting the interviewer seeks to describe how the victim feels about the bullying, drawing upon the materials that have been provided by the victim. This may involve reading a poem or a description of how the victim feels. There is to be no interrogation and no blaming. The aim is simply to share information and produce an empathic response.

- Attribute responsibility to the group

The interviewer points out that it is their joint responsibility to help by improving the situation for the victim.

- Elicit helpful suggestions

Specific suggestions may then be elicited as to how the victim can be made happier. No promises are required from the children regarding any proposals to help.

- Hand over responsibility to act to the group

It is explained that it is now up to them. (Nevertheless, the teacher undertakes to meet with them again in about a week's time to review progress.)

- Individual meetings with participants

Each member of the group and the victim are next interviewed on their own. In this way the effects of the intervention can be monitored and the extent of the progress can be assessed.

This approach was used with success in a number of primary schools. In one school students were first asked whether they wanted to take part in the meeting at which the no-blame approach was employed. Monitoring progress following the meeting by checking on the subsequent behaviour of the bully or bullies and the victim was seen as an important element in its operation. With the older children the approach was modified and became more punitive – which appears inconsistent with the spirit of No Blame !

6.5 The Method of Shared Concern.

The so-called Method of Shared Concern was cited by a number of schools as providing the basis for interventions with bullies and victims. It involves the following procedure.

- First the problem is identified. Information about who is involved, including (a) the person or persons being bullied by another individual or group and (b) the person or persons continually engaged in carrying out the bullying. Information about what is happening and the concern felt by the victim is ideally obtained through observations and reports rather than through talking directly with the victim. (This is to prevent repercussions on the victim for "dobbing" people in.)
- Next the suspected bullies are interviewed. A number of students are identified as likely to have taken part in the bullying, or to have supported it in some way. Each one is seen in turn, starting (if known) with the likely ringleader. In these meeting with individual students, it is important not to make any accusations. The meeting begins with the interviewer inviting the student to sit in a chair opposite (without an intervening desk) and waiting for eye contact before the interaction begins. The interviewer starts by sharing a concern for the person who is being victimised. Once the feelings of the interviewer have been clearly - and sincerely - conveyed, the student is asked to say what he or she knows about the situation. As soon as the student has acknowledged some awareness (not necessarily guilt) relating to what has been happening, the student is asked directly

what he or she can do to help improve matters. Note that the interviewer is not trying to "get to the bottom of the matter" and to apportion blame but to produce a constructive response and change the situation. Commonly suggestions are elicited. But if they are not, the interviewer may make suggestions, normally ones that are not difficult to follow. The interviewer should express strong approval for any constructive proposals, but arrange for another meeting (at an agreed time) to see how things have gone. At this meeting no threats are made nor any warnings given. The remaining students in the group are seen, again individually, and the procedure repeated.

- Then the victim is interviewed. The victim is seen after all the suspected bullies have been interviewed. It is essential that the interviewer begins by expressing concern, sympathy and **s**upport over what has been happening. However, questions need to be asked to find out whether the victim has been doing anything to bring on the bullying - that is by acting as a provocative victim. The interviewer discloses that he or she has actually talked with the bullies individually and that each of them agreed to cooperate. The interviewer undertakes to meet again with the victim to see how things develop.
- A meeting with the whole group is organized. At this meeting it is usually possible to (i) compliment the members on the progress that has been made and (ii) to "fall in with" (or elicit) a suggestion from members of the group that the victim be invited to join them for a final meeting to demonstrate that the problem of bullying has really been resolved. Reassurances are given by individual members that they will act positively towards the victim at such a meeting. The victim can normally be induced to join the group for a final meeting, with assurances that there will be no unpleasantness at the meeting. Such a meeting, if well conducted, can demonstrate publicly that the bullying is well and truly over. However, in cases where the victim has behaved provocatively, the interviewer must seek to facilitate adjustments in the behaviour of both sides, that is, play the role of mediator. The aim is to get the students to reach an agreement - ideally in writing and in an agreed form - relating to how each will behave in future.

6.6 Adaptations of Shared Concern

Schools endorsing the method tended to draw on what they saw as the underlying philosophy of 'shared concern,' that is, that students who bully should have the distressing consequences their actions have had for other people explained to them in a one-to-one interview in which no threats are made, but rather there should be an invitation for them to behave responsibly. It was thereby acknowledged that the student may be quite unaware of the impact and seriousness of his or her actions. One Principal reported that some of the students he encountered did not understand the extent to which they were hurting another. He commented: 'When they find out they are horrified and say they didn't mean it to happen.' The student may not in fact feel responsible for

his or her bullying behaviour, but in the course of a non-blaming interview come to accept personal responsibility.

Not all schools employed the method precisely as described above. At one school it was stated that the basic idea of this approach was used 'naturally without realising it is a particular method.' At this school the method was described as being responded to well. In another school, the approach was used in some cases without the suspected bully being aware that he or she was suspected of bullying. The 'script' was: "Someone's very unhappy. What can you tell me about it ?' The bottom line at this school, we were told, was that 'bullying must stop because it is making someone very unhappy." At another school, an adaptation of Shared Concern involved a teacher sharing her concern about the plight of a victim with the bully, and adding: 'Someone's doing it. Could you make sure they're alright?' Here the teacher was careful not suggest in any way that she was aware of the identity of the bully. For three consecutive days the bully was required to come back and report on how things were going.

However, some schools were critical of its use. Some thought it too time-consuming, despite the fact that the 'interviews' can be very brief. In one school the No-Blame approach in which teachers worked with groups was thought to be quicker and therefore preferable. Some were sceptical about a sharing of concern necessarily eliciting constructive, responsible behaviour from all bullies. Some bullies, it was thought, knew well enough what harm they were doing. Some would pretend to go along with the interviewer. It was thought at some schools that for those students who did not respond positively to a no-blame approach, the use of sanctions would subsequently be needed.

6.7 Mediation

Some schools placed much emphasis upon mediation as a means of resolving conflict between students, but especially at an early stage of the conflict and where there was little, if any, imbalance of power evident – and also where there was a genuine desire in both parties (and especially the aggressor) to reach a mutually satisfactory outcome. Generally, it was felt that if mediation was to succeed in resolving bully/victim problems, adults must be employed in the process.

6.8 Community Conferencing

The idea that a successful resolution of bully/victim problems could be achieved by bringing together all the interested parties – bullies, victims and their families and friends - has been suggested by some educators and tried by some Australian schools However, in the sample of schools in this study, it had not been tried. Nevertheless, the idea of 'conferencing' was taken up by one school where it was not uncommon for teachers to call a meeting of students, including a bully or bullies , the victim or victims, and other students who would be present to listen to what the victim(s) had to say in order that the bully or bullies would be 'shamed' into a recognition of the shamefulness of their behaviour. Apologies and acts of reparation on the part of the

perpetrators and reconciliation with the offended were expected to follow (see Morrison , 2001).

6.9 A mixed approach

Although some schools applied a 'rules and consequences 'approach and others a 'problem solving approach' there were some schools that made use of both approaches. It was not unusual for schools to explain that there were rules at their school against bullying and corresponding sanctions or penalties but on occasions a problem-solving approach was used that avoided the use of coercion.

The inclusion of both these approaches in dealing with bullying was seen by some schools as requiring a distinction between more severe and less severe forms of bullying and also an appraisal of how a student who had bullied someone had behaved after a 'problem-solving' approach had been used. The view expressed was that with a 'low severity form ' of bullying a 'softer' approach was acceptable, but would be 'hardened' if the bullying continued. With 'high severity' bullying the use of problem solving approaches such as No Blame and Shared Concern were seen as inappropriate, in part because of the pressure from parents of the victim to see the bully punished. Combining both approaches clearly required schools to make judgements about the severity of the bullying incidents and the responsiveness of individuals involved to the actions taken by the school.

