



Submission to the Queensland Government Anti Bullying Task Force

Bullying – everyone's problem

March, 2018



**Alannah & Madeline
Foundation**

Keeping children safe from violence

Bullying – everyone’s problem

Bullying is a significant, pervasive form of school violence (Batsche, 1997). ‘Bullying actually is the most common form of violence in our whole society. It is what drives the culture of violence, permitting the most powerful to dominate the less powerful. This is at the core of domestic violence, child abuse, workplace violence, hate crimes and why we have so much road rage. Bullying is everywhere and schools are a primary breeding ground for this pernicious and insidious element of the culture of violence and it must be stopped’.

Weinhold B. K. Bullying and School Violence: The Tip of the Iceberg 2000

Myths about bullying are persistent; for instance, some people once regarded it as a rite of passage or a character-building experience for young people. Such attitudes were dismissive of the seriousness of bullying and led to a failure to address it appropriately.

Bullying is now recognised as a significant problem in Australian society and across the world, and as part of the human rights movement. Concern about bullying reflects a growing awareness of the rights of all people to be free from victimisation and abuse, including children, women, LGBTIQ people, people from different ethnic or religious groupings and people with disabilities.

Its effects on individuals can result in poorer physical, psychological, cognitive and social outcomes for many involved: targets, perpetrators and often bystanders, negative effects that can persist into later life. Bullying can become entrenched. When an organisation tacitly condones it by failing to put in place explicit preventative and responsive measures a culture can emerge where power over others is endorsed, which allows bullying to flourish.

Bullying costs the Australian economy billions of dollars. A recent report commissioned from PwC by the Alannah & Madeline Foundation found that the costs associated with bullying total \$2.36 billion for each individual school year group, incurred while the children are in school and for 20 years after school completion. This includes costs associated with targets of bullying, perpetrators, their families, schools and the community during a child’s schooling years as well as the 20 years after school driven by impacts to productivity, chronic health issues, and impacts on family and other members from family violence.

This having been said, it is important to bear in mind that what schools are doing has made a difference. Meta-analyses have revealed that peer-victimisation (bullying) has been reduced by approximately 20 per cent over the last decade in Australia and other parts of the world, when well-designed strategies have been employed and evaluated.¹ However, there remains much to be done as too many children still endure it every day.

Bullying – definition

It would be advantageous if a definition of bullying were to be accepted Australia-wide.

¹ Rigby, K. and Johnson, K. 2016. The Prevalence and Effectiveness of Anti-bullying Strategies Employed by Australian Schools

We define bullying as an ongoing misuse of power in relationships through intentional, repeated verbal, physical and / or social behaviour that causes physical and / or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power over one or more persons. Bullying can happen in person or online, and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert).

Bullying of any form or for any reason can have long-term effects on those involved, including bystanders.

Single incidents and conflict or fights between equals, whether in person or online, are not defined as bullying.²

Bullying varies by age, gender and culture. In this country, offline bullying affects approximately one in five school-age children and young people on a frequent basis and about one in seven in online situations³ (dependent upon methodology). Bullying is not the expression of an opinion or legitimate performance management in a workplace.

Initially, scholars and commentators saw bullying and cyber bullying as distinct and different and there is still debate on this topic but we regard cyber bullying as a subset of traditional bullying. In over 80 per cent of cases, the perpetrator and target are the same, which makes it difficult to ascribe reported effects to cyber bullying alone. Common predictors have also been identified (e.g. strain, low self-esteem, negative relationship with family and peers).⁴

Cyber bullying – definition

It is important that those outside the research community have accurate information about cyber bullying. Many stories portray it as an “epidemic”. It is not. It occurs less frequently than traditional forms.⁵ There is also some evidence that students may be less upset by it than by other forms of bullying, however, we note that all forms of bullying can have serious and harmful impacts on children’s emotional and mental well-being.⁶

Cyber bullying has been defined as intentional harmful behaviour carried out by a group or individuals, repeated over time, using modern digital technologies to aggress against a victim who is unable to defend him / herself. Some commentators add that the aggressor is in some way more powerful than the target. The difference between this definition and the definition of traditional bullying – or offline bullying – consists mainly in the means by which the harm is perpetrated.⁷

Additional aspects some commentators note are those of anonymity and publicity.

Campbell and Bauman, in the introduction to their book ‘Reducing Cyber bullying in Schools: international evidence-based best practices’⁸ also mention the features of the digital world that differentiate it from the offline bullying world: size of audience, continuous access, permanence of online content, ease of copying and distribution of material and lack of supervision of online behaviour.

