The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

Avoid the Harm - Stay Calm

Report on the inquiry into the impact of violence on young Australians

House of Representatives
Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth

July 2010
Canberra

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THE REPORT

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Foreword

The current generation of young people is not a homogenous group, despite sharing the Gen Y 'tag'. Young people aged 12-24 years are socially and culturally diverse, and make up approximately one fifth of Australia's population. Individually, each has his or her own hopes, dreams and aspirations. Not only do young people make important contributions to our society now, but collectively they represent the future of our nation.

Nevertheless, it seems nearly every day we are confronted by yet another story in the papers or on the evening news. We are told about our out of control young people – fighting at school, getting drunk and fighting in the streets, carrying knives and joining gangs. Sometimes we hear how young people are using new technologies and social networking to bully their less fortunate peers. So, it is hardly surprising that many believe today's young people are more violent than ever.

But what is the reality? With so many violent incidents going unreported, assessing actual levels of violence is challenging to say the least. Based on the best available data however, it seems that youth violence in Australia is escalating. Importantly though, while often perceived primarily as perpetrators of violence, young people are in fact at greatest risk of being victims. Young people themselves are concerned about their own personal safety, with about one quarter of young people aged 18–24 years feeling unsafe or very unsafe when walking alone in their local area after dark, and around 1 in 10 feeling unsafe in their homes at night.

This leads to the fundamental question – what needs to be done to curb youth violence and address the concerns of young people and of the wider community? The starting point for the Committee was to examine what is known about the reasons that young people in particular are at increased risk of violence. Evidence to the inquiry shows that there are many factors and influences to be considered. While some pertain to characteristics of the individual, many relate to the

individual's immediate physical and social environment, including the nature of relationships with family and friends and levels of engagement with community. Added to these are the influences of alcohol and drugs for instance, as well as cultural influences which shape and reinforce attitudes towards young people and violence.

Given the many factors at play, it is clear that no single intervention or simplistic solution will be sufficient to address escalating levels of youth violence. Indeed, evidence to the inquiry includes reference to a large number of interventions and programs seeking to address youth violence by tackling a wide range of risk factors such as family violence, child abuse, bullying and the use and abuse of alcohol and other drugs. Not only is the sheer number of interventions overwhelming, but while all are well intentioned, it seems that not all have been evaluated with the same degree of rigour. The result is a potentially confusing array of interventions and programs at various stages of implementation and evaluation, supported by different portfolios within various levels of government, and delivered by a range of government and non-government agencies. Hence, a key recommendation of the Committee is to develop a national youth violence and rehabilitation strategy which brings together in a co-ordinated way, a comprehensive selection of evidence-based interventions.

The Committee recognises that developing an effective national strategy will require a collaborative exercise involving all levels of government and the non-government community sector, in consultation with the wider community. Young people must be included. Therefore, the Committee is encouraged to see the collaborative undertakings already being progressed through Council of Australian Governments. These include measures to reduce the harmful effects of alcohol, and to improve law enforcement through the implementation of best practice policing and increased access to restorative justice. In addition, the Australian Government has also demonstrated its commitment to consult with young people to identify priority issues of concern to them and suggest ways forward. The release in May 2010 of the *National Strategy for Young Australians* is a significant outcome of these consultations.

The Committee recognised the importance of engaging with young people as the priority of its own inquiry. Realising that young people were unlikely to make written submissions to a Parliamentary inquiry process, the Committee agreed to conduct an online youth violence survey. The survey was promoted through conventional means, including through websites of Members and Senators and through existing e-mail distribution lists. However, in thinking about how best to reach the target group – that is young people aged 12-24 years old – the Committee also felt that online advertising would be essential. Advertising through Facebook and Google was used for the first time by a Parliamentary

Committee. It proved to be a great success, with over 1300 young people responding to the survey. In addition, a Youth Forum held in Melbourne allowed around 40 more young people to share their experiences and ideas for solutions to youth violence with Members of the Committee directly. Formal and informal discussions were also held with young people living in the Northern Territory, Western Australia and Tasmania. The Committee found the input from all of the young people involved in the inquiry to be invaluable and many of their comments are interspersed throughout the report.

The Committee sought evidence from a wide range of contributors. I thank all of those who have participated in the inquiry, either by providing written evidence, by presenting evidence in person, by responding to the online survey or through informal discussions with the Committee. I also take this opportunity to thank my Committee colleagues for their efforts and contributions throughout the inquiry.

It is the Australian Government's vision for all young people to grow up safe, healthy, happy and resilient. It's a vision all Australians would share. Considering how experiences of violence impact on young people – damaging them physically, emotionally and socially – curbing escalating levels of youth violence will be essential to achieving this vision. As Chair of the Committee, it is my hope that the recommendations made in this report will provide a robust framework for a comprehensive, evidence-based approach to addressing the complex but crucial issue of youth violence.

Annette Ellis MP
Chair

Membership of the Committee

Chair	Ms Annette Ellis MP		
Deputy Chair	The Hon Judi Moylan MP		
Members	The Hon Tony Abbott MP *(until 3/02/10)*	Mrs Sophie Mirabella MP *(until 30/11/09)*	
	The Hon Kevin Andrews MP *(from 3/02/10)*	Mr Scott Morrison MP *(until 30/11/09)*	
	Ms Jodie Campbell MP	Mr Brett Raguse MP	
	Mr Steven Ciobo MP *(from 3/02/10)*	Mr Patrick Secker MP *(30/11/09 to 10/02/10)*	
	Ms Julie Collins MP	Mr Luke Simpkins MP *(from 30/11/09)*	
	Ms Kirsten Livermore MP	Mr Chris Trevor MP	

Committee Secretariat

Secretary	Mr James Catchpole *(until 23/04/10)*
	Ms Sharon Bryant *(from 27/04/10)*
Inquiry Secretary	Dr Alison Clegg
	Ms Susie Kelly *(until 26/02/10)*
Research Officer	Ms Belynda Zolotto
Administrative Officers	Ms Emily Costelloe *(from 10/02/10)*
	Mrs Jazmine Rakic *(from 15/02/10)*
	Mr Shaun Rowe

Terms of Reference

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth shall inquire and report on the impact of violence on young Australians with particular reference to:

- perceptions of violence and community safety among young Australians;

- links between illicit drug use, alcohol abuse and violence among young Australians;

- the relationship between bullying and violence and the wellbeing of young Australians;

- social and economic factors that contribute to violence by young Australians; and

- strategies to reduce violence and its impact among young Australians.

List of Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government, either through the Australian Bureau of Statistics or the Australian Institute of Criminology, implement a regular (biennial or triennial) cross-sectional community-based survey to:

- measure the prevalence, nature and severity of youth violence; and

- monitor trends over time. *(para 2.36)*

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs include social development education and training as an essential component in phase 3 developments for the national curriculum. *(para 4.28)*

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government, in consultation with state and territory governments and non-government stakeholders, examine options for establishing partnerships between departments of education and community-based service providers to facilitate referral of students to external counselling and support services where required and appropriate. *(para 4.39)*

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, as part of its review of the *National School Chaplaincy Program*, enhance and extend access to professional counselling and support service for students by:

- introducing mandatory training for all school chaplains to assist them with early identification of students who may require professional assistance; and

- establishing partnerships and formal mechanisms for referral from the *National School Chaplaincy Program* to other student counselling or youth support services, including external counselling services where appropriate. *(para 4.43)*

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government provide additional strategic funding for the development of community infrastructure to support communities to become more 'youth friendly'. The funding should be awarded on a competitive basis to local government authorities that can demonstrate communities with the greatest need for social/cultural facilities and/or infrastructure to support youth. *(para 4.85)*

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that the Attorney-General's Department introduce a new crime prevention grants scheme requiring partnerships to be established between the police and the local community to support collaborative approaches to enhancing community safety and reducing crime at a local level. *(para 4.121)*

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government, in consultation with state and territory governments and other key stakeholders, establish a national youth violence and rehabilitation strategy to guide the provision of a holistic and integrated policy and program delivery framework. The national youth violence and rehabilitation strategy should:

- be founded on a robust evidence-base;

- support multi-level interventions;

- be focused on prevention and early intervention;

- be collaborative, coordinated and inclusive of all levels of government, the non-government community sector and the wider community, including young people;

- link to existing strategies that target social and economic disadvantage; and

■ include population level strategies to reinforce social norms and foster positive cultural and attitudinal changes. *(para 5.14)*

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government conduct an audit of existing initiatives and programs that aim to address youth violence. The audit should detail the outcomes of any assessments or evaluations, and provide commentary on the rigor of evaluation.

Further, the Committee recommends that the audit findings be made publicly available. *(para 5.25)*

Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government, in consultation with state and territory governments and other key stakeholders, identify and establish an appropriate mechanism to support the development of a strong evidence-base through ongoing, systematic and rigorous evaluation of anti-violence interventions and programs.

A clearinghouse for the dissemination of information to policy makers and other interested parties should be an integral part of the considerations. *(para 5.27)*

Recommendation 10

The Committee recommends that the Attorney-General's Department examine the need for change to current classification categories of film and TV in relation to violent content. Consideration should be given to the potential impacts on children and young people of exposure to media violence with a view to better aligning classification categories with key developmental stages occurring in childhood and adolescence. *(para 5.77)*

Recommendation 11

The Committee recommends that the Australian Communications and Media Authority establish a 'Mediasmart' website aimed at providing children, young people and their parents with up-to-date, comprehensive and age-appropriate information to assist them to make informed, discerning and responsible choices in relation to media content, including exposure to media violence. *(para 5.80)*

Recommendation 12

The Committee recommends that the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations develop and implement a social

marketing campaign to promote positive images of young people and combat stereotypical and negative community perceptions. *(para 5.90)*

Recommendation 13

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government ensures that evaluations of social marketing campaigns undertaken in relation to youth violence or anti-social behaviour that can lead to youth violence, incorporate evaluation methodology to assess rates of behavioural change where this is an intended outcome. *(para 5.106)*

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Referral and Conduct of the Inquiry

1.1   While often seen as the perpetrators of public violence, the reality is that young people are also overwhelmingly the victims. Young Australians have clearly identified violence as one of the top issues impacting on their daily lives. Not only do they worry about their own personal safety, but also about the impact that violence is having on their friends, families and on their communities.

1.2   Underlying these concerns, there is a general perception that the incidence and severity of violence among Australia's young people is increasing. But what evidence exists to support this and what role should the Australian Government play to help minimise the problem?

1.3   The *Inquiry into the Impact of Violence on Young Australians* (the inquiry) was referred to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth on 16 June 2009. An advertisement calling for written submissions was placed in *The Australian* on 19 August 2009. Information on the inquiry, including its terms of reference and on how to make a submission, was available on the Parliament of Australia website.[1] The inquiry was also advertised through an extensive mail out to interested parties, including peak bodies and organisations, and state and territory governments.

1.4   The inquiry received 79 submissions and four supplementary submissions. The list of submissions is at Appendix A. Fifteen exhibits for the inquiry were also received and a detailed list is provided at Appendix B. The Committee held nine public hearings and four community roundtables across Australia between February and May 2010. Details of the public hearings for the inquiry are listed at Appendix C.

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1   Parliament of Australia website, viewed on 30 May 2010 at http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/fchy/youthviolence/index.htm.

Informal discussions were also held with police officers, representatives from community based organisations and with young people in Queensland, Tasmania and Western Australia. Committee inspections included site visits to the Gold Coast Closed Circuit TV Monitoring Centre and to the Ashley Youth Detention Centre in Tasmania.

1.5   At the outset of the inquiry, the Committee Chair, Ms Annette Ellis MP (Member for Canberra) indicated that it was essential that as many young people were consulted as possible. As the Committee recognised that young people were unlikely to provide formal written submissions to the inquiry, the Committee agreed to develop an online survey to help measure young people's perceptions and experiences of violence.

1.6   While this is not the first time an online survey has been conducted by a parliamentary committee, its method of promotion was novel. Facebook and Google advertising were used, as well as existing email distribution lists. Members of Parliament and Senators were also contacted to request they place a link to the survey on their own websites. The Liaison and Projects Office within the Department of the House of Representatives developed a short video using interviews conducted with young people. This was placed on the Committee website, and promoted through the *About the House* TV program on Sky News and Australia's Public Affairs Channel on 22 November 2009. The survey was open from 22 October 2009 to 16 February 2010. During that time there were 1379 respondents. A summary of the outcomes of the survey is at Appendix D. Comments made by survey respondents are interspersed throughout the body of the report.

1.7   Also, preceding the formal public hearings on 15 February 2010, the Committee held a Youth Forum in Melbourne that allowed around 40 young people to have informal group discussions with Committee members about their perceptions and experiences of violence and its impact on their lives. Following informal discussions, participants of the Youth Forum were invited to give formal feedback on the *Hansard* record. Some young participants of the Youth Forum were interviewed for a segment on the *About the House* TV program aired on Sky News and on Australia's Public Affairs Channel on 14 May 2010.

Context of the Inquiry

1.8   Media reports highlight and perhaps sensationalise the involvement of young people as both victims and perpetrators of violence. But what is the

actual extent of this problem, and how does the Australian Government need to act on it? It was in this context that the Committee undertook to investigate the impact of violence on young Australians.

1.9   The inquiry was conducted at a time when there was no national youth violence prevention framework. While there are national policies and strategies which aim to address various aspects of social and economic disadvantage, and which are therefore likely to impact on youth violence to varying degrees, these target broader issues.[2] In addition, there are a large number of strategies and programs operating in Australia which directly target youth violence. However, being administered by various portfolios in federal, state and territory governments, and delivered by a range of government and non-government agencies, these strategies and programs cannot be said to constitute a nationally cohesive youth violence prevention framework.

1.10   Also at the time of the inquiry, the Australian Government was in the process of conducting a series of broad ranging consultations with young people to consider the strategic direction for youth policy. These consultations were initiated with the establishment in 2008 of the Australian Youth Forum (AYF). On 20 February 2009, the Minister for Youth, The Hon Kate Ellis MP, hosted the inaugural AYF youTHINK forum. The forum allowed hundreds of young Australians from various locations in Australia to speak out on issues of importance to them and to share their views about practical solutions. As concern about personal safety had been a recurrent issue raised in earlier discussion, violence and safety was a theme for discussion at the youTHINK forum. As summarised by the AYF:

> In the discussion about 'Violence and Safety', participants spoke about the need for better understanding between young people and authority figures, like the police, through training. They also talked about the need for awareness raising campaigns about violence, and the links with alcohol abuse. Participants also said that because young people are more exposed to the media than

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2   See for example: Australian Government's Social Inclusion Agenda, and strategies to tackle issues associated with domestic violence and child safety (e.g. *National Council's Plan for Australia to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children; National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children),* the use and impact of alcohol and other drugs (*National Drug Strategy* including *National Alcohol Strategy* and the *National Binge Drinking Strategy)* and Indigenous disadvantage (e.g. *Closing the Gap*).

ever before, they are also more exposed to violence and its
impact.[3]

1.11   Consultations with young people through the AYF and through
        youTHINK resulted in referral of the *Inquiry into the Impact of Violence on
        Young Australians* to the Committee in June 2009. The inquiry's terms of
        reference were formally adopted by the Committee on 24 June 2009.

1.12   Following referral of the inquiry, on 3 September 2009, the Prime Minister,
        The Hon Kevin Rudd MP, announced the Australian Government's
        intention to develop a *National Strategy for Young Australians* (the National
        Strategy). The purpose of the National Strategy was to provide an
        overarching framework identifying issues of concern for young people,
        and priorities for action. To support the development of the National
        Strategy, additional consultations with young people and the broader
        community, the so called National Conversation, ran from 22 October to
        19 November 2009.

1.13   On 14 April 2010, the *National Strategy for Young Australians* was launched.
        It identifies the following eight priorities for action, all of which are
        directly relevant to addressing the issue of youth violence, and therefore
        to the inquiry. The eight priorities are:

        ■ improving the health wellbeing of all young people;

        ■ equipping young Australians to shape their own futures through
          education;

        ■ supporting young Australians within their families;

        ■ empowering young Australians to take part and be active in their
          communities;

        ■ equipping young Australians with the skills and personal networks
          they need to gain, and be successful in, employment;

        ■ enabling young Australians to participate confidentially and safely
          online;

        ■ strengthening early intervention with young Australians to help
          prevent any problems getting worse and to help young people get their
          lives back on track; and

        ■ establishing clear cut legal consequences for behaviours that endanger
          the safety of others.[4]

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3   Australian Government – Australian Youth Forum (AYF) website, viewed on 9 June 2010 at
     http://www.youth.gov.au/ayf/pages/youTHINK_home.htm#2.

Structure of the Report

1.14   Chapter 2 establishes the scope of the inquiry. The Chapters considers definitions of the terms 'violence', 'bullying' and 'young Australian'. It also presents an overview of the data and statistics on youth violence in Australia, and considers issues associated with perceptions of youth violence and the influence of perceptions on feelings of personal safety.

1.15   Chapter 3 presents an overview of risk and protective factors occurring at individual, family, community or societal levels that are associated with youth violence. The Chapter also examines the association of alcohol and other drugs with violence. The Chapter concludes by considering specific populations of young people that are at increased risk of experiencing violence.

1.16   Chapter 4 examines options for targeted interventions to address youth violence principally by decreasing risk factors and increasing protective factors that occur at individual, family and community levels. The Chapter includes consideration of strategies to reduce alcohol-related violence and to improve personal safety through the implementation of best practice policing. While the focus is on prevention and early intervention, consideration is also given to interventions to support young victims of violence and to reduce recidivism among young offenders.

1.17   Chapter 5 examines the need for a strategic and coordinated response to youth violence and considers the role of the Australian Government in supporting this approach. The Chapter also examines societal level influences on behaviour. The role of the Australian Government in supporting national policies to address broader issues of social and economic disadvantage is considered. The Chapter concludes by considering options for population based initiatives to reinforce social norms and foster widespread positive cultural and attitudinal change.

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4   Australian Government – *National Strategy for Young Australians*, viewed on 30 May 2010 at http://www.youth.gov.au/Documents/NatStrat.pdf.

2

Youth Violence – Terminology, Statistics and Perceptions

2.1   To establish the scope of the inquiry, Chapter 2 considers definitions of the terms 'violence', 'bullying' and 'young Australian' as used in the terms of reference. In presenting an overview of the statistics on youth violence in Australia, the Chapter also outlines the difficulties associated with obtaining accurate and comprehensive data. The Chapter considers the impact of violence on young Australians, and concludes with an examination of young peoples' and community perceptions of violence and considers how this relates to feelings of personal safety.

Terminology and Definitions

2.2   When examining the impact of violence on young Australians, it is essential to have an agreed understanding of what precisely violence is, and who is included in the demographic 'young Australians'. As neither 'violence' nor 'young Australians' is defined in the inquiry's terms of reference, consideration of possible definitional variations is essential to establish the scope of the inquiry. Consideration of other terms used either in the terms of reference or in evidence to the inquiry (e.g. bullying, anti-social behaviour etc) is also warranted.

Defining Violence

2.3   There is generally no agreed or accepted definition of what constitutes violence. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), violence is defined as follows:

> ... any incident involving the occurrence, attempt or threat of either physical or sexual assault. Physical assault involves the use of physical force with the intent to harm or frighten. An attempt or threat to inflict physical harm is included only if a person believes it is likely to be carried out. Sexual assault includes acts of a sexual nature carried out against a person's will through the use of physical force, intimidation or coercion, or any attempts to do this.[1]

2.4   In its 2002 *World Report on Violence and Health,* the World Health Organisation (WHO) defined violence as:

> The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation.[2]

2.5   WHO identified the following three categories of violence:

- self-directed violence (e.g. self abuse and suicide);

- collective violence (e.g. social and political violence including war and terrorism); and

- interpersonal violence (e.g. family and intimate partner violence, community violence involving an acquaintance or stranger).[3]

2.6   The definition of violence is also contextual. In his submission, The Hon Dr Bob Such MP points out that the word 'violence' potentially encompasses a number of quite distinct behaviours 'from bullying to slapping to rape or even death - in a variety of contexts'.[4] For this reason The Hon Dr Such MP suggests that:

> More precise definitions of these variations would offer meaningful distinctions, essential for policy formulation and strategies to prioritise and address the problem.[5]

2.7   The scope for differential understandings of what violence is, was also raised by representatives of the Youth Minister's Roundtable of Young

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1   Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2006), *Personal Safety Survey 2005, Australia,* Cat No 4906.0, p 5.
2   World Health Organization (WHO) (2002), *World Report on Violence and Health*, Geneva.
3   WHO (2002), *World Report on Violence and Health*, Geneva.
4   The Hon Dr Bob Such MP, Submission No 15, p 1.
5   The Hon Dr Bob Such MP, Submission No 15, p 1.

Territorians who had surveyed nearly 500 young people living in the Northern Territory. As explained to the Committee, survey respondents reported various understandings:

> Many believe that violence is all encompassing of verbal, emotional and physical actions while others felt that violence is a physical action that is intended to cause harm and that violence and abuse are separate but not mutually exclusive issues. However, even with the division of ideas, the group agreed that the intent to cause harm is the underlying definition of 'violence'.[6]

2.8 Also, although not included in the inquiry's terms of reference, the term 'anti-social behaviour' was encountered frequently in evidence. As with violence, there is no precise or agreed definition of anti-social behaviour, but the term is understood to cover a range of aggressive, intimidating and destructive behaviours. These behaviours range from non-criminal activities such as swearing, noisy behaviour and binge drinking to criminal behaviours such as the use and/or sale of illicit drugs, property damage and theft.[7]

Links between Bullying and Violence

2.9 Bullying in recent years has been subject to intense interest from the media with some high profile cases where bullying has had severe consequences (including suicide), for the victims.[8] According to the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY), the National Centre Against Bullying defines bullying as:

> ... the repeated and intentional use of negative words or actions by a person or group of people with more power against a person with less power which causes distress and risks wellbeing.[9]

2.10 Many have linked exposure to bullying and perpetration of bullying to the development of subsequent violent behaviour in the longer-term.[10] While

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6 Ms Hannah Woerle, Transcript of Evidence, 17 March 2010, p 1.

7 Williams J, Toumbourou J, Williamson E, Hemphill S & Patton G (2009), *Violent and antisocial behaviours among young adolescents in Australian communities: An analysis of risk and protective factors,* Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY), p 19.

8 See for example: *Bullies Drove My Girl to her Death*, Herald Sun, 22 July 2009; *Time to Stop the Torment,* Herald Sun, 11 February 2010; *In Harm's Way*, The Age, 10 March 2010.

9 ARACY, Submission No 55, p 24.

10 See for example: National Council of Single Mothers and their Children Inc (NCSMC), Submission No 2, p 2; Nepean Domestic Violence Network, Submission No 18, p 3; Youth Advisory Council NSW, Submission No 25, p 2; ARACY, Submission No 55, p 24; Tasmanian Government, Submission No 56, p 3; Voices Against Violence, Submission No 67, p 4.

it is clear that bullying behaviour and violent behaviour can, and do overlap, there was a lack of consensus in evidence as to whether bullying is always necessarily a form of violence. As explained by a representative of the Youth Minister's Roundtable of Young Territorians:

> The youth roundtable also believe that bullying and violence are not the same issue. Violence is often an outcome and is certainly an arm of bullying. If bullying can be caught in its earlier stages then many instances of violence could be prevented. It is important that bullying and violence are treated as separate issues with their own solutions, but both issues are as important as each other and both can have a devastating effect on young people.[11]

2.11   Bullying is recognised as a complex issue which can manifest in different ways (i.e. verbal and/or physical), involve different perpetrator and victim relationships (e.g. peer to peer, adult to young person, young person to adult) and occur in a variety of locations (e.g. school, workplace, home).[12] Submissions suggest that the prevalence of bullying behaviour is high, with approximately one in four Australian children experiencing bullying every few weeks or more often.[13] The emergence of new forms of bullying associated with changes in communications technology also featured widely in submissions.[14]

Defining Young Australians

2.12   Another consideration for the inquiry was to define the target population of 'young Australians'. While most submissions did not specify an age range for young Australians, many responded to the terms of reference with a focus on the young people between the ages of 12-25 years.[15] Focusing its considerations on young people aged 12-25 years, the Australian Government submission notes:

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11   Ms Hannah Woerle, Transcript of Evidence, 17 March 2010, p 1.

12   See for example: Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS), Submission No 39, p 4; ARACY, Submission No 55, p 24; Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic), Submission No 60, pp 13-15.

13   See for example: NCSMC, Submission No 2, p 8; Mission Australia, Submission No 59, p 15; YACVic, Submission No 60, p 13.

14   See for example: NCSMC, Submission No 2, p 8; Nepean Domestic Violence Network, Submission No 18, p 3; Cairns Community Legal Centre Inc, Submission No 23, pp 4-5; ACON, Submission No 30, pp 10-11; Professor Kerry Carrington, Submission No 47, p 7; Ms Rosemary O'Grady, Submission No 77, pp 7-8; Dr Adam Tomison, Transcript of Evidence, 10 February 2010, p 4.

15   Australian Government – Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) et al, Submission No 62, p 5.

> When defining 'young people', there are a number of definitions
> and age ranges for youth that are generally accepted.[16]

2.13   However, one submission which did address the issue of the target
        population directly argued strongly for the inclusions of children under 12
        years of age, suggesting:

> ... [an] extension of the definitional boundaries applying to young
> people and youth issues to encompass the developmental needs of
> younger adolescents (i.e. aged 10 plus) ...[17]

Committee Comment

2.14   The terms of reference presented to the Committee did not define violence
        or specifically prescribe boundaries for the target population of 'young
        Australians'. While not explicit in the terms of reference, the Committee
        took interpersonal violence, rather than self-directed or collective violence,
        as the intended focus of the inquiry. Also, when using the term 'youth
        violence' the Committee supports a broad definition of violence which not
        only encompasses actual physical violence and assault, but also the threat
        of harm. With regard to the term 'anti-social behaviour' as used in
        evidence to the inquiry, the Committee understands that this refers to a
        range behaviours, which depending on the context of usage may or may
        not include violence.

2.15   The overlap and linkages between violence and bullying are also
        acknowledged. In keeping with the broad definition of violence, the
        Committee recognises that bullying can also be a form of violence which is
        sometimes a precursor to physical violence or assault.

2.16   Although again not explicit in the terms of reference, the repeated use of
        the phrases 'among young Australians' and 'by Young Australians' have
        been taken by the Committee to imply that the primary focus of the
        inquiry is peer to peer violence; that is violence involving young people
        both as the perpetrators and as the victims. Importantly, the term 'youth
        violence' used throughout the report is intended to encompass violence
        committed against young people as well as violence perpetrated by young
        people.

2.17   The Committee recognises the devastating impacts of domestic violence
        and child abuse on young people and notes that these occurrences may
        lead to increased risks of perpetrating violence on others and/or

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16   Australian Government - DEEWR et al, Submission No 62, p 5.
17   ARACY, Submission No 55, p 14.

continuing victimisation. The Committee believes that a detailed examination of these issues is beyond the scope of this inquiry. However, the Committee also notes that detailed consideration has already been given to both of these issues resulting in the 2009 report *Time for Action: The National Council's Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2009-2021*.[18] Furthermore, through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) and in consultation with state and territory governments, the Australian Government has already initiated a series of priority actions in response to recommendations made in the *Time for Action* report.[19]

2.18   With regard to the inquiry's target population, the Committee is aware that, by any definition, young people are not a homogenous group. Clearly young people experience a number of very discrete developmental and transitional phases as they move from childhood to adolescence and from adolescence to young adulthood.[20] Therefore, in recognising the diversity of young Australians as a target population, the Committee has decided not to unnecessarily confine its considerations to a narrow or prescribed age group.

Data and Statistics on Violence in Australia

2.19   Data and statistics on violence and perceptions of violence in Australia are available from a number of different sources.[21] Data sources include:

- administrative data sets such as jurisdictional police data on recorded crime and data on hospital admissions;

- surveys and data from federal and state/territory government departments and agencies including the ABS (e.g. *Crime and Safety Survey*, *National Health Survey*, *Personal Safety Survey, General Social Survey)*; the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) (e.g. *National Homicide Monitoring Program*); the Australian Institute of Health and

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18   Australian Government - Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) website, viewed on 15 February 2010 at http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/women/pubs/violence/np_time_for_action/Pages/default.aspx.

19   Australian Government - FaHCSIA website, viewed on 15 February 2010 at http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/women/pubs/violence/np_time_for_action/immediate_government_actions/Pages/default.aspx.

20   See for example: The Smith Family, Submission No 14, p 6; ARACY, Submission No 55, pp 13-14.

21   Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), Submission No 42, p 6.

Welfare (AIHW) (e.g. *National Drug Strategy Household Survey* and *Morbidity and Mortality databases*); and the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research; and

- research and surveys on levels of violence, crime and perceptions of personal safety conducted by academic institutions and community based organisations, such as Mission Australia's annual *National Survey of Young Australians* which provides information about the values and issues of concern to young Australians.[22]

Difficulties with Measuring Violence

2.20   Measuring actual levels of youth violence in Australia is difficult. For example, a major limitation of using data sets such a police crime statistics or hospital admissions is that only a small proportion of incidences are actually reported to the police, and fortunately, not all violence results in injury requiring hospitalisation. As explained in the submission from the Australian Government:

> It must initially be acknowledged that there is an inherent difficulty when relying on statistics to paint the whole picture concerning violence. Most of the statistics and reports ... only take into account reported cases of violence. While the rates of reported violence should not be dismissed, it is important to recognise that many cases of violence go unreported and will not be represented in statistics.[23]

2.21   Dr Kelly Richards from the AIC also explained that certain types of crime, including violent crime, are much less likely to be reported to the police than others, observing:

> The vast majority of things like domestic violence and sexual assaults are never reported to police and are never recorded by police. Other crimes—primarily homicides and motor vehicle thefts—are almost always picked up by the police. With homicides it is obviously because there is a dead body, and with motor vehicle theft it is because of insurance purposes. That proportion of all crimes that are actually recorded varies substantially across the crime types.[24]

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22   Mission Australia website, *National Survey of Young Australians: Key and Emerging Issues,* viewed on 9 June 2010 at http://www.missionaustralia.com.au/document-downloads/doc_download/207-youth-survey-2009.

23   Australian Government – DEEWR et al, Submission No 62, p 8.

24   Dr Kelly Richards, Transcript of Evidence, 10 February 2010, p 5.

2.22   In relation specifically to assault, data from the ABS *Crime and Safety Survey* indicates that only a minority of young people (20%) aged 15 to 24 years will report their assault to the police. Various reasons were given with the most common being that they considered it too trivial or unimportant to report, followed by the assault being considered a private matter or one that they would take care of themselves.[25]

2.23   Consistent with this data, evidence to the inquiry also suggests that young victims of violence may be less likely to report incidents to the authorities, including to police. As explained by a young participant of the Committee's Youth Forum held in Melbourne:

> ... there is a definite under reporting due to lack of confidence, fear and no faith in the system as such. That includes police, schools, youth services and sports clubs. The first point of contact is very important.[26]

2.24   A number of reasons why under reporting of violence may be more prevalent among young people were given by Victim Support Australasia including:

■ Young people may be silenced by a culture of not 'dobbing' or 'dogging'.

■ Young people may have little faith in the likelihood of action being taken.

■ Many young people will be willing to take action themselves (including retribution).

■ The significant risk of this, is that through taking matters into their own hands young people heighten the risk of their own re-victimisation.

■ Many young people have experience of the justice system and don't like what they've seen.[27]

2.25   With regard to levels of unreported crime, Dr Richards observed:

> We would call [unreported crime] the 'dark figure of crime'. We know it is out there, but it is not getting recorded. And we know it is out there because crime statistics, police statistics, vary dramatically from what we find out about crime when we run a survey.[28]

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25   ABS (2006), *Crime and Safety, Australia 2005*, Cat No 4909.0.

26   Jakob, Transcript of Evidence, 15 February 2010, p 3.

27   Victim Support Australasia Inc (VSA), Submission No 1, p 2.

28   Dr Kelly Richards, Transcript of Evidence, 10 February 2010, p 5.

2.26   Although acknowledging that police crime statistics probably provide the best currently available estimate of the levels and nature of juvenile offending, the AIC also noted difficulties in comparing police data from different jurisdictions, noting:

> Police data provide an insight into the proportion of crime for which juveniles are the alleged offenders. This proportion varies substantially by jurisdiction ... because of state/territory differences in legislation, police practice and data collection methods. It is therefore not possible to create an accurate national picture of juvenile offending ...[29]

2.27   An additional limitation associated with these datasets is that data is often available only in aggregated form, making it impossible to unpack, potentially hiding trends relating to specific types of crimes, populations or areas.[30] With regard to youth crime specifically, and as a subset of criminal activity more broadly, the AIC advised that it has only recently begun to collect this data, stating:

> We have only recently begun to monitor youth crime at the AIC. We have monitored juveniles in detention for a long time—for almost 30 years—but that is only the hard end, if you like, of juvenile offending. The broader picture of young people coming into contact with police and then what happens to them is something that we have only just begun to monitor.[31]

2.28   Furthermore, administrative datasets can also be influenced by a range of factors which although they might appear as trends in criminal activity or violence, may not actually reflect real changes. For example, while changes in crime statistics might reflect actual changes in rates of crime, they might also reflect changes in police responses to criminal activity[32] or changes in levels of reporting.[33] Given apparently significant levels of unreported crime and challenges associated with unpacking aggregated data, there are clearly risks associated with putting too great a reliance on administrative datasets.