At one school a simple distinction was made between verbal and physical forms of bullying. For the former there was nothing beyond a warning and a statement that if they stop it will go no further. It was insisted that the victim must tell if there was any continuation of the bullying – and the bully was advised of this. This, according to the Principal, was an approach that worked well at his school. With physical bullying, he added, the matter was taken to 'a higher level'.

In some schools the relationship between the offence and the consequence was more complex. How the different approaches might be used was indicated in considerable detail by one school, The Heights High School in South Australia (see The Bullying and Harassment Response Chart, provided in Appendix 4 with permission of the school). Here levels of consequences are related directly to levels of severity of behaviours, and responsibility for taking action is ascribed to different people or teams of people. It is assumed that most bullying and harassment is of a low level of severity, eg., thoughtless, periodic teasing, name-calling and occasional exclusion. By contrast 'high severity' bullying is cruel, intense and may be over an extended time period. Between these extremes is an intermediate level of severity. The suggested 'consequences' include both being involved in counselling activities, eg., 'discussing the issue with those concerned,' and the use of penalties, such as 'yard duty' and "suspension from school.'

For ‘low severity behaviours’ all teachers were held to be responsible: ‘All teachers need to challenge these incidents both in the classroom and the yard.’ For the bullying of high severity, incidents were to be referred to the leadership team for action. Where bullying was at an intermediate level of severity, the leadership team was to be supported by curriculum and year level coordinators.

Inspection of the table given in full in Appendix 3 suggests that ‘consequences’ for low severity bullying are relatively mild, eg. ‘10 minutes yard duty’ and designed to help the bully to think through the implications of his or her actions, eg ‘session in the thinking room.’ At the intermediate level, a formal process was suggested, requiring an incident report and other documentation. The difficulty of deciding what penalty is to be imposed is indicated by the suggestion, among others, that ‘an appropriate consequence’ be used. This latter suggestion unfortunately does not provide much in the way of guidance. High level consequences understandably required an interview with parents and possibly suspension or exclusion. Less obviously, the school suggests that there could be‘ required educational activities’ for the very serious offenders. The example given was ‘anger management.’

6.10 Problems and difficulties

Teachers generally recognised the complexity of dealing with cases of bullying. They saw that it was not always easy to identify the source of the problem. For instance, there were children who could be called ‘bully/victims’ – ‘children who complain of being bullied and bully other children just as badly.’ A teacher commented: “They often don’t see this until they are told.’ There were children that could be called ‘provocative victims’ who annoy others repeatedly until they bully them. In some cases, it was stated, it was ‘shadowy whether it was fighting or bullying.’ Sometimes physical violence occurred because the victim had ‘had enough’ and lashed out in desperation.

Some children who were victimised were seen as particularly difficult to deal with, for instance intellectually impaired children who were said to be ‘the hardest and saddest to deal with because they develop a thick shell against it [bullying]- they are very much isolated and it is very difficult to get well-balanced children to accept them.’ Difficulties sometimes arose because of entrenched prejudice. In one school, the prejudice was directed towards children from low social class as indicated by their family living in a Housing Trust home. ‘You’re poor – stay there’ was a phrase used to put them in their place. Occasionally, bullying along racial and gender lines was mentioned.

Another difficulty derived from different messages being given to children who complained of being bullied. There were teachers who gave an ‘old fashioned’ response: ‘Go and play with someone else’ and ‘Stop being a sissy.’ Working with girls who had been bullied relationally by someone who had broken up a friendship or had excluded them from a group was particularly difficult, as the girls involved were typically extremely emotional. The girls were described as’ getting a sinister enjoyment

out of it, acting out melodramas.' Parents, too, were often highly emotional when they came to school to complain of their child being bullied. The problem often needed to be dealt with at the highest level. At one school 'a gilt edged guarantee was given by the Head Mistress that every complaint will be listened to and handled.' Some teachers felt that parents were often manipulated by their children who provide them with a distorted and self-serving account of what has happened. As one teacher said: 'When parents hear that something nasty has been going on, they often won't accept that it's their child and the teacher can't convince them. They hold that their child is always honest and never says an untruth. They should know that excusing oneself is at the bottom of human nature.' Some teachers commented that parents were in fact very supportive of anti-bullying generally. 'But', said one, 'their concepts often differ from reality. They are often very sure that their children can do no wrong'.

Many teachers commented upon differences in viewpoints of teachers and parents on the subject of treatments for bullying. Although some staff believed in the importance of punitive action in dealing with bullying, generally speaking, parents were more strongly in favour of such action. Some appeared vindictive. The attitude of many parents was described as 'Someone's going to pay for this.' Parents seemingly wanted immediate action, whereas teachers wanted more time to consider the problem and were more likely to favour a less punitive alternative. Thus teachers often felt that they were placed in a difficult position: to accede to parents or to do what was in the best interest of the child and the school.

7. Advice to schools on countering bullying

Those interviewed at the schools were asked to say on the basis of their experience what other schools could do to counter bullying. Most schools were interested in providing advice and suggestions based upon their experience of addressing the issue of bullying. In doing so, they tended to emphasise or prioritise points they had made earlier in the interviews. The themes that emerged could be classified under these headings.

- The need for openness to the issue of bullying
- Obtaining reliable information about bullying in one's school
- The need for a whole school approach, a shared understanding of the problem and a commitment to address it
- The importance of leadership in a school
- Childcentredness
- The need for clear expectations
- The value of promoting pro-social behaviour
- The relevance of compassion, understanding and morality
- The need for resources
- Other matters

7.1 The need for openness to the issue of bullying

Considerable prominence was given to the need for schools to accept that bullying did indeed take place at their schools. Typically, the view was expressed that there were some schools or some staff members who were prone to deny its existence. Hence this advice:

> Schools must be open to the problem and honest about it
>
> Address the problem and not pretend it isn't there
>
> It's foolish to deny bullying exists in any school, as it is to be found everywhere
>
> The problem must be acknowledged. It is not enough to say 'Boys will be boys.'
>
> Recognise it as an issue, however small or large

At one school it was seen as important to view bullying as a wider, community problem:

> Recognise it is everywhere, and not just at schools

There was advice that the school should clearly identify the problem:

Name it. This is bullying and this is what it is like.

7.2 Obtaining reliable information about bullying in one's school

Many of the respondents advised schools to gather reliable information about what was happening in their own schools:

The survey method was seen as particularly useful.

> General awareness raising is needed – useful to this end to have a survey
>
> Use anonymous surveys to find out what is happening
>
> Do a survey to gather the facts and raise the profile of the issue

Involvement of the whole school community was seen as desirable:

> Involve the whole school in the process, using surveys and getting parental involvement

Some recommended the PRAQ as a suitable tool:

> It is useful to administer the PRAQ to ascertain the extent of the problem
>
> Vital to do a survey so you have a yardstick on how bad the problem is. The PRAQ is recommended.
>
> Use the PRAQ – it prompts reflection and pressures you along. The survey is recommended because it is illuminating.
>
> Administer all three questionnaires

Whilst the use of an anonymous questionnaire was generally favoured, interviews with children were seen as useful:

> Gather information, especially by interviewing children to find their perceptions.