² Adapted from Bullying No Way! Website www.bullyingnoway.gov.au

³ Rigby, K. and Johnson, K. 2016. The Prevalence and Effectiveness of Anti-bullying Strategies Employed by Australian Schools
⁴ Reducing Cyber bullying in Schools: International Evidence-Based Best Practices edited by Marilyn Campbell, Sheri Bauman p.6

⁵ Campbell, M., QUT twitter <https://twitter.com/search?src=typd&q=QUT%20marilyn%20campbell>

⁶ Compton, Campbell and Mergler, 2014

⁷ Reducing Cyber bullying in Schools: International Evidence-Based Best Practices edited by Marilyn Campbell, Sheri Bauman

⁸ Reducing Cyber bullying in Schools: International Evidence-Based Best Practices edited by Marilyn Campbell, Sheri Bauman

While there is debate about the intentionality of an act and whether it is possible to know this unequivocally, Langos suggests that 'bullying should be considered as intentional harm if "a reasonable person" thinks it would be harmful'.⁹

Because there is still debate about definitional issues – for instance about imbalance of power, and research methodologies, difficulties arise unless the particular writing / article / policy / framework clearly details the definition used.

We consider that **cyber bullying is a form of bullying**. School-based physical bullying, verbal bullying, social exclusion and cyber bullying' make for 'difficult and complex' social and relationship problem[s]'.¹⁰ Simplistic advice 'ignores this basic fundamental proposition... if bullying is conceived as a relationship problem in the broad social sphere, then social solutions [like relationship building within the school] are going to work better than just technological and / or legal solutions.'¹¹

The body of research on aspects of cyber bullying is sizeable and still increasing. Missing is a similar body of work on evidence-informed programs designed to reduce it. The relative merits of several will be discussed further in this document.

Harms of bullying

There has been much public commentary about the harms of on and offline bullying. Hinduja and Patchin¹² point to the dangers to young people of bullying: 'depression, decreased self-worth, hopelessness and loneliness', all of which, they assert, are precursors to suicidal thoughts and behaviour.¹³ In discussing online bullying, they discuss the need to look at types that are more harmful than others, the seriousness of the incident, its social context and circumstances and the resultant 'continuum of effects for the target'.

They also acknowledge that internet-based harm often coincides with other issues such as offline mistreatment (e.g. bullying), emotional and psychological problems, academic difficulties, low self-worth, clinical depression, lack of a support structure and can lead to tragic results. All forms of bullying and peer aggression must be taken seriously by schools, homes and other settings where young people work, learn and play. Addressing this is complex and fraught with difficulty. While it is necessary to discuss the harms of bullying, it is incumbent on educators and others not to plant ideas in the minds of young people that suicide is a viable solution to their problems.

A systematic review of 377 articles¹⁴ concluded that, while online communication offers many positive opportunities for personal and relational development and online bullying was associated with many negative symptoms, it 'is unlikely that experiences of cyber bullying alone lead to youth suicide. Rather they may exacerbate an adolescent's distress at a time when they are already struggling with stressful life circumstances'.¹⁵ Hinduja and Patchin also concede that 'many of the teenagers who committed suicide after experiencing bullying or cyber bullying had other emotional and social issues going on in their lives', for example struggling with social and academic difficulties in a special school and another 'suffered from low self-esteem and depression and was on medication

⁹ Reducing Cyber bullying in Schools: International Evidence-Based Best Practices edited by Marilyn Campbell, Sheri Bauman p.4

¹⁰ Marilyn Campbell, QUT twitter feed.

¹¹ Campbell, Marilyn A. (2007) Cyber bullying and young people: Treatment principles not simplistic advice. In www.scientist-practitioner.com, Paper of the week 23rd February 2007 p. 5

¹² Hinduja, S., and Patchin, J., (2010) Bullying, Cyber bullying, and Suicide Archives of Suicide Research, 14:206–221, ISSN: 1381-1118 print=1543-6136 online DOI: 10.1080/13811118.2010.494133

¹³ Hinduja, S., and Patchin, J., (2010) Bullying, Cyber bullying, and Suicide Archives of Suicide Research, 14:206–221, ISSN: 1381-1118 print=1543-6136 online DOI: 10.1080/13811118.2010.494133, p 207.

¹⁴ Borges, S., <https://www.scielo.org/article/csp/2015.v31n3/463-475/en/> accessed online 28/2/2018

¹⁵ Borges, S., <https://www.scielo.org/article/csp/2015.v31n3/463-475/en/> accessed online 28/2/2018

when she took her life.¹⁶ They also consider that the variables moderating the interaction between an adolescent's instability and hopelessness while facing stressful life experiences to be an area worthy of further research. They suggest that some of these may be 'social support, internal locus of control and self-esteem' ... but that a major risk factor is 'depression which has been found to mediate the relationship between bullying experiences and suicidal ideation'.¹⁷

Bullying is not simply a school-based problem. It is a socially embedded problem¹⁸ and should be considered as a societal and public health concern. 'The mental and physical health, social, and academic consequences of bullying have an enormous impact on human and social capital. The costs of bullying burden our education, health care, social services, and criminal justice systems, as well as work force productivity and innovation'.¹⁹

Economic costs of bullying

We need to understand that the costs of any kind of bullying are enormous, and there will be a substantial return on investment in developing effective responses that are applied equitably across schools and communities.

The Alannah & Madeline Foundation recently released '*The Economic Costs of Bullying in Schools*', researched and written by PricewaterhouseCoopers Consulting (Australia) Pty Limited (PwC) commissioned by the Foundation.

This significant report enumerates the immediate and ongoing effects of school bullying on a truly alarming number of students; of 3.8 million students at school in Australia each year, over 900,000 experience bullying.