2.29   While some national surveys of crime and personal safety, such as those conducted by the ABS may provide a more comprehensive picture of what

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29   Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC), Submission No 57, p 3.
30   Professor Paul Mazerolle, Transcript of Evidence, 30 March 2010, p 19.
31   Dr Kelly Richards, Transcript of Evidence, 10 February 2010, pp 6-7.
32   Professor Paul Mazerolle, Transcript of Evidence, 30 March 2010, p 14.
33   Dr Adam Tomison, Transcript of Evidence, 10 February 2010, p 5.

is occurring, they also have their limitations. For example, and as noted by the ABS in relation specifically to its 2006 *National Personal Safety Survey*:

> Measuring violence in the community through household surveys is a complex task. It tests people's memories by asking about events that occurred in the past, which may have been traumatic and which may have involved people closely related to them. The accuracy of the statistics can be affected if respondents feel threatened by the act of providing information or if they are concerned that the information might be used against the perpetrator. [34]

2.30   While there are a number of national surveys which collect data on crime, personal safety and victimisation, none of these examine youth violence specifically. As with the administrative datasets, data from these national surveys is generally available only in aggregate form, making it difficult to unpack and identify issues that are specific to particular populations or look for emerging trends. Also, while some surveys are conducted on a regular basis enabling comparisons to be made over a period of time, this is often not the case for research projects, including those which may have a narrower focus on youth violence.

2.31   Although online surveys such as Mission Australia's *National Survey of Young Australians* which has been conducted annually since 2001, and indeed the online survey which was conducted as part of this inquiry, are useful for engaging with young people and obtaining descriptive information, their dependence on respondent self-selection rather than rigorous cross-sectional population sampling methods means that data is not statistically robust. As a result these findings cannot be extrapolated to the general youth population.

Committee Comment

2.32   While recognising the difficulties associated with measuring violence, the Committee appreciates that comprehensive and reliable data on youth violence is crucial to determining levels of violence, identifying emerging trends and to understanding the impacts of violence on young Australians. As summarised by the AIHW:

> The ability and success of reporting on the health and wellbeing of young people is dependent on the availability of robust, reliable, national and jurisdictional data, which tracks progress over time. [35]

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34   ABS (2006), *National Personal Safety Survey, Australia 2005*, Cat No 4906.0, p 4.

35   AIHW, Submission No 42, p 6.

2.33   In addition to assessing the level and characteristics of youth violence, the Committee also understands that robust data collection would also help evaluate the efficacy of anti-violence interventions. While recognising the value and expediency of using administrative datasets, the Committee understands their limitations and the risks associated with relying too heavily on these datasets.

2.34   Rather than attempting to expand and modify administrative datasets, the Committee believes there is a strong case for improved data collection to be achieved through the introduction of a regular, cross-sectional survey designed specifically to measure the prevalence, nature and severity of violence involving young people and to monitor trends over time.[36] As proposed by Professor Paul Mazerolle of Griffith University:

> If every two or three years Australia had a national youth survey that was a snapshot and cross-sectional and you could compare it over time, that would be useful. You could look at changing prevalence rates, different levels of victimisation and attitudinal shifts. There is a lot of analysis underneath that with that kind of information and I think that is probably the best way to go and it would start telling us something meaningful about how big the problem is, how it is changing and where we need to target our prevention resources to really try to turn these kids around.[37]

2.35   Given the complexities of measuring violence, the Committee agrees that a cross-sectional community-based survey to measure the prevalence, nature and severity of youth violence and to monitor trends over times is necessary. The Committee believes that such a survey would most appropriately be conducted either by the ABS or the AIC.

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36   See for example: ARACY, Submission No 55, pp 34-35; Associate Professor Sheryl Hemphill, Transcript of Evidence, 15 February 2010, p 49.

37   Professor Paul Mazerolle, Transcript of Evidence, 30 March 2010, pp 18-19.

Recommendation 1

2.36   **The Committee recommends that the Australian Government, either through the Australian Bureau of Statistics or the Australian Institute of Criminology, implement a regular (biennial or triennial) cross-sectional community-based survey to:**

- **measure the prevalence, nature and severity of youth violence; and**

- **monitor trends over time.**

What is Known about Violence Involving Young People

2.37   Despite the challenges associated with measuring youth violence and its impact on young people, using available data it is possible to make a number of broad observations. However, the following sections are not intended to be a comprehensive review of all the data and research relating to youth violence in Australia.

Increasing Levels of Violence

2.38   Data from various sources in a number of jurisdictions indicate that violence, including violence involving young people, is a significant and growing problem for the community.[38] Despite challenges in obtaining an accurate national figure for youth offending, according to a representative of the AIC:

> ... in general, crime is declining and that has been happening for about the last 15 to 20 years, but violence is in fact increasing as a subset within that. I think we can comfortably say that violence by young people is in fact increasing, perhaps both in frequency and in severity.[39]

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38   See for example: Mr Kelvin Thomson MP, Submission No 10, p 2; Tasmanian Government, Submission No 56, p 2.

39   Dr Adam Tomison, Transcript of Evidence, 10 February 2010, pp 3-4.

Young People are at Increased Risk

2.39   While some datasets indicate increased levels of violence perpetrated by young people, others show that young people are also most at risk of being the victims of violence.[40] The following table (Table 2.1) is drawn from the ABS *Crime and Safety Survey 2005* and presents data on victims of assault. According to the survey, young people are the most likely to be the victim of assault with nearly 9% of young people aged 15–24 years being the victim of assault in the previous 12 months. The data shows that the prevalence of victimisation decreases the older a person is, with less than 1% of persons aged over 65 years being victims of assault. The average victimisation prevalence rate in the general population is 4.8%.

Table 2.1:   Victims of assault by age and sex

Age group (years)	Victims of assault			Victimisation prevalence rate[a]
	Males	**Females**	**Persons**	
	%	**%**	**%**	**(% of population)**
15–19	16.5	18.3	17.3	9.9
20–24	16.2	12.7	14.6	7.9
25–34	23.7	24.9	24.3	6.6
35–44	19.5	19.5	19.5	5.1
45–54	14.5	16.1	15.2	4.3
55–64	7.4	5.5	6.5	2.3
65 and over	2.2	3.1	2.6	0.8
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**4.8**

(a) Victimisation prevalence rate is the proportion of the relevant population that have been the victim of assault in a 12 month reference period.

Source: ABS (2006), Crime and Safety, Australia 2005, *Cat No 4909.0.*

2.40   Based on this, and other data from the ABS *Crime and Safety Survey 2005*, the AIHW concludes:

> Young people were also two times as likely to be the victim of assault, and three times as likely to be the victim of robbery, as the general population.[41]

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40   See for example: Commissioner for Children and Young People (WA), Submission No 33, p 2; AIHW, Submission No 42, p 2; ARACY, Submission No 55, pp 3, 15.

41   AIHW, Submission No 42, p 2. See also: Commissioner for Children and Young People (WA), Submission No 33, p 2.

2.41   Importantly, some data also indicates that the cohorts of victims and
        perpetrators of violence are not discrete, with young people who have
        been victimised also at increased risk of offending. As explained by the
        AIC:

> Peer on peer violence amongst young people is common. Young
> people are more likely than older Australians to be both the
> perpetrators and victims of a range of violent offences, including
> assault, sexual offences and homicide. Our understanding about
> the peer on peer violence is emerging and the AIC believes this is
> the key area to understand if impacts of violence on young
> Australians are to be reduced.[42]

2.42   Data from the *National Hospital Morbidity Database* also provides
        information on the impact of violence on young people as victims. In brief,
        the data shows that:

> ... in 2005–06, there were 7,652 hospitalisations among young
> people aged 12-24 years due to assault — a rate of 205 per 100,000
> young people. Young people account for more than one-third of
> all hospitalisations for assault. Over the last decade the rate of
> assault hospitalisations has increased by over a quarter (29%
> increase for males and a 19% increase for females between 1996–97
> and 2005–06). The number of deaths from assault is considerably
> lower, with 27 deaths among young people aged 12–24 years in
> 2005 — a rate of 0.7 deaths per 100,000 young people. However,
> rates among young adult males were three times as high as among
> young adult females (18-24 year olds).[43]

Risk by Gender

2.43   As implied by data from the *National Hospital Morbidity Database*, young
        males and young females have quite different risk profiles. As shown in
        Table 2.2 based on data from the ABS *Crime and Safety Survey 2005,* female
        victims are much more likely to have known their offender than male
        victims. Teenage females are more likely to have been assaulted by a
        friend or other family member, while for 20–24 year old females assault is
        usually committed by their partners, other family members or by friends.
        The older young males get, on the other hand, the more likely they are to

42   Dr Adam Tomison, Transcript of Evidence, 10 February 2010, p 3.
43   AIHW, Submission No 42, p 2.

be assaulted by a stranger. Males are more likely to be victims of violent assault, and females of sexual abuse or assault.[44]

Table 2.2:   Victims of assault aged 15–24 years, by characteristics of offender

	Males	**Females**	**Persons**
	%	**%**	**%**
15-19 years			
Whether offenders were known to the victim in most recent incident			
Offender(s) all known	50.4	67.0	58.5
Some offender(s) known	*9.1	*8.1	8.6
Offender(s) not known (a)	40.5	24.9	32.8
How offender(s) known to the victim in most recent incident			
Partner/Ex-partner	–	*8.9	*4.3
Other family member	8.1	18.2	13.1
Friend (including (ex) boyfriend/girlfriend)	12.9	27.5	20.0
Other known person/ work/study colleague	32.9	*18.5	25.8
Not known personally	4.6	**2.6	*3.6
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**
20-24 years			
Whether offenders were known to the victim in most recent incident			
Offender(s) all known	36.8	63.8	47.8
Some offender(s) known	*9.0	**1.1	*5.7
Offender(s) not known	54.3	35.1	46.5
How offender(s) known to the victim in most recent incident			
Partner/Ex-partner	–	*16.8	*6.8
Other family member	4.5	*11.7	*7.4
Friend (including (ex) boyfriend/girlfriend)	16.4	*13.7	15.4
Other known person/work/study colleague	19.0	*16.1	17.9
Not known personally	7.3	**2.2	*5.3
Total (b)	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

–   cell has a value of zero

*   estimate has a relative standard error of more than 25% to 50% and should be used with caution.

** estimate has a relative standard error greater than 50% and is considered too unreliable for general use.

(a) Includes 'don't know' responses.

(b) Includes persons who did not give details of most recent incident.

Source: ABS (2006), Crime and Safety, Australia 2005, Cat No 4909.0.

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44   VSA, Submission No 1, p 2.

2.44   As shown in Table 2.3, the location of the incident of violence will depend on the age and sex of the young person. For females, nearly two-thirds were assaulted in their own home, another person's home or within their place of work or study. This is true regardless of their age. For males aged 15–19 years, half were assaulted in their own home, another person's home or within the place of work or study, with another 38% being assaulted in a place of entertainment, car park, street or open land. The reverse is true for males aged 21–24 years.

Table 2.3: Victims of assault aged 15–24 years, by location of incident

	Males	**Females**	**Persons**
	%	**%**	**%**
Location of most recent incident			
15–19 years			
Home	15.7	33.6	24.6
Another person's home	*11.0	*13.1	12.1
Place of work/study	22.8	17.3	20.1
Place of entertainment, including car park	20.0	*9.2	14.7
Street or other open land	18.8	*11.9	15.4
Other	*11.6	14.8	13.2
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**
20-24 years			
Home	10.3	30.9	18.7
Another person's home	*6.3	*7.7	*6.9
Place of work/study	16.9	25.2	20.2
Place of entertainment, including car park	36.5	*14.3	27.5
Street or other open land	16.7	*9.7	13.9
Other	*13.3	*12.1	12.8
Total(a)	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

*   Estimate has a relative standard error of more than 25% to 50% and should be used with caution.

(a)   Includes persons who did not give details of most recent incident.

Source: ABS (2006), Crime and Safety, Australia 2005, Cat No 4909.0.

2.45   Another national survey conducted by the ABS, the *Personal Safety Survey 2005*, shows similar findings, however only persons over the age of 18 years were interviewed. The *Personal Safety Survey 2005* also included a question regarding the contribution drugs and alcohol played in the violence. As with other indicators, the contribution of drugs and alcohol to violent behaviour differed depending on whether the perpetrator of violence was male or female. Drugs and alcohol were reported as

contributing to violence in 67% of cases where the perpetrators were male and approximately 50% of cases where the perpetrators were female.[45]

2.46   In addition, while male violent offenders still significantly outnumber female violent offenders (77% versus 23%)[46], some evidence has suggested there is apparent narrowing of the gap between the ratio of male to female offenders, suggesting that 'female delinquency' may be on the rise. As noted by Professor Kerry Carrington of Queensland University of Technology:

> Historically many more boys than girls have been drawn into the juvenile justice system for criminal offences and violent related offences. However this pattern is changing as officially recorded rates of female delinquency have been rising steadily in countries such as Australia, England, Canada and the United States over the past 50 years. They have also generally been rising at a rate faster than that for boys, as have their rates for violent crime. As yet there is little consensus about the reasons for these changing patterns of female delinquency.[47]

2.47   However, emphasising the difficulties associated with measuring violence, particularly the limitations associated with interpreting administrative datasets, Professor Carrington cautioned:

> Whether the statistical evidence of girls becoming increasingly more delinquent and violent reflects changes in the processing of girls by the juvenile justice authorities, or whether it reflects real qualitative changes in female behaviour is a matter of considerable unresolved controversy.[48]

The Impacts and Costs of Violence and Bullying

2.48   According to the WHO's *World Report on Violence and Health*:

> Youth violence deeply harms not only its victims, but also their families, friends and communities. Its effects are seen not only in death, illness and disability, but also in terms of the quality of life. Violence involving young people adds greatly to the costs of health and welfare services, reduces productivity, decreases the

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45   ABS (2006), *Personal Safety Survey 2005, Australia*, Cat No 4906.0, p 29.

46   ABS (2006), *Crime and Safety, Australia 2005,* Cat No 4909.0, p 7.

47   Professor Kerry Carrington, Submission No 47, pp 3-4. See also: Tasmanian Government, Submission No 56, p 3.

48   Professor Kerry Carrington, Submission No 47, p 6.

value of property, disrupts a range of essential services and generally undermines the fabric of society.[49]

2.49   In considering how experiences of violence can impact on young people specifically, a range of physical, emotional and social effects have been identified. These include loss of self esteem, increased risks of anxiety and depression, increased behavioural issues including higher levels of aggression, increased risks of alcohol and substance abuse in later life, lack of socialisation, poor engagement with education, as well as other signs of physical and psychological trauma.[50] The following comment was made by a respondent to the inquiry's online youth violence survey:

> *Some of my friends have been in tears, afraid to come to school anymore just because of bullying and violence, something needs to be done soon.*
> **Female, under 18 years, regional city**

2.50   Added to these very real physical, psychological and social costs, there is also an economic cost associated with youth violence. While the Australian Government notes in its submission that there is currently no definitive estimate of the overall financial burden of violence in Australia, it concludes that it is likely to be significant. Supporting this conclusion the submission includes the following data:

> ... while not focused solely on young people, a report commissioned by the Australian Government and undertaken by Access Economics estimates the total annual cost of domestic violence alone in 2002–03 was estimated to be $8.1 billion.

> Again, focused on the general population, the report *The Costs of Tobacco, Alcohol and Illicit Drug Abuse to Australian Society* in 2004-05 estimated that the cost of violence to Australian society attributable to alcohol was $187 million, attributable to illicit drugs was $196 million, and attributable to both was $203.2 million.[51]

Committee Comment

2.51   Based on the available data the Committee recognises that escalating levels of youth violence impacts first and foremost on young people themselves, as they are the group most likely to be the victims of such

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49   WHO (2002), *World Report on Violence and Health*, Geneva, p 25.

50   See for example: VSA, Submission No 1, p 3; Community Connections (Vic) Ltd, Submission No 12, pp 2-3; VicHealth, Submission No 26, p 3; ACON, Submission No 30, p 11; UnitingCare Children, Young People and Families (UCCYPF), Submission No 45, p 10; Professor Kerry Carrington, Submission No 47, p 8.

51   Australian Government – DEEWR et al, Submission No 62, p 13.

violence. Although young people have different risks depending on their age and gender, the physical, psychological and social impacts of experiencing violence are significant. Furthermore, youth violence also has far reaching consequences impacting on families, communities and on society as a whole. In view of the significant and far reaching impacts of youth violence on young people and on society more broadly the Committee appreciates that addressing this issue is a priority.

Perceptions of Violence Involving Young People

2.52   The extent to which people feel safe in society is important in terms of their health and wellbeing. Therefore, in addition to data which measures actual levels of violence involving young people, understanding perceptions of violence and the impact of these perceptions on young people and on the community is also of critical importance.

2.53   Some evidence to the inquiry has indicated that perceptions of safety do not always align well with the actual risk.[52] While an underestimation of risk is not desirable as this may lead to a false sense of security, equally an over estimation of risk can result a disproportionate level of fear.

Young Peoples' Perceptions of Violence

2.54   As noted earlier in the Chapter, since 2001 Mission Australia has conducted an online annual survey of young people aged between 11 and 24 years of age. The purpose of the survey is to 'identify the things that are important to young people'. Data from almost 48,000 respondents to Mission Australia's *National Survey of Young Australians 2009* indicates that personal safety is a major concern for around one in five young respondents across all age groups and both genders. Bullying/emotional abuse was also identified as a major issue by a similar proportion of respondents.[53]

2.55   The Australian Government's 2009 *State of Australia's Young People: a report on the social, economic, health and family lives of young people* also found that approximately one in four young people feel unsafe walking home alone

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52   See for example: Commissioner for Children and Young People (WA), Submission No 33, pp 2-3; Professor Kerry Carrington, Submission No 47, p 2.

53   Mission Australia, Submission No 59, p 7.

at night in their local area.[54] A national survey of crime victimisation and perceptions of crime conducted by the AIC found:

> ... among 7,000 respondents aged 16 years and over, 29 percent of young people (aged 16 to 24 years) report feeling 'a bit unsafe' or 'very unsafe' walking alone in their local area after dark ... This was higher than for the age groups 25 to 34 years (23%) and 35 to 59 (25%) ...[55]

2.56   Mission Australia also referred in its submission to the outcomes of research conducted by the Australian Childhood Foundation which shows that concerns about personal safety are also prevalent among school aged children (10-14 years), noting:

> ... two in five children surveyed felt unsafe in public spaces including shopping centres, cinemas, sporting grounds and walking to school. This sense of vulnerability was more prevalent among girls' responses to the survey, than boys' responses.[56]

2.57   Several other surveys have identified differences in levels of concern expressed by young males and females in relation to personal safety. Despite data which show that young men are more likely than young women to be victims of violence, based on findings of the ABS *General Social Survey* the AIHW reported that the women generally feel less safe than men stating:

> Young people's perception of their safety in the community shows low levels of perception of safety among females. ... For young people 18-24 years males were more likely to feel safe at home after dark than females of the same age (95% and 69% respectively). This difference is more pronounced when comparing how safe young people feel when walking alone in their local area at night, with 76% males and only 27% of females feeling safe or very safe.[57]

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54   *State of Australia's Young People: A Report on the social, economic, health and family lives of young people*, Social Policy Research Centre, University of New South Wales, October 2009, p 115.

55   AIC, Submission No 57, p 6.

56   Mission Australia, Submission No 59, p 8.

57   AIHW, Submission No 42, p 3. See also: Women's Health Victoria, Submission No 17, p 3; YACVic, Submission No 60, pp 5-6.

2.58   In fact, according to the 2009 *State of Australia's Young People* report, being female was the single largest demographic factor associated with feeling unsafe.[58]

2.59   Although clearly concerned about risks to their personal safety, it is interesting to note that young people are less likely than older people to see themselves as victims, even though data indicates that young people at the greatest risk. As noted by Ms Linda Chiodo et al:

> Despite their vulnerability to violence, young people are most likely to report feeling safe, while older people report the highest level of fear, irrespective of their lower rates of victimisation, in comparison to individuals aged between 15-24 years. Therefore, perceptions of safety are not always reflective of actual risk.[59]

2.60   One consequence of this raised by the Commissioner for Children and Young People (WA), is that it may present additional challenges in effectively communicating personal safety messages to young people.[60] On the other hand, the Commissioner also notes that an overestimation of risk may lead to a disproportionate level of fear among young people making engagement with community more challenging, stating:

> While responding to this issue with due seriousness it is also important to remember that the overwhelming majority of children and young people are not involved in violence either as victims or perpetrators. Overstating the risks can potentially lead to an increased risk for children and young people if they disengage from the community through fear of becoming victims or are further marginalised by the adult community through fear of them perpetrating violence.[61]

2.61   For individuals, the level of perceived risk to personal safety has been strongly linked to a young person's own exposure to, and experience of, violence. As noted by the National Council of Single Mothers and their Children (NCSMC):

> Young Australians' perceptions of violence and community safety begin from their experiences of home and family. Where home

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58   *State of Australia's Young People: A Report on the social, economic, health and family lives of young people*, Social Policy Research Centre, University of New South Wales, October 2009, p 116.

59   Ms Linda Chiodo et al, Submission No 78, p 3. See also: Commissioner for Children and Young People (WA), Submission No 33, p 2.

60   Commissioner for Children and Young People (WA), Submission No 33, p 2.

61   Commissioner for Children and Young People (WA), Submission No 33, pp 2-3. See also: Mission Australia, Submission No 59, pp 6, 8-9; YACVic, Submission No 60, p 5.

and family have been characterised by physical, sexual and/or emotional abuse, young people are much less likely to feel safe either at home or in their communities.[62]

2.62   Similarly, the Queensland Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian noted that homeless young people are also more likely to have a heightened perception of risk. The Commission reported that in consultations with homeless youth, the young people themselves had suggested:

> ... that this was based on aspects of their local community and specific previous encounters of violence that created an expectation that they might be confronted with violence on a daily basis.[63]

2.63   Based on her own extensive experiences of working with young people, Ms Nina Funnell suggested that young people's perceptions of risk have also been influenced by 'popular myths' about violence. Elaborating further, Ms Funnell identified the following misconceptions about violence:

- That young people are perpetrators but not victims of violence;
- That physical and sexual violence is most often committed by strangers;
- That victims of violence are often responsible for having provoked the violence;
- That alcohol is to blame for causing violence; and
- That verbal assault (including bullying, taunting, cyber bullying etc) is not as damaging as physical assault.[64]

2.64   Addressing each of these misconceptions and considering their implications, Ms Funnell observed that:

- only a very small proportion of young people are perpetrators, while young people are most at risk of being victims, but are also least likely to report violence or seek support;

- the risk of 'stranger danger' is overemphasised and atypical in relation to sexual violence, making it more difficult for young people to legitimise their own experiences of violence where family member or friend has been the perpetrator and often in the absence of a high degree of physical violence;

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62   NCSMC, Submission No 2, p 7.

63   Queensland Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian, Submission No 66, p 4.

64   Ms Nina Funnell, Submission No 4, pp 2-5.

- blaming the victim or alcohol thereby inappropriately deflecting responsibility and culpability away from the perpetrators; and

- underestimating the impact of verbal violence, thereby failing to fully acknowledge the serious and long lasting impacts on self worth and esteem.[65]

2.65   Ms Funnell concluded that in combination these misconceptions have acted to divert attention away from the real dangers, and consequently resources from tackling the underlying causes and real problems associated with youth violence.[66]

Committee Comment

2.66   The Committee recognises that young people are clearly concerned about their personal safety. However, despite being at the greatest risk of victimisation, people under the age of 25 years are still less concerned about risks to their personal safety than older Australians. While the Committee is aware that it is important to avoid creating a disproportionate level of fear, it is also vital that young people have a clear understanding of the actual risks to their personal safety so that they can make informed choices about their participation in activities and also make considered decisions about their own behaviour.

2.67   During the course of the inquiry, the Committee has received evidence which includes suggestions for a range of interventions to counter inaccurate or misleading perceptions about violence involving young people and levels of risk. Suggestions have included awareness raising through social marketing campaigns and support for education programs that assist young people to recognise all forms of violence, their involvement in violence either as a perpetrator or victim, and the potential impact of involvement on themselves and on other people.

2.68   Importantly, evidence also suggests that to be effective interventions must teach potential perpetrators alternative behaviours to resolve conflict, as well as provide young people with strategies to minimise their risks of victimisation. These strategies are examined in more detail in Chapters 4 and 5 of the report.

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65   Ms Nina Funnell, Submission No 4, pp 2-5.
66   Ms Nina Funnell, Submission No 4, p 4.

Community Perceptions of Young People

2.69   In addition to considering young peoples' perceptions of violence and
        risks to their personal safety, it is also important to consider community
        perceptions more broadly, as this shapes the environment in which young
        people seek to engage. As noted above, although the actual risk of
        victimisation declines with age, older people are more concerned than
        younger people about their personal safety. As reported in the submission
        from Voices Against Violence, a group of almost 3,500 members set up to
        promote, develop, implement and influence initiatives to lead change
        towards eliminating acts of unprovoked violence:

> 'Voices' contends that the community has a genuine perception of
> fear and that the level of violence within the community has
> reached a point whereby the feeling of community safety has been
> taken away.[67]

2.70   The Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY)
        provided information on the outcomes of research into community
        attitudes towards young people which reveals that:

> Today's young people were considered to be more technically
> savvy, worldlier, independent, have more money and
> opportunities as well as being more aware of their rights than ever
> before. Young people were perceived to be empowered.

> However, when asked to characterise young people, focus group
> participants typically expressed powerfully negative views. Young
> people were described as having a lack of respect, both for others
> and for themselves (e.g. risk taking behaviour), lacking in
> commitment, direction and hope, being too materialistic, being
> selfish and image/brand obsessed.[68]

2.71   On the basis of these findings ARACY concludes:

> ... that hostile community attitudes towards young people do not
> provide a supportive base from which to foster young people's
> emotional and social development and wellbeing. A hostile
> attitudinal environment is not only unlikely to reduce youth
> violence, but more than likely exacerbate it.[69]

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67   Voices Against Violence, Submission No 67, p 3.
68   ARACY, Submission No 55, p 17.
69   ARACY, Submission No 55, p 17.

2.72   In a joint submission, Youthlaw & Frontyard Youth Services observed that:

> Young people are often perceived as troublemakers, associated with criminal or deviant behaviour, and viewed with fear or suspicion by other community members. Young people hanging out in groups are often thought to be intimidating, dangerous, disruptive and likely to cause fear by their mere presence. Somewhat ironically when you speak to young people who have been the victims of crime, abuse & racial or socio-economic discrimination they are reluctant to be in public spaces on their own, feeling safer amongst groups of friends.[70]

2.73   An issue frequently raised in relation to community perceptions of young people, violence and personal safety, was the role of the media in shaping these perceptions.[71] Much of this evidence suggests that young people are often portrayed by the media as being anti-social and the perpetrators of violence, while downplaying the reality they are also the group at greatest risk victimisation.[72] YACVic illustrated negative reporting about young people by providing the following examples of recent headlines taken from the Victorian Press:

- *Kids riddled with booze and drugs: Pre-teens hooked on heroin*, Herald Sun, 23/10/09;

- *Police vow to be tough as schoolies run amok: Teen yobs face jail*, Herald Sun, 26/11/09;

- *Gangs, alcohol fuel another weekend of violence: Fear on our streets*, Herald Sun, 25/02/08;

- *Blood flows as the madness goes on: Youths battle in streets*, Herald Sun, 15/04/09; and

- *Crackdown on youth gangs brings peace to streets*, Herald Sun, 15/04/08.[73]

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70   Youthlaw & Frontyard Youth Services, Submission No 35, p 1.

71   See for example: Nepean Domestic Violence Network, Submission No 18, p 1; Youthlaw & Frontyard Youth Services, Submission No 35, pp 1-2; Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY), Submission No 44, pp 5, 8; Professor Kerry Carrington, Submission No 47, p 2; YACVic, Submission No 60, p 8; Ms Linda Chiodo et al, Submission No 78, p 3.

72   See for example: Ms Nina Funnell, Submission No 4, p 4; Youthlaw & Frontyard Youth Services, Submission No 35, pp 1-2; CMY, Submission No 44, pp 5, 8; YACVic, Submission No 60, p 8; Ms Linda Chiodo et al, Submission No 78, p 3.

73   YACVic, Submission No 60, p 8.

2.74   The following comments on reporting of youth violence in the media were made by respondents to the inquiry's online youth violence survey:

> *The media has made too much of an issue of youth violence.* **Female, under 18 years, rural/remote**
>
> *Also in the news they choose to report mostly fights, attacks on the elderly, vandalism, it is no wonder we are fearful about going out ... I'd really like to know the statistics for youth violence today.* **Female, under 18 years, regional city**

2.75   Hume City Council observed the influence of negative reporting by the media on community perceptions of young people, noting:

> Local and State media reporting of recent violent events in Hume involving young people, has exacerbated poor community perceptions. Often a small incident is compounded by the magnitude of attention received, leading to young people feeling more unsafe and victimised in their community. Negative stereotyping of young people devalues their place and contribution to the community.[74]

2.76   A representative from the Youth Minister's Roundtable of Young Territorians also observed:

> Good news stories involving young people are underrepresented or not reported and negative stories are often sensationalised. The youth roundtable also felt that the media neglects the underlying causes of violence in its reporting and that such coverage provides notoriety for violent youth, who welcome the situation.[75]

2.77   The influence of the media in strengthening negative perceptions of youth was reported as being particularly problematic for young people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) or refugee backgrounds. As noted in the submission from the Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY):

> Young people from refugee or migrant backgrounds are also affected by the prejudices and speculations reported in the media around ethnic 'gang' violence and drug related issues. The difference between 'youth group formations' and gangs is a sensitive one and it is important to avoid media stereotypes in this area. Where there is ethnic-based group criminal activity, media

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74   Hume City Council, Submission No 43, p 2.

75   Ms Hannah Woerle, Transcript of Evidence, 17 March 2010, p 2.

> reporting needs to be sensitive to the potential impact on the public's perception of groups of refugee and migrant youth.[76]

2.78   As well as promoting negative perceptions of young people, a number of submissions outlined other potential consequences of negative media stereotyping. For example, Professor Kerry Carrington suggested that:

> Undue media attention, social over-reaction and over-policing, can place pressure on group members to live up to a particular public image by behaving in ways that correspond with the labels - usually in the form of 'dangerous' or 'tough' gang behaviour.[77]

2.79   Similarly, ARACY reported on research which suggests that media reporting may in some cases increase anti-social behaviour, with some groups 'enjoying' the associated notoriety.[78] Mr Thomas McGuire of the Australian Hotels Association suggested that high profile reporting of specific types of violence (e.g. glassing) in the media could also result in copycat behaviour and an escalation in that type of violence.[79]

Committee Comment

2.80   Despite the fact that only a minority of young people engage in violent behaviour, and that when it comes to victimisation young people are in fact the most vulnerable group in our society, the Committee understands community perceptions of young people appear to be negative or even hostile. The Committee believes that addressing negative community perceptions of young people is essential if young people are to be supported in their development and encouraged to participate and contribute fully and positively to society.

2.81   Suggestions for countering negative community perceptions of young people include implementing social marketing campaigns to effect cultural and attitudinal changes towards young people and promoting responsible reporting in relation to young people and violence in the media. Both of these strategies are examined in more detail in Chapter 5 of the report.

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76   CMY, Submission No 44, p 5. See also: Professor Kerry Carrington, Submission No 47, pp 2-3; Ms Linda Chiodo et al, Submission No 78, p 3.

77   Professor Kerry Carrington, Submission No 47, p 2.

78   ARACY, Submission No 55, p 18.

79   Mr Thomas McGuire, Transcript of Evidence, 3 February 2010, pp 7-8.

3

Understanding Youth Violence

3.1   Chapter 3 presents an overview of risk and protective factors that occur at individual, family, community or societal levels and that influence the risks of experiencing youth violence. The Chapter also examines the association of alcohol and other drugs with violence. The Chapter concludes by considering specific populations of young people that are at increased risk of experiencing violence.