7.3 The need for a whole school approach, a shared understanding of the problem and commitment to address it.

The need for a 'whole school approach' was constantly re-iterated in the advice given by schools:

> A 'whole school approach' is essential

> Adopt a whole school approach
>
> A policy is important, but all must own it and follow it.
>
> Talk about it and involve all staff

A whole school approach was seen by some as including students, parents and staff:

> Staff agreement and commitment must be developed, involving parents and students wherever possible.
>
> Involve all parties

One Principal suggested what she saw as an important extension:

> Involve bus drivers in any strategy

A common understanding of the problem was seen as a prerequisite for effective cooperation, beginning with the staff:

> The staff must be convinced there is a problem before anything can be done. Staff are often resistant
>
> Achieve a common understanding of bullying in the staff. It is a matter of educating the staff.
>
> Staff and students must understand a simple statement about the nature of bullying.
>
> Use a common language
>
> Begin the campaign with a full, comprehensive definition of bullying
>
> Have a wide, inclusive definition
>
> There is a need for staff to be aware of subtle forms of bullying
>
> Educate parents to see that there is more to bullying than physical ill treatment

It was noted by one principal that identifying behaviour as bullying was not always easy, especially when boys engaged in 'rough and tumble play', for which, he believed, some boys, at least, have a need.

7.4 The importance of leadership in the school

The importance of leadership in promoting anti-bullying activities was emphasised at some schools:

> There must be an acknowledgment of the problem and commitment from school leadership
> The Principal should personally push the agenda
> The Principal himself (sic) should speak to all students about the problem and emphasise its seriousness
> The Principal must show leadership by personally dealing with issues immediately

One Principal spoke of the need to seize the initiative when an issue of bullying 'blew up', for example, when media attention or the threat of legal action raised concern about bullying in a school. At such a time an opportunity is presented for a school to mobilise its resources and seek to bring about much needed changes in the school culture.

7.5 Child Centredness

At many schools it was seen as important to focus on the particular needs of children and to understand their perceptions of the problem of bullying:.

> Avoid being adult centred, that is, look at it from the child's perspective
> The children should have a say
> Use language children can understand
> Talk to students about the problem in small tutorials
> Involve students in reference groups
> Concentrate on what you can do to suppport the children
> Let the students know constantly that the staff are on their side
> Make the students' lives happier
> Increase opportunities for children to talk about it – this requires a change in staff attitudes

7.6 The need for clear expectations

In some schools advice related to the need for students and staff to be clear about what was required of them:

> Students should be aware of what is expected of them and what is the best they can do.

To this end it was felt that students should be very clear about the school policy relating to bullying:

It is essential to make students aware that bullying is unacceptable
There must be a clear understanding of what constitutes bullying
Make the anti-bullying policy known to students
Keep the bullying policy simple

In some schools emphasis was placed upon the staff knowing what they needed to do in dealing with cases of bullying:

Be clear about roles and responsibilities
A definite plan of action is needed with no interpretation
There should be consistent consequences.

At one school it was advised that

Staff should be vigilant and prepared to 'lift the lid'

At another school it was felt that close attention should be paid to relations between staff members

Ensure that every school has a Staff Code of Conduct.

7.7 The value of promoting pro-social behaviour

Some schools were more concerned with promoting pro-social behaviour as a means of countering bullying than in punishing anti-social behaviour.

A program of respect and treating others well is what is needed
Catch kids being positive
Use rewards, for example when the bully does something right
Get teachers to model good, pro-social behaviour
Teachers should model appropriate behaviour and support children
Don't preach, but practice
Work hard on relationships between teachers, students and parents
Build rapport. This takes three times more time than applying 'consequences.'

In some schools there was a readiness to provide advice suggesting that bullying should be seen less as a problem to be solved by providing appropriate rewards and punishments and more as a moral problem involving understanding and compassion:

Bullying is a deeply moral matter, not a matter of behaviour management
Recognise that we can all be guilty of bullying
Recognise the influence of home background, even though this is difficult.
Some bullies come from very dysfunctional homes
Don't be judgemental.

7.8 The need for resources

Some schools advised that resources should be acquired and utilised to counter bullying more effectively:

> Make use of external resources that can help to address the problem, for example, use 'Mind Matters'
> Employ mediation services
> Seek out suitable material to use in tackling bullying.

There was a need for some resources that are not currently available.

> Schools need lessons specifically written for teachers to address bullying

> All schools should have their own Counsellor, not shared with others. It is essential that the Counsellor should really know, and belong to, a particular school to be effective.

7.9 Other matters

A number of other matters were raised relating to the need to start anti-bullying policies early and to persist with them:

> It is important to begin programs to counter bullying with children at an early age and sustain such programs over the years
> There is a need for schools to continually revisit the problem of bullying – in creative ways
> Give time to the problem. There is no quick fix. Don't let things drag on.
> A lot of education is needed to change a school's culture

At a practical level it was advised that attention should also be paid to the school's physical environment:

> Look at the physical structure of the school and its lay out in relation to bullying

Broader educational matters are important in addressing bullying.

> Children are more inclined to bully when they are bored. Hence quality lessons and good teaching can play a part in reducing bullying.

8. Departments of Education

8.1 Consensus

Bullying was seen as a significant problem by all of the education authorities interviewed for this study. This was evident not only in the views expressed but also in the substantial amount of information being provided by the education departments for teachers, students and parents, through printed and electronic means, and especially through the agency of a recently completed website: www.bullyingnoway.com.au. This was developed in 2002 in a cooperative venture by Australian State, Territory and Commonwealth government education departments, and Catholic and independent education sectors. It may be taken as providing a general consensus on what educational authorities are agreed upon in addressing the problem of bullying in Australian schools.

In describing the challenge posed by bullying in schools, the consensus was that;

> Schools are among the safest places in the community for children and young people. But bullying, harassment and violence place students' safety in jeopardy.

There was agreement, too, that members of the school community have certain basic rights:

> We all have the right to learn in a safe and supportive school environment that values diversity - an environment free from bullying, harassment, discrimination and violence.
>
> We all have the right to be treated with fairness and dignity.
>
> We all have a responsibility to keep others safe and to treat them in the same way - with fairness, dignity and respect.

However, in the course of interviewing representatives from the departments and examining documentation provided by them for schools, it became apparent that there were some differences in how they viewed the problem, how they believed bullying should be tackled by schools and how they were directing and assisting schools in the process.

8.2 How bullying was understood by educational authorities

Education Departments concurred in recognising the presence in varying degrees of bullying in all schools and that by and large schools were taking the problem seriously. In providing facts about bullying the agreed judgment about its incidence was as follows:

> As many as 20 per cent of students in Australian schools have experienced bullying and harassment. The real figure may be even higher, because many problems are not reported.

No reference is provided for this estimate.

In discussion with one state representative, it was opined that 'there was still a high level of bullying' in schools; another that bullying was now being seriously addressed by schools because of the existence of 'compulsory anti-harassment policy.' It was generally acknowledged that there were large differences between schools in the ways in which they were responding to the problem of bullying, from 'head in the sand' to 'active.'

Bullying was conceptualised in a variety of ways. It was seen by one educational authority as an attitude rather than an act, which suggests that bullying can be taking place when a child is conscious of someone's hostility towards them. Another focussed on the intentions of the perpetrator and saw bullying as 'a wilful conscious desire to hurt, threaten or frighten'. Some saw bullying as essentially an abuse of power:

> Imbalance and misuse of power underpin every instance of bullying.

The power imbalance was seen in one proposed definition, as evident when a person felt repeatedly intimidated:

> 'Bullying is repeated intimidation over time of a physical, verbal or psychological nature by a more powerful person or group.

Bullying and harassment were not differentiated, except by one authority who saw harassment not as 'a desire to hurt' but as a 'perception by a person of being persistently disturbed, tormented or manipulated by another.'

A distinction was made between conflict and bullying. It was argued that conflict, unlike bullying, could have positive connotations

> This positive use of conflict is different from bullying and harassment because it respects the rights of both sides and builds the trust that allows healthy debate in a civil society.