543,000 students instigate 35 million bullying incidents, which means that those 900,000 boys and girls experience, on average, more than one bullying incident per week throughout the year.

The trauma resulting from bullying can be felt at the time and for many years after schooling is complete – if it is. Many bullied students do not complete Year 12, with ongoing consequences for all aspects of their lives, those of their family and the broader community.

Repercussions on Australia are very significant. Every cohort of students will accumulate costs totalling an estimated \$386 million over the course of their group's time at school. If the long-term costs over the course of 20 years are considered for all school students in 2018, the total cost associated with bullying amounts to \$2.36 billion. The Victorian Government funded additional research to investigate the specific cost to its state, extrapolated data estimates the cost for the state of Queensland as almost \$500 million.

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Understanding these costs and impacts is critical to impel prevention measures and program design that are informed by evidence and are appropriate and effective in reducing bullying's prevalence and adverse effects.

¹⁶ Hinduja, S., and Patchin, J., (2010) Bullying, Cyber bullying, and Suicide Archives of Suicide Research, 14:206–221, ISSN: 1381-1118 print=1543-6136 online DOI: 10.1080/13811118.2010.494133 P. 216

¹⁷ Hinduja, S., and Patchin, J., (2010) Bullying, Cyber bullying, and Suicide Archives of Suicide Research, 14:206–221, ISSN: 1381-1118 print=1543-6136 online DOI: 10.1080/13811118.2010.494133 P. 217

¹⁸ Marilyn Campbell, QUT twitter feed.

¹⁹ Kandersteg Declaration, Switzerland, 2007

What the evidence says about what works

How should we as a society of schools, parents, young people, media commentators, government, business and members of the general public respond?

In our view, a multi-faceted, social-ecological approach is necessary, one that involves: the target/s, those who bully, parents / carers, the police, ISP providers and schools. Simple programmatic responses are usually just that – they are developed as a reaction to particular incidents, tragic events or moral panics. They do not have the capacity to effect long-term attitudinal or behavioural change.

The Alannah & Madeline has deep expertise in working with schools, and strong networks that include law enforcement (AFP), ISP providers (e.g. Google, Twitter, Facebook) the Office of the eSafety Commissioner and other key government, industry and community stakeholders. All of these key players need to be involved in a multi-layered effort to effect behavioural change implementation if the problem of online bullying and other forms of online abuse and aggression are to be addressed.

Preventative action

A focus on *Wellbeing*: what is it and why is it so important?

There is incomplete understanding of this term in non-educational settings, but it is an important concept underpinning many school reforms and directions (e.g. 'Respectful Relationships– Education Department, Victoria²⁰) and underpins many efforts to address bullying.

Student wellbeing is 'a sustainable state of positive mood and attitude, resilience and satisfaction with self, relationships and experiences at school'²¹.

Enhancement of student wellbeing has emerged as an important approach to the development of students' social, emotional and academic competence. It provides a significant contribution to preventing youth depression, suicide, self-harm, antisocial behaviour (including violence and bullying) and substance abuse.²²

Schools with an emphasis on building wellbeing work to develop positive teacher-student relationships, which are associated with increased behavioural, cognitive and emotional engagement of students and include the positive peer relationships that foster connectedness to school and psychosocial health. Wellbeing encourages the growth of resilience, which helps young people cope with stressful life events such as bullying – as mentioned above, a risk factor in youth suicide.

The key to reducing bullying is prevention and evidence is clear about what this looks like.

A school's 'structural, functional and physical environment and interpersonal relationships' have a strong influence on students' health and academic outcomes. 'Australian-based research conducted

²⁰ <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/Pages/respectfulrelationships.aspx?Redirect=1>

²¹ Scoping study into approaches to student wellbeing, Literature Review, (2008) ACU and Erebus International

²² Scoping study into approaches to student wellbeing, Literature Review, (2008) ACU and Erebus International.

by Waters et al., (2008) suggests the structure of a school including its size, sector and organisation (e.g., leadership and policies) and functionality (e.g., student care practices and teaching practices) help to create a positive school environment which appears to directly influence adolescent behaviour.²³ In light of young people's reluctance to report incidences of bullying – an effect that increases as they progress through adolescence – a supportive school environment where bullying and cyber bullying are generally seen as transgressive, becomes a central concern. This is generally referred to as a 'whole-school approach'.

- **A whole-school approach**

- 'A whole-school approach involves all members of the school community – school staff, parents and carers, students and the broader community – building and refining a thriving positive culture where everyone feels a sense of belonging'.²⁴
- It can also be described as 'the active collaboration of all members of a school community to address bullying in accordance with an agreed plan. It is distinct from an approach that assigns responsibility to particular staff members who operate independently of other school community members'.²⁵

The following principles represent good practice in a whole school framework implementation, and we recommend that these principles are featured in any solution that aims to reduce bullying and cyber bullying:

- **Universal implementation is better** – i.e. delivered to all students rather than being specifically targeted towards 'at risk' students. (However, sometimes targeted measures are needed for behaviour-challenged or at-risk students.)
- **Embed relevant [e.g. anti-bullying, wellbeing, health etc.] principles and processes in the curriculum:** school-based prevention efforts are more effective when they are embedded in the curriculum, practices and daily life of the school rather than being 'added on'.²⁶
 - When a program is embedded, the skills, concepts and understandings are located in other curriculum areas and initiatives and applied in a variety of classroom and playground contexts. The values, skills and concepts are also supported by teaching practices, interactions and other school activities and experiences.²⁷
 - Programs for reducing bullying and promoting pro-social behaviour are less effective if they are perceived by teachers as 'add-on extras' rather than an integral part of their work.²⁸ If a program or practice is just an 'add-on feature' that is easy to discard, then it is less likely to be sustained over time.²⁹ There is also a danger of using narrow programs and packages that do not take into account the context of a specific school and its students. Such de-contextualised materials and directions are unlikely to be sustainable.

²³ Cross, D., Shaw, T., Epstein, M., Monks, H., Dooley, J., and Hearn, L. (2012) Cyber bullying in Australia: is school context related to cyber bullying behaviour? Child Health Promotion Research Centre, Edith Cowan University Accessed online 7/3/2018

²⁴ <https://www.kidsmatter.edu.au/sites/default/files/public/Whole%20school%20approach.pdf>

²⁵ Rigby, K., and Johnson, K., (2016). The prevalence and effectiveness of anti-bullying strategies employed in Australian Schools. University of South Australia.

²⁶ Elias, M. J., (2003) Academic and social-emotional learning. Brussels, Belgium: International Academy of Education.

²⁷ Report on the National Safe Schools Framework Best Practice Grants Programme, 2004-2005, (2006) McGrath, H., Commonwealth of Australia – unpublished document. The report describes and analyses the actions and outcomes of 171 schools that received a grant as part of the National Safe Schools Framework's Best Practice Grants Programme during 2004 and 2005.

²⁸ Galloway, D. M. and Roland, E. (2004) 'Is the direct approach to reducing bullying always best?' in *Bullying in schools: how successful can interventions be?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 37-53.

²⁹ Sellman, E. (2002), Peer Mediation, School Culture and Sustainability. *Pastoral Care in Education*, 20: 7–11. doi:10.1111/1468-0122.00223

- **Start early in a student's life.** Parents and early childcare workers are vital partners in the educative life of a child. The earlier prosocial values, attitudes and behaviours are instilled, the more effective is the process.
- **Plan for sustainability, because long-term implementations work best.** It is not always easy to sustain momentum and a team drawn from different areas of the school provides for sustainability of an effort in the face of staff attrition. Long-term programs also give students opportunities to practise concepts in age-appropriate ways in different contexts.
- **Involve parents and the community.** When parents / carers and other community members are engaged and the values, attitudes, behaviours are reinforced, messages are more likely to be taken up and the outcome productive.
- **Use multiple strategies and sequences that promote social skills and prosocial behaviour.** The principal of Gran School, Norway, when talking about how successful their 4-year home / school environment project was in reducing its very serious problem with violence, weapons, threats against students and teachers, said that *'it was not one, single ingenious thing that made the great difference, but the sum of many small moves'*.³⁰ (The moves included provision of training of school staff, improved parent-school and inter-professional cooperation, activities for students, improvements in the aesthetics of the physical environment, recruitment of specialist personnel, introduction of a student mediation service, establishment of school traditions and positioning the school as a 'culture house' and a general focus on social competence.
- **Ensure teachers' behaviour is consistent with the values the school advocates**
 - When one thinks about a whole-school implementation, however, difficulties lie in ensuring that all staff support it, endorse it, and importantly, model the desired attitudes and behaviours. This does not always happen. Not only do teachers sometimes engage in bullying behaviours toward one another, something students observe, but some do not intervene in bullying (read also cyber abuse, harassment, sexual and racist and other forms of relational aggression) incidents: a 2014 study found that teachers intervened in only 4 per cent of incidents in the playground and only 18 per cent of incidents in the classroom.³¹
 - Farrington and Ttofi found that among the most important program elements associated with a reduction in bullying others were classroom rules against bullying and effective classroom management techniques to identify and respond to instances of bullying³².
 - It is important to support teaching and other staff to develop supportive and respectful relationships through behavioural protocols and professional learning.

³⁰ Minton, S. J., (2012), *Using Psychology in the Classroom*, Sage Publications, London, California, New Delhi, Singapore.

³¹ Veenstra, R., Lindenberg, S., Huising, G. and Salmivalli, C., (2014) The Role of Teachers in Bullying: The Relation Between Antibullying Attitudes, Efficacy, and Efforts to Reduce Bullying Craig and Pepler, *Journal of Educational Psychology*, Vol. 106, No. 4, 1135-1143.

³² Farrington, D. P., & Ttofi, M. M. (2009). *School-based programs to reduce bullying and victimization* Campbell Systematic Reviews. Oslo: The Campbell Collaboration.