Risk and Protective Factors Associated with Youth Violence

3.2   Understanding the key causes of violence will assist in developing and improving strategies to reduce future violence among young Australians. A significant body of research, both international and national, already exists. This research indicates that violent behaviour among young people is influenced by multiple factors.[1] These factors act either to increase the likelihood of young people engaging in violent and/or anti-social behaviour (i.e. risk factors) or decrease the likelihood of young people engaging in these behaviours (i.e. protective factors).

3.3   While not a comprehensive review of all that is known about the risk and protective factors and their influences on the behaviour of young people, this Chapter provides context for subsequent considerations of interventions to reduce levels of youth violence in Australia and its impact on young Australians.

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1   See for example: World Health Organization (WHO) (2002), *World Report on Violence and Health*, Geneva; Williams J, Toumbourou J, Williamson E, Hemphill S & Patton G (2009), *Violent and antisocial behaviours among young adolescents in Australian communities: an analysis of risk and protective factor,* Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY).

3.4   Research has shown that different risk and protective factors that are associated with youth violence occur at various levels within a young person's environment. The WHO *World Report on Violence and Health* identifies significant influences which it categorises as follows:

- individual factors—includes biological factors (e.g. gender, age), as well as individual psychological and behavioural characteristics (e.g. hyperactivity, impulsiveness, poor behaviour control, attention problems);

- relationship factors—includes factors associated with the quality of interpersonal relationships, particularly with family members and with peers;

- community factors—includes levels of attachment to neighbourhood and the degree of social integration within a community; and

- societal factors—includes factors associated with social and economic disadvantage, and the influence of modern culture which reflects the values and norms of society.[2]

3.5   A number of submissions to the inquiry have referred specifically to the findings of a 2009 report commissioned by the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY).[3] The ARACY report examined risk and protective factors for violent and anti-social behaviour in Australian adolescents aged 10-14 years. In this report risk and protective factors were broadly categorised and examined in the context of the following four domains:

- peer-individual;

- family;

- school; and

- community.

3.6   Additional observations were also made of the prevalence of alcohol use and associations with violent and anti-social behaviour among young people. Analysis of the research data led the authors to make the following observations:

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2   WHO (2002), *World Report on Violence and Health*, Geneva, pp 32-38.

3   Williams J, Toumbourou J, Williamson E, Hemphill S & Patton G (2009), *Violent and antisocial behaviours among young adolescents in Australian communities: an analysis of risk and protective factors*, ARACY. See for example: ARACY, Submission No 55, p 28; NSW Government, Submission No 76, pp 1-2.

- girls are significantly less likely than boys to participate in violent or anti-social behaviour, with boys five times more likely to participate in violent behaviour;

- the greater the number of risk factors in the young person's life, the more likely they are to engage in problem behaviours;

- the greater the number of protective factors in the young person's life, the less likely they are to engage in problem behaviours;

- risk and protective factors have different levels of influence depending on the young person's developmental stage at the time of exposure, and the total number of risk and protective factors they experience;

- almost 80% of young people who had four or more risk factors reported having used alcohol in the past month and/or having been involved in violent or anti-social behaviour in the past year. This percentage dropped to just over 50% for those with two or three risk factors and 23% for those with no risk factors or only one risk factor; and

- there is significant variation in the prevalence of violent behaviour across communities even after controlling for socio-economic status, age, sex, alcohol use and individual levels of risk and protection.[4]

3.7   The following section examines characteristics within each of the risk/protective factor domains more closely.

Individual Factors

3.8   Research has identified a number of factors specific to the individual that have implications for the extent to which a young person is more or less, likely to engage constructively with society, or to engage in violent and anti-social behaviour. These factors include:

- gender—young males more likely to engage in anti-social and violent behaviour than young females;

- age—violent behaviour peaks at around 15-19 years of age and declines thereafter;

- temperament—characteristics such as hyperactivity, impulsiveness, poor behaviour control and attention problems are associated with increased risk of anti-social and violent behaviour;

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4   Williams, J, Toumbourou, J, Williamson, E, Hemphill, S & Patton, G (2009) *Violent and antisocial behaviours among young adolescents in Australian communities: an analysis of risk and protective factors*, ARACY.

- intellectual capacity—low intelligence is a risk factor for anti-social and violent behaviour;

- brain development—major changes to adolescent brain development are known to affect how young people regulate emotion, their response to stress, propensity for risk taking behaviour, as well as how their brain processes alcohol and drugs;

- diet and nutrition—malnutrition and nutritional deficiencies, particularly lack of protein, certain vitamin and mineral deficiencies, have been shown to contribute to poorer behavioural and mental outcomes for young people.[5]

3.9   Research has also pointed to possible pre-birth influences (e.g. the effect of alcohol and drug use during pregnancy, including foetal alcohol syndrome) which may be associated with increased likelihood of behavioural difficulties, thereby predisposing some young people to anti-social and/or violent behaviour.[6]

3.10   While recognising that some individual factors such as age and gender cannot be changed, ARACY has called for the interaction of individual factors with other social, economic and environmental influences to be acknowledged when considering strategies that seek to ameliorate youth violence.[7]

Relationship Factors

3.11   Factors associated with interpersonal relationships, particularly relationships with family and peers can strongly contribute to the risks of developing aggressive or violent behaviour.

Family Factors

3.12   Key risk factors at family level associated with the development of violent and anti-social behaviour include:

- poor family management such as poor monitoring and supervision of children, the use of inconsistent and/or unusually harsh or severe punishment;

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5   ARACY, Submission No 55, p 27. See also: The Smith Family, Submission No 14, p 2; The Hon Dr Bob Such MP, Submission No 15, p 4; Centre for Adolescent Health, Submission No 24, p 2.

6   ARACY, Submission No 55, p 23.

7   ARACY, Submission No 55, pp 26-27.

- high levels of family conflict and family history of anti-social behaviour, crime, violence or alcohol or drug abuse or dependency; and

- parental attitudes tolerant to drug use and/or to anti-social behaviour.

3.13   Protective family factors include:

- nurturing, supportive and stable family attachments; and

- opportunities for, and recognition of, pro-social participation of young people in family activities.

3.14   In relation to family risk factors specifically, a large volume of evidence to the inquiry has identified risks associated with exposure, either as a witness and/or as a victim, to family conflict and violence.[8] As explained by Dr Adam Tomison from the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC):

> Often, young people will first be exposed to violence in the home through child abuse and neglect, or through exposure to or the witnessing of domestic violence. There is now a very strong link, which has been evident for some time, that those experiences—being harmed by parents or care-givers—do have a detrimental long-term effect on children's psychological wellbeing and physical health, and can lead to a pattern of re-victimisation or subsequent perpetration of violence as children age.[9]

3.15   In relation to family violence a number of submissions have emphasised the cyclic nature of violence, with victimisation frequently proceeding subsequent offending[10], and with learned behaviour patterns leading to the intergenerational transmission of violent behaviour.[11] As explained by the AIC:

> Social learning theory suggests that when children and young people are exposed to violence it may become a learned behaviour, with children learning to model or adopt the violent behaviours

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8   See for example: National Council of Single Mothers and their Children Inc (NCSMC), Submission No 2, pp 3, 7; National Abuse Free Contact Campaign, Submission No 5, p 6; Ms Amanda Beattie, Submission 6, p 3; Youthlaw & Frontyard Youth Services, Submission No 35, p 7.

9   Dr Adam Tomison, Transcript of Evidence, 10 February 2010, pp 2-3.

10   See for example: Victim Support Australasia Inc (VSA), Submission No 1, p 5; Youthlaw & Frontyard Youth Services, Submission No 35, p 6; NSW Government, Submission No 76, p 1.

11   See for example: NCSMC, Submission No 2, pp 3-7; The Smith Family, Submission No 14, pp 2-3; Cairns Community Legal Centre Inc, Submission No 23, p 5; Youthlaw & Frontyard Youth Services, Submission No 35, pp 6-7; UnitingCare Children, Young People and Families (UCCYPF), Submission No 45, p 13.

> they see demonstrated by significant others in their lives,
> particularly parents and caregivers.[12]

3.16   Although the focus within the family environment is frequently on the
        behaviour of parents, some inquiry participants noted that adolescent
        violence against other family members is an insidious form of family
        violence which is underreported but has serious implications.[13] The
        behaviour often occurs as violence against siblings, usually younger
        siblings. A submitter to the inquiry stated that:

> The impact on siblings is the same as adult family violence from
> men to women; siblings feel frightened, constantly unsafe,
> terrorised, ashamed and embarrassed. Many suffer physical injury
> as a result of the violence. Most feel they can tell no one what is
> happening and unsafe in their own homes.[14]

Peer Factors

3.17   As young people move from childhood to adolescence the influence of
        peers increase while that of the family decreases. Risk factors for violent
        and anti-social behaviour include associating with peers that engage in
        violent and/or anti-social behaviour. The Queensland Commission for
        Children and Young People and Child Guardian observed that the
        importance of peer influences should not be underestimated. The
        Commission noted the following observations made by Professor Paul
        Mazerolle of Griffith University in relation the impact of peer influence,
        noting that it can:

- provide values/attitudes that endorse violence;
- provide behavioural models supporting violence;
- amplify opportunities and situations for violence; and
- accentuate levels of machismo-bravado.[15]

3.18   In relation to the potential importance of peer influence, the UnitingCare
        Children, Young People and Families (UCCYPF) concluded:

> Peer pressure can be difficult for children and young people to
> resist, especially if their need for friendships and acceptance is
> quite high. The need for acceptance by their peers can cause the

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12   Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC), Submission No 57, p 6.
13   Ms Jo Howard, Submission No 3, p 2. See also: Mr Harry Hukin, Submission No 72, p 1.
14   Ms Jo Howard, Submission No 3, p 2.
15   Queensland Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian, Submission
      No 66, p 5. See also: Professor Paul Mazerolle, Transcript of Evidence, 30 March 2010, p 22.

young person to become both the victim and the perpetrator in the same act.[16]

3.19   The following comments in relation to the influence of peer pressure were made by respondents to the inquiry's online youth violence survey:

> *Peer pressure, trying to prove masculinity, strength, how tough and cool they are.* **Female, 18-24 years, capital city**
>
> *... young males who get bored and have nothing to do, either at home or with their friends, and a lack of supervision by the parents, peer pressure to drink/smoke and a lack of respect for their peers. they want to look 'cool' in front of their friends and usually use violence or public bullying to curry favour and get a cheap laugh.* **Female, 18-24 years, regional city**

Community Factors

3.20   The communities in which young people and their families live also exert powerful influences on behaviour. Research has shown that certain communities are more likely to experience violence than others.[17] Key risk factors at community level include:

- low levels of community attachment including low levels of bonding to the neighbourhood and high levels of population transience;

- community disorganisation characterised by high population density, high rates of juvenile and adult crime and the availability/use of alcohol and other drugs; and

- poverty/socio-economic disadvantage including poor engagement with education and high levels of unemployment.

3.21   As summarised by UCCYPF:

> Statistics indicate that certain communities are more likely to experience violence ... the likelihood of violent behaviour increases as the community's socio-economic status decreases. Furthermore, areas of social and economic disadvantage experience higher rates of reported domestic violence ... These statistics do not equate violence with economic disadvantage. Rather, the statistics indicate that these communities contain a greater number of risk factors, lack the same access to resources, and often face greater

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16   See for example: UCCYPF, Submission No 45, p 14.

17   UCCYPF, Submission No 45, p 12. See also: Youthlaw & Frontyard Youth Services, Submission No 35, p 8.

hardships which in turn impacts on feelings of powerlessness and exclusion.[18]

3.22   Protective factors at community level include:

■ opportunities for positive engagement with the community and access within the community to places for young people to meet and socialise; and

■ recognition from the community of positive involvement.

3.23   An indicative sign of youth disengagement with the community which was raised in evidence, particularly by young people, relates to feelings of boredom and frustration due to a lack of interesting and affordable recreational activities. At the inquiry's Youth Forum held in Melbourne, one young participant noted the lack of 'after hours' activities for young people, stating:

> ... there is not much to do after hours. Everything closes at five, like shops and other organisations that you can go to. You are just left with nothing. You are left with frustration and anger.[19]

3.24   Shortage of recreational activities for young people living in regional or rural areas in particular was highlighted by another young participant of the Forum who explained:

> I went to school in a country town where most of the young people have since been arrested for pub fights and stuff because they do not have a cinema there. ... in that town going to the couple of pubs there is one of the only options that people seem to have. A lot of them have a macho vibe to them so they have to try to appear to be really tough at all times when they go to these places. So when someone does bump into them ... their friends will end up roughing them up. Even if it was an accident and even if the person has apologised, they seem to do it anyway. That is because they seem to be really bored and feel the need to do that to try to get a reputation to make them seem really tough, which is quite a problem in a lot of social groups.[20]

3.25   Similarly, a young submitter to the inquiry, Ms Madison Strutynski observed:

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18   UCCYPF, Submission No 45, p 12. See also: Youthlaw & Frontyard Youth Services, Submission No 35, p 8.

19   Farah, Transcript of Evidence, 15 February 2010, p 5. See also: Nasro, Transcript of Evidence, 15 February 2010, p 11.

20   Keith, Transcript of Evidence, 15 February 2010, p 6.

> Tackling the issue of teenage boredom in Rural and Regional Queensland and Australia is a huge issue. The main contender being the lack of activities for young Australians to partake in, thus initiating boredom and therefore resulting in drinking and sometimes drugs which in turn leads to destructive behaviours and increased violence particularly between young men and women in our communities.[21]

3.26   A representative of the Youth Minister's Roundtable of Young Territorians also observed the linkages between lack of access to recreational activities and violence, saying:

> Another solution [to youth violence] may be more activities and events for young people and greater publicity of those that already exist, to relieve youth boredom and recklessness. Many young people we surveyed indicated that boredom can lead to alcohol and other drug abuse, violence and crime.[22]

3.27   The following comments on the importance of access to recreational activities were made by respondents to the inquiry's online youth violence survey:

> *Youths need to be kept interested. The moment they are bored they go and cause havoc because there is nothing else to do.* **Male, under 18 years, capital city**
>
> *The area in which I live has no entertainment. Cinemas shut at 9, and there is nothing available. nearest clubs (if you're into that) are in the city. There are no sporting facilities, such as bowling, indoor beach volleyball, netball, basketball for people over school age. people get bored, and so they drink, and become violent.* **Female, 18-24 years, capital city**

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21   Ms Madison Strutynski, Submission No 74, p 5.
22   Ms Hannah Woerle, Transcript of Evidence, 17 March 2010, p 3.

> *Taking up sports which allow for an amount of violence (football - tackling, Martial Arts - Sparring, etc.) are ways for people to release their anger in a reasonable and even productive manner, but need to be taught to keep this off the streets and save it up for their sport.* **Male, under 18 years, regional city**

3.28   Importantly, even where recreational activities for young people are available, the costs of accessing them were often considered to be prohibitive.[23]

3.29   Low levels of achievement and poor engagement with school were also identified as risk factors for violent behaviour, with evidence suggesting that that there is a cohort of young people in Australia who are 'falling through the education gaps'.[24] For this group in particular, a number of submissions questioned the value of school suspensions and expulsions, suggesting that these policies simply exacerbate disengagement. In this regard UCCYPF observed:

> When a child or young person is suspended it can cause them to disengage with their schooling, particularly if it is a long suspension or if they are regularly suspended and if no school work is provided during their suspension period. The opportunity to not attend school or complete any school work may also feel like a 'reward' to some children and young people and encourage them to get suspended again, effectively rewarding poor behaviour.[25]

Societal Factors

3.30   At societal level, a number of socio-economic and cultural influences have been identified and raised in evidence which may contribute to an environment which is more conducive to violence.[26] These societal factors include:

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23   May & Farah, Transcript of Evidence, 15 February 2010, pp 4-5.

24   See for example: The Smith Family, Submission No 14, p 3; Cairns Community Legal Centre Inc, Submission No 23, p 5; Youthlaw & Frontyard Youth Services, Submission No 35, p 8.

25   UCCYPF, Submission No 45, p 14.

26   ARACY, Submission No 55, p 25. See also: VSA, Submission No 1, p 7; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), Submission No 42, p 5; Tasmanian Government, Submission No 56, p 3.

- demographic and social changes such as the ageing population, more children/young people living in sole parent families, rapid population growth, migration and urbanisation;

- poverty/income inequality frequently associated with poor educational attainment and long-term unemployment; and

- cultural influences which reflect and reinforce societal values and norms, including the degree of cultural acceptance of violence (e.g. within sports), attitudes towards vulnerable and minority groups and exposure to media violence.

Committee Comment

3.31   The Committee recognises that there is a complex array of influences that impact on a young person's risk of experiencing violence. The Committee also recognises that many of the risk and protective factors occurring at various levels and in diverse social contexts, interact and are ultimately interdependent. It is uncommon for these factors to occur in isolation and in general terms the Committee understands that a young person's risk of experiencing violence increases as the number of risk factors increase and the number of protective factors decrease.

3.32   Furthermore, the Committee also acknowledges that various risk and protective factors exist in a wider social context which includes influences of situational factors, such as access to alcohol and other drugs, and societal factors including socio-economic and cultural factors. Given the diverse causes, situations and circumstances that influence youth violence, it is clear that a diverse range of interventions is required. Options for interventions are considered in Chapters 4 and 5.

The Influence of Alcohol and Other Drugs

3.33   Attitudes that are tolerant towards the use of alcohol and other drugs, coupled with high prevalence of alcohol and drug use among community, family and peers are risk factors for engagement in anti-social and violent behaviour. As such, the association between the consumption of alcohol or use of other drugs and violent behaviour was also a common theme in

evidence to the inquiry.[27] With regard specifically to the association between alcohol and violence, the submission from ARACY notes:

> The links between alcohol and violent behaviour have been well established. Data from the Australian Department of Health and Ageing for 2003 indicate that alcohol misuse was implicated in:
>
> ■ half of all domestic and sexual violence cases;
> ■ 40-70 percent of violent crimes;
> ■ 70-80 percent of night-time assaults; and
> ■ 34 percent of murders.[28]

3.34   The submission from the ACT Government also notes research strongly linking consumption of alcohol with criminal behaviour and violence, observing:

> It has been estimated that nationally, approximately 62% of police time is spent in response to alcohol-related incidents. Alcohol is involved in 73% of assaults, 77% of street offences, and 40% of domestic violence incidents and in approximately 90% of all late-night police call-outs.[29]

3.35   Importantly however, consumption of alcohol not only increases the risk of perpetrating violence, but also the risks of victimisation. As outlined in the submission from the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS):

> Alcohol and drug use affects cognitive and physical functioning. In an intoxicated state of mind, rational decision-making is often compromised, leading to less self-control and an inability to assess risks. In such a state, certain drinkers are more likely to resort to violence in times of conflict or confrontation. On the other hand, intoxication that reduces physical control and the ability to recognise dangerous situations can makes some people easy targets for perpetrators. In the ABS (2005) Personal Safety Survey Australia, 79% of the 18-24 year old men who identified as having been physically assaulted said that the perpetrators had been drinking or taking drugs. Just over one-third (34%) also said that they themselves had been drinking or taking drugs.[30]

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27   See for example: NCSMC, Submission No 2, pp 7-8; The Hon Dr Bob Such MP, Submission No 15, p 3; Cairns Community Legal Centre Inc, Submission No 23, p 6; AIHW, Submission No 42, pp 3-4; Mission Australia, Submission No 59, pp 10-12; Dr Adam Tomison, Transcript of Evidence, 10 February 2010, p 9.

28   ARACY, Submission No 55, p 20.

29   ACT Government, Submission No 37, p 6.

30   Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS), Submission No 39, p 4.

3.36   As part of the *National Drug Strategy Household Survey* conducted by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) in 2007 respondents were asked if in the last 12 months, anyone affected by alcohol or illicit drugs had verbally abused, physically abused or put the respondent in fear. Results indicated that:

> … one in five Australians aged 14 years or older were the victims of alcohol-related incidents. People aged 20–29 years were most likely to be victims of drug-related incidents in the previous 12 months compared to other age groups. Young people aged 14-19 years who were the victims of physical abuse were most likely to receive bruising and abrasions.[31]

3.37   Also from the AIHW's *National Drug Strategy Household Survey* the submission from the Australian Government highlights the following findings:

> … in a 12 month period there were an estimated:
>
> ■ 4.4 million victims of alcohol-related verbal abuse;
>
> ■ 2.3 million Australians aged 14 years or older who were 'put in fear' by persons under the influence of alcohol in the 12 months preceding the 2007 survey.
>
> Further, more than three quarters of a million Australians were physically abused by persons under the influence of alcohol.[32]

3.38   In relation to younger people, specifically those aged 10-14 years, research commissioned by ARACY confirms a strong association between the consumption of alcohol, including binge drinking, and anti-social or violent behaviour as outlined below:

> ■ The likelihood of engaging in violent or antisocial behaviour was much higher for those who had ever used alcohol and particularly high amongst those who had drunk five or more alcoholic drinks on one occasion in the previous two weeks (binge drinkers).
>
> ■ Young people who had ever consumed alcohol, or had consumed alcohol in the previous month, were approximately three-and-a-half times as likely to have been violent in the previous year, and six times as likely to have participated in antisocial behaviour.
>
> ■ Among those who had engaged in binge drinking in the previous two weeks, the likelihood of having been violent was

31   AIHW, Submission No 42, pp 3-4.

32   Australian Government – Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) et al, Submission No 62, p 13. See also: AIFS, Submission No 39, p 3.

> more than five times higher than for those who had not
> consumed alcohol at this level, while the likelihood of
> participating in antisocial behaviour was more than nine times
> as high.[33]

3.39   The association between consumption of alcohol by younger people and
        increased vulnerability to violence was highlighted by the Commissioner
        for Children and Young People (WA) who noted:

> The nexus between alcohol use and vulnerability to violence and
> other forms of personal violation is of particular concern ... 19% of
> female and 12% of male secondary school age students reported
> having unwanted sex because they were 'too drunk'. Alarmingly
> this trend seems to be increasing, consistent with increases in risky
> levels of alcohol consumption in young people, particularly young
> women.[34]

3.40   Another common practice among young people, pre-loading (i.e.
        consuming a large amount of alcohol prior to going out to licensed
        premises or other entertainment venues) has also been strongly linked to
        increased risk of experiencing violence. As noted by the Australian Drug
        Foundation (ADF):

> Those who pre-loaded were two and half times more likely to
> have been in a fight when going out and pre-loading was more
> strongly associated with being involved in nightlife violence than
> the total amount of alcohol an individual consumed.[35]

3.41   While acknowledging the clear associations between alcohol and youth
        violence, a number of submissions also emphasised that risky and harmful
        alcohol consumption should not be viewed simply as a youth issue, but as
        a broader community issue.[36] Noting the general acceptance of alcohol as
        an integral part of Australian society, the Queensland Government
        observed:

> There are clear linkages between alcohol and violence. Alcohol is,
> however, an integral part of Australia's history, reputation, and
> image. It has infiltrated pop culture, featuring in books, music
> videos, movies, anecdotes, jokes, normal conversation and even
> advertising for non-related products. For many, it is a key

33   ARACY, Submission No 55, pp 20-21.

34   Commissioner for Children and Young People (WA), Submission No 33, p 3.

35   See for example: Australian Drug Foundation (ADF), Submission No 29, p 10.

36   See for example: Commissioner for Children and Young People (WA), Submission No 33, p 3;
      Youthlaw & Frontyard Youth Services, Submission No 35, pp 2-3, 7; UCCYPF, Submission
      No 45, pp 8-9; ARACY, Submission No 55, p 23; Ms Linda Chiodo et al, Submission No 78, p 2.

component of their social and cultural life. Furthermore, research for the National Alcohol Campaign found that respondents tended to see harmful use of alcohol as a problem for others and not as an issue for themselves. Drinkers generally perceive that the benefits of alcohol far outweigh the disadvantages. These benefits include the enjoyment experienced through its use, its use as a social lubricant to ease awkwardness of social occasions and its relaxant qualities.[37]

3.42   Furthermore, some inquiry participants emphasised the need to recognise that alcohol and other drugs are not themselves causes of violence, but rather facilitators or catalysts.[38] As explained by Ms Jo Howard, a submitter to the inquiry:

> The experience of violence both precedes and is a result of illicit drug use and alcohol abuse. Whilst both drugs and alcohol are disinhibitors, they do not cause violence. Violence does not cause drug and alcohol use. But the three issues conflate.[39]

3.43   Similarly, while noting that alcohol consumption does not compel the drinker to behave violently, the ADF observed that violent behaviour is more likely to occur as a result of a combination of risk factors including:

- The pharmacological effects of alcohol
- A person who is willing to be aggressive when drinking
- An immediate drinking context conducive to aggression
- A broader cultural context that is tolerant of alcohol-related aggression.[40]

3.44   Expanding on the linkages between drinking and other underlying risk factors, Voices Against Violence observed that:

> Alcohol ... in some cases may provide the ignition but the bomb is the underlying lack of respect for others. Alcohol triggers the ignition – lack of personal values or apathy towards others causes the explosion. It is the underlying degradation of common values and respect that emerges and presents itself as acts of violence by some individuals whilst under the influence of drugs and alcohol.[41]

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37   Queensland Government, Submission No 46, p 2.
38   See for example: Ms Jo Howard, Submission No 3, p 3; Mr Thomas McGuire, Transcript of Evidence, 3 February 2010, p 4;
39   Ms Jo Howard, Submission No 3, p 3.
40   ADF, Submission No 29, p 6.
41   Voices Against Violence, Submission No 67, p 3.

3.45   The following comments were made about alcohol and violence by respondents to the inquiry's online youth violence survey:

> *I don't think that alcohol is ever the reason for violence, but it only acts as a catalyst. Restricting alcohol use will not help to solve any of the issues at the root of the problem.* **Male, 18-24 years, capital city**
>
> *From my limited knowledge (and the way the media portrays it), physical violence seems to happen when people have drank too much/taken too many drugs and are ejected from night clubs onto the street. They tend to want to pick a fight with anyone. I think these people do need to take more responsibility for their actions when in an intoxicated state. Being drunk doesn't justify being violent so there certainly an issue there which makes some people aggressive and others not.* **Female, 18-24 years, capital city**
>
> *Alcohol is becoming a huge problem among adolescents in my area. 16-year-olds are drinking 20 shots of vodka and are ignorant of those encouraging them to cease their constant drinking parties. These teens are doing things that they would never do while sober. Risky and daring things. Alcohol laws are simply not strict enough.* **Male, under 18 years, regional city**

3.46   In its submission, Step Back Think expressed concern that too much policy focus on alcohol or drugs as 'causes' of violence might actually divert attention from addressing more fundamental issues, stating:

> ... that in most cases alcohol and illicit drugs act as a facilitator for street violence rather than as the principal cause, which stem from existing social and cultural problems. Alcohol and illicit drugs when compared with cultural change are a convenient policy target and mask the core problems.[42]

3.47   Rather than focusing on the influence of alcohol on young peoples' behaviour, Mr Alex Shaw, a submitter to the inquiry suggested that it would be more useful to consider why young people are increasingly turning to excessive drinking, saying:

> Could it be that the violence we see today is not the result of a neat confluence of factors, but rather the result of erosion? Could it be that when you take away self-expression, human decency, self-esteem, everything that is necessary for people in a decent and civil society, then drinking excessively is all that seems available to them? Could drinking be a symptom of many other problems with

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42   Step Back Think, Submission No 27, p 5.

> young people that we're not even beginning to take seriously enough?[43]

3.48   Although alcohol is the major drug of concern in relation to its association with violent behaviour, some evidence also noted that illicit drugs, often taken in association with alcohol, can also contribute to or exacerbate violent behaviour.[44] As explained in the submission from the WA Government:

> In recent years anecdotal evidence indicates that amphetamine use has amplified the problem of alcohol-fuelled violence, by extending the time that people are drunk and prone to getting into fights. The energy and speed provided by the amphetamine, combined with the reduced inhibition and cognitive ability provided by the alcohol, may also make the violence more severe than alcohol-fuelled violence alone.[45]

3.49   The submission from the WA Government also notes associations between violence and the use of other drugs such as anabolic steroids, heroin and volatile substance abuse.[46]

Committee Comment

3.50   While acknowledging the strong associations between alcohol and violence, the Committee also understands that alcohol, taken alone or in combination with other drugs, is not itself a cause of violence. As such, in combination with other risk factors, alcohol may act as a catalyst increasing both the risks of perpetrating violent behaviour and the risks of victimisation. Nevertheless, given the strong associations between alcohol and violent behaviour, and the apparent prevalence of alcohol-fuelled violence, the Committee believes that addressing this issue remains a priority for action.

3.51   Evidence to the inquiry suggests that strategies which decrease young peoples' access to alcohol, in combination with social marketing campaigns to effect cultural and attitudinal changes towards alcohol are required. Targeted strategies to decrease the availability and accessibility of alcohol are considered in Chapter 4. Social marketing campaigns to

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43   Mr Alex Shaw, Submission No 79, pp 1-2.
44   See for example: NCSMC, Submission No 2, p 7; Australian Government – DEEWR et al, Submission No 62, p 14; Mr Les Twentyman, Transcript of Evidence, 15 February 2010, p 47.
45   WA Government – Department of Premier and Cabinet, Submission No 75, p 3.
46   WA Government – Department of Premier and Cabinet, Submission No 75, p 3.

raise awareness of negative consequences of alcohol abuse and to promote responsible drinking are considered in Chapter 5.

Populations at Increased Risk

3.52   The importance of social norms and cultural attitudes which make violent behaviour more acceptable within society was a common theme raised in evidence to the inquiry. As explained by The Hon Dr Bob Such MP:

> ... the culture or the norms and values of a society can also influence the level of violence by sanctioning violence as a normal means of resolving conflicts.[47]

3.53   A large volume of evidence also suggested that negative social and cultural attitudes to vulnerable, marginalised and minority groups also puts particular populations at increased risk of experiencing violence. As summarised by the Nepean Domestic Violence Network:

> The risk of being a victim increases when young people are members of marginalized or vulnerable sub cultures within the dominant youth culture. Young people who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender are at increased risk. Young people who are homeless and young people who have poor social connection due to violent and abusive backgrounds are at increased risk of becoming involved in violent situations.[48]

3.54   The following comment was made by a respondent to the inquiry's online youth violence survey:

> *Violence is caused by intolerance of peoples' beliefs, way of living, personal preferences, sexual orientation.* **Female, under 18 years, capital city**

Women

3.55   As noted in Chapter 2, the violent experiences of young males and females are markedly different. Although young men are more likely to be victims of violent assaults than young women, men are less likely to know their

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47   The Hon Dr Bob Such MP, Submission No 15, p 2.
48   Nepean Domestic Violence Network, Submission No 18, pp 2, 4.

assailants. In contrast, women are more likely to know their assailants and to be victims of sexual crime such as rape.[49]

3.56   According to evidence, reasons for this include the power imbalance between men and women (gender inequality) and a greater tolerance of aggression and violence towards women.[50] As stated in the submission from Community Connections:

> There are societal norms within Australian culture that encourage a tolerance of violence against women and discourage perpetrators from taking responsibility for their violence. These encompass collective attitudes that favour conservative gender roles, trivialise violence and its effects, blame the victims, deny that violence has occurred and encourage the sexual objectification of women.[51]

3.57   Similarly, Women's Health Victoria notes:

> Violence against women remains a serious and pervasive issue that affects individuals, families, communities and the social fabric of our society as a whole. It is widespread, systematic and culturally entrenched and is recognised as one of the world's most pervasive human rights violations.[52]

3.58   The following comment was made by a respondent to the inquiry's online youth violence survey:

> *Violence against young women in relationships is absolutely massive, with domestic violence within university boyfriend/girlfriend situations needing more attention.* ***Female, 18-24 years***

3.59   Issues of gender inequality that contribute to a tolerance of violence against women may be exacerbated by gender stereotyping. These stereotypes are typified by cultural models which equate manhood with dominance and violent behaviour. As explained below:

> We need to challenge the construction of masculinity in today's society and move from a construction that accepts control and domination over others to one which privileges caring and

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49   Women's Health Victoria, Submission No 17, p 2.

50   See for example: Community Connections (Vic) Ltd, Submission No 12, pp 1-2; The Hon Dr Bob Such MP, Submission No 15, p 2; Royal Women's Hospital, Submission No 21, pp 4-5; VicHealth, Submission No 26, p 2, 8; Mission Australia, Submission No 59, p 25; Ms Linda Chiodo et al, Submission No 78, p 4.