8.3 Explanations for bullying

The national website, reflecting consensus between educational authorities, provides explanations for bullying that relate to the 'deeper issues'. These are mainly concerned with social differences which give rise to 'winners and losers' and involve prejudice and discrimination against more vulnerable groups:

> We can all be discriminated against for our socioeconomic status, cultural and linguistic diversity, religion, gender, sexuality, disability, ability or personal characteristics, among other factors.

Concern was expressed at one meeting that bullying behaviour had been seen too much and too often in relation to the individual child and not adequately in relation to relevant social issues, such as homophobia and gender discrimination.

Where 'personal characteristics' are discussed, they are illustrated as follows: .

> …body size and shape, the way they speak or walk, their name, their clothes, jewellery or glasses or their sub-culture.

.
No reference was made to psychological differences between children, for example, to the introverted and anxious personality of the child who tends to get bullied or the aggressive and impulsive nature of a child who bullies others.

Family factors were seen as important by some, especially when they involved serious deprivations incurred by children. But not all interviewees saw it this way. Recognising that there were very substantial differences in the incidence of bullying between schools in similarly placed socio-economic areas, the level of bullying was attributed mainly to the 'school ethos' or climate, which in some schools discouraged the 'acceptance of difference.' One interviewee saw bullying as ' a symptom that the school ethos needed to be examined.'

Whilst much was made of the view that bullying should be seen as an abuse of power related to differences between groups, it was also suggested that bullying could also be seen as occurring because of a deficiency in resilience on the part of children who become involved in bully/victim problems. Resilience is described in one state education document as 'the ability to bungy jump through the pitfalls of life,' or, less colourfully, as 'the capacity to cope with extreme and stressful situations.'

A further view to explain bullying related to the failure of the school curriculum to interest, stimulate and develop in students the kinds of attitudes and skills that would lead to them not bullying others. 'Productive pedagogy' was seen in one state as having a capacity to transform the condition of mind of students so that they would behave responsibly and pro-socially. The term, productive pedagogy' was defined as any 'array of classroom strategies that teachers can select from and use to focus instruction and improve student outcomes.' (see http://www.teachers.ash.org.au/liswelden/productive_pedagogies.htm). Conflict resolution, problem solving, showing tolerance and leadership, developing and maintaining personal friendships, and coping with peer pressure were seen as basic educational outcomes. It was felt that the curriculum should not only encourage critical thinking about social issues but also be relevant to student's deeply felt interests. Argued one interviewee:

> If the curriculum does not connect with children's lives, there is resistance – and behaviour problems.

One educational authority related bullying to inadequacy in 'social capital.' This was conceived as 'consisting of formal and informal networks that enable people to mobilise resources and achieve common goals.'. Thus, the problem of bullying in schools was not to be located exclusively in the school, nor necessarily in the families of students, but rather in communities where people failed to act together to support and promote positive ways in which schoolchildren behaved towards each other.

8.4 How it was thought bullying could be countered

Emphases were frequently placed upon the need for a shared understanding of the nature and extent of bullying. This was seen as requiring a collaborative and reflective approach by school communities. The term 'whole school approach' was frequently employed. Some authorities explicitly supported the collection of relevant data from students and parents.

> Surveys of students and their parents are a valuable means of finding out the level of concern and specific safety issues affecting students. As students continue to see bullying at school as one of their key concerns, it is crucial that relevant policies and procedures are developed and communicated to all members of the school community.
>
> Education Victoria (1999)

Consistent with their view of the deeper issues underlying bullying, the educational authorities encouraged schools to reflect upon the social factors thought to give rise to bullying and harassment and to promote their conception of social justice, especially

> the ways in which power and political, social and cultural influences affect interpersonal behaviours, institutional practices and the educational and social outcomes for diverse communities.

Such reflections, it was thought, would lead to schools 'challenging and changing beliefs, attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate domination and submission in relationships and institutional practices' and 'valuing and engaging with all representative cultures and ensuring that all groups and individuals are included in the practices, institutions and benefits of a fair and democratic society. ' It was put at one meeting that:

> Schools should be looking at the political and social dimensions of what's happening and foregrounding that – because it is not being addressed properly.

Schools were encouraged to develop' skills and options for resolving conflict equitably' and also ' for building relationships of trust with those less familiar'. Teachers were asked to model, teach and reinforce socially constructive behaviour and react to bullying, harassment, discrimination and violence when they occur by 'responding quickly and appropriately'

How they might respond appropriately is covered briefly in the communication in the national website. Schools were to provide 'individual-focused and psychologically based models of support and assistance' to individuals or groups who are perpetuating bullying or harassment or who are the targets. These could include mediation and problem solving, counselling, promotion of protective behaviour and the management of emotions. No mention is made of the use of sanctions.

A variety of other methods or means of addressing bullying were described and endorsed by some departmental interviewees. These included:

- The use of playground programmes for young children in which there were activities guided by teachers and older children. (It was felt that bullying often arose because of boredom during the breaks between classes)
- The use of drama and role play to help children to understand how conflict arises and how it can be effectively resolved by non violent means.
- An examination with children of the role played by bystanders when bullying occurs and teaching through role play of actions that can be taken by children to discourage it.
- The formation and use of anti-bullying committees of students to work with the school counsellor and teachers to develop and implement plans and procedures to counter bullying at school.
- The provision and utilisation of peer mediation or 'peace keeping' training, obtained either from within or outside the education department
- The use of 'no-blame approaches', such as the Method of Shared Concern in dealing with incidents of bullying.

It was noted in discussion with an interviewee who worked closely with schools that there were, from time to time, in some schools conflict between staff members over whether it was preferable to use a 'consequences' approach in dealing with incidents of bullying or whether to use a counselling or no-blame approach. It was pointed out that 'consequences' could be applied if and when 'no-blame' was unsuccessful.

8.5 Bullying and behaviour management

There was much evidence that some education departments at least saw a role for the imposition of sanctions to counter bullying behaviour. For example, in one state the plan for countering bullying provides links with the school discipline policy. One of the aims of this policy is stated as:

> The establishment of clear consequences for bullying and the use of non-violent sanctions in the management of student behaviour.

In another State, a policy document described as "Management of Behaviour in a Supportive School Environment' has a requirement that school communities should 'analyse and respond to specific problems' which include harassment and bullying. Schools are asked to

> delineate procedures for applying fair and non-violent consequences for infringement of the code [of behaviour] ranging from the least intrusive sanctions to the most stringent step of exclusion which is only considered when all other approaches have been exhausted or rejected.

The connection with Behaviour Management Policy is made clear in another state:

> Schools will be expected to address violence, bullying and harassment prevention as part of their School Behaviour Management Plan

8.6 Bullying and Student Support Services

In one state it was asserted that 'anti-social behaviours including bullying, harassment and violence fall within the wider context of DEET student welfare policy as outlined in 'Framework for Student Support Services in Victorian Government Schools' (Education, Victoria (1999) This framework is designed to help teachers to promote student welfare and in particular to help them to develop as 'healthy, secure and resilient people. ' Bullying per se is mentioned twice in this 62 page document, once in connection with the desirability of conducting surveys to discover student concerns and once in describing a report from a school that students would like to see bullying addressed more effectively. The major emphasis in this document is on promoting resilience.