- **Involve Parents.** When parents are involved in their children’s education, including addressing bullying, results are enhanced.³³ Bullying behaviours are observed by children not only at school, but in the home. Parents need to model good respectful behaviours on and offline.³⁴
- **Work to promote literacies** (critical, media, digital) from the earliest years.
 - ‘Digital literacy’ is an increasingly important subset of broader literacy practices. Digital literacies involve mastering ideas, not keystrokes. It enables students to ‘decipher complex images and sounds as well as the syntactical subtleties of words’.³⁵
 - ‘Digital literacies’ can be defined as a set of social practices involving ‘reading, writing and multimodal meaning-making through the use of a range of digital technologies’. It describes literacy events and practices that involve digital technologies, but may also involve non-digital practices. Ability to understand, use, analyse and critically evaluate information in multiple formats from a wide range of [digital] sources will take diverse forms. Like other forms of communication, these should be underpinned by explicit teaching about ethical values and behaviour.
 - Critical and creative thinking, specifically addressed by the Australian Curriculum³⁶, is envisioned as a primary purpose of education: to ‘challenge [students] to think logically, reason, be open-minded, seek alternatives, tolerate ambiguity, inquire into possibilities, be innovative risk-takers, and use their imagination. In other words, prepare them for a future largely unforeseen.

Developing a framework – not a program

What is a framework?

A framework is a model or system that provides an outline, or skeleton of interlinked items, which supports a particular approach to a specific objective, and serves as a guide. Frameworks are used extensively in a variety of fields, e.g. information technology, health, child care, qualifications – and education.

A framework provides schools with an end-to-end process that helps them identify what they are doing well and what gaps exist in what they are doing to tackle bullying and cyber bullying. A framework directs schools to relevant programs that will address their specific gaps.

Why a framework rather than a program?

Programs, on the other hand, sit *within* a framework and are generally targeted at specific issues or problem areas – e.g. bullying.

We know that while individual talks, lessons, drama presentations and the like can raise awareness about a subject, they have no capacity to effect real or sustainable change in attitudes and behaviour, despite schools’ continuing to employ them, Schools should be encouraged to adopted whole-

³³ Donna Cross, Leanne Lester, Natasha Pearce, Amy Barnes & Shelley Beatty (2016) A group randomized controlled trial evaluating parent involvement in whole-school actions to reduce bullying, *The Journal of Educational Research*, 111:3, 255-267, DOI: 10.1080/00220671.2016.1246409

³⁴ Campbell, M., OUT twitter <https://twitter.com/search?src=typd&q=OUT%20marilyn%20campbell>

³⁵ Lanham, R.A. (1995). Digital literacy, *Scientific American*, 273(3), 160–161

³⁶ <https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/general-capabilities/critical-and-creative-thinking/>

school approaches based in reliable evidence, which can be applied across a range of contexts and supported to do so by a framework such as STEPS.³⁷

Bullying (including cyber bullying) is a complex issue and unfortunately, there is no 'silver bullet' program that solves it. Reducing bullying and cyber bullying requires all members of the school and broader community to be actively involved and share understandings, attitudes and approaches. A framework covers every area that schools need to work on. By comparison, programs will address specific areas of the school's work in this area, such as policy development, or having a focus on teachers' awareness and behaviours.

Without a framework, schools are left to decide which programs to use with little to no guidance to help them understand how these articulate with one another or what evidence underpins them. eSmart Schools is an example of a framework. As a framework, eSmart saves schools time by allowing them to determine the programs they really need.

For example, the Office of the eSafety Commissioner and the Daniel Morcombe Foundation provide a range of programs for schools. The eSmart Schools Framework can show a school they should provide information to parents on how to support their child if they are a target of cyber bullying or that bullying is an issue in the school toilets. The eSmart resources portal or an eSmart Advisor will then direct the school to the iParent section of the Office of the eSafety Commissioner's website and / or the Toilet Block Bullying activity on the Daniel Morcombe Foundation website.

A school not involved in eSmart faces two major challenges in this scenario. Firstly, they don't know they need to provide information to its parent community or that bullying is an issue in their school toilets and secondly, don't know where to go to get the kind of information they need. Without a framework helping a school navigate through the plethora of programs available, it is difficult to discover which would be of most benefit.

The majority of anti-bullying programs available are just that, programs. An analysis of Australian anti-bullying framework and programs showed that the most commonly available service available to schools for tackling bullying and cyber bullying are one-off workshops for students, parents and / or teachers.

Years of research show that knowledge alone is not enough to change behaviour in the long term.