51   Community Connections (Vic) Ltd, Submission No 12, p 4. See also: The Hon Dr Bob Such MP, Submission No 15, p 3.

52   Women's Health Victoria, Submission No 17, p 2.

empathy as desirable traits (and ones that are not considered 'weak').[53]

3.60   Further, with regard to cultural perceptions of masculinity, the acceptance and even glorification of violence in some social settings, particularly in sports, was raised by some.[54] Mr Michael Jeh of Griffith University suggested that definitions of masculinity need to change if messages about the unacceptability of violent behaviour are going to be effective, stating:

> For the next generation of young men coming through, the definition of manhood might be being man enough to walk away, being man enough to look a fight in the eye and say: 'We do not do that. That is what being a real man is about.'[55]

3.61   The following comments were made by respondents to the inquiry's online youth violence survey:

> *I think a lot of these young guys simply need a way of proving they are men but for the most part don't see any other way of doing it other than how much they can drink, how many girls they can pull or how many fights they are in...* **Male, 18-24 years, capital city**
>
> *Men need another gender example of how to live and be than the type of common violent dominant male stereotypes they are presented with in popular culture and through their families. This I see is crucial.* **Female, 18-24 years, rural/remote**

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse and Refugee Populations

3.62   Evidence to the inquiry indicates that young people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, including recent migrants and refugees, have an increased fear of being victims of violence.[56] Racist abuse was reported to be prevalent in schools. Based on interviews of almost 700 school students the Foundation for Young Australians (FYA) reported that 80% of young people from non-Anglo backgrounds and 55% from Anglo backgrounds reported experiences of racism.[57] The following

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53   Ms Jo Howard, Submission No 3, p 4.

54   See for example: Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic), Submission No 60, pp 16-17. See also: National Abuse Free Contact Campaign, Submission No 5, p 3; Women's Health Victoria, Submission No 17, p 3; Mr Michael Jeh, Submission No 73, p 4; Ms Linda Chiodo et al, Submission No 78, p 2.

55   Mr Michael Jeh, Transcript of Evidence, 30 March 2010, p 2.

56   YACVic, Submission No 60, p 12.

57   Foundation for Young Australians (FYA), Submission No 20, p 2.

comment was made by a respondent to the inquiry's online youth violence survey:

> *Australian born young men are very racist to new refugees.* **Male, under 18 years, capital city**

3.63   With regard specifically to young people from refugee backgrounds, the Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY) noted the following findings from research conducted by La Trobe University:

> According to the research based on the experiences of 88 young people aged 12 to 20 years of age from refugee backgrounds:
>
> - 42% of young people reported experiencing racism because of their ethnicity, religion or colour, by their second year in Australia;
> - 9% of young people experienced discrimination in their first year at school in Australia, which increased to 20% at school in the second year;
> - 12% of youth experienced discrimination on the street or in public settings;
> - 13% of young people experienced discrimination from police since arriving in Australia;
> - 21% of young people experienced discrimination in public places since arriving in Australia, especially on trains and in shops.[58]

3.64   The CMY also noted that young people from CALD or refugee backgrounds are likely to feel more insecure for a range of reasons, including past experiences with violence and higher 'visibility' due to ethnic markers such as appearance or language.[59] The CMY identified increased risk of young people from CALD or refugee backgrounds engaging in retaliatory violence in response to racist aggression, stating:

> Retaliatory violence as a response to racist bullying can also have a serious impact on the wellbeing of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, in terms of the consequences for them at school or within the juvenile or criminal justice systems.[60]

Indigenous Australians

3.65   The *State of Australia's Young People* report draws on ABS data which shows that Indigenous young people are more likely to be victims of

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58   Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY), Submission No 44, p 6.
59   CMY, Submission No 44, p 3.
60   CMY, Submission No 44, p 7.

violence than non-Indigenous young people, with approximately one third of 18-24 year old Indigenous people reporting that they had been a victim of physical or threatened violence in the previous 12 months.[61]

3.66   The Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS) identifies a number of features specific to violence in Indigenous communities, including:

- Young people being pressured by older people to continue long standing family disputes within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

- Violence is seen as a consequence of transgenerational trauma from colonisation and erosion of the male role in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander society.

- Some young women present at family violence refuges saying things like: 'my man does not love me if he does not hit me'. People who question this trend attempt to communicate that violence is not a part of Aboriginal culture.

- Over-representation in victimisation statistics, but failure to perceive oneself as a victim, as evidenced by an under-representation in applications to the Victim of Crime Assistance Tribunal by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

- Discrimination, bullying or racism on the streets or in schools happening on a daily basis.

- Some young people are not linked in with culture and see prison as a way of learning culture or as a rite of passage.[62]

3.67   Evidence also noted the comparatively high levels of domestic and family violence in Indigenous communities and emphasised the cyclic nature of violence as a result of past and present abuses.[63] Mr Norm Richardson of the Circular Head Aboriginal Corporation observed:

> By and large our young people are well educated and well equipped academically but they have been neglected relationally. We need to help them build solid futures through building and maintaining long lasting relationships that bring stability and trust.[64]

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61 *State of Australia's Young People: A Report on the social, economic, health and family lives of young people*, Social Policy Research Centre, University of New South Wales October 2009, p 115. See also: YACVic, Submission No 60, p 8.

62 Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service Co-operative Ltd (VALS), Submission No 51, pp 1-2.

63 Dr Adam Tomison, Transcript of Evidence, 10 February 2010, p 3. See also: Circular Head Aboriginal Corporation, Submission No 50, p 1.

64 Circular Head Aboriginal Corporation, Submission No 50, p 1.

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex

3.68   Submissions from groups representing gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex (GLBTI) young people indicate that this group experience higher levels of abuse and violence than the community generally.[65] Homophobic and sexual preference discrimination, prejudice and violence involving young people was found to occur in all social settings (i.e. at home, at school, and on the streets) leaving no 'safe' environment. The following comment was made by a respondent to the inquiry's online youth violence survey:

> Youth violence is increasing for gay and lesbian youth, statistics have shown that schools are still unsafe for a lot of gay and lesbian young people, and research has shown that in general we are turning a blind eye towards violence against these individuals of our community. **Female, 18-24 years, capital city**

3.69   As observed below, school was reported as being the most common setting for discrimination, bullying and violence directed against young GLBTI people:

> Young people were asked if they had been verbally or physically abused because of their sexuality. Almost half reported being verbally abused (44%) and (16%) physically abused for this reason. Of those who had been abused, school was by far the most common context of abuse with 74% having suffered abuse there (89% of those still of school age). The street (47%) and social occasions (34%) were also common contexts for abuse. Young people were least likely to have suffered heterosexist abuse at sport (12%) and home (18%).[66]

3.70   In the school context some concern was expressed that responses by authority figures to sexuality based discrimination, bullying and violence was not consistent. In its submission ACON (formerly known as the AIDS Council of NSW) explained:

> Young people talked about teachers ignoring homophobic abuse and not taking it as seriously as they would racist or sexist abuse.

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65   See for example: ACON, Submission No 30, pp 4, 6; ALSO Foundation & the Victorian Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby (VGLRL), Submission No 53, p 3; Rainbow Network Victoria, Submission No 54, pp 1-2; YACVic, Submission No 60, p 14.

66   ALSO Foundation & the VGLRL, Submission No 53, p 3. See also: OUTthere, Rural Victorian Youth Council for Sexual Diversity, Submission No 16, pp 1-4; FYA, Submission No 20, p 2; Ms Jen Sainsbury, Transcript of Evidence, 15 February 2010, pp 29-30.

> There is a perception that some teachers will help, but that it is out of the norm and going beyond the call of duty to do so.[67]

3.71   In Melbourne, Ms Jen Sainsbury of the FYA observed:

> We also know that teachers are often reluctant to intervene in incidents of homophobic bullying and abuse. Often they feel undertrained. They might be fearful of backlash from either the school or the parent community. They might be scared of losing their jobs. They might be scared of people thinking that they are encouraging a homosexual lifestyle or of being accused of being gay themselves—which for many people, regardless of their sexual orientation, is a very confronting thing.[68]

3.72   With a history of institutionalised discrimination, addressing abuse and violence directed against GLBTI young people was seen to be particularly challenging as explained in the submission from the ALSO Foundation & the Victorian Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby (VGLRL):

> Unlike other forms of bullying, there is an institutionalised history of support for sexual and gender related prejudice from the law, medicine and the church. Many of these things have now changed but this is not widely known and many people remain unsure about whether challenging such prejudice is acceptable. In addition, sexual and gender difference is still regarded as a moral issue by many people and therefore seen to be 'trickier' to challenge in a school context than other forms of bullying, for example around body type or ethnicity.[69]

3.73   Although abuse and violence against GLBTI young people involving family members occurs less frequently, its impact was reported to be more significant, as explained by ACON:

> What family members say or do is often more hurtful and upsetting. Furthermore, for many same-sex attracted youth, their family and their home is not an environment that they can avoid or escape from due to the fact that young people do not have the economic or social capacity to safely move out of home.[70]

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67   ACON, Submission No 30, p 7.

68   Ms Jen Sainsbury, Transcript of Evidence, 15 February 2010, pp 29-30.

69   ALSO Foundation & the VGLRL, Submission No 53, p 5. See also: Ms Jen Sainsbury, Transcript of Evidence, 15 February 2010, p 32.

70   ACON, Submission No 30, p 8.

3.74   Also, while noting that rates of drug and alcohol abuse are higher among
        GLBTI young people than among young people in the wider community,
        the ALSO Foundation & the VGLRL suggests that rather than being a
        precursor to violence, in this context substance abuse is more often a form
        of self-medication to ameliorate impacts of violence and social rejection.[71]

Other Vulnerable Populations

3.75   Other vulnerable population groups that are at significantly increased risk
        of experiencing violence include young people who are homeless and
        young people with disability.

3.76   Melbourne based research found that almost all homeless males (96%) and
        three-quarters of homeless females (74%) had experienced physical
        violence since leaving home. In was also noted that many of these young
        people had been rendered homeless in the first place as a consequence of
        violence occurring in the family home.[72] The Queensland Commission for
        Children and Young People and Child Guardian also noted that the
        vulnerability of young people who are homeless was probably increased
        due to a lack of support networks to assist them when they do encounter
        unsafe situations and decreased options for avoidance.[73]

3.77   According to data from ABS *General Social Survey 2006* young people with
        disability have considerable concerns about their personal safety, and are
        in fact more likely to have been victim of violent crime.[74]

Committee Comment

3.78   The Committee recognises that young people are not a homogenous
        group. As a demographically, socially and culturally diverse group their
        perceptions and experiences of bullying and violence will vary. However,
        there is no doubt that some groups of young people are more vulnerable
        to bullying and violence than others. The Committee believes that
        acknowledging the heterogeneity of young Australians and
        understanding their different risk profiles will be crucial to developing

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71   ALSO Foundation & the VGLRL, Submission No 53, pp 4-5.

72   YACVic, Submission No 60, p 10. See also: Youthlaw & Frontyard Youth Services, Submission
      No 35, p 5; NSW Government, Submission No 76, p 1.

73   Queensland Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian, Submission No
      66, pp 3-4.

74   *State of Australia's Young People: A Report on the social, economic, health and family lives of young
      people*, Social Policy Research Centre, University of New South Wales October 2009, p 116. See
      also: Cairns Community Legal Centre Inc, Submission No 23, p 4; YACVic, Submission No 60,
      p 6.

interventions to reduce levels of youth violence and the impact of violence on young people.

3.79   The Committee considers that developing and reinforcing social and cultural norms that are founded on respect for diversity will be crucial to achieving a more tolerant and peaceful society. Reinforcement of these values and social norms should start in early education and in schools. Where necessary, targeted educational interventions may also need to be supported by broader social marketing measures to effect wider cultural and attitudinal changes. These interventions and others are considered in more detail in Chapters 4 and 5 of the report.

4

Targeted Interventions to Reduce Youth Violence

4.1   There are many, often interdependent factors which combine to influence behaviour during childhood, adolescence and through into adulthood. Chapter 4 examines a diverse range of interventions that aim to reduce youth violence by decreasing risk factors and increasing protective factors which occur at individual, family and community levels.

4.2   Chapter 4 also includes consideration of strategies to reduce alcohol related violence and to improve safety through the implementation of best practice policing. While the emphasis in this Chapter is prevention and early intervention, consideration is given to interventions that aim to support the rehabilitation of young victims of violence and to reduce recidivism among young offenders.

4.3   Strategies to address societal level issues associated with social and economic disadvantage, and cultural influences which reinforce social norms and shape attitudes towards young people and violence will be considered in Chapter 5.

Approaches to Intervention

Risk and protective factors have been broadly categorised according to whether they occur at individual, relational, community or societal level. There are a large number of strategies and interventions that aim to reduce youth violence and its impacts on young people by targeting risk and protective factors occurring at each of these levels.[1] Regardless of which

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1   Ms Linda Chiodo et al, Submission No 78, p 5.

level or levels are targeted, essentially strategies to address youth violence focus on reducing exposure to risk factors and building resilience by increasing exposure to protective factors.[2]

4.4   In addition, strategies and interventions to reduce youth violence can also be classified as primary, secondary or tertiary. As described by the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS):

> Primary prevention is targeted at the general community, aiming to promote healthy relationships. Secondary prevention targets at-risk groups and individuals such as young people who have experienced violence in the family home. Tertiary prevention involves those who have already experienced violence, including counselling programs, statutory interventions and perpetrator groups.[3]

4.5   While most evidence to the inquiry has emphasised early intervention and prevention (that is primary and secondary interventions), the need to also provide tertiary interventions to assist and rehabilitate young victims of violence, as well as to reduce levels of recidivism among young offenders is also acknowledged.

Individual

4.6   Individual approaches to addressing youth violence are generally aimed at reducing levels of aggressive and anti-social behaviour by assisting with the development of life skills.

Social Development Education

4.7   The value of social development programs as an intervention to reduce individual risk factors that contribute to violence and increase protective factors was raised frequently in evidence.[4] As described in the submission

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2   See for example: The Smith Family, Submission No 14, p 3; Commissioner for Children and Young People (WA), Submission No 33, p 4; Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY), Submission No 55, p 16; Mission Australia, Submission No 59, p 18.

3   Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS), Submission No 39, p 6.

4   See for example: The Smith Family, Submission No 14, p 4; The Hon Dr Bob MP, Submission No 15, p 5; Cairns Community Legal Centre Inc, Submission No 23, p 6; Matthew Stanley Foundation, Submission No 52, p 32; Mr David Morris, Submission No 64, pp 1-2; Mr Daniel & Mrs Jo Hames, Submission No 65, p 1, Attachment 1; Ms Linda Chiodo et al, Submission No 78, p 5.

from the Queensland Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian, social development programs:

> ... commonly include improving competency and social skills with peers and generally promoting behaviour that is positive, friendly and cooperative. Such programs can be provided universally or to high-risk groups and are most frequently carried out in school or alternative education settings. Programs that emphasise social skills appear to be among the most effective among youth violence prevention strategies. They also appear to be more effective when delivered to children in preschool and primary school environments rather than to secondary school students.[5]

4.8 Also emphasising the importance of early intervention, the submission from The Smith Family describes the value of pre-school enrichment programs and social development programs:

> **Preschool enrichment programs** These aim to increase children's school readiness by providing them with early academic skills such as emergent literacy and numeracy, and emotional literacy, such as raising self esteem, problem solving, and empathy.
>
> **Social development programs** These aim to promote pro-social behaviour and prevent aggression in children by developing life skills such as anger management, empathy, developing and maintaining healthy relationships, problem-solving and conflict resolution.
>
> The positive long-term effects of these programs are most pronounced in children from disadvantaged backgrounds and at-risk groups, reducing involvement in violence and improving educational and employment outcomes.[6]

4.9 There was general consensus that social development interventions in early childhood have the greatest effect. However, the need for interventions to be appropriate to the developmental capacity of the child and to be provided continuously as the child transitions through key developmental stages was also noted.[7]

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5   Queensland Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian, Submission No 66, p 7.

6   The Smith Family, Submission No 14, p 4. See also: Mr Daniel & Mrs Jo Hames, Submission No 65, p 1, Attachment 1; Queensland Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian, Submission No 66, p 7.

7   See for example: ARACY, Submission No 55, p 35; Mission Australia, Submission No 59, p 25; Ms Linda Chiodo et al, Submission No 78, p 5; Ms Deirdre Croft, Transcript of Evidence,

4.10   Reference was made in evidence to a number of social development
        programs. These programs aim to assist children and young people with
        moral development, anger management and conflict resolution, and to
        promote pro-social behaviours e.g. *Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies
        (PATHS)*, *Second Steps*, *Rock and Water*, *Teach One to Lead One*.[8] Reference
        was also made to social development programs which more specifically
        aim to promote development of respectful, healthy relationships and
        tolerance of diversity e.g. *LoveBites*, *Respectful Relationships*.[9]

4.11   A number of inquiry participants recommended that social development
        education interventions include clear and unambiguous information about
        the consequences of violent behaviour. This information should give
        young people a clear understanding of the potential impact of violence on
        victims and the consequences for perpetrators, including criminality. In
        this regard, the submission from Voices Against Violence observed:

>   Schools need to reinforce and educate those values - but also to
>   practice what they preach. Schools need to be able to effectively
>   punish bad behaviour. We need a society and culture with respect
>   for authority where those in authority can hand out a realistic
>   consequence. Many schools currently run values based programs,
>   however these programs need to be constructive and real and
>   avoid pushing a 'warm and fuzzy – lets all be nice to each other'
>   message. Such programs must teach consequences. They must
>   outline there is a punishment consequence for inappropriate
>   behaviour, and they must teach that there is an impact
>   consequence for the receiver. Put simply children need to be
>   taught the impact of hurting someone else.[10]

4.12   Evidence to the inquiry also included information on social development
        resources which have already incorporated components designed to
        educate young people about the consequences of their actions and of poor

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24 February 2010, p 3; Professor Paul Mazerolle, Transcript of Evidence, 30 March 2010, p 15;
Dr Kate Freiberg, Transcript of Evidence, 30 March 2010, p 30.

8   The Smith Family, Submission No 14, p 4; Cairns Community Legal Centre Inc, Submission
        No 23, pp 6, 7.

9   See for example: Ms Nina Funnell, Submission No 4, p 7; Nepean Domestic Violence Network,
        Submission No 18, p 4; UnitingCare Children, Young People and Families (UCCYPF),
        Submission No 45, p 18; Queensland Government, Submission No 46, p 11; Tasmanian
        Government, Submission No 56, p 9; NSW Government, Submission No 76, p 4; Ms Allyson
        Essex, Transcript of Evidence, 12 May 2010, pp 14-15.

10   Voices Against Violence, Submission No 67, p 5.

decision making. Examples include the *Skool Project*[11] and *Putting Youth in the Picture*.[12]

4.13　Recognising bullying as a widespread form of violence that occurs in various social settings, submissions have also identified the need for social development programs that specifically target bullying behaviour. Importantly, to be effective, evidence suggests that anti-bullying strategies need to assist both the victims and perpetrators of bullying.[13] Again, evidence to the inquiry included reference to a number of anti-bullying social development interventions including *Solving the Jigsaw, Pride and Prejudice, Friendly Schools and Families*.[14]

4.14　In the context of changing communications technologies, a number of submissions considered options addressing the increase in cyber-bullying specifically. Professor Kerry Carrington of Queensland University of Technology (QUT) noted some of the difficulties of addressing cyber-bullying through increased regulation of the internet and other electronic forms of communication as follows:

> The difficulty of regulating internet crimes poses manifold challenges to policy makers and legislators. Regulation is costly, fraught with disputes about jurisdictional liability and frequently outside the reach of regulators. Electronic bullies can also use anonymity, false identities or temporary email accounts to avoid detection.[15]

4.15　Instead Professor Carrington suggested that the best approach to tackling cyber-bullying is through education about the safe and ethical use of internet and other electronic forms of communication, saying:

> ... the best way to minimise harm is to prevent these crimes from occurring in the first place. Responsibility for preventing cyberbullying rests with young people, parents, educators, regulators and internet service providers. Young people need to be educated about the ethical use of internet and electronic forms of communication and warned of the risks of cyberbullying ... Parents and young people can take control of cyberspace by target hardening their home computers with internet security tools,

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11　Mr Michael Jeh, Submission No 73, Attachment 1, pp 1-4.

12　Province Promotions Pty Ltd, Submission No 71, pp 1-5. See also: Exhibits No 11 & 12.

13　Kalyan, Transcript of Evidence, 15 February 2010, pp 10-11.

14　See for example: ACT Government, Submission No 37, p 4; Queensland Government, Submission No 46, p 8; Tasmanian Government, Submission No 56, p 8.

15　Professor Kerry Carrington, Submission No 47, pp 8-9.

software to block fight sites, and regulating the unsupervised time slots allocated for accessing the internet.[16]

4.16   Youthlaw & Frontyard Youth Services also recommended that cyber-bullying strategies be directed to young people, parents and educators, suggesting:

- raising the awareness of young people about personal decision-making in on-line social spaces,
- educating parents and encouraging setting of appropriate controls for their children's engagement with digital-technology, and
- supporting teachers to assist in identifying students at risk of bullying or being bullies themselves.[17]

Early Education Facilities and Schools as the Hub of Social Development

4.17   While acknowledging the importance of families, particularly parents, in providing guidance and discipline to support the development of values, pro-social behaviours and life skills, it was recognised that this is not available to all children and young people in the home. As explained by Dr Adam Tomison, where the family environment does not provide adequate social learning, school provides a means for reaching a large number of children and young people:

> If you take the assumption that maybe parents are not providing the attitudinal education that kids need, you have to look at alternative vehicles to do that and teach what is appropriate behaviour. A school, even though it is very busy in terms of its curriculum, is obviously an ideal venue to do that at varying ages. I am a quite big believer in the use of school for not just teaching reading, writing and arithmetic but also teaching social behaviour that you wish to have enforced through the community— appropriate standards of behaviour, as simple as public courtesy and all the way through to not assaulting people.[18]

4.18   Representing the Foundation for Young Australians (FYA), Mr Charby Ibrahim explained to the Committee:

> We want young people to respect each other and to be able to empathise and sympathise and to develop a range of behaviours, but I do not think those things are necessarily innate all the time.

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16   Professor Kerry Carrington, Submission No 47, p 9.
17   Youthlaw & Frontyard Youth Services, Submission No 35, p 9.
18   Dr Adam Tomison, Transcript of Evidence, 10 February 2010, p 12.

> Also, it is not as though they are explicitly taught within
> everybody's nuclear family, not that the nuclear family is the norm
> anymore anyway. I really believe that there has to be very specific
> education within schools, not just violence prevention but a
> broader respect for relationships ...[19]

4.19   Also focusing on schools as a portal for social development education, the
        submission from UnitingCare Children, Young People and Families
        (UCCYPF) stated:

> Probably the most important point for addressing violent
> behaviour is within the education system. Schools enable
> prevention and early intervention programs to reach a large
> number of young people and present a valuable opportunity to
> provide support for children and young people who are
> displaying or experiencing violent or antisocial behaviour.[20]

4.20   Comments to the Committee from young people themselves were
        generally favourable to integrating social development education into
        schools. As explained by a young participant from the inquiry's Youth
        Forum in Melbourne:

> ... [we need to] teach people how to recognise violence and how to
> deal with it from a very young age. It could maybe be put into the
> curriculum when they are starting school. And it should not just
> be their teachers who teach them, but someone with some
> credibility—someone who has had experience in that area or a role
> model or someone like that—who would come in and teach these
> kids about the issue and how to deal with it, whether it be at
> home, on the street or in the school and whether it be
> cyberbullying or whatever.[21]

4.21   Another young participant emphasised the need for early intervention
        and sustained social development capacity building, saying:

> We need to teach [young children] that even emotional bullying is
> not on, giving the conflict resolution skills at that age and then
> moving on to high school and equipping families with the capacity
> to deal with that at home as well and to educate their children. We
> talked about teachers possibly being equipped with the skills to

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19   Mr Charby Ibrahim, Transcript of Evidence, 15 February 2010, p 31.
20   UCCYPF, Submission No 45, p 4.
21   Simon, Transcript of Evidence, 15 February 2010, p 9. See also: Ms Lauren Moss & Ms Hannah
     Woerle, Transcript of Evidence, 17 March 2010, pp 3, 5.

deal with violence in terms of taking preventative measures rather than addressing the issue when it happens.[22]

4.22   The following comments on social development education were made by respondents to the inquiry's online youth survey:

> *Educate (especially in schools) about the possible outcomes of violence and bullying.* **Female, under 18 years, rural/remote**
>
> *Have a proper education program. Most young people are getting no or wrong behavioural advice from their home environment e.g. lots of parents in 30/45 year old category know nothing of family life, family values and moral behaviour.* **Male, 18-24 years, regional city**
>
> *Make it compulsory in schools to make the students aware of the repercussions and how violence among young people can change a person's life for the worse.* **Female, under 18 years, rural/remote**
>
> *Some young people I know think it is okay to start a fight with someone when you disagree with them. I think teaching people how to express themselves in words and in logical ways would help them.* **Female, 18-24 years old, capital city**
>
> *Violence has to be bred out of people by educating them about the more important aspects of life such as love, respect, human advancement, mental expansion, scientific exploration, arts, culture, music, creativity - this is the way to feed positive thought to those who need it and when they are occupied by these sorts of activities and life goals, then they will cease their senseless violent activity.* **Female, 18-24 years, capital city**

4.23   While prevention of violence among young people is the ideal, some submissions identified the need to provide assistance for those who are at increased risk of violence or who have already been involved in violence either as a perpetrator or victim. In the school setting, it was suggested that better access to support from school counsellors, social workers or school chaplains is needed to prevent escalation of violence or repeat involvement.[23] The following comment was made by a respondent to the inquiry's online youth survey:

> *Provide more counsellors for victims to talk to and not just friends even though friends can be good in the short term, what good is it in the long term?* **Male, under 18 years, capital city**

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22   Heba, Transcript of Evidence, 15 February 2010, p 6.

23   See for example: National Council of Single Mothers and their Children Inc (NCSMC), Submission No 2, p 10; UCCYPF, Submission No 45, p 17.

Committee Comment

4.24   In view of the volume and strength of evidence to the inquiry, the Committee concludes that social development programs which teach and support effective interpersonal communication, life skills and pro-social behaviours will be an essential component of an early intervention and prevention strategy to reduce violence. With regard to effective implementation, the Committee understands the importance of initiating social development with very young children, including pre-school children, and continuing to support social skills capacity building in a developmentally appropriate framework.

4.25   The Committee believes that delivering social development programs through early education facilities and schools will have a number of benefits. Firstly, delivery through formal education systems will ensure that social development programs reach the vast majority of children and young people. Secondly, program delivery through these systems will ensure that understandings are consistent and will eliminate the perception of stigmatisation if the program were delivered to 'at risk' students only.

4.26   To ensure that social development programs are provided nationally, the Committee strongly supports the inclusion of social development as a core component of the national curriculum for kindergarten to year 12. The national curriculum is being progressively developed by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), which in turn reports to the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA). The Committee notes that development, consultation and implementation of phases 1 and 2[24] of the National Curriculum are well progressed and due to be implemented by 2011.[25]

4.27   Therefore, and in view of the volume and strength of evidence to the inquiry, the Committee recommends that MCEECDYA include social development education and training as an essential component in phase 3 developments for the national curriculum.

24   Phase 1 learning areas include English, mathematics, science and history. Phase 2 learning areas include geography, arts and languages. Phase 3 learning areas include information and communication technology and design and technology, health and physical education, economics, business, and civics and citizenship.

25   Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACRA) website, viewed on 19 May 2010 at http://www.acara.edu.au/verve/_resources/What_are_the_AC_development_timelines.pdf.

Recommendation 2

4.28   **The Committee recommends that the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs include social development education and training as an essential component in phase 3 developments for the national curriculum.**

4.29   With regard specifically to bullying, the Committee notes the 2009 *Bullying of Children and Young People* report produced by the General Purposes Standing Committee No 2 of the NSW Legislative Council. The report makes 25 recommendations which address a range of issues including:

- provision of more support and guidance to assist schools with the implementation of anti-bullying programs;

- improved training for teachers on how to identify and intervene in bullying situations;

- recruitment of additional school counsellors and more support for access to external counselling services for students;

- the need for anti-bullying education to be implemented as part of a broad focus on student well-being;

- the need to increase community awareness of the harmful effects of bullying and effect changes in attitudes to bullying; and

- the need to develop and implement a range of strategies to specifically address cyber-bullying.[26]

4.30   The Committee believes that its own recommendation to make social development programs an essential part of the national curriculum will be instrumental in reducing bullying behaviour by promoting respectful relationships and tolerance of diversity. However, the Committee also appreciates as cyber-bullying is a relatively recent phenomenon, that different approaches may be required to address this issue.

4.31   Therefore, the Committee is pleased to note that cyber-bullying is one aspect of cyber-safety being investigated in more detail by the recently

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26   General Purposes Standing Committee No 2, NSW Legislative Council (2009), *Bullying of Children and Young People*.

established Joint Select Committee *Inquiry into Cyber-Safety*.[27] The Committee looks forward to viewing the recommendations made in relation to cyber-bullying in due course.

4.32   In the meantime, the Committee is encouraged to see that the Australian Government has already proceeded to take action to address cyber-safety for young people through its Cybersmart initiative.[28] The Cybersmart website developed by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) provides parents, teachers, librarians, children and young people with up-to-date, comprehensive and age appropriate online cyber-safety resources and assistance.

4.33   With regard to bullying and violence occurring in schools, the Committee notes that the *National Safe Schools Framework* (NSSF) is currently under review. Introduced in 2003, the NSSF:

> ... consists of a set of nationally agreed principles for safe and supportive school environments and includes appropriate responses that schools can adopt to address the issues of bullying, harassment, violence, and child abuse and neglect.[29]

4.34   As noted below, the emergence of new communications technology is also the driver for the NSSF review:

> Since the NSSF was first implemented in schools there has been an emergence of new technologies such as mobile phones and computers. These new technologies have resulted in a new type of bullying known as cyber bullying.
>
> The NSSF also needs to incorporate recent changes to legislation regarding online crimes. Schools have expressed their concerns about their areas of responsibility given that many bullying activities now follow students home, or begin at home, through the use of computers and mobile phones.[30]

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27   Australian Parliament – Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety webpage, viewed on 20 May 2010 at http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jscc/tor.htm.

28   Australian Government Cybersmart website, viewed on 1 June 2010 at http://www.cybersmart.gov.au/.

29   Australian Government – Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) website, viewed on 20 May 2010 at http://www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/NationalSafeSchools/Pages/NationalSafeSchoolsFramework.aspx.

30   Australian Government – DEEWR website, viewed on 20 May 2010 at http://www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/NationalSafeSchools/Pages/Frameworkreview.aspx.

4.35   The Committee understands that the review of the NSSF is due to be completed by mid 2010 and presented to MCEECDYA for endorsement. The Committee looks forward to the release of the revised NSSF.

4.36   For young victims of violence, but also for perpetrators of violence who are frequently facing challenges of their own, the Committee believes that access to support and counselling services for students is critical to the early identification of problems and assisting young people to improve their social skills and to build resilience. While recognising that the provision of school counselling services is the responsibility of state and territory government departments of education, in accordance with recommendation 17 of the NSW 2009 *Report on Bullying of Children and Young People*[31] the Committee urges action by state and territory education departments to recruit additional school counsellors.

4.37   However, the Committee believes that a broader approach to the provision of youth counselling and support services is needed to ensure adequate availability and access. Therefore, the Committee welcomes the additional $79 million funding announced in the 2010 budget to support additional 'youth friendly' mental health services provided by Headspace, including drug and alcohol services. The additional funding, to be rolled out over four years, will deliver up to 30 new youth-friendly services as well as providing extra funding for the existing 30 Headspace sites.[32]

4.38   The Committee believes that establishing partnerships to facilitate referral of students to community-based youth counselling services, such as those provided by Headspace, could provide a means for addressing shortages of counselling services, particularly where school services are limited or oversubscribed. Therefore the Committee recommends that the Australian Government, in consultation with state and territory governments and non-government stakeholders, examine options for establishing partnerships between departments of education and community-based service providers. The intention of these partnerships is to facilitate the referral of students to external counselling and support services where required and appropriate.

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31   Recommendation 17: That the Minister for Education and Training take immediate action to support the recruitment of additional school counsellors. Further, that the Minister consider adopting the model proposed by Public Schools Principals Forum, which would involve the recruitment of university graduates with social-work qualifications to undertake those functions of school counsellors that are not related to clinical assessment.

32   Australian Government - Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA) website, *Australian Government 2010-11 Health and Ageing Portfolio Budget Statements*, viewed on 15 June 2010 at http://www.health.gov.au/budget2010. See also: Various witnesses, Transcript of Evidence 12 May 2010, pp 3, 8-9.