Four overlapping areas in which action can be taken to provide necessary support are described. The first is Primary Prevention which may be achieved by building a sense of belonging and promoting student wellbeing; the second, Early Intervention, to be achieved through identifying children at risk and strengthening their capacity to cope; the third, intervention, whereby attention is focussed upon providing support for a relatively small number of students with serious problems, and fourthly, Postvention, an activity designed to help rehabilitate students who have experienced extremely distressing and debilitating events. It is up to teachers to determine how their policy on bullying articulates with these considerations. However, an examination of the document shows that it contains suggestions that are relevant to addressing bullying and harassment. These include the following:

> Encouraging the development of supportive peer relationships, for example, through Peer Support, and "Buddy' programs and the training of senior students in peer counselling and mediation.
>
> Easing the transition of children from one stage of schooling to another, as in transition from primary to secondary school which can be stressful for some children.
>
> Developing meaningful relationships between the school and the families of the students.
>
> The development of skills among teachers which enable them to relate supportively with students and to make appropriate referrals if necessary.

8.7 Advice on the development of anti-bullying policies

Although there were differences about where the school anti-bullying policy should be located, no educational authority saw anti-bullying policies as 'standing alone.' In one state, information was provided by the Department on what could be included in the policy.

Suggestions were provided about the titles of such a policy, such as:

- Addressing bullying behaviour – a whole school approach
- School policy to address bullying behaviour
- A Whole School Approach to Bullying, Harassment and Violence

The policies were to include an introduction which outlines why the school has chosen to develop a specific policy. Bullying should be defined (no definition was prescribed). The effects of bullying behaviour should be described. It should be made clear that the policy extends further than reacting to immediate problem behaviours, that is, it should be concerned with preventive measures as well. Links should be made, where possible, to other relevant policies, especially DEET's student welfare policy. The policy should contain specific procedures and protocols that would be implemented in responding to incidents. Reference should also be paid to the school's beliefs and undertakings to ensure a safe and supportive school environment. There should be an acknowledgment of the value of making community linkages and partnerships. Finally, the school should ensure that the policy was widely disseminated to all school members who were to become informed about its implementation. All schools were expected to have such a policy.

8.8 How education authorities sought to support schools in countering bullying

Beyond directives, guidelines and suggestions, educational authorities reported seeking to assist schools in a number of ways. In some cases the assistance was direct and practical, as in providing resource staff to help schools with bully/victim problems that were difficult to handle and in providing or facilitating staff seminars or workshops to provide training in addressing bullying more effectively. In one state, workshops were being provided on demand in the form of one-day consultancies. In some states authorities provided training in mediation. However, support came mainly in the form of information and resources that were deemed useful in helping schools tackle the problem more effectively.

An example of a widely used resource was the video, 'Bullying – no way !' which was provided to all schools in Queensland - and purchased by many schools outside Queensland. This resource provided short vignettes illustrating different kinds of conflicts between students and was intended for use in staff development meetings. More recently, websites have been developed by state education authorities, some of which have contained a good deal of helpful information for classroom teachers which can be used in preparing lessons addressing bullying and harassment (see in particular, http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/bullying/geninfo/index.htm#activity). Education

authorities have also taken on the role of informing schools of what other schools are doing to address bullying. This is seen not only as a means of spreading ideas about what can be done, but also as a means of acknowledging and encouraging innovative work of schools in this area. Departments have also publicised the work of some community groups that have collaborated or worked in partnership with schools, for example, S.A.I.N.T.S. - A Prevention Approach to Bullying. This is a partnership program in which St Kilda Football club players work with upper primary school students and their teachers. Another example is the Buddy Bear Schools Program - A DEET partnership program for working with young children in kindergarten and early primary school. Publications and websites about bullying are also being given publicity by most educational authorities, largely drawing upon work done by the authorities themselves.

8.9 The effectiveness of interventions and future plans

Although schools were being encouraged to monitor outcomes from their interventions, none of the education departments referred to rigorous inquiries that had demonstrated that bullying could be significantly reduced. Opinions were supported by anecdotes or subjective impressions. At only one meeting was there any reference to an appraisal of a specific means of intervention. This related to the Method of Shared Concern for which, it was claimed, there had been 'almost 100% success rate over the last seven or eight years.'

In one state plans were being made to collect information about the specific actions that schools were taking to tackle bullying. In the future, schools would be expected to provide documentation on 'what you are doing about school safety' with bullying defined as a safety issue. There was seen to be a strong need to carefully monitor interventions and discover what works.

9. Discussion and conclusions

9.1 Scope and relevance of the study

This report has addressed an issue not hitherto examined in the Australian context, namely how Australian schools are responding to the problem of peer victimisation in schools. In doing so it has drawn upon data provided by 40 Australian schools and 6 state educational authorities. The overall picture is one of a readiness of schools and educational authorities to recognise and address the problem. On some matters there appears to be a general consensus on how it should be confronted, for example, in providing a 'whole school approach' involving the whole school community. On others, such as dealing with cases of peer victimisation, there were notable differences.

This study may be described as exploratory. It was based in part upon a convenience sample of schools, selected because they had already demonstrated an interest in addressing peer victimisation by making use of a survey method to assess the nature and incidence of bullying between students. As such, it appears likely that the schools in the sample were relatively advanced in their thinking about bullying and committed to counter it. Other schools may, or may not, have been as enterprising and progressive as these. Generalisations based upon this study can be made only to schools of this kind. In conducting this study we aimed at providing information about what schools who had already committed themselves to examining the problem of peer victimisation were doing about it.

There was nevertheless considerable diversity in the nature of the schools in this study. Both primary and secondary schools in roughly equal proportions were included in the sample. In addition there were schools that catered for children between Kindergarten and Year 12. As well as coeducational schools, there were schools attended solely by boys or by girls. Two schools provided boarding facilities. Schools were drawn from both state and private sectors of education and from each of six Australian states. Opportunity was thus created for schools that were diverse geographically, administratively and in the kind of students for whom they catered to be accommodated in the inquiry. The inclusion of education departments from different states also added to the diversity. All this seems likely to have contributed to the wide variety of approaches that were described and the range of views and suggestions that were elicited.

At the same time, given the smallness of the sample and the relatively few schools in particular sub-categories, conclusions could not be validly drawn regarding differences between types of schools in different locations. The analysis of what schools were doing was therefore of a qualitative rather than a quantitative nature. Part of its value may lie in providing a useful background to a further, more definitive study based upon a larger and more comprehensive sample.

9.2 The reaction of schools to participating in the study

One of the indicators that the schools in the sample were very much concerned about the problem of peer victimisation was the alacrity with which nearly all schools, when contacted, enthusiastically agreed to participate in the study, made congenial arrangements, sometimes at short notice, and were prepared to give their time and attention during interviews that lasted for as long as an hour.

9.3 The use and impact of the survey on schools

At several schools new staff had been recently appointed, sometimes including a new principal or counsellor. Thus in a few cases not possible to obtain reliable information about how the staff had reacted to the survey results. Of the remainder, it was clear that for the most part the PRAQ had provided data of much interest to the staff. It had raised awareness of the issue and surprised many teachers who found that the situation was less positive than they had expected. It was frequently reported that conducting the survey had had a motivating effect in getting staff members to work closer together to tackle the problem. Some schools reported that the development of a school anti-bullying policy and the inclusion of anti-bullying content in curricula were direct consequences of reflecting on findings from the survey. Conducting the survey also demonstrated to some teachers the value of involving parents in the exercise of data collection, leading to parent/teacher meetings and collaborative planning. It had provided a baseline against which changes in the prevalence of peer victimisation could be assessed. Some schools availed themselves of this facility and were able to demonstrate the effectiveness of their work. There were, nevertheless, reports from some schools that teachers had not wanted to see the results because (they said) they already knew what the situation was. Thus even in the schools that had committed themselves to conducting surveys, there was some scepticism about the value of the results.