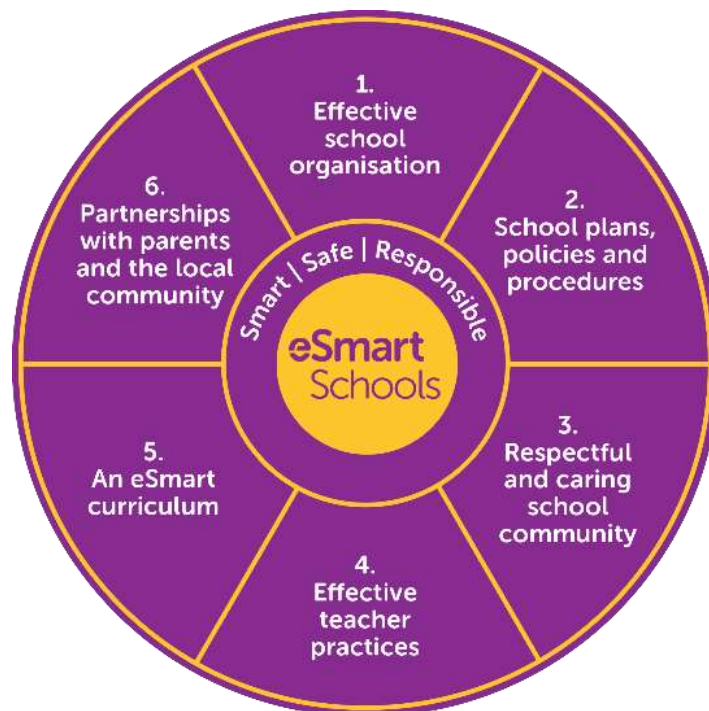
Other examples of common anti-bullying programs available are resource hubs. These are websites or "tool kits" that provide information but take time to navigate and rely on schools knowing exactly which issues need to be addressed. Again, without a framework to help schools diagnose their weaknesses it is difficult for schools to navigate these hubs.

The health-promoting framework (below) is one of the better-known models used by schools.

³⁷ STEPS decision-making framework (2016) Bullying. No Way! Website www.bullyingnoway.gov.au



The model below is the **eSmart Schools Framework**³⁸, which works to improve the structure of a school and its organisation (e.g., leadership and policies) and functionality (e.g. curriculum and teaching practices, including behaviour management) and to create a positive school environment, to reduce bullying and cyber bullying and to enhance cyber safety and general wellbeing.



eSmart Schools Framework

³⁸ www.esmartschools.org.au

The eSmart Schools Framework was developed in 2009 by RMIT University for the Alannah & Madeline Foundation in response to heightened levels of awareness about the dangers posed to young people's wellbeing by all forms of bullying, including online bullying. In 2010, the eSmart Schools framework and delivery model was piloted by 159 schools nationally and is now being implemented in 1 in 4 Australian schools.

eSmart presents a model of organisational change consistent with Health Promoting Schools and initiatives such as SunSmart. It is designed to help schools improve their cultures through preventative and responsive approaches to wellbeing, on and offline bullying and the promotion of appropriate use of digital technologies. eSmart stems from the belief that these issues cannot effectively be addressed separately. It provides a set of shared attitudes, understandings and behaviours across a school's community: parents, staff and students. It helps them 'join the dots' to see that the different things they are doing are part of a greater whole that will work together to produce better outcomes for everyone.

The six eSmart focus areas (see model, above):

eSmart includes six areas that represent a 'whole of school approach' by focusing on teaching parents, students and teachers the right behaviours to prevent and respond to bullying, cyber bullying and cyber safety whilst also creating a prosocial, positive relationship culture where bullying and cyber bullying are never acceptable.

1. **The school organisation** – schools set up a group to oversee the program in the school, and a system is set up for recording bullying complaints and the response made. Data is regularly collected to inform future action.
2. **Policies and procedures** – schools examine their existing policies and procedures to ensure that a positive approach is taken to digital technologies and behaviour management and that bullying and cyber bullying are addressed and responded to effectively, consistently and respectfully.
3. **Respectful and caring school** – students, parents and teachers work together to promote school-wide values and behaviours that describe the way they are all expected to behave. This focus area sees a strong emphasis on peer support and cross age interaction: older students helping younger students; students acting as eSmart Leaders - helping teachers write policies, and presenting at school assemblies to their peers and parents.
4. **Teacher practices** – this area focuses on teachers by making sure they are aware of the work taking place across all focus areas. Teachers are taught how important it is to role model pro-social and pro-technology attitudes and behaviours, manage their classrooms effectively to and be prepared to respond to any form of negative behaviour. They use pedagogies in the classroom that foster relationships between students (e.g. cooperative learning, mixed grouping, enquiry based project work). Teacher skills in all areas are audited and developed where necessary.
5. **eSmart Curriculum** – the focus is on teaching explicitly about rights and responsibilities awareness of bullying together with social and emotional skills. An important aspect of this focus area is to run activities with students where they can input into the schools' policies and procedures and develop anti-bullying messages in their own language.
6. **Parents and the community** – this area focuses on ensuring parents are receiving consistent and constant messages relating to all focus areas. Schools will share policies with parents, include information in their newsletter about bullying and cyber bullying, showcase students work with anti-bullying messages and run parent workshops on bullying and cyber bullying.

What does eSmart Schools do?

eSmart Schools provides a structured, guided approach for schools to reduce bullying, cyber bullying, increase online safety and enhance the wellbeing of students, staff and families.

How does eSmart Schools work?

Schools are provided with the framework as an online checklist that helps them to identify their strengths and weaknesses. They are then supported through the provision of training, resources and one on one support to address their areas of weakness and build on their strengths.

What is different about eSmart schools?

What's uniquely different about eSmart Schools is that schools have access to an expert who provides tailored advice and assists them to navigate the overwhelming number of speakers, websites, tools, lesson plans and programs available to get exactly what they need. This helps maintain momentum, sustain their efforts over time militate against staff attrition and provides up-to-date resources that are informed by reliable evidence via links that address schools' specific needs.