Recommendation 3

4.39   **The Committee recommends that the Australian Government, in consultation with state and territory governments and non-government stakeholders, examine options for establishing partnerships between departments of education and community-based service providers to facilitate referral of students to external counselling and support services where required and appropriate.**

4.40   In addition, the Committee also notes that the Australian Government provides complementary support to school counselling services through the *National School Chaplaincy Program* (NSCP). For participating schools[33], the NSCP offers advice and guidance about ethics, values and relationships.[34] The NSCP program is currently being reviewed by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. The review is being informed by a national consultation with key stakeholders (i.e. state and territory education departments, major service providers, representatives of independent and faith based school systems, peak representative bodies for parent and community organisations, principals and other relevant interest groups). The national consultation process aims to:

> ... consider the achievements and effectiveness of the NSCP, and its relationship with other student support activities. The process will canvass stakeholder views and issues in relation to future chaplaincy and pastoral care services, and other student support activities. A number of key issues will be examined including:
>
> - NSCP achievements
> - relationship of the NSCP with other student support activities
> - what is/is not working well
> - current and future needs
> - potential target group(s)/priority areas
> - possible future program options

33   The NSCP is a voluntary program requiring schools to apply for annual funding to support school chaplains or pastoral care workers. Two funding rounds were conducted under the program in 2007, with schedule program completion in December 2011.

34   Australian Government – DEEWR website, viewed on 15 June 2010 at http://www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/NationalSchoolChaplaincyProgram/Pages/home.aspx.

■ funding model/mechanisms and funding requirements.[35]

4.41   While noting the potential of the NSCP to provide students with pastoral
        care and spiritual guidance, the Committee notes that this is not a
        substitute for professional counselling or support services for students. In
        situations where demand for counselling services is high or in
        circumstances where student issues are complex, some students that
        initially approach school chaplains for advice may need to be referred to
        professional counselling services, either school services or external
        services.

4.42   To improve access to student counselling and support services, the
        Committee believes mandatory training for all school chaplains to assist
        with the early identification of students who may require professional
        assistance is essential. Furthermore, and as noted above, the Committee
        believes that establishment of partnerships and formal mechanisms for
        referral to other youth support services, including external counselling
        services, will enhance and extend the range of professional counselling
        options available to students.

Recommendation 4

4.43   **The Committee recommends that the Department of Education,
        Employment and Workplace Relations, as part of its review of the
        National School Chaplaincy Program, enhance and extend access to
        professional counselling and support service for students by:**

■ **introducing mandatory training for all school chaplains to
  assist them with early identification of students who may
  require professional assistance; and**

■ **establishing partnerships and formal mechanisms for referral
  from the *National School Chaplaincy Program* to other student
  counselling or youth support services, including external
  counselling services where appropriate.**

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35   Australian Government – DEEWR website, viewed on 15 June 2010 at
      http://www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/NationalSchoolChaplaincyProgram/Pages/
      home.aspx.

Relational

4.44   Relational approaches are generally aimed at influencing the relationships that young people have with those that they interact with on a regular basis, such as family members and peers. Interventions are generally aimed at providing parents with effective parenting skills and supporting good family and peer relationships.

Family Relationships

4.45   The importance of stable, healthy and nurturing parenting and good family relationships raised frequently in evidence to the inquiry. As noted by Australian Bahá'i Community:

> The first source of values education is the family. By the time children are old enough to enter school, they have unconsciously adopted many of the values that they experience at home. It is recognised that parental behaviour (particularly neglect or coercion) is a leading cause of violence amongst young people.[36]

4.46   Positive parenting, including the provision of consistent messages, teaching children and young people to understand and respect boundaries was seen by many inquiry participants to be fundamental to establishing pro-social behaviour patterns and avoiding violence.[37] However, parenting skills were also seen by many to be deficient, particularly in certain family circumstances (e.g. those involving economic hardship, inadequate housing, domestic violence, parental substance abuse, lack of parental education).[38] The following comments on parenting were made by respondents to the inquiry's on-line youth survey:

> *Some people just need better parents. **Female, under 18 years, rural/remote***
>
> *Teach the parents how to raise their kids so they have guidelines, support and a conscience so they will have enough respect for others to not disrespect them in any way. **Female, under 18 years, regional city***

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36   Australian Bahá'i Community, Submission No 58, p 2.

37   See for example: Ms Jo Howard, Submission No 3, pp 5-6; Dr Susan George, Submission No 13, pp 1-3; The Smith Family, Submission No 14, pp 6-8; Cairns Community Legal Centre Inc, Submission No 23, p 6; Matthew Stanley Foundation, Submission No 52, pp 28-29; Voices Against Violence, Submission No 67, p 5; Mr Paul Stanley, Transcript of Evidence, 30 March 2010, p 41.

38   See for example: Victim Support Australasia Inc (VSA), Submission No 1, p 7; Ms Jo Howard, Submission No 3, p 3; Voices Against Violence, Submission No 67, p 4.

4.47   In situations of intergenerational disadvantage, it was suggested that today's parents may themselves have lacked the benefit of good parental role models to teach them positive parenting skills.

4.48   Once again, early intervention to encourage the development of effective, stable and supportive relationships within families was considered by many to be critical.[39] The Commissioner for Children and Young People (WA) stressed the importance of early identification of families at risk, suggesting:

> Focusing efforts to support families in the early years with universal screening and information, and with targeted support for families identified with increased risk profiles is essential to improving the risk and protective factor balance for children and young people.[40]

4.49   Some evidence to the inquiry called for universal access to pre-natal and post-natal nurse visitation programs for new mothers to identify parents that may require additional assistance.[41] Evidence also called for increased access to positive parenting programs and programs to facilitate and promote strong and healthy parent/child relationships.[42] Support for positive parenting and family relationships capacity building initiatives in evidence to the inquiry includes reference to a large number of interventions such as the *Positive Parenting Program (Triple P)*, *Communities for Children, Brighter Futures* and *Bringing up Boys*.[43]

Committee Comment

4.50   The Committee notes the availability of a number of Australian Government and state/territory government programs to assist with building and developing strong, stable and healthy family relationships. For example, as part of the NSW State Plan, the Committee notes the

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39   See for example: The Smith Family, Submission No 14, p 5; Cairns Community Legal Centre Inc, Submission No 23, p 6; Matthew Stanley Foundation, Submission No 52, p 25; Queensland Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian, Submission No 66, p 7.

40   Commissioner for Children and Young People (WA), Submission No 33, p 4.

41   See for example: UCCYPF, Submission No 45, p 18; NSW Government, Submission No 76, p 3; Professor Paul Mazerolle, Transcript of Evidence, 30 March 2010, pp 14, 21.

42   See for example: The Smith Family, Submission No 14, p 5; Cairns Community Legal Centre Inc, Submission No 23, p 5; Queensland Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian, Submission No 66, p 7; NSW Government, Submission No 76, pp 3-4.

43   NCSMC, Submission No 2, p 10; Cairns Community Legal Centre Inc, Submission No 23, p 5; NSW Government, Submission No 76, p 3; Professor Paul Mazerolle, Transcript of Evidence, 30 March 2010, p 21.

commitment made by the NSW Government by 2011 to:

■ provide routine ante-natal and post-natal psychosocial assessments for all women who use the public system to identify any issues or areas of difficulty;

■ offer all new parents a nurse home visit;

■ offer parenting education to all parents of children aged 3-8 years by 2011; and

■ extend its *Brighter Futures Program*, a program which aims to improve the level of support available to vulnerable families by providing access to a range of services, such as quality child care, case management, parenting programs and home visiting.[44]

4.51   Furthermore, the Committee understands that the Australian Government is offering a number of interventions under its *Family Support Program*. Family and parenting services which provide early intervention and prevention services are a core component of the program, which aims to assist families to build and strengthen relationships, develop life skills and enhance relationships between parents and children.[45] Of particular relevance to the inquiry is the *Communities for Children* initiative which provides more that $100 million between 2009-10 to 2011-12 to promote protective factors such as good ante-natal and maternal health and nutrition, good parental communication, positive parenting, family harmony and participation in broader social networks.[46] The program focuses on families with children up to 12 years of age who are at risk of disadvantage and operates at 45 sites around Australia.

4.52   In view of the expansion of a number of state based and national strategies to increase the resilience of children and young people by supporting the development of supportive and healthy family relationships, the Committee stops short of making specific recommendations. However, the Committee anticipates that the efficacy of these interventions will be assessed in due course through rigorous evaluation. The critical

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44   NSW Government, Submission No 76, pp 10-11.

45   Australian Government – Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) website, viewed on 26 May 2010 at http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/families/progserv/familysupport/Pages/default.aspx. See also: Ms Allyson Essex, Transcript of Evidence, 12 May 2010, pp 4-5.

46   Australian Government – FaHCSIA website, viewed on 26 May 2010 at http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/families/progserv/communitieschildren/pages/default.aspx. See also: Ms Allyson Essex, Transcript of Evidence, 12 May 2010, pp 4-5.

importance of program evaluation is considered in more detail in Chapter 5.

Peer Relationships

4.53   As children grow older, the influence of parents decreases while the influence of peers increases. As noted in Chapter 3, peer pressure can be difficult for young people to resist. Where peer pressure involves anti-social behaviour and violence and the influence on behaviour is negative, positive messages from peers can also be powerful tools for encouraging positive behaviour.[47] The potential for peer influence to encourage positive behaviour was emphasised in the submission from Voices Against Violence which observed:

> Young guys are probably the biggest influencers - they need to all step up and stop their stupid mates before they do something stupid. Don't encourage the behaviour by relishing in the stories of the fight he got into on the weekend - tell him he is an idiot.
>
> If you've got a mate that gets aggressive when he has too much - stop him before he drinks too much. Young girls also play a big part. Also all need to stand up and give a clear message they don't want to be with someone that likes to punch on. Girls need to send a clear message that they are not impressed by thuggish behaviour.[48]

4.54   As explained by Step Back Think and the Foundation for Young Australians, peer influence is a significant component of the *No Regrets* program.[49] In brief, as outlined by Step Back Think, *No Regrets*:

> ... targets years 9 to 12, with a focus on peer leadership and giving ownership of the problem to students. With the help of a number of volunteers and members of Step Back Think, '*No Regrets*' enables students to come up with ideas and methods for addressing issues of violence and problems of disrespect. It gives them the opportunity to think about ways of dealing with confrontational situations and aims to dispel myths over issues of

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47   See for example: Matthew Stanley Foundation, Submission No 52, p 4; Various witnesses, Transcript of Evidence, 30 March 2010, pp 38-39.

48   Voices Against Violence, Submission No 67, p 5.

49   Foundation for Young Australians (FYA), Submission No 20, p 1; Step Back Think, Submission No 27, p 7.

> violence, drugs and alcohol and the ability to make your own decisions.[50]

4.55   In Brisbane, the Committee heard evidence relating to *Red Frogs*, another peer influence intervention. *Red Frogs* employs young volunteers to support school-leavers through schoolies weeks by providing a positive presence and practical support for young people within their party culture. Mr Leigh Drennan, a friend of Matthew Stanley who was tragically killed in 2005 at the age of 15 years as a result of a violent attack, described his experience as a *Red Frogs* volunteer on the Gold Coast as follows:

> Probably the best example of [peer influence] was when I was down at Schoolies. There were five 17-year-olds walking down Cavill Avenue, not in a group but in a straight line—walking with the intention of knocking into someone or hoping that they could get a reaction out of someone. I happened to walk past them as a Red Frog worker, so I just went over to them and asked them if they wanted some red frogs. I ended up getting into a discussion with them and I talked about Matt and my friendship with Matt and how badly it had cut me up when he died. By the time I finished my discussion with them, their whole body language had changed. They walked away one behind the other. They went from having the intention of looking for a fight, going out at night and wanting to fight someone and getting into some sort of trouble, to being so affected by hearing my story that they walked away with totally different intentions for the night.[51]

Committee Comment

4.56   In addition to the increased risks of experiencing violence as a result of exposure to anti-social peer pressure, the Committee also recognises the very real potential for young people to exert positive influences on their peers. Rather than using 'authority' figures to transfer knowledge and skills, peer educators and volunteers use approaches and styles of communication which overcome traditional generational communication barriers. Furthermore, through their participation in education and guidance initiatives, the young volunteers themselves provide inspirational and positive peer role models for others.

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50   Step Back Think, Submission No 27, p 5. See also: Mr Daniel Cronin, Transcript of Evidence, 15 February 2010, p 18.

51   Mr Leigh Drennan, Transcript of Evidence, 30 March 2010, p 39.

4.57   As with interventions at individual and community levels, the Committee understands the need for peer education programs and interventions to be rigorously evaluated. However, the Committee also believes that it is important for young people to be seen as part of the solution to youth violence rather than solely the cause of the problem. In this regard the Committee is aware that a number of inquiry participants have called for young people to be actively engaged in developing strategies to tackle youth violence.[52]

4.58   The Committee agrees that seeking input from young people is essential to devising and implementing solutions to youth violence that are going to work for them. Indeed as part of its own inquiry the Committee has sought to engage with young people and to hear their views through the inquiry's online survey, and through talking to young people at public hearings and informal meetings. The Committee found this input to be invaluable, and acknowledges that young people themselves best understand the issues confronting them.

4.59   Therefore, the Committee strongly supports the Australian Government's approach to opening channels of communication between Government and young people through the Australian Youth Forum (AYF) and other consultative fora to identify issues of importance to youth and to actively engage young people in developing solutions.

Community

4.60   Community approaches to reducing youth violence generally aim to increase a young person's connectedness with their proximal social environment. Risk and protective factors involve:

- engagement with schools/education;

- the built environment and infrastructure;

- the availability of alcohol and drugs; and

- the effectiveness of law enforcement and policing.

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52   See for example: NCSMC, Submission No 2, p 1; Commissioner for Children and Young People (WA), Submission No 33, p 4; Queensland Government, Submission No 46, p 2; Queensland Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian, Submission No 66, p 1; NSW Government, Submission No 76, p 2; Mr Adair Donaldson, Transcript of Evidence, 30 March 2010, p 48.

Linking to Communities

4.61   The importance of establishing linkages between communities and young people to reduce youth violence was raised by a number of inquiry participants. For example, Mr Harry Hukin observed:

> So many children do not get the nurturing that teaches discrimination, that enables discretion and discernment and social responsibility for the individual, so that they know they are part of the community, needed by the family, that they themselves have responsibilities involving contributions to society. In many ways they are left to fend for themselves.[53]

4.62   The Commissioner for Children and Young People (WA) suggested that:

> Strategies that improve engagement with children, young people and their communities are significant in addressing the impact of social exclusion and disengagement that often translates into violent and antisocial behaviour.[54]

Connections with School

4.63   Several submissions note that strong engagement with school, characterised by good academic achievement and regular attendance, is a protective factor against violence.[55] The following comment was made by a respondent to the inquiry's online youth survey:

> *EDUCATION!!! keep people in school and that will reduce fights.*
> **Female, 18-24 years, regional city**

4.64   The UCCYPF observed:

> For young people who come from a disadvantaged background or who have had few safe places in their lives, school represents a place where they feel safe and can be protected and supported.[56]

4.65   Several submissions and witness statements raised concerns about the value of punitive measures such as school suspensions and expulsions,

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53   Mr Harry Hukin, Submission No 72.2, p 1. See also: Hume City Council, Submission No 43, p 2; Mission Australia, Submission No 59, p 18; Ms Linda Chiodo et al, Submission No 78, p 6.

54   Commissioner for Children and Young People (WA), Submission No 33, p 4.

55   See for example: The Smith Family, Submission No 14, p 5; Mission Australia, Submission No 59, p 18; Youthlaw & Frontyard Youth Services, Submission No 35, p 8.

56   UCCYPF, Submission No 45, p 17.

suggesting that children are likely disengage further from education and become more marginalised.[57] As argued by ARACY:

> While punitive approaches to violent and antisocial behaviour among young people (including school suspension or incarceration in juvenile justice facilities) may have short-term political and public appeal, we submit that policies and programs which have the effect of further alienating young people from constructive social engagement are likely to be counter-productive in the long term.[58]

4.66   Based on the outcomes of their own research, the University of Melbourne's Centre for Adolescent Health reported:

> We found that students who had been suspended from school were 70% more likely to engage in antisocial behaviour 12 months later. This effect was found even after examining the role of established influences such as family conflict and association with violent peers. Finding less punitive ways of dealing with challenging student behaviour may be one way to reduce violence in our young people.[59]

4.67   UCCYPF suggested investigating alternatives to suspension and expulsion as strategies for managing anti-social and violent behaviours in schools, including implementing solutions that focus on effecting behavioural change.[60]

4.68   Evidence to the inquiry, including statements made during informal discussions with young people and youth workers in Perth, suggests that young people are not always effectively supported during periods of suspension. Explaining that suspension and expulsion were sometimes seen as a reward or 'badge of honour' for violent behaviour, Jakob, a participant of the inquiry's Youth Forum told the Committee:

> We agreed that schools are far too lenient in their deterrents. Suspension is virtually a reward. Who wouldn't want to sit on the couch for a week and watch TV?[61]

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57   See for example: Youthlaw & Frontyard Youth Services, Submission No 35, pp 8-9; UCCYPF, Submission No 45, pp 16-17; Mission Australia, Submission No 59, p 23.

58   ARACY, Submission No 55, p 34. See also: Nosrat, Transcript of Evidence, 15 February 2010, p 13.

59   Centre for Adolescent Health, Submission No 24, p 2.

60   UCCYPF, Submission No 45, pp 16-17.

61   Jakob, Transcript of Evidence, 15 February 2010, p 4.

4.69   The importance of useful occupation during periods of suspension and for those young people who have disengaged completely from mainstream education was raised by the Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY) which suggested that there is a need for:

> Targeted and relevant alternative programs for those students who have been expelled or otherwise 'let go' from mainstream education.[62]

Committee Comment

4.70   The Committee is aware of evidence showing that strong engagement with school reduces the risk of involvement in violence for a young person, while disengagement increases the risk of involvement. Low academic achievement and school failure were both factors associated with increased risks of disengagement from school. In this regard, and in accordance with the identified preference for early intervention, the Committee notes the introduction of the *Early Years Learning Framework* (EYLF). The EYLF is part of COAG's broader reform agenda for early childhood education and care. The EYLF is a key component of the *National Quality Framework* which will put in place new *National Quality Standards* to ensure high quality and consistent early childhood education and care across Australia.[63] In brief, the EYLF:

> ... describes the principles, practice and outcomes essential to support and enhance young children's learning from birth to five years of age, as well as their transition to school. The Framework has a strong emphasis on play-based learning as play is the best vehicle for young children's learning providing the most appropriate stimulus for brain development. The Framework also recognises the importance of communication and language (including early literacy and numeracy) and social and emotional development.[64]

4.71   The EYLF is to be progressively implemented starting from July 2010, with full implementation commencing in 2012. The Committee believes that the EYLF will provide a nationally available mechanism to assist children

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62   Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY), Submission No 44, p 9.

63   Australian Government – DEEWR website, viewed on 21 May 2010 at http://www.deewr.gov.au/EarlyChildhood/Policy_Agenda/Quality/Pages/EarlyYearsLearningFramework.aspx.

64   Australian Government – DEEWR website, viewed on 21 May 2010 at http://www.deewr.gov.au/EarlyChildhood/Policy_Agenda/Quality/Pages/EarlyYearsLearningFramework.aspx. See also: Ms Kathryn Shugg, Transcript of Evidence, 12 May 2010, p 14.

from an early age to maximise their engagement with education and to manage the sometimes difficult transition to school.

4.72   An area of concern for the Committee, however, remains the widespread use of school suspension and expulsion. While recognising that schools need to have strategies for dealing with students who are disruptive, the Committee is concerned by evidence that suggests suspension and expulsion, particularly in the absence of adequate supports, is likely to increase student disengagement further.

4.73   In this regard the Committee notes information provided by the ACT Government relating to the trial of a pilot program which provides access for suspended students and their families to a suspension support team (SST) comprising a psychologist, a social worker and a school management consultant. Through the program the SST will provide advice and support for families and schools for addressing the issues responsible for the suspension. The pilot is due to be evaluated at the end of 2010.[65]

4.74   Although school suspension and expulsion policies are the responsibility of state and territory government departments of education the Committee urges jurisdictions to review the policies with a particular focus on providing support for suspended students to assist them to reengage with education.

The Built Environment and Infrastructure

4.75   A number of submissions emphasised the importance of the built environment and infrastructure in developing connectedness with the neighbourhood and reducing crime and violence. Problem behaviours are most likely to occur in areas that suffer from overcrowding and where rapid population growth means that the needs of the community exceed the capacity of available services. For example, the Gold Coast City Council (GCCC) observed:

> High rates of population growth have placed pressure upon the planning, provision and management of social infrastructure. There are major short falls in community facilities and services across the [Gold Coast], particularly in the north, where there is a high need for community facilities, affordable housing, sport and

65   ACT Government, Exhibit No 9.

recreation facilities, community development services, public
transport services, and individual and family support services.
The lack of social facilities and services, increases young people's
vulnerability to crime and violence.[66]

4.76 To address this the GCCC recommended an expansion of the Regional
Local Community Infrastructure Program (RLCIP), an Australian
Government program administered by the Department of Infrastructure,
Transport, Regional Development and Local Government (DITRDLG)
which provides funding to local government authorities to assist with
building and modernising of community infrastructure.[67]

4.77 Several submissions identified the need for young people to have access to
appropriately located and well designed 'youth friendly' spaces, including
public spaces, where young people can congregate safely and also feel
part of the wider community.[68] The following comment was made by a
respondent to the inquiry's online youth survey:

> In neighbourhoods that are known for trouble, (e.g. drugs, violence,
> gangs etc), there needs to be places where youth can go, hang out and
> play games such as billiards or playstation, and there can also be
> information about schools, tafes and uni's and jobs that they can do after
> school. Also details of voluntary work that is available. **Female, under
> 18 years, regional city**

4.78 Research shows that young people frequently report feeling unsafe in
public areas. While many young people congregate in groups for social
reasons, some also report doing so for their own safety. However, groups
of young people in public places are generally viewed with suspicion by
the community and may be perceived as intimidating or threatening. The
Commissioner for Children and Young People (WA) noted the outcome of
a recent survey which reported that more than 50% of children surveyed
felt that they were not made to feel welcome in public spaces.[69]

4.79 According to the submission from Youthlaw & Frontyard Youth Services,
research shows that the use of 'move on' powers to disperse groups from
public areas have not been successful in reducing crime.[70] Rather, several

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66 Gold Coast City Council (GCCC), Submission No 68, p 1.

67 GCCC, Submission No 68, p 2.

68 Nepean Domestic Violent Network, Submission No 18, p 1; CMY, Submission No 44, p 3;
Mr Chris Chappel, Submission No 63, p 3.

69 Commissioner for Children and Young People (WA), Submission No 33, p 4.

70 Youthlaw & Frontyard Youth Services, Submission No 35, p 10.

submissions recommended more active engagement with children and young people in designing youth friendly public spaces and facilities.[71]

4.80   Access to reliable and safe public transport emerged as a significant infrastructure issue for young people. Young people are reliant on public transport and many have identified public transport, including train stations, bus interchanges and taxi-ranks, as high risk areas.[72] Shortages of public transport at night and in the vicinity of entertainment precincts when venues close was raised as particular issues.[73] Commenting on this, Step Back Think observed:

> Taxi ranks are rare and patrons are often refused service because their fare is apparently insufficient. Thousands of people are forced to squabble over taxis and mill around in the city late at night, sometimes for hours.

> Public transport is limited after midnight and as a result, train stations become isolated places. A cycle ensues as stations have a reputation for being unsafe places. This drives the number of commuters down, meaning transport companies cannot justify running late night services.[74]

4.81   In addition to increasing the availability of public transport, suggestions for improvements to public transport safety included better lighting, increased surveillance and monitoring and an increased security presence.[75] The following comments were made by respondents to the inquiry's online youth survey:

> *Definitely need more night time public transport to keep people off the street at late hours.* **Male, under 18 years, capital city**

> *Bus interchanges in Canberra are a no-go zone after dark, and I worry a lot about assaults on campus at night too. Public transport should be a*

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71   See for example: Nepean Domestic Violence Network, Submission No 18, pp 5-6; Commissioner for Children and Yong People (WA), Submission No 33, p 4; CMY, Submission No 44, p 3.

72   See for example: ACT Government, Submission No 37, p 2; Youthlaw & Frontyard Youth Services, Submission No 35, p 11; Queensland Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian, Submission No 66, p 8; Heba, Transcript of Evidence, 15 February 2010, p 6.

73   Step Back Think, Submission No 27, p 3.

74   Step Back Think, Submission No 27, p 3.

75   See for example: AIFS, Submission No 39, p 6; Queensland Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian, Submission No 66, p 8; Heba, Transcript of Evidence, 15 February 2010, p 6.

lot more frequent at night so people aren't left stranded or forced to walk home. **Female, 18-24 years, capital city**

Have better guards and police on public transport. It's really unsafe at night and I know people talk about gangs and drunk people on trains having fights. **Male, under 18 years, capital city**

Committee Comment

4.82   The Committee recognises the important influence of the built environment and infrastructure to developing cohesive and strong communities. Access to a range of services for families and individuals, particularly in areas of high population density or experiencing rapid population growth, is critical. For young people specifically, who often do not have access to their own 'private space', youth friendly public spaces and facilities are important realms in which to socialise. The dependence of young people on public transport also makes them particularly vulnerable to deficiencies and risks in public transport infrastructure.

4.83   While responsibility for infrastructure generally lies with state/territory governments and/or local government authorities, the Committee notes the support that has been provided to local government authorities for community infrastructure under the RLCIP. Two rounds of RLCIP funding totalling $1.2 billion have been provided to support a diverse range of infrastructure projects. Funded projects have included development and improvement of social and cultural infrastructure (e.g. sports grounds and recreations facilities), youth facilities (e.g. community and youth centres) and public transport infrastructure. The RLCIP was part of the Australian Government's Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan.

4.84   The Committee believes that additional strategic funding to develop community infrastructure, specifically youth friendly public spaces, youth facilities and improved public transport infrastructure will help to develop and support connectedness of young people with their communities. Therefore, the Committee recommends that the DITRDLG provide additional strategic funding for the development of community infrastructure to assist communities to become more 'youth friendly'. The funding should be awarded on a competitive basis to local government authorities that can demonstrate communities with the greatest need for additional social/cultural facilities and/or infrastructure to support youth. These could include communities experiencing rapid population growth, or more established communities with inadequate or ageing infrastructure.

Recommendation 5

4.85   **The Committee recommends that the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government provide additional strategic funding for the development of community infrastructure to support communities to become more 'youth friendly'. The funding should be awarded on a competitive basis to local government authorities that can demonstrate communities with the greatest need for social/cultural facilities and/or infrastructure to support youth.**

4.86   Bearing in mind that urban planning and infrastructure are primarily responsibilities of state and territory governments and local authorities rather than of Australian Government, the Committee also strongly encourages the responsible authorities to actively engage with young people when planning youth friendly public spaces, youth specific facilities and in the planning the provision of adequate and safe public transport options.

Alcohol and Violence

4.87   Availability and access to alcohol and other drugs, as well as tolerant attitudes towards alcohol consumption and drug use at family, local and community levels are factors known to increase the risk of becoming involved in violence. As noted in Chapter 3, although use of illegal drugs is believed to contribute to youth violence, consumption of alcohol is the most concerning issue due to levels of drinking in the community and the well established association between alcohol and violence. A number of inquiry participants also observed that drinking alcohol is part of Australia's social and cultural fabric. As such, alcohol and alcohol-related violence is not only a 'youth' issue, but part of a wider social issue.

4.88   While using social marketing to change community attitudes towards alcohol is considered in Chapter 5 of the report, this Chapter addresses issues associated with control and regulation. There was widespread support in evidence for governments to explore and implement a diverse

range of measures to reduce the harmful consumption of alcohol and associated alcohol-fuelled violence.[76] Common suggestions include:

- enacting nationally consistent liquor licensing legislative reforms to restrict access to alcohol by decreasing the physical and economic availability of alcohol (e.g. by raising the minimum legal drinking age, increasing taxes on alcohol, restricting the density of alcohol outlets and restricting outlet opening times, mandatory responsible service of alcohol (RSA) training for staff at licensed venues);[77]

- enacting nationally consistent liquor licensing legislative reforms to mitigate against the risks of alcohol-fuelled violence by improving the physical environment in licensed premises (e.g. reducing overcrowding by establishing national standards for occupancy loading, reducing 'vertical drinking'[78] environments by requiring floor plans to include dance floors, seating areas and quiet areas etc);[79]

- improved policing and enforcement of liquor control laws and regulations;[80]

- limiting the way alcohol is advertised and served to young people and raising awareness of the linkages between consumption of alcohol and increased levels of violence;[81] and

- developing nationally consistent principles and practices regarding supply of alcohol to minors (secondary supply), including legislation around the service of alcohol to minors on private premises.[82]

4.89   One of the challenges identified with regard to increasing and enforcing stronger liquor control measures relates to the deregulation of the liquor industry. Specifically, it was noted that the National Competition Policy

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76   See for example: Mr Kelvin Thomson MP, Submission No 10, pp 1-2; Community Legal Centre Inc, Submission No 23, p 7; Queensland Government, Submission No 46, p 9.

77   See for example: VicHealth, Submission No 26, pp 5-7; Alcohol and other Drugs Council of Australia (ADCA), Submission No 28, pp 5-6, 12; Australian Drug Foundation (ADF), Submission No 29, p 5; UCCYPF, Submission No 45, p 9; Queensland Government, Submission No 46, pp 9-10; ARACY, Submission No 55, p 23.

78   Vertical drinking environments are those which 'encourage' the consumption of alcohol by providing limited spaces to sit, limited surface on which to rest a drink and limited options for engaging in non-drinking activities such as eating, dancing or conversation.

79   See for example: ADCA, Submission No 28, pp 10-11; Mr Jono Chase, Transcript of Evidence, 15 February 2010, pp 20-21.

80   See for example: ADCA, Submission No 28, p 14; ADF Submission No 29, p 8; ARACY, Submission No 55, p 24.

81   See for example: ADCA, Submission No 28, pp 5-6; UCCYPF, Submission No 45, p 9;

82   See for example: ADF, Submission No 29, p 11.

(NCP) which requires states/territories to remove regulatory obstacles to competition in all industries, including the liquor industry, has contributed to the ready availability and accessibility of alcohol.[83] Although it is possible for an industry to be exempted from NCP on the basis of the 'public interest', according to Step Back Think:

> ... minimising of harm has come off second-best in the pursuit of a competitive, alcohol-fuelled market.[84]

4.90   Although support for increased controls and restrictions to be applied to the liquor industry was widespread in evidence to the inquiry, it was not universal. The submission from the Australian Hotels Association (AHA) argued that no further controls are needed, noting that the liquor industry is already subject to extensive regulation.[85]

4.91   A number of submissions commented favourably on voluntary participation in local liquor accords, which bring together a range of stakeholders to reduce harmful drinking, including representatives of the liquor industry and community representatives.[86] To complement this form of self-regulation, Step Back Think proposed establishing an interactive website called *Rate Your Venue*. Step Back Think described their proposal as follows:

> Marketed as a gig guide this website would provide information about live music, good food, events and promotions, while also offering a safety rating based primarily on patron feedback but also on Victorian police statistics. The website would tackle, amongst other things, information about whether bouncers are 'male friendly' or unnecessarily violent at a particular venue, the street lighting, how long queues tend to be and whether it's easy to get transport (particularly taxis) to and from a venue.[87]

4.92   Also in support of a collaborative approach with the liquor industry, Mr Adair Donaldson of Province Promotions noted the potential for unintended consequences with over-regulation, observing:

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83   ADF, Submission No 29, 7. See also: Step Back Think, Supplementary Submission No 27.1, pp 1-5; GCCC, Submission No 68, p 2.

84   Step Back Think, Supplementary Submission No 27.1, p 3.

85   Australian Hotels Association (AHA), Submission No 49, pp 10-11.

86   See for example: Queensland Government, Submission No 46, p 7; AHA, Submission No 49, pp 8-9; Matthew Stanley Foundation, Submission No 52, pp 13-14; NSW Government, Submission No 76, p 5.

87   Step Back Think, Submission No 27, pp 6-7.

> I also think we need to adopt a collaborative approach with the alcohol industry, rather than an adversarial approach ... Here in Queensland, the government was naming and shaming venues and putting further licensing controls on them. In the past the publicans had been cooperating with the police. If somebody was acting up in their hotel they would hold them until the police arrived and then pass them over to the police and provide all the imagery to ensure the most successful chance of a prosecution. But, of course, as soon as that started counting against them, they thought, 'Bugger this, what's the point in doing that? We might as well grab him, put him outside and then ban him from coming into the venue.' There was no benefit for them to do the right thing.[88]

4.93   The possibility of other unintended consequences of restricting access to alcohol was raised by a number of inquiry participants. For example, with regard to raising the legal drinking age, Simon, a participant of the Melbourne Youth Forum noted:

> We looked at the drinking age and how it has been talked about being raised to 21. We thought that would not help; it would only encourage people to go and drink in public places such as public transport, in the park and wherever else. As we know, underage drinking does occur. It is hard to stop. Raising the drinking age would create less safe environments for people to go and drink, so would only increase the violence.[89]

4.94   Similarly the AHA also commented as follows:

> If you make it harder for licensed premises, which are subject to stringent regulatory behaviour requirements, to operate and you push drinking behaviour out into the parks, the backyards and all of that, you are actually going to create an environment where drinking will be less regulated and the potential for uncontrolled violence will be more evident.[90]

4.95   The risk of alcohol price increases simply shifting activity from one problem behaviour to another was also raised. As Mr Thomas McGuire of the AHA told the Committee:

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88   Mr Adair Donaldson, Transcript of Evidence, 30 March 2010, p 50.
89   Simon, Transcript of Evidence, 15 February 2010, p 8.
90   Mr William Healey, Transcript of Evidence, 3 February 2010, pp 2-3.