9.4 Anti-bullying policies of schools

It was noted that a small majority of schools had developed anti-bullying policies. Whilst this demonstrated the earnestness of many schools in documenting what they were doing, it is perhaps surprising that almost half of the schools were unable to provide the researchers with such documentation. One should bear in mind, too, that the schools in question were ones that were thought to be more pro-active in tackling bullying. This apparent reluctance of nearly half the schools to provide an anti-bullying policy should also be viewed in the context of pressure from education departments to do so. One education department, for instance, provided detailed suggestions about what an anti-bullying policy should contain, how it should be titled and to what general policy it should be attached. Not being able to find the time to write an anti-bullying policy was one explanation for not doing so. The presence of conflicting ideas about what the policy should contain is a further possible explanation, supported by discussions with principals who mentioned staff differences on how bullying should be tackled.

There is clearly a need for some schools to explore these differences and resolve them before concerted action can be taken.

Among those schools providing anti-bullying policies there was a high degree of agreement about what the policy should contain - at a general level. There should be close collaboration on the part of all members of the school community. (The mantra of 'whole school approach' appeared repeatedly). The values underpinning the policy should be clearly stated. The rights of members of the school community to be free of bullying should be asserted. Staff members should accept personal responsibility to do whatever they could to stop it. What constitutes bullying should be clearly understood by everyone. Here, however, divergent definitions offered by different schools suggest that 'a clear understanding' by everyone has not yet been achieved. Some schools saw bullying as a desire to hurt or an attitude that could be perceived as threatening. Such a subjective view contrasts with definitions that focus on more objective behaviour. Some schools did not differentiate between' aggression in general' and 'bullying in particular', an important distinction that most writers in the area insist in making. Some, the majority of schools with policies, included in their definition the notion that bullying and harassment invariably involve an imbalance of power, with the bully or bullies having greater power. This definition is in accord with the agreed position of departments of education as put forward in the DEET national website. Whilst there are differences in definition of bullying evident in school policies, as well as in discussions with teachers, the schools appeared to be in agreement in identifying that bullying could be perpetrated in a wide variety of ways, not only physically, but also verbally and through indirect means, as in rumour spreading and deliberate exclusion.

9.5 Schools dealing with incidents of bullying

Anti-bullying policies diverged when it came to describing actions to be taken to deal with incidents of bullying. Broadly, it was possible to distinguish between schools that were committed to the promulgation of rules governing interpersonal behaviour and appropriate penalties when they were broken and schools that favoured a 'problem-solving approach' making use of counselling procedures, mediation and no blame methods involving groups of students or one to one meetings with children suspected of bullying others as in the Method of Shared Concern. However, there were many schools that sought to accommodate both ways of dealing with bully/victim cases. This involved a careful examination of the kind of cases that were appropriate for one approach and the kind of cases that could be dealt with appropriately using another. Considerable ingenuity was applied in making and justifying such distinctions.

In discussion with schools it was evident that the approaches to dealing with cases were related to different philosophies or educational ideas. Some schools saw the controlling of bullying as according readily with traditional views of 'crime and punishment', that is, bullies not only deserved to have penalties imposed upon them but also were more likely to be deterred by the threat of punishment. However, any penalty or sanction imposed was seen by those of this general persuasion as 'a consequence.' Indeed, the use of this term in explaining what should befall bullies was widespread. It was linked by some schools with the idea that 'consequences' have a logical status. As such, no-one was seen as taking personal action - 'consequences' just happened. They were brought about by actions for which the perpetrator of the bullying was

entirely responsible. He or she could be seen as choosing to bring the penalties on. Getting the offending child to see it that way involved a methodology in which outcomes for behaviours were made clear and an opportunity was provided for the child to reflect upon the situation in before making an appropriate decision to be admitted back into the normal routine of school life.

Some schools were critical of this approach on the grounds that in many cases it was not necessary to impose penalties for bullying someone or to threaten the use of penalties. Change in behaviour, it was thought, could be brought about more efficiently by detailing the distressing consequences that the bullying had had for the victim of such behaviour and thereby evoking an empathic and constructive response. The assumption here is that the bully or bullies are typically unaware of the pain they have caused and can be brought to such an awareness by counselling or structured interview methods, for example using the No-Blame Approach or the Method of Shared Concern. Mediation approaches were also favoured by some schools that felt the punitive methods of changing behaviour were unacceptable.

A further view held by some schools in dealing with cases of bullying may be described as eclectic or pragmatic. It was accepted that a variety of methods could be used effectively, depending on the particular case. Some children, it was felt, would respond positively to counselling methods, the sharing of concern for a victim by a credible adult, or to a mediation approach. Some thought that this should be tried first, more especially in cases where the bullying was not extreme. The danger recognised by some schools was that the use of punishment could drive the bullying 'underground' and become less easy to identify. However more punitive methods were generally seen as necessary 'when all else failed.' In some schools knowledge of different approaches was lacking and suggests that more staff education on alternative ways of dealing with bully/victim cases is needed.

9.6 Schools preventing bullying

Prevention loomed large in the plans and procedures embraced by most schools. Curricula often included content that was designed to educate students about bullying and to train students in the use of methods that could help them to avoid being bullied and also help others who needed their support, for example in situations in which they were bystanders. There were schools in which impressive use had been made of role play and drama, including the employment of acting companies that could provide stimulating and instructive portrayals of bullying incidents.

The use of Peer Support and provision of trained student mediators was controversial. There were differences of opinion expressed on the matter, both within schools and between schools. More education appears to be needed in understanding what can be achieved by empowering students to help in resolving peer conflict in different situations, for example, when those in conflict were of equal or of unequal power. It was thought at some schools that mediation could only be successful when disputants were equally powerful and when there was careful and efficient training and supervision or monitoring of the 'empowered' students.

Schools generally felt that modelling of pro-social behaviour, especially by members of staff was important. Some engaged in identifying and rewarding students who were polite and helpful, and seeking out those who needed special help and support from teachers. Such actions were seen by some as more likely to occur when staff morale was high, and that this would happen when efficient systems of dealing with disruptive behaviours were in place. Finally, some schools believed that changes in teaching arrangements could affect the level of bullying, especially when opportunities for movements of students between lessons was minimised by the introduction of fewer and longer periods of teaching.

9.7 Perspectives of Education Departments and Schools on Bullying

In some respects departments of education held views which were not dissimilar to those held by the schools in our sample. For example, bullying was described as a significant problem affecting all schools. Its prevalence was seen as an infringement of the rights of members of the school communities. The documentation departments provided and the websites they have made available clearly contain a good deal of advice with which the schools agree, for example, bullying is most effectively countered when there is close cooperation between members of the school community in providing 'a whole school approach'

It is difficult to generalise about the ways in which the schools differed from education authorities in their approach to bullying. In part, this is because the education departments at times expressed different views from each other, and so did the schools. However, if we take the contents of the national website derived from contributions from all the local educational authorities as those upon which there was general agreement, some broad differences appear.

The explanations for bullying in schools proposed by the departments were generally not those expressed by the schools. The education authorities focussed strongly on the 'deeper issues' related to differences in social power of community groups and saw the countering of bullying as involving taking a stand against social injustices that derived from the misuse or abuse of power. By contrast, for the most part schools focussed upon individual differences that could be attributed to physical and personality difference. These were seen as making bullying possible. There was also a view expressed by several schools that bullying behaviour was an inevitable outcome of children's behaviour, as children passed through a developmental stage in which they learned (or in some cases failed to learn) how to handle situations without abusing their power.

These differences in viewing bullying had implications for how bullying was to be countered. If bullying is primarily an outcome of differences in social power, then the remedy may be seen as addressing social inequality and the causes of social injustice. In practice, this would involve opposing prejudice and discrimination relating to social categories as race, gender, sexuality, social class, religious affiliation, socio-linguistic background. It was assumed that if this could be achieved, bullying would largely be removed, although some bullying may remain based upon differences in personal appearance, some appearances being more acceptable than others. Countering bullying according to this view would require that schools

take strong measures to discourage discrimination by implementing appropriate policies, personal example and through the use of the curriculum.