Other key differences:

- eSmart guides schools through an end-to-end process that helps them to know what to do when, it provides structure whereas other anti-bullying programs provide great information but leave the school to decide how to use it with little to no guidance.
- With eSmart, schools are allocated an expert eSmart Advisor who visits the school providing individual guidance through the program.
- eSmart's online system tool is an interactive tracking system that guides schools through the process. The Advisor regularly checks the schools progress via the online tool and provides individualised support according to the school's progress.
- In addition to their own Advisor, schools have access to a help desk.
- Once schools have worked through the framework, they are audited by the Advisor who undertakes a quality check of the schools policies and how they have fulfilled the requirements of the framework.

The eSmart Schools advantage

Two other frameworks are available within Australia for tackling bullying and cyber bullying; the National Safe Schools Framework (NSSF) (now under revision) and Friendly Schools. All three have an evidence base and each is housed on relatively similar online platforms, with access to audit tools, where schools work through a similar process of audit, track and monitor.

The evaluation of the National Safe Schools Framework's 'Safe Schools Hub' (now 'Student Wellbeing Hub'), advises that the 'availability and access to a website that promotes safe schools and student wellbeing and caters for a diverse range of education stakeholders is strongly supported and very

much required. This is particularly so with the recognition that young people's wellbeing can be an important predictive factor in their capacity to be engaged and happy learners.³⁹

An assessment of all three programs showed that eSmart has a number of points of difference that can be used to demonstrate a competitive advantage.

The key point of difference eSmart has is its individual support offered through its Advisors and Help Desk.

With eSmart, schools are allocated an expert eSmart Advisor who provides training on how to implement the framework and regularly engages with and visits the school providing individual guidance through the framework. The eSmart School advisor regularly checks the schools progress via the online tool and provide individualised support according to the school's progress. In addition to their own Advisor, schools have access to a help desk.

Each framework provides access to online resources that support schools to address their gaps. Friendly Schools resources include classroom activities only and are at an extra cost to the school. The NSSF resources are freely available to anyone online and don't require a login. The resources available through Smart's online portal are included as part of the school's registration.

For eSmart Schools participants the Advisor and Help Desk are available to help them navigate through the resource portal. Also, the eSmart resources are curated regularly by the Foundation's Senior Advisory of Cyber Safety and where there are not appropriate programs or resources available to address a schools needs the eSmart team will create them.

In addition, eSmart's online tool is used to specifically tailor the individual support offered by the eSmart School Advisors.

eSmart Schools works – the evidence

eSmart has been independently evaluated by the Foundation for Young Australians ,the Pitt Group and University of Western Sydney. The findings showed that students in eSmart school's felt safer and knew what to do if they themselves or someone they knew were being bullied, teachers in eSmart school's reported being more confident in teaching anti-bullying awareness as well as responding to incidents and parents felt more confident in knowing what to do if their child experienced bullying.

The full evaluation report can be provided upon request; below are some examples of the findings:

- 9 out of 10 principals said eSmart prompted their school to take action on cyber bullying it might not have otherwise taken.
- 85% of principals and 82% of school staff said eSmart contributed to improvement in cyber safety awareness and practices.
- 80% of principals said eSmart was effective in changing school-wide culture and behaviour with regard to cyber safety, technology use and bullying. Universal, whole-school approaches that take a multifaceted approach are the most effective way to prevent and reduce bullying.⁴⁰
- The majority of in students in eSmart schools agreed or strongly agreed that if a student were being bullied, teachers would:

³⁹ Taddeo, C.M., Spears, B.A., Ey, L-A., Green, D., Price, D.A., Carslake, T., & Cox, G. (2015). A report on the evaluation of the Safe Schools Hub, University of South Australia. Adelaide.

⁴⁰ (NCAB, 2018)

- help (87%)
 - respond quickly (84%)
 - respond appropriately (85%)
 - care (85%).
- Compared to another Australian study that showed young people reported losing faith in reporting bullying behaviour because some teachers and other adults are not taking action or not recognising bullying, especially via cyber means,⁴¹ 55% of students in eSmart schools said bullying situations improved when they told a teacher. Compared to students in two other Australian studies that indicated telling a teacher resulted in 28% of the situations improving⁴² and the other 40% of situations improving⁴³.
 - Prior to participating in eSmart 35% of schools reported that they provided cyber safety including cyber bullying professional development to their staff. Teachers generally believe that training to counteract bullying is inadequate⁴⁴, 67% of schools staff in one Australian study felt other teachers at their school needed more training to enhance their skills to deal with a range of issues related to covert bullying, such as dealing with incidents or addressing covert (including cyber bullying) within the curriculum. Once schools have progressed through eSmart, 81% of teachers said they felt confident to advise and manage incidents of inappropriate technology use.
 - Evidence shows the further a school progresses through the eSmart framework the more likely are the parents / carers in their school community to know what bullying was, are able to identify bullying and know what to do if an incident occurred. School-family-community partnerships are essential in preventing and reducing bullying⁴⁵.