> The problem we can see is that, the more expensive our drinks
> become, the more attractive the [illegal] drug is.[91]

4.96   Similarly the National Council of Single Mothers and their Children
        (NCSMC) observed:

> One of the difficulties of drug and alcohol policies is that
> restricting supply of one drug or form of supply can lead users to
> change to more harmful substances which may be cheaper or more
> readily available. The 'alcopop' tax, for example, lead many young
> people to purchase spirits to mix themselves, rather than use the
> more expensive, but dosage controlled, pre-mixed drink.
> Policymakers in this area need to research the views and
> behaviours of substance abusers to identify the impacts of
> proposed policies and ensure that the planned policy will not shift
> users to more harmful behaviour.[92]

4.97   In relation to underage drinking specifically, evidence shows that this
        tends to occur away from licensed premises taking place most frequently
        in public spaces (parks, public transport etc) and on private premises
        (parties at private residences etc), creating a different set of risks.[93] As
        explained by Mr Donaldson:

> If, for one moment we have a look at the hotel as a drinking
> environment, we know that every one of those people working
> there have to be trained in the responsible service of alcohol and
> they have to have proper security because they know that if they
> do not do those things there are going to be tough penalties for
> them. However, when you look at drinking at private premises,
> particularly at underage parties, invariably there is no security and
> no monitoring of how much alcohol is being consumed. I believe
> there is far greater risk for patrons in private premises than there is
> in licensed premises.[94]

4.98   On a number of occasions inquiry participants noted the role of family
        members (including parents and siblings) and older friends in supplying
        alcohol to people under the age of 18 years. The Australian Drug
        Foundation (ADF) described the extent of 'secondary supply' of alcohol to
        under 18s noting:

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91   Mr Thomas McGuire, Transcript of Evidence, 3 February 2010, p 8.
92   NCSMC, Submission No 2, p 8.
93   See for example: AHA, Transcript of Evidence, 3 February 2010, p 2; Mr Adair Donaldson,
     Transcript of Evidence, 30 March 2010, p 51.
94   Mr Adair Donaldson, Transcript of Evidence, 30 March 2010, p 51.

> Studies on how and where young drinkers acquire alcohol reveal young people find it easy to obtain. Parents are the most common source of alcohol for secondary school students, with 37% of 12- to 17-year-olds indicating their parents gave them their last drink. The proportion of students whose parents supplied them with alcohol was significantly greater among younger students (39%) than older students (35%). The three main locations in which current student drinkers consumed alcohol were the family home, a friend's home or at a party.[95]

4.99   The following comments were made by respondents to the inquiry's online youth survey:

> *Alcohol isn't just a problem when sold straight from the store to young people, but many of them actually get it from their parents or an older friend.* **Female, under 18 years, regional city**
>
> *Make the people responsible for suppling alcohol to under 18s have greater penalties.* **Female, under 18 years, rural/remote**

4.100   Some evidence noted that there are jurisdictional differences in relation to the regulation of secondary supply of alcohol to minors on private premises. Only three states (Queensland, NSW and Tasmania), have legislation which places limits on the circumstances under which adults can supply alcohol to minors on private premises. The ADF and others have recommended the introduction of nationally consistent legislation based on the Queensland model which:

> ... deems [supply of alcohol to minors on private premises] illegal unless the young person's parent or responsible adult has given prior approval; the amount of alcohol supplied is not excessive; and the server provides adequate supervision of the young person. Otherwise provision of alcohol to young people is regarded as 'irresponsible supply' and is unlawful.[96]

4.101   Proponents of this approach however also stress the need for secondary supply sanctions to be accompanied by a national comprehensive communication and education campaign targeting both parents and teenagers.[97]

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95   ADF, Submission No 29, p 11.

96   ADF, Submission No 29, p 11. See also: Leigh Clark Foundation, Submission No 69, p 2.

97   ADF, Submission No 29, p 11; Leigh Clark Foundation, Submission No 69, p 2.

Committee Comment

4.102   The Committee acknowledges that the vast majority of Australians consume alcohol at safe levels and behave responsibly. Nevertheless, the evidence regarding the impact of irresponsible and excessive alcohol consumption, including evidence linking alcohol consumption with increased risks of being involved in violence, is compelling. In this environment the Committee understands that reducing the harmful effects of alcohol is an area of active concern for the community and for policy makers at all levels of government.

4.103   Of particular relevance, the Committee notes recommendations made in two recent reports that have examined options for minimising the harmful effects of alcohol, including alcohol-related violence. Firstly, in September 2009 the National Preventative Health Taskforce published its *National Preventative Health Strategy: Australia the healthiest country by 2020.*[98] The Taskforce's report identified a number of key action areas for reducing the harmful effects of alcohol through a range of fiscal, regulatory and social marketing measures.

4.104   Then in March 2010 the Law, Justice and Safety Committee of the Queensland Legislative Assembly released the report from its *Inquiry into Alcohol-Related Violence.*[99] Broadly endorsing the recommendations of the National Preventative Health Taskforce, the Legislative Assembly's report makes a total of 68 recommendations addressing a wide range of issues, and includes recommendations to:

   ■ mitigate risks in licensed venues (e.g. by mandating RSA training for staff, encouraging improved electronic surveillance in and around venues, limiting trading hours, restricting the use glass etc);

   ■ improve the enforcement of liquor licensing laws by increasing resources to support enforcement by the relevant government officials and by increasing police numbers in entertainment precincts at times of high activity;

   ■ provide improved access to public transport to assist with the safe and efficient departure of large numbers of patrons from entertainment precincts when venues close;

98   National Preventative Health Taskforce, *National Preventative Health Strategy: Australia the healthiest country by 2020,* viewed on 15 June 2010 at http://www.preventativehealth.org.au/.

99   Law, Justice and Safety Committee of the Queensland Legislative Assembly, *Inquiry into Alcohol-Related Violence – Final Report,* viewed on 15 June 2010 at http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/view/committees/documents/lcarc/reports/Report%2074.pdf.

- restrict alcohol promotional activities, including implementing bans on advertising of discount liquor;

- support the development of local liquor accords; and

- foster positive cultural change in community attitudes towards alcohol.

4.105   In May 2010 the Australian Government released its response to the Taskforce's recommendations, *Taking Preventative Action: A response to Australia the healthiest country by 2020*. Therefore the Committee understands that the Australian Government has already committed to a number of key actions aimed at reducing the harmful effects of alcohol. In this context the Committee particularly adds it support to initiatives being progressed through COAG and the Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy (MCDS) to:

- harmonise liquor control laws and regulations across states and territories;

- to implement best practice policing and enforcement measures; and

- to support community inclusive initiatives such as liquor accords.

4.106   The Committee is also strongly in favour of the Government's support for developing a nationally consistent approach and strengthening legislation relating to secondary supply of alcohol to minors. The Committee will present its views later in the report on the use of social marketing campaigns to effect cultural change in community attitudes to alcohol.

4.107   The Committee notes that a number of submissions to the inquiry have suggested that restrictions to liquor licensing should be linked to reforms to the NCP. However, the Committee feels that it would be inappropriate to utilise the NCP, which is essentially an economic policy framework to support the principles of commercial freedom, to bring about social policy outcomes. Instead, the Committee believes that a national policy approach comprising the suite of initiatives currently being progressed through COAG will have a more direct and significant effect on reducing the harmful effects of alcohol, including alcohol-related violence impacting on young Australians.

Best Practice Policing

4.108   At community level, effective policing and enforcement of laws have been identified as important protective factors against violence. As noted by the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC):

> There is a great deal of evidence that suggests that police practices can also have an impact on crime. It should be noted however that while some police practices can reduce crime, others may have no impact, and still others may actually inadvertently increase crime. Importantly, police often come into contact with at-risk young people before other agencies. As such, they can play a crucial role in reducing youth violence.[100]

4.109   Highlighting the potential for tensions between young people and the police, particularly in some communities, a participant of the inquiry's Melbourne Youth Forum explained:

> The other issue is the police—they are totally against young people. If we are to survive as a society—and we are the future— we need to have the police on our side. We need them to look at us first. If we drink, smoke or do whatever young people do these days, do not look at that—see the young person first. A lot of young people get hurt by the police. A lot of communities are afraid of them, so the police need to do mental health training and to study psychology, sociology, people's cultures and stuff and how to deal with different communities. Some communities can be approached easily, while some communities are very scared of the police.[101]

4.110   Another participant of the Youth Forum observed:

> The police can act as a deterrent but there also needs to be rapport between young people and the police so that young people do not feel targeted by the police. They need to feel that the police are people that they can go to. That would maybe enhance the reporting [of crime] because we recognise that for young people it is quite difficult for them to report for various reasons.[102]

4.111   Evidence has included a range of suggestions for optimising the effectiveness of policing and law enforcement. Some have indicated that there are demonstrable benefits associated with increasing the police presence in areas of need and in known trouble 'hotspots' as this improves the capacity of the police to respond rapidly to emerging issues and to prevent the escalation of violence.[103] There was also a significant level of

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100 Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC), Submission No 57, p 11.

101 Nasro, Transcript of Evidence, 15 February 2010, p 12.

102 Heba, Transcript of Evidence, 15 February 2010, p 7.

103 Ms Amanda Beattie, Submission No 6, p 3; Centre for Adolescent Health, Submission No 24, p 3; WA Government, Submission No 75, p 5; Simon, Transcript of Evidence, 15 February 2010, p 8.

support for community policing initiatives to build positive relationships between law enforcement authorities and young people.[104] Programs supported in evidence include the *School Based Police Officers Program*, *Adopt a Cop* and initiatives such as the network of Police and Citizens Youth Clubs (PCYC).[105]

4.112 The importance of policing strategies which are tailored to address the needs of diverse groups of young people and communities was also raised For example, the CMY observed:

> There is a lack of cultural appropriateness and flexibility within the police and justice system. Often there is a lack of translated material available to a victim, an inadequate use of interpreters and a lack of understanding of how the experience of being a refugee impacts on a young person's settlement in Australia.[106]

4.113 The CMY described its *Youth Referral and Independent Persons Program (YRIPP)* as an example of a successful strategy to break down communication barriers between culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) youth and law enforcement officers, stating:

> The Victorian Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee endorsed the Youth Referral and Independent Person Program (YRIPP) as 'an excellent example' of a strategy that tries to reduce offending and its effects by breaking down communication and language barriers and providing culturally diverse young people with access to a referral service that may be able to provide further and specialised assistance.[107]

4.114 In informal discussions with police officers in Perth, the Committee also heard about the important communication role played by designated multicultural liaison officers working within the WA police force. There was additional support in evidence for increased training for police,

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104 See for example: Dr Susan George, Submission No 13, p 6; Queensland Government, Submission No 46, pp 3-4; Professor Kerry Carrington, Submission No 47, p 14; Tasmanian Government, Submission No 56, pp 5-6; Queensland Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian, Submission No 66, p 8.

105 See for example: Queensland Government, Submission No 46, pp 3-4; Tasmanian Government, Submission No 56, pp 6-7; Northern Territory Government, Submission No 61, p 10; Mr Russell Armstrong, Transcript of Evidence, 10 March 2010, p 12.

106 CMY, Submission No 44, p 6.

107 CMY, Submission No 44, p 9.

including those 'on the front line' in dealing with young people from diverse cultural backgrounds.[108]

4.115   Some evidence also advocated for a greater focus on crime prevention, and identified the critical role of the police in effecting early intervention and prevention of crime.[109] The Police Federation of Australia (PFA) called for a collaborative approach to crime prevention involving police forces and all levels of government working together effectively to reduce crime impacting on young people.[110] Using a US based program as an operational model of collaborative community policing, the PFA proposed the establishment of an innovative crime prevention program in Australia which brings the police and local communities together to address issues of significance at the local level.[111]

4.116   Although noting limitations associated with the rigour of evaluations, based on available data the AIC identified nine key principles of best policing practice which apply to reducing levels of youth violence. In brief these principles are:

- targeted approaches – providing a police presence to reduce crime in areas where the need is greatest;

- tailored approaches – recognising that 'one size does not fit all', and responding to diverse need of different cohorts of young people (e.g. women, Indigenous youth, young people from CALD backgrounds etc);

- timeliness – approaches that offer immediate responses to young people's offending behaviour are likely to be more successful than those (such as courts) that involve lengthy delays;

- early intervention and prevention – policing initiatives that target offenders at young ages and/or early in their offending trajectories;

- trust and relationship building – approaches that increase this trust, and build healthy relationships with communities, are likely to have positive long-term impacts on levels of violence;

108   CMY, Submission No 44, pp5-6, p 8. See also: Farah, Transcript of Evidence, 15 February 2010, p 5.

109   See for example: Police Federation of Australia (PFA), Submission No 41, p 2; Mr Robert Falconer, Transcript of Evidence, 15 February 2010, p 44;

110   PFA, Submission No 41, p 2.

111   PFA, Submission No 41, pp 4-6.

- respectful interactions – evidence has shown that offenders who are treated with respect by criminal justice personnel are less likely to reoffend;

- collaborative approaches – programs that involve extensive inter-agency collaborations frequently involving the police, youth workers, the community sector and young people;

- sending clear messages – initiatives that send clear and immediate responses to violent behaviour; and

- targeting substance misuse – initiatives that seek to address the misuse of alcohol and other drugs.[112]

4.117   The following comments on policing and law enforcement were made by respondents to the inquiry's online youth survey:

> *Provide more police, and in the right places at the right time - Provide police with the POWER (laws) to deal with it and then ENFORCE it (in the courts) - Reintroduce right moral principles into society, which is in serious decline.* **Male, 18-24 years, regional city**
>
> *More Police, EXTREME toughness on gangs or gang behaviour, offenders should be punished (not a slap on the wrist) offenders usually get caught and go back to old habits without caring.* **Male, 18-24 years, regional city**
>
> *Definitely need more police in 'trouble spots' and greater penalties for those initiating/ participating in violent activities.* **Female, under 18 years, capital city**
>
> *Bigger Police presence on the street but we need police who are youth friendly and not just agro to everyone they meet-the causes more aggression! It also makes young people have a fear and hatred of the police force and not use them properly.* **Female, 18-24 years, capital city**
>
> *I do not think more police presence and restriction of opening hours for pubs and clubs is going to work -you will simply create more tension for those youths who hold an anti-authority mentality and they will have less time occupied in places where they can be monitored by security.* **Female, 18-24 years, capital city**

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112   AIC, Submission No 57, pp 12-13.

Committee Comment

4.118   The Committee notes the potential for best practice policing to build and strengthen communities, and to reduce levels of violence involving young people. During the inquiry the Committee had the opportunity to engage in formal and informal discussions with serving police officers based in the ACT, Queensland and WA. On these occasions the Committee was impressed by the dedication and commitment of police officers to engaging constructively with young people and communities to reduce levels of crime generally, and to address issues of violence involving young people specifically.

4.119   In relation to reducing levels of youth offending, the Committee is encouraged to see that the Australian Government and state/territory governments have been working together through COAG to further the development of best practice policing.[113] According to the December 2009 COAG communiqué:

> COAG endorsed the work of the Ministerial Council on Police and Emergency Management, noting that best-practice policing is one element of broader, holistic responses to youth offending. COAG asked Police Ministers to work together to further develop best-practice policing, the features of which could include:
>
> ■ targeted police effort in areas with a history of anti-social and violent behaviour and weapons use;
>
> ■ restorative justice conferencing, which can require young offenders to face their victims and confront the impact and consequences of their actions and complete community service and other reparations;
>
> ■ bans to prevent serious and persistent offenders from entering entertainment precincts (containing licensed premises) and reducing access to alcohol through strict enforcement of licensing legislation; and
>
> ■ ensuring that young people are dealt with by police as soon as possible following criminal incidents when they are still fresh in a young person's mind.
>
> COAG noted that best-practice policing targets areas of greatest need, is developed in consultation with non law-enforcement agencies to address the diverse needs of young people, draws on Australian and international research on best practice, is informed

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113   Australian Government – DEEWR et al, Submission No 62, p 46.

by successful programs and is adaptable to jurisdictional circumstances.[114]

4.120   The Committee is also keen where possible to support innovative policing approaches to reduce levels of crime and violence involving young people. In relation to this, the Committee notes the Australian Government's support for crime prevention through the now discontinued National Community Crime Prevention Program (NCCP) administered by the Attorney-General's Department.[115] In the context of a growing evidence-base relating to best practice policing, the Committee recommends that the Attorney-General's Department introduce a new crime prevention program to foster a collaborative approach to crime prevention. The Committee suggests establishing partnerships between the police and local communities to enhance community safety and to reduce crime, including violence involving young people, should be a key feature of the program.

Recommendation 6

4.121   **The Committee recommends that the Attorney-General's Department introduce a new crime prevention grants scheme requiring partnerships to be established between the police and the local community to support collaborative approaches to enhancing community safety and reducing crime at a local level.**

Tertiary Interventions and Rehabilitation

4.122   While support for a 'prevention first' approach is a prominent feature of evidence to the inquiry, some participants have also emphasised the need for tertiary interventions directed at assisting young people who have already experienced violence, including victims of violence and perpetrators of violence. A number of submissions indicated that demand for victim support services exceeds supply, identifying a shortage of

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114   COAG Communiqué, 9 December 2009, viewed on 26 May 2010 at
      http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2009-12-07/index.cfm#nat_yout_strat.

115   Australian Government – Attorney-General's Department website, viewed on 26 May 2010 at
      http://offi.gov.au/agd/WWW/ncphome.nsf/Page/National_Community_Crime_Prevention_Programme.

tertiary services to assist young victims of violence, including victims of bullying, family violence and of sexual assault.[116] In response to a question regarding supports available to reduce the impact of violence on young victims and to assist victims to build resilience, Professor Mazerolle observed:

> What are the supports for young people or anyone who has been victimised? We have something in Queensland—the Homicide Victims Support Group—but a lot of victimisation occurs short of homicide, so I think that is a good question. There is a void in that space.[117]

4.123   Access to tertiary services, including drug and alcohol services, and mental health services for the rehabilitation of perpetrators of violence was also considered by some to be in short supply.[118] In broad terms, the aim of tertiary interventions for young perpetrators of violence is to reduce the incidence of recidivism and to assist with reintegration into society. Where possible, evidence suggests that the use of diversionary measures such as police cautions, warnings and restorative justice conferencing for young offenders is preferable.[119] As explained by Youthlaw & Frontyard Youth Services:

> Youthlaw ... supports strategies that provide access to cautions and diversionary programs as positive ways to reduce re-offending and young people's contact with the criminal justice system. Research indicates that diversionary measures, such as cautions, conferencing, and diversion programs are more effective in reducing re-offending than traditional and more punitive methods of punishment. Whilst statistics show that, once convicted, young offenders are more than likely to re-offend.[120]

4.124   Professor Kerry Carrington of the Queensland University of Technology noted that support for restorative justice conferencing is founded on research which indicates that:

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116 See for example: VSA, Submission No 1, p 5; NCSMC, Submission No 2, p 9; Ms Nina Funnell, Submission No 4, p 7; National Abuse Free Contact Campaign, Submission No 5, p 11; Royal Women's Hospital, Submission No 17, p 3; ACON, Submission No 30, p 5.

117 Professor Paul Mazerolle, Transcript of Evidence, 20 March 2010, p 24.

118 See for example: Centre for Adolescent Health, Submission No 24, p7; UCCYPF, Submission No 45, pp 18-19.

119 See for example: Hume City Council, Submission No 43, p 3; Professor Kerry Carrington, Submission No 47, p 20; NSW Government, Submission No 76, pp 9-10.

120 Youthlaw & Frontyard Youth Services, Submission No 35, p 12.

> ... punitive, retributive forms of justice stigmatize the offender and
> amplify deviance. In contrast to punitive models, restorative
> justice models of intervention stigmatize the deed rather than the
> offender, emphasize responsibility, negotiation, restoration,
> compensation, and reintegration, rather than retribution ...[121]

4.125   Similarly, describing the operation and benefits of restorative justice, the
         ACT Government observed:

> Restorative justice is a private justice transaction that takes place in
> a safe and carefully managed environment. It gives the people
> who have been affected by the offence - the victim, offender and
> their respective supporters - the opportunity to come together to
> discuss what happened, who has been affected, and what can be
> done to move forward. It is a voluntary process with the victim
> and offender able to withdraw their consent at any time during the
> process.
>
> There is strong evidence to suggest that the most positive
> application of restorative justice is with violent offences. Further to
> this are the positive findings around the capacity for restorative
> justice processes to reduce post-traumatic stress in victims of
> crime.[122]

4.126   Despite the potential of restorative justice conferencing to reduce violent
         reoffending, Dr Kelly Richards of the AIC referred to research suggesting
         that this option is underutilised in some jurisdictions. Specifically Dr
         Richards noted:

> There was a lot of setting up of programs and a lot was invested in
> those programs, but in New South Wales in particular and also in
> Queensland—two enormous jurisdictions with lots of young
> people going through the system—a very small proportion of
> young people are given the opportunity to go to youth justice
> conferencing.[123]

4.127   Where the nature of violent offending is serious or where there is a history
         of repeat offending and diversionary options are not appropriate, then
         access to more intensive rehabilitation is required.[124] Intensive approaches
         focus on:

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121 Professor Kerry Carrington, Submission No 47, p 20.
122 ACT Government, Submission No 37, pp 9-10.
123 Dr Kelly Richards, Transcript of Evidence, 10 February 2010, p 12.
124 Life Without Barriers, Submission No 48, pp 2-4; Professor Paul Mazerolle, Transcript of
     Evidence, 30 March 2010, p 14.

■   providing intensive counselling to identify and address underlying
    factors which increase the risk of violent behaviour; and

■   teaching life skills, including constructive and alternative strategies to
    dealing with anger and developing non-violent conflict resolution
    skills.

4.128   For example, the *Intensive Supervision Program* (ISP) available for young
        offenders in NSW:

> ... addresses some of the factors associated with juvenile re-
> offending, including substance abuse, financial problems, housing
> needs, family conflict and negative peer pressure. Ultimately, ISP
> seeks to promote responsible behaviour and decrease antisocial
> behaviour amongst juvenile offenders.[125]

4.129   Life Without Barriers described another intensive rehabilitation
        intervention for young offenders based on a multi-systemic therapy
        approach, outlined as follows:

> ... a family and community based treatment approach that has
> achieved long-term positive outcomes with antisocial youth (aged
> 10 to 17) by addressing the multiple determinants of serious
> antisocial behaviour. Positive outcomes include reducing
> offending, increasing school or vocational attendance and
> reducing the need for out-of-home placements.[126]

4.130   The Committee also heard evidence about the *Be Real About Violence*
        program (BRAVE), a state funded cognitive behavioural intervention
        targeted at young people who have been found guilty by the court of
        committing a violent offence. BRAVE aims to explore in an interactive
        way with young offenders their motivations for violent behaviour and the
        benefits of reducing violent behaviour, as well as to teach strategies to
        manage anger and provide opportunities to develop and practice pro-
        social behaviours.[127] BRAVE, which was set up in 2005, is being evaluated
        in 2010.

Committee Comment

4.131   The Committee appreciates that tertiary interventions to assist young
        people who have already experienced violence are a critical component of

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125   NSW Government, Submission No 76, p 7.

126   Life Without Barriers, Submission No 48, pp 2-4.

127   Centre for Adolescent Health, Submission No 24, pp 6-7; Ms Lynne Evans, Transcript of
      Evidence, 15 February 2010, pp 51-52.

a holistic approach to reducing youth violence and its impact. As noted earlier in this Chapter the Committee is encouraged to note that the COAG discussions between the Australian Government and state/territory governments with regard to best practice policing include consideration of restorative justice conferencing for young offenders.

4.132   While law enforcement measures are principally the responsibility of state and territory governments, the Committee notes through the Attorney-General's Department the Australian Government supports a number of initiatives specifically to address concerns relating to Indigenous involvement with the juvenile justice system. These initiatives include the development of the *National Indigenous Law and Justice Framework* and support for diversionary, restorative and rehabilitation interventions provided through the *Prevention, Diversion, Rehabilitation and Restorative Justice Program*.[128]

4.133   Further, the Committee is aware that the involvement of Indigenous juveniles and young adults in the criminal justice system is currently the subject of an inquiry by the House Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs.[129] The Committee looks forward to seeing the outcomes of the inquiry, in particular recommendations that relate to best practice examples of programs to support diversion of Indigenous people from juvenile detention centres and crime, and provide support for those returning from such centres.

4.134   A common theme raised in the inquiry relates to the limited capacity of services and programs to meet levels of demand.[130] While this evidence included reference to a large number of tertiary services and programs addressing a range of issues affecting victims and perpetrators of violence, the Committee concludes that insufficient resourcing and inequalities in the distribution and availability of some services, compromises the effectiveness of these interventions. The Committee believes that to some extent these inefficiencies could be addressed through a more strategic and coordinated approach to reducing youth violence and its impact on young Australians. This potential for the Australian Government to provide leadership in this domain is examined in more detail in Chapter 5.

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128   Australian Government – DEEWR et al, Submission No 62, pp 25-27.

129   Parliament of Australia website, viewed on 28 May 2010 at
      http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/atsia/sentencing/tor.htm.

130   See for example: Royal Women's Hospital, Submission No 21, p 4; Commissioner for Children and Young People (WA), Submission No 33, p 5; NSW Government, Submission No 76, p 2; Associate Professor Sheryl Hemphill, Transcript of Evidence, 15 February 2010, p 50; Ms Lauren Moss, Transcript of Evidence, 17 March 2010, p 3; Mr Adair Donaldson, Transcript of Evidence, 30 March 2010, p 50;

5

A Strategic Response to Youth Violence

5.1   Chapter 5 considers the need for a strategic response to youth violence and the role of the Australian Government in leading such a response. Specifically, the Chapter outlines the importance of a response to youth violence that is evidence-based, prevention focused, collaborative, coordinated and inclusive.

5.2   In addition Chapter 5 considers the role of the Australian Government in addressing societal level factors which influence youth violence. This includes consideration of the need to support national policies that address broader issues of social and economic disadvantage, which although they do not directly target youth violence, are likely to impact on youth violence to varying degrees. The Chapter also considers population based initiatives to reduce youth violence and its impact on young Australians by reinforcing social norms and, where required, by fostering widespread cultural and attitudinal change.

The Role of the Australian Government

5.3   Preceding Chapters of the report have examined what is known about youth violence in Australia, the influence of various risk and protective factors and investigated options for prevention, early intervention and rehabilitation strategies. With so much known about the underlying causes of youth violence, and so many initiatives and programs supported by various levels of government that aim to address these issues, the question remains: why does youth violence seem to be a growing problem?

5.4   The issue here is the absence of a coherent, national violence prevention and rehabilitation framework. The need to build and implement a national

strategic framework and the role of the Australian Government in leading and facilitating this is examined.

5.5   As with many social issues, youth violence is complex. Therefore, it is unlikely that simple solutions will be effective. Added to this, to be effective, many interventions will require implementation to be sustained in the longer term. To achieve an effective national response to youth violence, Ms Deirdre Croft representing the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) observed:

> What is apparent is that there are individual factors, there are factors that occur at a family level, there are mental health issues, there are drug and alcohol issues. At a government level each of those are being addressed by discreet portfolio areas, and some excellent programs are occurring. But my perception ... is that it is fragmented and often it is not sustained, so there has to be some top-level commitment. It cannot be initiated from one government agency; it has to be a top-level commitment.[1]

5.6   The following comment was made by a respondent to the inquiry's online youth survey:

> *Violence, like other issues affecting modern societies, has its roots in multiple issues. These include lack of or poor education (both formal and values-based), abusive or neglectful homes, unemployment and poverty. These issues will not change overnight - it requires an entire shift of how we view our country and ourselves. As a people, we need to be better educated, more open minded and amenable to change. We need to accept responsibility for our actions - both locally and on a global scale.* **Female, 18-24 years, capital city**

5.7   It is likely that in some family and community situations, breaking the cycle of violence will require generational change to resolve issues associated with long-term and embedded social and economic disadvantage. Similarly, addressing some of the issues associated with youth violence will also require significant cultural and attitudinal change at population level. Fostering these changes will require sustained effort and will only come about over a prolonged period of time. According to the submission from Voices Against Violence:

> This is about cultural change and the government is the key driver of that change. We need a government that provides strategic leadership with foresight to look ahead at what needs to be done.

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1   Ms Deirdre Croft, Transcript of Evidence, 24 February 2010, p 2.

> 'Voices Against Violence' is strongly of the view that just as this is
> a societal and cultural issue it will take all members of our
> community to step and accept some degree of responsibility. We
> do all need to do more - but we need a government that provides
> stronger leadership and sets the tone and context for the
> community we live in.[2]

5.8   The role of governments in addressing youth violence from the Australian
        Government's perspective is outlined in the joint submission from
        Australian Government departments as follows:

> The issue of violence in the community is complex and
> multi-faceted, requiring all levels of government, community
> organisations, parents, and young people themselves to work in
> partnership towards a range of solutions. State and territory
> governments, for example, have a direct role on important issues
> to do with violence such as the administration of policing and
> juvenile justice.
>
> The Australian Government plays an important role in supporting
> the wellbeing of young Australians, including by:
>
> - identifying national concerns and priorities for young people
> - delivering targeted initiatives to support young people at risk
> - working through the Council of Australian Governments
>   (COAG) to implement reform agendas to strengthen the
>   foundations in early childhood, education and in the
>   employment participation of young people
> - leading national collaborative work to strengthen connections
>   across governments and improve integrated, coordinated
>   service delivery
> - directly engaging with young people at the national level and
>   promoting positive opportunities for the participation of young
>   people.[3]

Identifying the Priorities and Concerns of Young Australians

5.9   A key strategy for identifying the priorities and concerns of young people
        was the establishment of the Australian Youth Forum (AYF) in 2008 by the

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2   Voices Against Violence, Submission No 67, p 5.
3   Australian Government – Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
     (DEEWR) et al, Submission No 62, p 7.

Australian Government. The AYF provides a communication channel between the Government and young people, as well as organisations in the youth sector. In early 2009, following extensive consultations and discussions with young people, the AYF identified violence and safety as major concerns for young Australians.[4] One result of this feedback was the reference of this inquiry from the Minister for Early Childhood Education, Child Care and Youth, The Hon Kate Ellis MP.

5.10   Building upon previous engagement with young people through the AYF, during October and November of 2009, the Australian Government conducted a 'National Conversation' with young people. The aim of the National Conversation was to ensure widespread consultation to feed into the development of a *National Strategy for Young Australians* (the National Strategy) to guide future government policy.[5] The National Strategy was released on 14 April 2010. It identifies the following eight priority areas for Government action to help young Australians:

- improve their health and wellbeing;

- shape their own futures through education;

- support them within their families;

- empower them to take part and be active in their communities;

- equip them with the skills and personal networks they need to get work;

- enable them to participate online confidently and safely;

- help them get their lives back on track through early intervention; and

- establish clear-cut legal consequences for behaviours that endanger the safety of others.[6]

Committee Comment

5.11   The Committee believes that the National Strategy represents significant progress in determining issues of concern to young people, identifying priorities for action, and allowing young people to have a say in the development of policy which impacts on them. Considering the multiple

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4   Australian Government - DEEWR et al, Submission No 62, p 17.

5   Australian Government website, *National Strategy for Young Australians*, viewed on 30 May 2010 at http://www.youth.gov.au/Documents/NatStrat.pdf.

6   Australian Government Social Inclusion website, viewed on 28 May 2010 at http://www.socialinclusion.gov.au/LatestNews/Pages/NationalStrategyforYoungAustralians.aspx.

and complex influences associated with youth violence, the Committee concludes that addressing youth violence will require a range of initiatives that relate to all eight of the priority areas identified in the National Strategy. This will include support for early intervention and prevention, initiatives that support strong relationships with families and communities, which enhance educational and employment opportunities, and which improve levels of safety strengthening law enforcement and raising awareness of the consequences of perpetrating violence.