No school expressed the view that social prejudice and discrimination could lead to bullying, although in discussing the kinds of bullying that took place in schools, there was some mention of occasional incidents of racial and sexual harassment, and, at one school, of some students 'looking down' on children from poorer backgrounds.' But by and large bullying behaviour was attributed to personal factors. These personal factors were often seen as 'givens' although some interviewees believed that being brought up in a dysfunctional family or in a family in which bullying tactics were often used could result in a child engaging in bullying behaviour at school.

One education department sought to link bullying – and school anti-bullying policies – to considerations raised in their Framework for Student Support Services. This source places great emphasis upon the importance of students being resilient in order to be 'healthy, safe and happy.' The implications of promoting resilience for addressing bullying in schools are, unfortunately, not examined. It might be suggested that the resilient child (who 'bounces back') is less likely than others to be bullied since the absence of distress on the part of the targeted child may discourage the bully from continuing. It might be argued that non-resilient children tend to be those who have experienced disturbing life experiences which result in them wanting to hurt - and bully - others. It may be that the relevance of the study of resilience to bullying lies in the understanding it promotes in recognising the help and support that victimised, non-resilient children need at school. Unfortunately, no arguments or evidence are provided to make the link. The concept of resilience was not employed in discussions about bullying with any of the schools. It would seem desirable for education departments to explain the relevance of the concept to the work of teachers in dealing with bullying.

In discussing school actions to reduce bullying emphasis was placed in one education department on the development of an innovative curriculum that would greatly encourage critical thinking and connect with real life. Again the precise link with countering bullying was not apparent. But it might be said that serious engagement in school work could lead to children being more constructively occupied and disinclined to seek distractions. There was little mention of the possible role of the general curriculum and the employment of 'productive pedagogy' in countering bullying. The comment was made repeatedly that the alleviation of boredom at school could contribute to a reduction in bullying, because some children bully out of boredom. Clearly teaching that interested and stimulated students could work towards this end.

9.8 Views of schools and departments on dealing with cases of bullying

What to do with cases of bullying was a matter that deeply occupied schools, and, as discussed above, a variety of approaches were utilised. By contrast, for the most part Education Departments were concerned more with examining social explanations for bullying and promoting ways in which bullying might be prevented by educational means, collaboration with community groups and the development of social capital.

Whilst, there was much encouragement from some departments to link dealing with cases of bullying with Behaviour Management Policy and the use of appropriate consequences or sanctions, there was a disappointing lack of attention to a key problem that is currently occupying schools, that is, how to choose an appropriate model for dealing with cases of bullying, whether, for instance, schools should rely on the use of 'rules' and 'consequences' or should make use of alternative problem solving approaches. Departments gave some recognition and support for the use of mediation, but did not address the problem of when mediation can be effectively used and when it is not appropriate – again an issue concerning schools. Although some Education Department interviewees acknowledged that the No Blame Approach and the Method of Shared Concern was being used in some schools (the latter with conspicuous success), there is currently no documentation relating to these methods available from education departments to schools.

9.9 Resources provided by departments and what is needed by schools

The range and quality of resources being made directly available to schools by Departments differs widely between states. The development and increasing use of websites has, however made it possible for all schools to obtain a good deal of highly relevant resources, especially material of an educational nature to assist in the development of lessons and activities to promote a better understanding of issues of bullying and strengthen the capacity of children to protect themselves and help others. The Victorian website has been particularly useful in helping classroom teachers.

It is widely recognised among educators that there is a strong need for teachers to be educated, trained and supported in their efforts to counter bullying. Some resources provided by an education department, for example, in the form of a training video and in the one-day workshops run by departmental staff, have been well appreciated. District Offices in some states have provided support for the acquisition of resources such as visits by drama groups and the conducting of surveys. Yet for many schools the problem is seen as far outstripping available resources. A strong priority expressed by some schools is the provision of a full time counsellor.

Despite the strong efforts in recent years made by departments of education in Australia to encourage and support schools in tackling bullying, some deficiencies remain. This is evident in Departments not recognising and relating to some issues (as detailed above) seen by schools as of major importance in dealing with cases of bullying. To some extent, Departments deal with matters that are not generally recognised as issues for schools or not seen to be relevant to efforts to counter bullying. This may in part be a matter of not communicating the relevance of departmental concerns.

Information about bullying supplied by departments to schools was, with few exceptions, that produced by departmental staff. Only limited reference and acknowledgment is being made to the large quantity of relevant source material that has been produced from outside the departments over the last few years in the form of books, videos, websites and journal articles. A good deal of this material has been produced by Australian authors and is being used by many Australian schools, including those in our sample, as well as in schools overseas. The

movement towards a partnership between education departments and those outside the departments who are also addressing the problem of bullying in schools is under way in some states and further progress is anticipated.

9.10 Conclusion

After many years of neglecting the distressing and widely prevalent practice of peer victimisation in schools, some schools in Australia are now earnestly addressing the problem. In the course of many discussions with schools and departments of education we were greatly impressed with the whole hearted commitment that is now being shown to the task of countering bullying in schools. These schools were enthusiastically embracing a 'a whole school approach' and ready to share with us what they were doing.

We were also impressed with the wide range of approaches and methods that were being employed. Some of these were directed towards the development of policy, some towards the implementation of anti-bullying strategies and procedures. It was widely recognised that the problem was not a simple one and that educational, counselling and disciplinary means need to be considered.

Amongst the plethora of ideas about the problem of bullying and the diversity of practices, there were inevitably differences in emphases and preferred ways of operating. The greatest differences occurred over how schools should deal with cases of bullying, especially how to change the behaviour of children who bullied others. There was no agreed way, with some preferring relatively punitive methods and others problem-solving approaches. Some schools were proposing that alternative methods should be used depending upon the nature of the aggression and the readiness of perpetrators to respond to non-disciplinary actions. This is an area where more research and more public debate is needed.

Finally, in describing how schools and education departments are currently viewing the problem of bullying and the actions they are now taking to address, it is our hope that this account will be of much practical benefit, especially to schools and educators who are examining what they can do to prevent or reduce peer victimisation in their own schools.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Main features of the Peer Relations Assessment Questionnaires (PRAQs)

In the PRAQ package there are questionnaires for students, teachers and parents. Each is answered anonymously.

The Student Questionnaires

There are two versions, one for older students over the age of 8 years and one for younger students under the age of 8 years.

The PRAQ for older students is a short questionnaire which can be completed in class in less than 20 minutes. It enables the school to make a brief assessment of the students' peer relations focussing on the following:

- The nature and extent to which bullying is occurring in the school
- How the students have reacted to bullying and what the consequences were for their feelings of safety and well-being and how their attendance at school has been affected
- Whether they have informed others about being bullied and with what outcomes
- Students' perceptions of their teachers' concern about bullying at their school
- Whether students wish to engage in joint action to stop bullying

The PRAQ for younger students. This is a much simpler questionnaire which contains visual images and instructions about how young children can be helped to answer it. It can normally be completed in about 15 minutes. It enables the school to make an assessment of the following:

- Whether children enjoy being at school and playing with others
- The nature and extent of bullying in the school
- Whether children have informed adults about being bullied at school

The Parent Questionnaire. This is a brief 10-item questionnaire. It seeks to obtain information from parents in these areas:

- How friendly or otherwise parents see relations between children at the school attended by their child or children
- How happy their child is at school and whether he or she is ever bullied by other children
- Whether the child has been upset by being bullied and has, for that reason been absent from school
- Whether their child has ever engaged in bullying others at school

- How parents believe teachers should react to incidents of bullying
- Whether parents would be in favour of there being a school policy about bullying at school

In addition, opportunity is provided fro parents to make further comments and suggestions.