In 2016, in response to the evaluation findings that showed schools needed additional tailored support to implement the framework effectively, the one-on-one individual support for schools became a feature of the program. Since the introduction of these changes to the service delivery model, the number of schools that have completed the framework has tripled in half the time. This evidence supports the importance of eSmart's main point of difference.

Recommendations

The Queensland Anti-bullying Task Force responsibilities include:

- Develop a proposed Framework for Addressing Bullying (the Framework), presenting recommendations for community and government action to reduce the incidence of bullying and cyber-bullying
 - Rather than start again from scratch, the Queensland Government could utilise the eSmart Schools Framework and service delivery model. eSmart is a proven solution to tackling bullying and cyber bullying, fit-for-purpose and ready to be rolled-out in Queensland Schools.
 - Queensland has, over time, demonstrated its strong commitment to reduce and manage bullying. It has developed a range of expectations for responsible behaviour in schools

⁴¹ (Cross, et al., 2009)

⁴² (Cross, et al., 2009)

⁴³ (Rigby & Johnson, 2016)

⁴⁴ (Rigby & Johnson, 2016)

⁴⁵ (NCAB, 2018)

on and offline with the aim of providing safe and secure environments in which schools can learn. The Education Queensland website provides access a range of resources and programs. It is evident that these, while useful need to be linked by a unifying framework and underpinning systems and tools.

- We believe that eSmart Schools can build on the momentum of the 208 Schools in Queensland already registered as eSmart Schools. There is a strong case to be made for rolling-out eSmart across all schools.
- **Advise government on the development of a program of activities under the Framework**
 - The eSmart Framework contains a suite of 23 activity areas in which schools engage in each of 3 phases – planning, implementing and sustaining. These action areas act as a checklist that guides schools through an evidence-based ‘whole-of-school’ approach in an end-to-end process that helps them to know what to do, when, provides structure and acts as a ready-made sequence of activities.
 - eSmart Schools is supported by the Alannah & Madeline Foundation’s ‘Connect’ workshops on a range of topics including bullying, respectful relationships, and cyber safety. These are available to be delivered to leadership staff, teaching staff, students (primary and secondary) parents and wider community members.
- **Advise government on resources, best practices and other strategies to prevent and address bullying behaviour in order to provide appropriate training and intervention**
 - The Alannah & Madeline Foundation is accustomed to working with government on a number of levels, at a program delivery level and, through the preparation of submissions and the giving of evidence to parliamentary enquiries. Through its National Centre Against Bullying, the Foundation has access to many of the premier researchers, program designers, authors and commentators on the subjects of bullying, including cyber bullying and the creation of supportive and caring school communities. The Foundation can provide important new directions based on relevant and recent research.
 - eSmart Schools contains current, evidence informed resources including online and face-to-face training modules to support schools in their quest to prevent and address bullying behaviour. The resources are available through eSmart’s online portal and an Advisor and Help Desk are available to help them navigate through the resource portal. Also, the eSmart resources are curated regularly by the Foundation’s Senior Advisory of Cyber Safety and Bullying and where there are not appropriate programs or resources available to address a schools needs the Foundation will create them. We also endorse Bullying, No Way’s STEPS process that helps schools examine relevant programs and approaches
- **Consult with the Queensland community to gain the insights of those affected by bullying and harness grass-roots ideas on ways to tackle the issue**
 - The Alannah & Madeline Foundation has extensive experience of respectful and productive community consultation and co-creation of programs and resources.
 - Through its existing eSmart School’s network of schools the Alannah & Madeline Foundation has already provided the Anti-Bullying Taskforce with connections to school leaders and teachers to provide insights into how they use eSmart to tackle bullying and

cyber bullying. We could provide the Taskforce with further learnings and connections with Queensland schools and communities to gain further insights.

- Educate and engage Queenslanders to create a community that practices positive attitudes and behaviours and promotes a culture of non-violence and respectful relationships
 - Because of the highly dispersed nature of the Queensland community and schools, it would be necessary to develop a media campaign, social media campaign and education for the public through schools, libraries and other community organisations.
 - An effective framework should promote the importance of community partnerships in responding to bullying and cyber bullying. Action area six of the eSmart Schools Framework makes links with local community organisations to create consistent messages about the appropriate use of information and communications technology. The Alannah & Madeline Foundation can use its existing relationships across government, industry and community organisations to support the establishment positive communities.
- Act as a liaison point between the community and government to encourage ownership of initiatives
 - The Alannah & Madeline Foundation is well-placed to be a liaison point between stakeholders to develop ownership of the initiatives. It has a strong media presence and a proactive and experienced media department. The Alannah & Madeline Foundation currently works in a similar way with 'Bullying No Way'.

Call to action

The Alannah & Madeline Foundation advocates for the adoption of a system-wide proven, effective framework that provides preventative and responsive approaches to bullying and cyber bullying and which enhances cyber safety and student satisfaction and achievement. We recommend the eSmart Schools Framework for this purpose. The Alannah & Madeline Foundation would welcome the opportunity to present to the Taskforce in person on the suitability of eSmart Schools as such as solution or provide its expertise in other ways.

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THANK YOU.



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