5.12   While recognising the value of the National Strategy as an overarching framework of priorities for young people, in view of the requirement to provide a diverse range of programs delivered across portfolios and by all levels of government, the Committee believes that a specific national youth violence and rehabilitation strategy is essential to achieving a holistic and integrated policy response.

5.13   Importantly, the Committee emphasises that in order to be effective a national youth violence strategy must be founded on a robust evidence-base, particularly in relation to the efficacy and value of government supported interventions and programs. On the basis of evidence to the inquiry, the Committee also suggests that an evidence-based national youth violence strategy should be founded on the following key principles:

- implementation of a diverse range of multi-level interventions that target risk and protective factors that are influences at various levels in a young person's life (e.g. individual, peer, family, community);

- a focus on prevention and early intervention measures first, supported by more targeted interventions for those at increased risk of experiencing violence and rehabilitation programs for violent offenders and for victims of violence;

- collaborative, coordinated and inclusive response bringing together the efforts of different levels of government and portfolios, the non-government sector and the community, including young people themselves;

- the establishment of well defined linkages to existing government strategies and programs addressing social and economic disadvantage (e.g. poverty, unemployment, poor engagement with education, family and domestic violence); and

- a focus on influencing and shaping societal factors at population level to reinforce social norms and to foster positive cultural and attitudinal changes.[7]

Recommendation 7

5.14   **The Committee recommends that the Australian Government, in consultation with state and territory governments and other key stakeholders, establish a national youth violence and rehabilitation strategy to guide the provision of a holistic and integrated policy and program delivery framework. The national youth violence and rehabilitation strategy should:**

- **be founded on a robust evidence-base;**

- **support multi-level interventions;**

- **be focused on prevention and early intervention;**

- **be collaborative, coordinated and inclusive of all levels of government, the non-government community sector and the wider community, including young people;**

- **link to existing strategies that target social and economic disadvantage; and**

- **include population level strategies to reinforce social norms and foster positive cultural and attitudinal changes.**

5.15   Each of the proposed elements for a national youth violence and rehabilitation strategy is considered in more detail below.

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7   See for example: The Smith Family, Submission No 14, p 3; Commissioner for Children and Young People (WA), Submission No 33, p 3; Youthlaw & Frontyard Youth Services, Submission No 35, p 10; Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY), Submission No 44, p 9; Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service Co-operative Ltd (VALS), Submission No 51, p 5; Voices Against Violence, Submission No 67, p 4; Province Promotions Pty Ltd, Submission No 71, p 4; Professor Paul Mazerolle, Transcript of Evidence, 30 March 2010, p 24.

The Need for a Robust Evidence-Base

5.16   A sound evidence-base which provides a thorough understanding of the factors that influence young persons' risks of experiencing violence and includes rigorous evaluation of interventions and programs targeting youth violence is crucial to supporting the development of an effective national youth violence strategy.[8] The importance of an evidence-base was emphasised by Mission Australia as follows:

> While much is known about youth violence, its causes, and the interventions which are effective, a broader and more detailed evidence base – particularly one that is grounded in an Australian context – would be invaluable in deepening decision-makers' knowledge of the various dimensions of youth violence and improving the effectiveness of programs and interventions.[9]

5.17   However, there is scope for the evidence-base to be expanded to include more information about youth violence at national level and to monitor emerging trends and changes in patterns of youth violence at national, regional and local levels.[10] Furthermore, evidence to the inquiry suggests that there are also significant gaps in the evidence-base, particularly in relation to assessing the efficacy of strategies and interventions that target youth violence. As observed by the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS):

> Although numerous prevention strategies have been implemented in Australia, very few prevention programs have undertaken formal evaluations. More comprehensive evaluation is therefore needed that can identify aspects of programs that bring about change in the lives of young people.[11]

5.18   It is in this context that the submission from the 20th Man Fund Inc cautions against implementing well-intentioned interventions that have not been adequately evaluated, saying:

> We must not embrace 'common sense' approaches to complex social problems like youth violence. Programs need to be targeted,

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8   Professor Paul Mazerolle, Transcript of Evidence, 30 March 2010, p 24.
9   Mission Australia, Submission No 59, p 20.
10   See for example: Professor Paul Mazerolle, Transcript of Evidence, 30 March 2010, p 17.
11   Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS), Submission No 39, p 7. See also: Associate Professor Sheryl Hemphill, Transcript of Evidence, 15 February 2010, p 50.

> evidence based and routinely assessed to ensure they are relevant and effective.[12]

5.19   Similarly, Mission Australia expressed the following concern with regard to implementing programs that are not supported by a strong evidence-base:

> There are significant risks associated with the implementation of programs without a strong theoretical and/or evidence base. As well as channelling community resources and funds towards endeavours that may have little success, in some cases programs or approaches lacking in theoretical and design integrity can do harm.[13]

5.20   Mission Australia described a University of Colorado initiative called *Blueprints for Violence Prevention*. The initiative, supported by the University's Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, assesses intervention programs to determine what works and what does not.[14] According to the Centre's website:

> Across the country [USA], a raft of programs aimed at preventing violence and drug abuse is underway. All of these programs are well-intentioned. Yet very few of them have evidence demonstrating their effectiveness. Many are implemented with little consistency or quality control.[15]

5.21   Interestingly, Mission Australia notes that of more than 800 programs assessed under the *Blueprints for Violence Prevention*, only 11 have been identified as 'model' programs and 17 as 'promising'. Mission Australia also proceeded to note:

> The 'model' and 'promising' programs shared the following characteristics: they promoted developmentally appropriate ways of working with clients at key transition points (early childhood, transition to school, transition to adolescence); and, they identified and worked with schools as a place for intervention and multi-systemic approaches that involved the whole community.[16]

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12   20th Man Fund Inc, Submission No 19, p 1. See also: Ms Linda Chiodo et al, Submission No 78, p 7.

13   Mission Australia, Submission No 59, p 23.

14   Mission Australia, Submission No 59, p 23. See also: Professor Paul Mazerolle, Transcript of Evidence, 20 March 2010, p 17.

15   University of Colorado, Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, Blueprints for Violence Prevention website, viewed on 19 May 2010 at http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/index.html.

16   Mission Australia, Submission No 59, p 23.

Committee Comment

5.22   The Committee recognises the importance of developing and maintaining a strong evidence-base to underpin a national youth violence and rehabilitation strategy. While existing national and international research provides the current basis of understanding risk and protective factors, the Committee understands that issues of youth violence are not static. Therefore, the Committee supports the need to ensure that the evidence-base is continuously updated so that emerging issues and changing trends can be identified and proactive responses developed.[17] The Committee's recommendation in Chapter 2 of the report, to improve data collection systems, will contribute to the evidence-base. By providing reliable and consistent information on levels of offending and victimisation over time, it will facilitate the identification of changing patterns of violence and assessment of the impact of policies to reduce levels of violence.

5.23   However, with regard to anti-violence interventions and programs specifically, while acknowledging the need for innovation to respond to emerging trends, the Committee is also aware of the need 'not to reinvent the wheel'. With so many anti-violence programs already being used throughout Australia and internationally, the Committee believes that a rigorous and systematic approach to evaluation is an essential undertaking to ascertain what is working and what isn't, and to establish why.

5.24   In the absence of a strong evidence-base, the Committee is concerned that limited resources may be diverted to ineffective interventions. Furthermore, in the absence of sufficient evidence some interventions and programs may have unintended or even harmful consequences. To address these concerns, and as an initial undertaking, the Committee recommends a full audit of existing interventions and programs that aim to address the issue of youth violence. Where information is available, the audit should detail program assessment and evaluation outcomes, and include commentary on the rigour of evaluation.[18] The audit findings should be made available to inform government policy makers, non-government and community organisations operating within the youth sector, and other interested parties.

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17   See for example: Ms Lynne Evans, Transcript of Evidence, 15 February 2010, p 55; Professor Paul Mazerolle, Transcript of Evidence, 30 March 2010, p 17.

18   Although not available at the time of writing this report, the Committee understands that Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) has recently undertaken a review of evidence relating to the efficacy of diverse youth violence intervention strategies and programs. The outcomes of the review are due to be published in mid 2010.

Recommendation 8

5.25   **The Committee recommends that the Australian Government conduct an audit of existing initiatives and programs that aim to address youth violence. The audit should detail the outcomes of any assessments or evaluations, and provide commentary on the rigor of evaluation.**

Further, the Committee recommends that the audit findings be made publicly available.

5.26   In addition, the Committee recommends that the Australian Government, in consultation with state and territory governments, identify and establish an appropriate mechanism to support the development of a strong evidence-base through ongoing, systematic and rigorous evaluation of anti-violence interventions and programs. The Committee suggests that the University of Colorado's *Blueprints for Preventing Violence* initiative provides a useful model for consideration. A clearinghouse for the dissemination of information to policy makers and other interested parties should be an integral part of the considerations.

Recommendation 9

5.27   **The Committee recommends that the Australian Government, in consultation with state and territory governments and other key stakeholders, identify and establish an appropriate mechanism to support the development of a strong evidence-base through ongoing, systematic and rigorous evaluation of anti-violence interventions and programs.**

A clearinghouse for the dissemination of information to policy makers and other interested parties should be an integral part of the considerations.

5.28   Despite gaps in the evidence-base regarding the efficacy and value of specific interventions and programs, there is sufficient national and international evidence to identify a number of general principles that are

likely to be crucial to successfully addressing youth violence. These are examined in more detail below.

Multi-Level Interventions

5.29   Given the range of factors and circumstances that influence youth violence, it is clear that a holistic approach comprising a diverse range of strategies and interventions is required.[19] As explained by Professor Sheryl Hemphill of the University of Melbourne:

> What is really important in this area is to accept that violence is a complex problem and not to look for one single solution. You have a lot of different young people with a lot of different problems and different backgrounds. I think that we need to be thinking about the different areas of a young person's life—the family, the school, the community and the individuals themselves—and targeting each of those areas to try to make a difference. I guess I am talking more at the prevention end: having bullying-prevention programs in schools; teaching the young people social skills; helping families to handle those situations if they are going through a stressful time; and creating positive opportunities for young people in the community so that they can engage in social ways and have constructive things to do and hopefully are less likely to get involved in other behaviours. So I think we as a community need to be looking at an integrated, multifaceted approach if we really want to make a difference.[20]

5.30   Similarly, Victim Support Australasia identified a range of strategies, both preventative and remedial, that it suggests are required to address multiple risk and protective factors that are influences occurring at different levels, stating:

> The community needs strategies to address:
>
> - family dynamics;
> - parenting;
> - school approaches to bullying and childhood violence;
> - what the entertainment multimedia inaccurately portrays as a representation of 'normal' society;

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19   See for example: The Hon Dr Bob Such MP, Submission No 15, p 6; Nepean Domestic Violence Network, Submission No 18, p 4; Alcohol and other Drugs Council of Australia (ADCA), Submission No 28, p 9; NSW Government, Submission No 76, p 1.

20   Associate Professor Sheryl Hemphill, Transcript of Evidence, 15 February 2010, p 55.

- the behaviour of role models in sport, music and community leadership;
- appropriate health and justice system responses to those who are dependent on alcohol, drugs, or similar; and
- a justice system approach to sanctions for unacceptable behaviour which is serious and consistently applied.[21]

5.31   Advocating also for a holistic approach that addresses not only individual risk factors, but also wider societal risks, Mission Australia observed:

> It is therefore important that strategies seeking to address the risk factors associated with youth violence and to enhance protective factors consider the individual's place within the broader community context, and also focus on family and peer relationships, other influential actors in young people's lives (such as educators and those in sporting clubs), and structural factors such as policing strategies, media influences, recreational opportunities (or the lack thereof) and so on.[22]

5.32   The *Pathways to Prevention* program, jointly supported by Mission Australia and Griffith University, is an example of an intervention that aims to address risk and protective factors occurring different levels. The program was described as follows by Dr Kate Freiberg of Griffith University:

> Our work is guided by the understanding that outcomes for children are actually intimately bound up in the welfare of their whole families and communities, and it is also guided by the understanding that it is better to intervene early in pathways that can lead to poor developmental outcomes rather than wait until problems start appearing and become entrenched ... In Pathways to Prevention, what we do is try and work directly to support the development of the children's social and cognitive skills. But we also work to promote nurturing and supportive contexts for their development, both at the family level but also within schools, neighbourhoods and communities.[23]

5.33   The following comments were made by respondents to the inquiry's on-line youth survey:

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21   Victims Support Australasia Inc (VSA), Submission No 1, p 7.

22   Mission Australia, Submission No 59, p 21. See also: Ms Jen Sainsbury, Transcript of Evidence, 15 February 2010, pp 31-32.

23   Dr Kate Freiberg, Transcript of Evidence, 30 March 2010, p 26.

> *I think this issue requires a multifaceted approach encompassing education (schools), raising awareness (advertising, political campaigning and a show casing of real life negative consequences to the community) and provision of alternative activities (engagement between youth and the community to achieve and complete cooperative projects in local areas).* **Female, 18-24 years, capital city**
>
> *It's complex and seems connected to so many other things – drug and alcohol use, mental health issues (i.e. drug induced psychosis/paranoia), homelessness, etc so there should be a holistic approach.* **Female, under 18 years, capital city**

Committee Comment

5.34   The Committee recognises the need for a range of interventions and programs which address the diverse risk and protective factors which influence young people in different areas of their lives. Given the diversity and complexity of these various factors, responding in a holistic way will require effort across a broad range of portfolio areas and at all levels of government. The need for a collaborative and coordinated government response to youth violence is considered in more detail later in this Chapter, as is the need for an inclusive and whole-of-community approach to address wider social and economic issues.

Prevention and Early Intervention

5.35   The importance of prevention and early intervention strategies to break the cycle of violence has been a consistent theme throughout the inquiry.[24] Research demonstrates that behavioural problems in early childhood if unaddressed can lead to anti-social behaviour, aggression and violence in later life.[25] As noted in the submission from the NSW Government:

> ... people display physical aggression more often during the preschool period than during any other age period. To be maximally effective, interventions that target physical aggression should start when children are below the age of five.[26]

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24   See for example: The Hon Dr Bob Such MP, Submission No 15, p 5; ACT Government, Submission No 37, p 6; AIC, Submission No 57, p 11; Youth Affairs Council of Australia Inc (YACVic), Submission No 60, p 18; Queensland Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian, Submission No 66, p 6; Dr Adam Tomison, Transcript of Evidence, 10 February 2010, p 10; Roshen, Transcript of Evidence, 15 February 2010, p 13

25   See for example: The Smith Family, Submission No 14, p 4; Mission Australia, Submission No 59, p 6, NSW Government, Submission No 76, p 2.

26   NSW Government, Submission No 76, p 2.

5.36   However, while early intervention targeting infants and young children was emphasised, so too were interventions targeting older children and young people as they transition across key development stages.[27] The importance of these key transitions was emphasised as follows by Mission Australia:

> There are many key transition points for children and young people, including the commencement of pre-school, transitioning to school, transitioning to adolescence and moving from school into the labour market. While a source of excitement and opportunity, these transition points are also a time of change and potential instability, and can be critical periods for which support is required.[28]

5.37   Critically, evidence also emphasised the need for interventions to be sustained across the development pathway and to be appropriate to the child's or young person's developmental capacity. As explained by Dr Freiberg:

> ... it is really critical that we do not pretend to ourselves that something that happens when the child is in grade 1 is necessarily going to carry over and continue to be some sort of magic potion that lasts for the rest of their lives. There has to be continuing support and engagement as the children grow older and as they change ... So it cannot be an all-in-one shot in the primary school years.[29]

5.38   Similarly, as outlined in the submission from Ms Linda Chiodo et al:

> In general, the importance of the early years as the critical period to implement early interventions, such as teaching life skills or socially appropriate behaviours in preschool, has been emphasised ... However, it is strongly argued that strategies to reduce youth violence should be continuous in nature. That is, they should be implemented across developmental stages and tailored according to the risk and protective factors relevant to the stage (i.e. developmentally appropriate).[30]

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27   See for example: ARACY, Submission No 55, p 35.

28   Mission Australia, Submission No 59, p 25.

29   Dr Kate Freiberg, Transcript of Evidence, 30 March 2010, p 30.

30   Ms Linda Chiodo et al, Submission No 78, p 5. See also: ARACY, Submission No 55, p 35. Ms Deirdre Croft, Transcript of Evidence, 24 February 2010, p 3; Professor Paul Mazerolle, Transcript of Evidence, 30 March 2010, p 15.

5.39   Illustrating the importance of appropriately targeting interventions, Professor Paul Mazerolle told the Committee of the unintended outcome of an intervention which had increased police contact in schools with grade 9 children. Rather than acting as a crime deterrent, the intervention actually resulted in increased delinquency. Professor Mazerolle observed:

> ... it almost appeared as if the involvement of the police officer kind of primed their delinquency because they had higher rates of delinquency and violence after the intervention when we compared it to the control schools. So there was probably a priming effect of 'Isn't it cool to be tough and isn't it cool to be anti-authority?', and so part of the message is we need to intervene earlier. Grade 9 is probably too late if we are trying to shape attitudes about authority, violence, risks.[31]

5.40   Although there was overwhelming support for a 'prevention first' approach, a number of inquiry participants also acknowledged the importance of providing interventions which target young people at particular risk of experiencing violence, and rehabilitation programs to support victims of violence and to reduce recidivism among young offenders.[32] While a number of submissions also called for harsher penalties for young offenders to be included in the mix[33], others observed that stronger punitive measures do not appear to be effective deterrents to offending or reoffending.[34] As noted by Mission Australia:

> What does not appear to work, where youth violence is concerned, are programs that are of a punitive and coercive nature. For example, boot camps have proven to be ineffective and in some cases increase the incidence of youth antisocial behaviour ... There is growing knowledge about other punitive approaches that do not work, including punitive approaches in schools (i.e. school suspensions) which serve to further disconnect students from learning environments, and young offenders being tried in adult courts.[35]

5.41   Similarly, in its submission ARACY states:

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31   Professor Paul Mazerolle, Transcript of Evidence, 30 March 2010, p 15.
32   See for example: Mission Australia, Submission No 59, p 20.
33   See for example: Mr Keith Holman, Submission No 7, p 1; Neighbourhood Watch Broadbeach 20, Submission No 9, pp 1-2; Voices Against Violence, Submission No 67, p 5.
34   See for example: VSA, Submission No 1, p 7; Professor Kerry Carrington, Submission No 47, p 13.
35   Mission Australia, Submission No 59, p 23.

While punitive approaches to violent and antisocial behaviour among young people (including school suspension or incarceration in juvenile justice facilities) may have short-term political and public appeal, we submit that policies and programs which have the effect of further alienating young people from constructive social engagement are likely to be counter-productive in the long term.[36]

5.42   The following comments were made by respondents to the inquiry's online youth survey:

Jails are not the answer. Most violent young people come from troubled homes. Most physically violent people have been physically abused themselves. It's not a cop out, and it's not an excuse, but it does seem to be a very common co-occurance. People don't need a jail. They need someone who CARES AND, they need to learn how to do things differently. We can't just take the behaviour away without providing an alternative solution. At the same time, there needs to be consequences for their actions. These consequences should not be jail, where there cycle of pain and violence and recidivism is just likely to continue to another generation. Things like mandatory programs to handle violence/anger/emotions, community service (not just mowing lawns but actually seeing people who are worse off, like in a soup kitchen or something), and education for emotional intelligence in schools would be among some of the solutions **Female, 18-24 years, regional city**

Make it when a kid fights, he/she should have to go to court and then jailed straight up. None of this stupid rehabilitation crap as it doesn't work as they just keep doing it over and over. **Male, under 18 years, regional city**

Make harsher penalties and ENFORCE them every time. **Female, 18-24 years, rural/remote**

Lock them up and throw away the key they are a burden to society' and bring back joining up the armed forces again. **Male, 18-24 years, regional city**

Violence in general is a serious problem and I think one of the best ways to counteract it is to punish violent behaviour more strongly than is being done now. **Female, 18-24 years, capital city**

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36   ARACY, Submission No 55, p 34.

Committee Comment

5.43   While supporting the focus on a prevention first approach to the issue of youth violence, the Committee recognises the need to support a multi-faceted approach which also includes secondary interventions for young people at increased risk of violence and tertiary interventions to support young victims of violence and reduce recidivism by young offenders. Noting that it is likely to be some time before the results of prevention and early interventions such as social development programs manifest, the Committee believes that introducing measures to address situational factors that contribute to violence, such alcohol, will complement longer term initiatives by having a more immediate impact on youth violence.

5.44   In addition, while recognising the need for young people to have a clear understanding of acceptable behavioural boundaries and of the consequences of transgressing those boundaries, from evidence the Committee understands that harsher penalties for offenders do appear to be effective deterrents. Instead the Committee concludes that the implementation of best practice policing is more likely to provide constructive outcomes. As outlined in Chapter 4, the Committee supports best practice policing measures which ensure that young offenders are dealt with quickly so that the linkages between actions and consequences are clearly established. The Committee also supports the increased use of restorative justice measures which require young offenders to confront consequences of their actions on victims and to make reparations.

A Collaborative and Coordinated Approach

5.45   Responsibility for addressing the numerous and complex factors associated with youth violence is shared between federal, state/territory and local governments, and across multiple portfolios. Furthermore, to be effective, approaches will also need to engage broadly with communities, including young people and their parents. Therefore, an effective response to youth violence will only be achieved if the approach taken is collaborative, coordinated and inclusive. As summarised in the Australian Government's submission:

> ... there is of course no simple answer. The issue of youth violence is a complex, multi-faceted problem and one that demands all levels of government, community organisations, parents, and

> young people themselves to work in partnership towards a range
> of solutions. [37]

5.46   Ms Linda Chiodo et al also concluded in their submission:

> Most importantly, strategies should not be considered in isolation.
> Therefore, collaboration and partnership across sectors
> (governments, business, civil society, and religious sectors), and
> across fields or disciplines (e.g., criminal justice, psychology,
> public health, education) are essential. [38]

5.47   As previously stated, no single program will address the complexity and
diversity of young people's needs in the community. This requires
support for a diverse range of programs that meet the different needs of
young people and the specific issues facing local communities. Targeted
interventions involving families, education, law enforcement and juvenile
justice, urban planning and infrastructure, as well as, and measures
associated with the regulation and control of alcohol. The result is a
patchwork of interventions and programs which are supported to varying
degrees by federal, state/territory and local governments. The need for an
integrated and whole-of-governments response to violence committed
against and by young people was identified as a priority need. [39] As
observed by Ms Lynne Evans of the Adolescent Forensic Health Service at
the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne:

> Different services are working around this problem, but
> sometimes there is a lack of coordination about who is doing what
> and synergy between things happening at a similar time. [40]

5.48   The Commissioner for Children and Young People (WA) also noted the
importance of developing an integrated approach, identifying the
following as being critical to effective intervention:

> Services are provided in a coordinated, accessible and integrated
> way to deal holistically with the needs of children, young people
> and their families and to ensure that they reach the most
> vulnerable members of our community. [41]

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37   Australian Government – DEEWR et al, Submission No 45, p 45.
38   Ms Linda Chiodo et al, Submission No 78, p 7. See also: Associate Professor Sheryl Hemphill,
Transcript of Evidence, 15 February 2010, p 50.
39   See for example: ADCA, Submission No 28, p 4; ARACY, Submission No 55, p 36; Mr Adair
Donaldson, Transcript of Evidence, 30 March 2010, p 49.
40   Ms Lynne Evans, Transcript of Evidence, 15 February 2010, p 45.
41   Commissioner for Children and Young People (WA), Submission No 33, p 5.

5.49   Evidence to the inquiry included reference to a number of programs involving collaboration across portfolios, such as the Tasmanian Government's police led interagency support team (IAST) which is described as follows:

> The IAST program is an important Tasmanian Government initiative which provides a collaborative, multi-agency approach to the case coordination of those young people and their families in Tasmania with complex needs. These young people are frequently known to police and other government agencies, have histories of offending, and are recipients of a broad range of government services.
>
> IASTs are convened and led by Tasmania Police, and bring together key government agencies and local government. Through the coordination of service delivery, the IAST model seeks to avoid duplication, identify and respond to gaps in service delivery, and provide a tailored response.[42]

5.50   A number of submissions have indicated that addressing youth violence effectively requires a whole-of-community response. This would involve supporting active engagement between governments, government funded entities (e.g. schools), non-government agencies (e.g. community based youth organisations and sporting clubs), community leaders, families and young people. With regard to engaging with young people specifically, inquiry participants have emphasised the need for youth to be involved in developing the solutions rather than being viewed solely as the problem.[43] As suggested below:

> [The] views of young people should be included in community decision making, especially when considering youth issues. For example, youth should be encouraged to participate in the development, implementation, and evaluation of programs and services. In addition, incentives or recognitions should be offered to motivate young people to participate in such activities.[44]

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42   Tasmanian Government, Submission No 56, pp 4-5.

43   See for example: National Council of Single Mothers and their Children Inc (NCSMC), Submission No 2, p 1; Commissioner for Children and Young People (WA), Submission No 33, p 4; Youthlaw & Frontyard Youth Services, Submission No 35, pp 11-12; Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY), Submission No 44, p 11; ARACY, Submission No 55, p 32; Queensland Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian, Submission No 66, p 1; Mr Adair Donaldson, Transcript of Evidence, 30 March 2010, p 48.

44   Ms Linda Chiodo et al, Submission No 78, p 6.

5.51   To support a more collaborative and coordinated response to youth
        violence, the Men's Advisory Network (MAN) recommended:

> ... the establishment of a reference group made up of the relevant
> government agencies, plus non-government organisations to plan
> the most effective approach to addressing the issue of abuse and
> violence in the community.[45]

5.52   It has also been suggested that governments might take a leadership role
        in promoting partnerships by engaging with the private sector (e.g.
        sporting clubs, telecommunication providers) to encourage support for
        anti-youth violence initiatives as part of corporate social responsibility
        activities.[46]

Committee Comment

5.53   The Committee agrees that a collaborative, coordinated and inclusive
        response involving governments, non-government organisations and the
        wider community, including young people themselves will be critical to
        addressing the issue of youth violence. The Committee understands that
        there are several ways in which the Australian Government can take a
        leadership role in this regard. The Committee has already outlined a
        number of areas where cooperation between Federal government and
        state/territory governments is being supported through COAG and the
        appropriate Ministerial Councils.[47]

5.54   The release of the *National Strategy for Young Australians*, developed
        following extensive consultation with young people and organisations
        operating within the youth sector, provides guidance in the form of an
        overarching framework of priorities to be addressed to improve the health
        and wellbeing of young Australians. With regard to moving forward in a
        collaborative and coordinated way to address these priorities identified,
        the Committee notes the COAG communiqué of December 2009 which
        indicates that:

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45   Men's Advisory Network (MAN), Submission No 40, p 2.

46   See for example: Matthew Stanley Foundation, Submission No 52, pp 14, 28; Mr Michael Jeh,
     Transcript of Evidence, 30 March 2010, p 6.

47   See for example: Ministerial Council on Police and Emergency Management support for best
     practice policing; Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy approach to addressing binge
     drinking.

> Commonwealth will consult the States in developing key elements
> of the Strategy to ensure it is appropriately targeted and effective,
> and complements State action.[48]

5.55   The Committee also believes that its recommendation for a national youth
        violence and rehabilitation strategy, informed by a robust evidence-base
        relating to the efficacy and value of various interventions and programs
        would significantly assist in achieving a cohesive, collaborative,
        coordinated and inclusive response to youth violence.

Acknowledging Social and Economic Factors

5.56   In addition to interventions that target specific individual, relational and
        community factors associated with increased risks of experiencing
        violence, a holistic response will also necessitate addressing social and
        economic influences (e.g. social exclusion, poverty, unemployment,
        limited engagement with education etc). As noted in the Australian
        Government's submission:

> ... interpersonal violence is strongly associated with such
> macro-level social factors as unemployment, income inequality,
> rapid social change and access to education. Any comprehensive
> violence prevention strategy must ... also be integrated with
> policies directed at these macro-level social factors and harness
> their potential to reduce the inequities which fuel interpersonal
> violence.[49]

5.57   The importance of acknowledging and linking to policies that while not
        specifically targeting youth violence, are likely to reduce the risks of
        experiencing youth violence by improving social conditions and reducing
        social inequalities was noted by The Smith Family as follows:

> To address the broader social determinants of violence, a
> comprehensive violence prevention strategy needs to be integrated
> with policies directed at reducing disadvantage and the social
> pressures that can fuel youth violence. These include
> unemployment, income inequality, rapid social change,

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48   Council of Australian Governments website, viewed on 4 January 2010 at
     http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2009-12-07/index.cfm.

49   Australian Government – DEEWR et al, Submission No 62, pp 45-46.

intolerance of cultural differences, gender inequality and a lack of access to education.[50]

5.58   The submission from Youthlaw & Frontyard Youth Services recommends a multi-pronged approach to addressing the underlying causes of youth violence which aims to:

- improve the economic well-being of families, particularly those with several dependent children
- reduce the burden of child care and increase the availability of practical support
- reduce social isolation
- provide greater support for young parents
- enhance parental skills in coping with the stresses of infant and child care, especially where the child has been drug exposed or suffers some form of disability
- adequately funds a range of strategies to support young people to remain engaged at school and improve the educational achievements of young people.[51]

5.59   The relevance of the Social Inclusion Agenda which articulates the Australian Government's vision of an inclusive society in which all Australians feel valued and have the opportunity to participate fully has been noted by some inquiry participants. The Social Inclusion Agenda includes the following priorities for action:

- Supporting children at greatest risk of long term disadvantage by providing health, education and family relationships services
- Helping jobless families with children by helping the unemployed into sustainable employment and their children into a good start in life
- Focusing on the locations of greatest disadvantage by tailoring place-based approaches in partnership with the community
- Assisting in the employment of people with disability or mental illness by creating employment opportunities and building community support
- Addressing the incidence of homelessness by providing more housing and support services
- Closing the gap for Indigenous Australians with respect to life expectancy, child mortality, access to early childhood

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50   The Smith Family, Submission No 14, p 8. See also: NSW Government, Submission No 76, p 2.
51   Youthlaw & Frontyard Youth Services, Submission No 35, p 11.

education, educational achievement and employment
outcomes.[52]

5.60   A range of initiatives are supported under these priorities, including
        initiatives to increase engagement with education, to develop skills and
        reduce unemployment, to support families and communities, to protect
        children and to reduce Indigenous disadvantage.

Committee Comment

5.61   While recognising the important influences of social and economic factors
        on youth violence, the Committee is aware that a comprehensive review of
        the social and economic policies is beyond the scope of this report.
        However, to be effective the Committee believes that a strategic approach
        to addressing youth violence will require well articulated linkages
        between targeted anti-violence polices and broader social policies which
        may also impact on youth violence by addressing other fundamental
        issues associated with social and economic disadvantage.

5.62   At a minimum, the Committee believes that a national youth violence and
        rehabilitation strategy will need to acknowledge the influence of broader
        social and economic disadvantage on youth violence, and establish clear
        linkages with a range of initiatives, including those operating under the
        Government's Social Inclusion Agenda.

Influencing Social Attitudes and Reflecting Cultural Norms

5.63   On many occasions during the inquiry the Committee heard about the
        influence of modern Australian culture in shaping attitudes toward youth
        and violence, and in reinforcing social norms. Specifically, evidence
        included references to the potential detrimental effects on values and
        behaviour occurring as a result of exposure to violence in the media (i.e.
        television, films, music, computer games and internet). Interestingly, at
        the same time the Committee also heard evidence highlighting the
        potential for the media to be used as a social marketing tool in campaigns
        to foster positive cultural change and attitudinal changes. These issues are
        considered below.

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52   Australian Government Social Inclusion website, viewed on 31 May 2010 at
     http://www.socialinclusion.gov.au/SIAgenda/Priorities/Pages/default.aspx.

Exposure to Media Violence

5.64   A general concern expressed in evidence relates to the depictions of violence in the media and its role in influencing social norms and behaviour.[53] According to Mission Australia, there is a body of research which shows that exposure to media violence has a significant impact on young people as it can:

> ... 'teach' young people aggressive behaviours, it desensitises young people to violence, and it can generate levels of fear and anxiety that are disproportionate to the actual risk of violence based on the recorded incidence of crime ...[54]

5.65   Evidence linking exposure to violence in the media with promotion of violent behaviours was extensively reviewed in a submission from the Australian Council on Children and the Media (ACCM).[55] According to the ACCM:

> Short term exposure to media violence increases the predisposition to aggress for both children and adults regardless. Repeated exposure to media violence is likely to have further deleterious effects, including greater fear, a hostile bias whereby others are seen as threatening and dangerous, greater hostility, desensitisation to further depictions of violence, beliefs normalising aggression and detailed and generalised scripts for aggressive behaviour.[56]

5.66   The concern as outlined by Voices Against Violence is:

> [The] depiction of violence without impact or consequence provides a view that real violence has no impact and there is no consequence for it. Young people that have become desensitised to the consequence of violence also have no sense of respect for authority because they do not see a genuine consequence for their actions.[57]

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53   See for example: National Abuse Free Contact Campaign, Submission No 5, p 8; Protective Mothers Alliance, Submission No 11, pp 1-2; Dr Susan George, Submission No 13, p 7; The Smith Family, Submission No 14, p 2; VicHealth, Submission No 26, p 8; Mr Gary Anderson, Transcript of Evidence, 1 March 2010, p 29.