The Teacher Questionnaire This is intended to enable teachers to provide information about bullying based on their experiences at the school. It can provide answers to the following questions from a teacher viewpoint:

- How much bullying goes on between students and what kinds of bullying in different settings such as the classroom and at recess
- How safe is the school for children who find it hard to defend themselves from attacks from other students
- To what extent teachers actually participate in stopping bullying at their school
- Whether bullying occurs between teachers and students
- Whether teachers support or oppose 10 proposals that have been made about how bullying can be tackled at their school

Again, opportunity is provided for respondents to comment and make detailed suggestions about how the school should respond to bullying.

Other features of the PRAQ

.PRAQs contains some questions that are asked of children, parents and teachers. This makes it possible to identify areas in which the three parts of the school community agree or disagree on what should be done to counter bullying. The PRAQ package includes tally and summary sheets to enable administrators to collate the data.

Appendix 2 Letter to schools outlining the project

As you know, discovering and applying ways of effectively reducing bullying and harassment in schools has become a high priority for schools in Australia. However, comparatively little is known about the actions schools are actually taking to reduce bullying. This study is being conducted to discover what steps selected schools have taken to counter bullying over the last few years and with what outcomes.

Your school is being approached because we understand that you have administered an anonymous questionnaire to students assessing the nature and extent of peer harassment at your school with a view to addressing the problem. We would like to learn from your experience.

If you wish to participate arrangements would be made for the school principal or nominee, to take part in an interview at your school. This would be conducted by a visiting researcher from the University of South Australia. The interview would take place at your school and would focus on the school's response to bullying and what has transpired as a consequence of the development of policies and practices adopted by the school.

It is emphasised that the answers provided would be treated in confidence, no names of staff members or the school would be used in any subsequent report. Interviewees would be free to withdraw from the research at any time. Notes taken at the time of the meeting would be stored and retained for seven years safely at the University of South Australia.

For any further information on this project, you could contact Dr Ken Rigby at the University of South Australia on 08 83026945 or Ms L Hartmann, Chairperson of the Ethics Committeee of the University of South Australia on 08 83020327.

These broadly are the questions to be ask.

- In the light of results obtained using the PRAQ what is your perception of the nature and extent of bullying and peer harassment at your school ?
- In what ways, if any, has the nature and extent of bullying changed, especially since the administration of the PRAQ. ?
- What steps have been taken to reduce bullying at the school ?
- Does the school have a written policy on school bullying and if so how was it developed and what is its content ?
- What have you found to be the main outcomes of efforts to reduce bullying ?
- Based on your own experience, what advice would you give to schools wishing to develop anti-bullying policies and practices ?

(The letter was signed by either Dr Ken Rigby or Dr Barrington Thomas according to which of the researchers was wishing to conduct the interview.

Appendix 3: Anti-bullying policy: Marian College, Victoria.

Marian College does not tolerate bullying in any form and considers harassment to be a form of bullying. All members of the College Community are committed to ensuring a safe and caring environment which promotes personal growth and positive self-esteem for all.

1. What is bullying?
Bullying is an act of aggression causing embarrassment, pain or discomfort to another:

- it can take a number of forms; physical, verbal, gesture, extortion and exclusion
- it is an abuse of power
- it can be planned and organised or it may be unintentional
- individuals or groups may be involved

- **Some examples of bullying include:**

  - any form of physical violence such as hitting, pushing or spitting on others
  - interfering with another's property by stealing, hiding, damaging or destroying it
  - using offensive names, teasing or spreading rumours about others or their families
  - using put-downs, belittling others abilities and achievements
  - writing offensive notes or graffiti about others
  - making degrading comments about another's culture, sexuality, religion or social background
  - hurtfully excluding others from a group
  - making suggestive comments or other forms of sexual harassment
  - ridiculing another's appearance
  - forcing others to act against their will

- **If we are bullied:**

  - we may feel frightened, unsafe, embarrassed, angry or unfairly treated
  - we may feel confused and not know what to do about the problem
  - our relationships with our family and friends may deteriorate
  - our work, sleep and ability to concentrate may suffer

- **What do we do to prevent bullying at Marian College**

As a School Community we accept that we all have the responsibility to speak up, even though this may be difficult at times. This requires Staff to:

- be role models in word and action and treat all members of the school community with respect at all times
- be observant of signs of distress or suspected incidents of bullying
- take steps to help victims and remove sources of distress as quickly as possible
- report and document suspected incidents to the appropriate staff member such as Homeroom/Class teacher, Year Coordinator, Student Welfare Coordinator or Principal
- refuse to be involved in any bully9ing situation. If you are present when bullying occurs:
- if appropriate, take some form of preventative action;
- report the incident or suspected incident.

The college recommends that parents:

- watch for signs of distress in their child, e.g. unwillingness to attend school, a pattern of headaches, missing equipment, requests for extra money, damaged clothing or bruising
- advise your child to tell a staff member about the incident, or inform the college if bullying is suspected
- be willing to attend interviews at the college if your child is involved in any bullying incident
- be willing to inform the college of any cases of suspected bullying even if your own child is not directly affected

When staff, students and parents work together, we create a more Christian environment at Marian College.

Appendix 4: The Bullying and Harassment Response Chart: The Heights School, South Australia

BEHAVIOURS		ACTIONS		PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE
Level 1 Bullying and Harassment This level of bullying and harassment involves thoughtless periodic teasing, name-calling, occasional exclusion or theft of belongings. This can be annoying and hurtful and can escalate and then involve more serious forms of bullying. This behaviour may be initiated by an individual or be in response to previous actions by someone else.		**Consequences** These could include • Discussing the issue with those concerned. • 10 minutes yard duty/walk with teacher • Note in student diary for parents • In class timeout/yard time out • Send to counsellor • Session in buddy class/time with buddy • Session in thinking room		**All Teachers** It is of great importance that these occurrences of bullying or harassment are not ignored. **All teachers** need to challenge these incidents when they occur both in the classroom and the yard. In the **Middle** and **Senior** schools an incident report is to be completed and passed to homegroup teacher. In the **Junior** school class teachers and yard duty teachers report bullying and harassment incidents through the thinking room book and class behaviour book. The data relating to bullying and harassment is kept across the whole school.
Level 2 Bullying and Harassment This level of bullying and harassment occurs when a student is subjected for a period of time to forms of harassment that are both systematic and deliberate. These may include cruel teasing, theft of belongings, continual exclusion and some threats of or actual physical abuse, for example pushing, tripping or punching.		**Consequences** These incidents will be investigated by a formal process which could include • Formal documentation • Contact with parents • Counselling, mediation, resolution • Attendance at skill workshop • Appropriate consequence - detention		**All Teachers supported by members of Leadership Team,** Curriculum and Year Level Coordinators Class teachers and Home Group teachers are encouraged to undertake the level 2 procedures and may seek assistance from the above people. As with level 1, these incidents of bullying and harassment need to be recorded on an incident/behaviour slip.
Level 3 Bullying and Harassment This level of bullying and harassment occurs when the actions are cruel, malicious and intense, especially if they occur over an extended period of time and are very distressing to the person who is experiencing it. It often involves serious physical assaults, but is still considered severe if non-physical methods such as name-calling and exclusion are used.		**Consequences** In dealing with incidents at this level actions would include; • Formal investigation and documentation • Interview with parents • Required educational activities. Eg anger management • Suspension/exclusion from school		**Leadership Team** Incidents of these nature will be referred directly to members of the leadership team for action