54   Mission Australia, Submission No 59, p 8.

55   Australian Council on Children and the Media (ACCM), Submission No 31, pp 4-7.

56   ACCM, Submission No 31, p 3.

57   Voices Against Violence, Submission No 67, p 3.

5.67   Feedback from young people who participated in the inquiry's Youth Forum held in Melbourne also indicated a level of concern among young people themselves, with one group spokesperson observing:

> People as young as primary school age are watching these high-violence movies or playing these high-violence video games where they take away the message that violence is okay, that maybe one punch will not do any damage and that they can get away with it, whereas it is not seen as appropriate by others. Also, the glorified sports stars that are out there might get into a pub brawl and it will be in the media. The children see it and think, 'Our sports stars—our heroes—are doing it; maybe it's okay for us.' Maybe the sports stars should not be so glorified and put under so much pressure by the media. The music industry also has a part to play in that. The videos from the rappers and all the other hip-hop music includes violence and shows other people participating in violence. Young people may look up to that and deem it to be okay as well.[58]

5.68   The following comments on media violence were made by respondents to the inquiry's online youth violence survey:

> *The media and government sensationalisation of violence makes us think it is common place and therefore somewhat socially acceptable.* **Male, 18-24 years, capital city**
>
> *Violence and deaths in movies I think takes away the real meaning and consequences, not that they should be banned, but death/murder/violence/suicide should not be taken so lightly.* **Female, under 18 years, regional city**

5.69   In contrast however, the Queensland Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian noted alternative perspectives from young people who considered that media violence had very little influence on their behaviour. In fact more than one young person suggested that playing violent computer games actually provided them with a non-violent outlet for aggression.[59]

5.70   To address its concerns the ACCM suggests a review of media classification levels relating to depictions of violence. Specifically the ACCM called for classification levels to focus not only on the 'traumatic' impact of violence on the individual viewer but also the possible

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58   Simon, Transcript of Evidence, 15 February 2010, p 9.

59   Queensland Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian, Submission No 66, p 6.

psychological influences in relation to behaviour. The ACCM further suggests that classification levels should align more closely with what is known about key developmental stages occurring during childhood and adolescence.[60]

5.71   Mission Australia and others have proposed introducing strategies to increase media literacy among children, young people, parents and the wider community to enhance the capacity to make discerning decisions about the media and informed choices about exposure to violent content.[61]

Committee Comment

5.72   Despite evidence to the inquiry linking exposure to media violence with higher levels of aggression in young people, establishing a definite link with violent behaviour continues to be the subject of rigorous debate.[62] With regard to media classifications, and in the absence of consensus about the influence of media violence on behaviour, the Committee appreciates the need to consider the views of Australian community. An important consideration in media regulation is the balance between freedom of communication and regulation to protection the community from exposure to harmful or disturbing material.

5.73   Media classification is currently regulated under the National Classification Scheme (NCS), a cooperative arrangement between the Commonwealth, states and territories. Any change to classification categories requires amendments to the *Commonwealth Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Act 1995*, the associated code and guidelines, as well as to state and territory enforcement legislation. Under the *Intergovernmental Agreement on Censorship* and the Commonwealth Act, the code and guidelines can only be amended with the agreement of all jurisdictional Censorship Ministers.[63]

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60   ACCM, Submission No 31, pp 8-9. See also: NCSMC, Submission No 2, p 10; Dr Susan George, Submission No 13, p 7.

61   Mission Australia, Submission No 59, p 10. See also: ACCM, Submission No 31, p 5; Mr Harry Hukin, Submission No 72, p 3; Dr Wayne Warburton, Transcript of Evidence, 1 March 2010, pp 3, 6.

62   Correspondence to the Committee from Associate Professor Christopher Ferguson dated 2 March 2010 referring to the following article: *Much Ado About Nothing: The Misestimation and Overinterpretation of Violent Video Game Effects in Eastern and Western Nations: Comment on Anderson et al,* (2010) Psychological Bulletin.

63   Australian Government – Attorney-General's Department website, viewed on 17 May 2010 at http://www.ag.gov.au/www/agd/agd.nsf/Page/Classificationpolicy_Nationalclassification scheme.

5.74 There are currently six classification categories for films (G, PG, M, MA 15+, R 18+, X 18+) and four classification categories for computer games (G, PG, M and MA 15+). The R 18+ and X 18+ categories do not apply to computer games in Australia. Films and computer games can also be classified RC (refused classification). RC films and computer games cannot be legally sold or distributed in Australia.

5.75 The Committee is aware that the Attorney-General's Department has recently undertaken a public consultation in relation to classification categories of computer games. The aim of the consultation was to ascertain views as to whether Australia should introduce an R18+ classification for computer games.[64] Public submissions closed 28 February 2010 and nearly 60,000 submissions were lodged. In May 2010 the Attorney-General's Department published a status report containing preliminary figures and information about the public consultation.[65] The Committee notes that the Censorship Ministers are currently deliberating on the feedback received from the public consultation. To assist the Censorships Minister with their deliberations, the Committee will make available the information that it has received in relation to classification categories of computer games as part of its inquiry into youth violence.

5.76 In addition, given the emergence of new technologies and of access to the media generally, the Committee considers that examination of current classification categories for film and TV, particularly with regard to levels and depictions of violence is warranted.

Recommendation 10

5.77 **The Committee recommends that the Attorney-General's Department examine the need for change to current classification categories of film and TV in relation to violent content. Consideration should be given to the potential impacts on children and young people of exposure to media violence with a view to better aligning classification categories with key developmental stages occurring in childhood and adolescence.**

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64 Australian Government – Attorney-General's Department website, viewed on 13 January 2010 at http://www.ag.gov.au/gamesclassification.

65 Australian Government – Attorney-General's Department website, *Status report on the public consultation on the possible introduction of an R 18+ classification for computer games,* viewed on 17 May 2010 at http://www.ag.gov.au/gamesclassification.

5.78   In addition, children, young people and adults need to be supported to develop media literacy skills in order to make well-informed and discerning choices regarding media content and levels of exposure to media violence. In particular, parents of young children should be encouraged to monitor their children's access to the media, and supported to develop their capacity to make responsible and discerning decisions on behalf of their children.

5.79   To assist young people and adults to develop their media literacy skills, the Committee proposes the establishment of a media literacy resource website similar to the Australian Communications and Media Authority's (ACMA) website described in Chapter 4 of the report.[66] The Committee suggests that a 'Mediasmart' website could provide children, young people and their parents with up-to-date, comprehensive and age appropriate information which will assist them to make informed, discerning and responsible choices in relation to media content, including exposure to media violence.

Recommendation 11

5.80   **The Committee recommends that the Australian Communications and Media Authority establish a 'Mediasmart' website aimed at providing children, young people and their parents with up-to-date, comprehensive and age-appropriate information to assist them to make informed, discerning and responsible choices in relation to media content, including exposure to media violence.**

Social Marketing to Achieve Cultural Change

5.81   To effect widespread cultural, attitudinal and behavioural changes in relation to youth violence, there has been considerable support in evidence for social marketing campaigns. Essentially proposals for social marketing campaigns have fallen into two broad categories:

   ■ promoting more positive community attitudes towards young people; and

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66   Australian Government Cybersmart website, viewed on 1 June 2010 at http://www.cybersmart.gov.au/.

■ promoting social norms through anti-violence messages, encouraging pro-social behaviour and supporting responsible drinking.

Negative Community Perceptions of Young People

5.82 As noted in Chapter 2, community attitudes towards young people are often negative and even hostile.[67] Media portrayals of young people as anti-social and violent often belie the fact that young people themselves are most frequently the victims of violence.

5.83 To effect cultural and attitudinal changes within the community, there has been some support for the implementation of a social marketing campaign which portrays young people in a positive way.[68] The submission from Hume City Council suggests breaking the cycle of negative perceptions and violence:

> ... through social marketing initiatives aimed at addressing poor perceptions of young people in the community, with an emphasis on young people guiding the development and the delivery of the campaign. Campaigns should also emphasise equal and respectful relationships and that reject violence in the community in any form.[69]

5.84 In adding its support for a social marketing campaign to promote positive images of young people, ARACY highlighted the success of long-term social marketing campaigns in effecting change in community attitudes to depressive illness, drink driving and smoking. ARACY suggests:

■ the introduction of public education campaigns that promote tolerance of diversity, as well as countering negative stereotyping of young people of different ethnic backgrounds;

■ the development of responsible reporting guidelines for media coverage of the involvement of young people in violent and antisocial behaviours (particularly relating to the ethnicity of the alleged offenders);

■ the development of standards for the release of information by police on the ethnicity of young people engaging in criminal behaviour.[70]

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67   See for example: YouthLaw & Frontyard Youth Services, Submission No 35, p 1; CMY, Submission No 44, p 5, 8; ARACY, Submission No 55, p 17; YACVic, Submission No 60, p 8; Ms Linda Chiodo, et al Submission No 78, p 3.

68   20th Man Fund Inc, Submission No 19, p 3. See also: Cairns Community Legal Centre Inc, Submission No 23, pp 7-8; ADCA, Submission No 28, p 14; MAN, Submission No 40, p 2.

69   Hume City Council, Submission No 43, p 2.

70   ARACY, Submission No 55, p 19.

5.85   Given the importance of the media in shaping community perceptions, it was suggested that the media could be instrumental in promoting more positive views of younger people.[71] As noted by the Protective Mothers Alliance:

> The media has a significant impact on how our community understands and responds to violence. It is therefore important that reporting the community is responsible and balanced.[72]

5.86   Ms Linda Chiodo et al have recommended that:

> ... the media should be utilised as a channel to increase awareness regarding the issue and alter existing norms condoning the use of violence (e.g. social norms marketing). It is believed that the media has the capacity to alter such misconceptions regarding youth violence by portraying positive images of youth; rather than solely depicting youth as 'trouble makers', and moving away from equating youth crime with ethnicity and race.[73]

5.87   CMY also suggests that the following strategies might also be employed to encourage more positive media coverage relating to young people:

- Encourage efforts to counter misleading media through letters to the editor, Mediawatch and other ways;
- Provide community-based organisations with media information and resources explaining how to make a complaint to media outlets, Australian Communication and Media Authority, and other media-monitoring mechanisms, as well as information about relevant legislation, such as the *Racial Discrimination Act (2001)*;
- Distribute information on good media practice (e.g. the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission Media Guide) and to ensure that the media is aware of the Industry Code on the Portrayal of Cultural Diversity, which advises against using racial descriptors; and
- Develop a social-marketing campaign to address negative attitudes and behaviours towards culturally diverse young people, to educate and dispel stereotypes in order to overcome interpersonal discrimination that includes victim blaming and scapegoating.[74]

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71   NCSMC, Submission No 2, p 10.
72   Protective Mothers Alliance, Submission No 11, p 3.
73   Ms Linda Chiodo et al, Submission No 78, p 7. See also: Farah, Transcript of Evidence, 15 February 2010, p 5.
74   CMY, Submission No 44, p 8.

Committee Comment

5.88   The Committee is fully supportive of measures to promote positive images of young people in the community. In this regard the Australian Government is proud to lead by example showcasing in its recently released *National Strategy for Young Australians* the positive contributions that young people make to the community and supporting initiatives such as the Young Australian of the Year.

5.89   However, the Committee also believes that promoting positive images of young people through a social marketing approach would be a valuable component of a multi-faceted approach to achieving cultural and attitudinal change within the community. Importantly, the Committee is mindful of the need for social marketing campaigns to be well designed in order to reach target audiences effectively, and to be adequately resourced in the longer term.

Recommendation 12

5.90   **The Committee recommends that the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations develop and implement a social marketing campaign to promote positive images of young people and combat stereotypical and negative community perceptions.**

5.91   With regard to responsible reporting of violent incidents involving young people, the Committee recognises achieving an appropriate level of media regulation is challenging. The difficulty for Government is to achieve a balance which allows freedom of communications while also providing adequate protections for the community.

5.92   Although the ACMA is the Government agency responsible for regulating and monitoring television and radio broadcasting, most aspects of program content is determined by the industry and governed by industry developed codes of practice.[75] For print media, the Australian Press Council is the industry's self-regulatory body.[76] The context of industry developed principles and explanatory guidelines aims:

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75   Australian Communication and Media Authority (ACMA) website, viewed on 11 May 2010 at http://www.acma.gov.au/WEB/STANDARD/pc=PC_90078.

76   Australian Press Council website, viewed on 11 May 2010 at http://www.presscouncil.org.au/pcsite/apc.html.

> ... to help preserve the traditional freedom of the press within
> Australia and ensure that the free press acts responsibly and
> ethically.[77]

5.93   Both the ACMA and the Australian Print Council have complaints
        mechanisms which can be used to investigate complaints regarding media
        content.

Promoting Pro-Social Behaviour and Responsible Drinking

5.94   Although acknowledging that social marketing alone will not solve the
        issue of youth violence, evidence included significant support for social
        marketing as part of a multi-faceted approach to addressing a complex
        problem. As explained by Mr Philip Huzzard, Managing Director of
        Accelerator Communications, when discussing a proposal for an anti-
        knife advertising campaign:

> Our position ... though is that an advertising campaign in its own
> right is not the sole answer. It is a combination of legislation,
> enforcement ... along with intervention and effective
> communications. The last two are significant.[78]

5.95   Evidence to the inquiry has included support for a range of social
        marketing campaigns at various stages of planning, implementation and
        evaluation which seek to achieve cultural, attitudinal and behavioural
        change.[79] These include social marketing campaigns to promote tolerance
        of diversity, respectful relationships, anti-violence messages, pro-social
        behaviour and responsible consumption of alcohol.[80]

5.96   While promoting social norm messages that violence at any level is not
        acceptable, achieving changes to the way Australians view and consume
        alcohol is likely to be challenging due to the broad cultural acceptance of

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77   Australian Press Council website, viewed on 11 May 2010 at
     http://www.presscouncil.org.au/pcsite/activities/gprguide.html.

78   Mr Philip Huzzard, Transcript of Evidence, 15 February 2010, p 39.

79   A large number of social marketing campaigns were referred to in evidence to the inquiry for
     example: *Homophobia: What Are You Scared of?; One Punch Can Kill; Don't Turn a Night Out into a
     Nightmare; What are you doing to yourself? Championship Moves.*

80   See for example: Nepean Domestic Violence Network, Submission No 18, p 3; 20th Man Fund
     Inc, Submission No 19, p 3; Cairns Community Legal Centre Inc, Submission No 23, p 7;
     VicHealth, Submission No 26, p 9; ADCA, Submission No 28, p 14; MAN, Submission No 40,
     p 2; Queensland Government, Submission No 46, p 3; Matthew Stanley Foundation,
     Submission No 52, p 21; Gold Coast City Council (GCCC), Submission No 68, p 2; NSW
     Government, Submission No 76, p 4; Ms Karen Price, Transcript of Evidence, 1 March 2010, p
     20; Ms Karen Bevan, Transcript of Evidence, 1 March 2010, p 67; Various witnesses, Transcript
     of Evidence, 12 May 2010, pp 7, 15.

drinking. Hence the social marketing focus on raising awareness of the potential harmful effects of alcohol, while also discouraging binge drinking and encouraging responsible drinking rather than total abstinence. As observed by Youthlaw & Frontyard Youth Services:

> In general terms Australia needs a seismic attitudinal shift where getting drunk and violent becomes as socially unacceptable as lighting a cigarette in a restaurant, not wearing a seat belt, refusing to use a condom during casual sex or repeatedly getting sun-burnt.[81]

5.97   However, some reservations about the potential impact of broad based social marketing campaigns were raised. For example, Mr Jono Chase of Step Back Think who observed:

> ... mainstream advertising in this area is very difficult and fraught with problems in terms of addressing the right target audience. Often this kind of advertising, like [Transport Accident Commission] or even the binge drinking, does a lot to ease the concerns of parents of this audience but does not do a whole lot to actually make the young people think about their behaviour.[82]

5.98   In its submission, the Queensland Government urged caution in the use of advertising 'fear campaigns' observing:

> Research indicates that careful consideration is needed in using fear campaigns ... fear appeals generated favourable cognitive responses and consequent attitude change only if participants felt vulnerable to the threat. Furthermore, in order for fear messages to be effective, recipients must be provided with a clear, feasible means for reducing their fears.[83]

5.99   Mr Adair Donaldson also noted the importance of appropriately designed advertising campaigns to effectively convey intended messages to target audiences. However, while recognising the potential usefulness of advertising, Mr Donaldson was concerned that too great an emphasis on advertising alone might divert limited resources from other valuable interventions.[84]

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81   Youthlaw & Frontyard Youth Services, Submission No 35, p 10. See also: ADCA, Submission No 28, p 6.

82   Mr Jono Chase, Transcript of Evidence, 15 February 2010, p 19.

83   Queensland Government, Submission No 46, p 3.

84   Mr Adair Donaldson, Transcript of Evidence, 30 March 2010, p 49.

5.100   The following comments were made by respondents to the inquiry's online youth violence survey:

> *I also feel that the 'Australian way to behave is to 'smash' anyone who says something slightly wrong, looks slightly wrong, or even hanging with the slightly wrong crowd. I think it goes a lot deeper than that though ... it's definitely Society that is making this kind of disgusting behaviour acceptable.* **Female, 18-24 years, regional city**
>
> *We need to redefine what it means to be Australian - and please, can we spare the meat and three veggie eating, beer drinking yobbo who can hardly construct an intelligible sentence? Our only role-models are sportspeople, and nowadays that just is not good enough - promote the Arts, the Sciences, the Politics, the Lawyers, the Academics - We have enough of them!!!* **Male, 18-24 years, regional city**

Committee Comment

5.101   The Committee notes that a significant volume of written and verbal evidence to the inquiry included at least some level of support for social marketing to promote social norms and to effect cultural, attitudinal and behavioural changes. The Committee is aware that, between them, federal and state and territory governments are currently providing of support for a number of social marketing campaigns.[85] Notably as part of its *National Alcohol Strategy* the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing has provided $20 million to support a *National Binge Drinking Campaign* to fund advertising which confronts young people with the costs and consequences of binge drinking. While an initial evaluation of the campaign found that there were some promising improvements in awareness of risks associated with binge drinking and attitudes towards binge drinking it is unclear to what extent these improvements have lead to behavioural change.[86] The Committee understands that the outcomes of subsequent evaluations may provide more information in this regard.

5.102   In addition, at federal level the Committee notes the $17 million social marketing campaign announced in April 2007 as a component of the Respectful Relationships program administered through the Department

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85   See for example: Queensland Government, Submission No 46, p 3; Australian Government – DEEWR et al, Submission No 62, p 40; NSW Government, Submission No 76, p 5.

86   Australian Government – Department of Health and Ageing (D0HA), National Binge Drinking Campaign, Evaluation Survey 2009, viewed on 1 June 2010 at http://www.health.gov.au/internet/drinkingnightmare/publishing.nsf/Content/research-eval.

of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. As part of a strategy to reduce violence against women, the campaign aims to:

> .... convey the message to young people that all forms of violence are unacceptable, including bullying, cyber bullying, harassment, stalking, sexual abuse, and domestic violence.[87]

5.103   While proponents of social marketing campaigns point toward their success in raising awareness and achieving attitudinal and behavioural change the Committee understands that the evidence-base relating to the behavioural change is less compelling. Therefore while supportive in principle of social marketing campaigns, the Committee wishes to make the following observations. Firstly, the Committee notes that social marketing campaigns will only be effective in promoting cultural change if underpinned by a range of other interventions which also address other risk factors and structural influences associated with youth violence. The Committee is also mindful that to stand any chance of success, social marketing campaigns need to be well designed and appropriately implemented to convey the intended messages to the target audience.

5.104   Ultimately, the Committee's main concern is the absence of a robust evidence-base which demonstrates the long-term impacts of anti-violence social marketing campaigns on behaviour. Noting existing levels of Government support for a number of national anti-violence social marketing campaigns the Committee considers that a recommendation for the further allocation of resources is not required at this time, particularly as this would also divert resources from other interventions. Instead the Committee suggests that further work is required to identify the best practice with regard to the design and implementation of social marketing campaigns.

5.105   As noted throughout this Chapter, a sound evidence-base is necessary to ensure that resources are directed to effective interventions and programs. Therefore, while not underestimating the difficulty of establishing cause and effect, the Committee believes that in addition to assessing changes in knowledge and attitudes, evaluations of social marketing campaigns that are intended to modify behaviour should also seek to establish effectiveness in terms of behavioural outcomes. Therefore, the Committee recommends that the Australian Government ensures that evaluations of social marketing campaigns undertaken in relation to youth violence or

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87   Minister for Housing, The Hon Tanya Plibersek MP, Media Release: *Lead Agency Announced For Respectful Relationships Campaign,* viewed on 1 June 2010 at http://www.tanyaplibersek.fahcsia.gov.au/mediareleases/2010/Pages/agency_rr_campaign _7apr10.aspx.

anti-social behaviour that can lead to youth violence, incorporate evaluation methodology to assess rates of behavioural change where this is an intended outcome.

Recommendation 13

5.106   **The Committee recommends that the Australian Government ensures that evaluations of social marketing campaigns undertaken in relation to youth violence or anti-social behaviour that can lead to youth violence, incorporate evaluation methodology to assess rates of behavioural change where this is an intended outcome.**

5.107   In concluding, the Committee considers that the implementation of a national youth violence and rehabilitation strategy, developed in consultation with key stakeholders, including young people, and founded on the key principles outlined in this Chapter will be an integral part of addressing youth violence in Australia and reducing its impact on young Australians.

Annette Ellis MP
Chair

A

Appendix A – List of Submissions

1   Victim Support Australasia Inc

2   National Council of Single Mothers and their Children Inc

3   Ms Jo Howard

4   Ms Nina Funnell

5   National Abuse Free Contact Campaign

6   Ms Amanda Beattie

7   Mr Keith Holman

8   Mrs Rosemary Power

9   Neighbourhood Watch Broadbeach 20

10   Mr Kelvin Thomson MP, Federal Member for Wills

11   Protective Mothers Alliance

12   Community Connections (Vic) Ltd

13   Dr Susan George

14   The Smith Family

15   The Hon Dr Bob Such MP JP, South Australian Parliament

16   OUTthere, Rural Victorian Youth Council for Sexual Diversity

17   Women's Health Victoria

18   Nepean Domestic Violence Network

19   20th Man Fund Inc

20   Foundation for Young Australians

21   Royal Women's Hospital

22   The Gender Centre Inc

23   Cairns Community Legal Centre Inc

24   Centre for Adolescent Health, University of Melbourne

25   Youth Advisory Council NSW

26   VicHealth: Victorian Health Promotion Foundation

27   Step Back Think

28   Alcohol and other Drugs Council of Australia

29   Australian Drug Foundation

30   ACON (AIDS Council of NSW)

31   Australian Council on Children and the Media

32   National LGBT Health Alliance

33   Commissioner for Children and Young People (WA)

34   Hillcrest Christian College

35   Youthlaw: Young People's Legal Rights Centre & Frontyard Youth
        Services

36   Coalition of Activist Lesbians Australia

37   Australian Capital Territory Government

38   Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations Inc

39   Australian Institute of Family Studies

40   MAN: Men's Advisory Network

41   Police Federation of Australia

42   Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

43   Hume City Council

44   Centre for Multicultural Youth

45   UnitingCare Children, Young People and Families

46   Queensland Government

47   Professor Kerry Carrington

48   Life Without Barriers

49	Australian Hotels Association
50	Circular Head Aboriginal Corporation
51	Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service Co-operative Ltd
52	Matthew Stanley Foundation
53	ALSO Foundation & the Victorian Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby
54	Rainbow Network Victoria
55	Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth
56	Tasmanian Government - Department of Premier and Cabinet
57	Australian Institute of Criminology
57.1	Australian Institute of Criminology *(Supplementary)*
57.2	Australian Institute of Criminology *(Supplementary)*
58	Australian Bahá'i Community
59	Mission Australia
60	Youth Affairs Council of Victoria Inc
61	Northern Territory Government - Department of Health and Families
62	Australian Government - Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations et al
63	Mr Chris Chappell
64	Mr David Morris
65	Mr Daniel & Mrs Jo Hames
66	Queensland Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian
67	Voices Against Violence
68	Gold Coast City Council
68.1	Confidential *(Supplementary)*
69	Leigh Clark Foundation
70	Mr Paul Johnson
71	Province Promotions Pty Ltd
72	Mr Harry Hukin

B

Appendix B – List of Exhibits

1   *It All Starts At Home: Male Adolescent Violence to Mothers* (Provided by Ms Jo Howard)

2   Liverpool Women's Health Centre, WEEO WISER Project, *Young Women's Healthy Relationships Project, Evaluation Report (No 1),* September 2007 (Provided by Liverpool Women's Health Centre)

3   *We're not saying don't drink, just think. Geelong Advertiser fight against violence* (Provided by Geelong Advertiser Group)

4   Poster: anti-knife campaign (Provided by Accelerator Communications)

5   TV commercial slides: anti-knife campaign (Provided by Accelerator Communications)

6   Banks T, *Through The Eyes Of A Person With A Disability* (Provided by Mr Tom Banks)

7   Sainsbury J, *Study methods for building the capacity of the education sector to support same sex attracted young people* (Provided by Ms Jen Sainsbury)

8   Audio CD: Triple J's Hack Program on the Melbourne Youth Forum (Provided by ABC Triple J)

9   *ACT Suspension Support Trial Notes - Suspension Support Pilot at the Melba-Copland cluster* (Provided by ACT Government)

10   Police Federation of Australia, *Australian Crime Prevention Program: Innovative Grants.* (Relates to Submission No 41)

11   Province Promotions Pty Ltd, *Training Manual: Putting Youth in the Picture.* (Relates to Submission No 71)

12   Province Promotions Pty Ltd, DVD: *Welcome to our World.* (Relates to Submission No 71)

13   Province Promotions Pty Ltd, DVD: *Welcome to our World - Indigenous Youth.* (Related to Submission No 71)

14   Autobiographical experiences by: Mr Kristian McDonald and Mr Samuel Birch (Provided by Ms Marie Stannus)

15   Poetry by Mr Samuel Birch: *An Imprisoned Mind –Shadow* (Provided by Ms Marie Stannus)

C
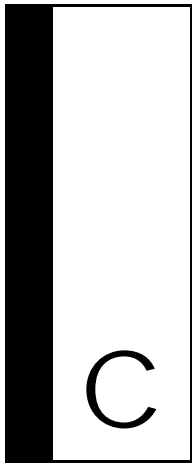
Appendix C – List of Public Hearings

Wednesday, 3 February 2010 - Canberra

Australian Hotels Association

> Mr William (Bill) Healey, National Chief Executive Officer

> Mr Thomas McGuire, National President

Wednesday, 10 February 2010 - Canberra

Australian Institute of Criminology

> Dr Kelly Richards, Analyst

> Dr Adam Tomison, Director

Monday, 15 February 2010 - Melbourne

20th Man Fund Inc

> Mr Robert (Bob) Falconer

> Mr Les Twentyman OAM

Accelerator Communications

> Mr Anthony Hardy, Creative Director

> Ms Nicola Horan, Art Director

> Mr Philip Huzzard, Managing Director

Adolescent Forensic Health Service and Young People's Health Service

> Miss Lynne Evans, Programs Manager

Foundation for Young Australians

>   Mr Charby Ibrahim, Program Manager, No Regrets

>   Ms Jen Sainsbury, Manager, Partner and Program Development

Step Back Think

>   Mr Jono Chase, Director

>   Mr Daniel Cronin, Director

Centre for Adolescent Health, University of Melbourne

>   Associate Professor Sheryl Hemphill, Principal Research Fellow

Wednesday, 24 February 2010 - Canberra

Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth

>   Ms Deirdre Croft, Collaboration Manager

Monday, 1 March 2010 - Sydney

Private capacity

>   Mr Gary Anderson

>   Ms Nina Funnell

ACON (AIDS Council of NSW)

>   Mr Nicolas Parkhill, Chief Executive Officer

>   Ms Karen Price, Director, Policy Strategy and Research

Australian Council for Children and the Media

>   Dr Wayne Warburton, Member and spokesperson

Mission Australia

>   Ms Prue Burns, Senior Research and Projects Officer

>   Ms Anne Hampshire, National Manager, Research and Policy

UnitingCare Children, Young People and Families

>   Ms Karen Bevan, Director, Social Justice

Ms Susan Chapman, Coordinator ACE AfterCare, UnitingCare Burnside

Wednesday, 10 March 2010 - Canberra

Alcohol and other Drugs Council of Australia

Mr David Templeman, Chief Executive Officer

Ms Sophie Turnbull, Policy/Project Officer

Police Federation of Australia

Mr Russell Armstrong, WA Branch President

Mr Mark Burgess, Chief Executive Officer

Ms Dianne Gayler, Policy Adviser

Wednesday, 17 March 2010 – Canberra (Teleconference)

2010 Youth Minister's Round Table of Young Territorians

Mr Joshua May, Member

Miss Lauren Moss, Chairperson

Miss Hannah Woerle, Member

Tuesday, 30 March 2010 - Brisbane

Arts, Education and Law, Griffith University

Professor Paul Mazerolle, Pro Vice Chancellor

Griffith Sports College, Griffith University

Mr Michael Jeh, Manager

Key Centre for Ethics, Law, Justice and Governance, Griffith University

Dr Kathryn Freiberg, Senior Research Fellow and Program Leader, Prevention and Developmental Pathways

Matthew Stanley Foundation

Mr Neville Coventry, Volunteer

Mr Leigh Drennan, Member

Mr Paul Stanley, Founder

Redlands Christian Reformed Church

Reverend David Groenenboom

Province Promotions Pty Ltd

Mr Adair Donaldson, Director

Wednesday, 12 May 2010 - Canberra

Attorney-General's Department

Dr John Boersig, PSM, Assistant Secretary, Human Rights Branch

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

Mr Daniel Owen, Branch Manager, Office for Youth

Ms Kathryn Shugg, Branch Manager, Early Childhood Quality

Mr Richard Smith, Director, Student Engagement

Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

Ms Allyson Essex, Branch Manager, Family and Child Support Policy

Department of Health and Ageing

Ms Georgina Harman, First Assistant Secretary, Mental Health and Chronic Disease Division

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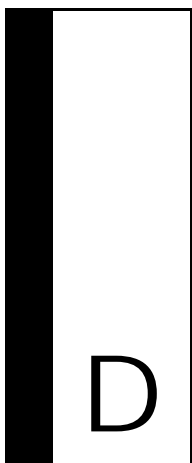
Appendix D – Results from Online Survey on the Impact of Violence on Young Australians

Consulting with young people about their perceptions and experiences of violence was a priority for the Committee. The Committee recognised that young people were unlikely to provide formal written submissions to the inquiry. This proved to be correct. Very few young people, besides those who were an employee or member of an organisation, made written submissions providing their views or experiences.

To ensure that the experiences and views of young people were captured, the Committee agreed to conduct an online survey. The survey questions, based on the inquiry's terms of reference, were developed in partnership with an external consultant with expertise in social research.[1] The questions were framed using accessible language and plain English so that younger respondents could complete the survey without adult assistance.

The survey was advertised extensively through e-mails to youth organisations, many of which promoted the survey through their e-mail distribution lists. Members of Parliament and Senators were also contacted to request that they place a link to the survey on their own websites. Thinking about the survey's target group, that is young people aged 12–24 years, the Committee realised that online advertising would be essential. Facebook and Google advertising were used for the first time by the Department of House of Representatives as a method to promote the survey. The survey opened on 22 October 2009 and closed on 16 February 2010.

The intention of the survey was to gather opinions and experiences of young people. Importantly, the Committee recognises that the survey methodology, which relied on respondent self-selection rather than cross-sectional population

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1   Mr Patrick Shanahan, E & S Research.

sampling, does not allow for results to be interpreted as rigorous, statistical measurements of levels of youth violence. Rather the survey was intended to be descriptive and findings should not be used to extrapolate to the general youth population. As such, the data is provided in basic graphs, and the raw data is generally not presented. Furthermore, as responses to the survey were anonymous the veracity of input cannot be guaranteed.

The survey divided into four parts. In the first part young people were asked about their perceptions of violence. In the second part they were asked about their experiences of violence. In the third part young people were asked to give their views on what causes violence and in the fourth part what should be done about it. While responses to the survey were anonymous, respondents were asked to provide some basic demographic information to assist with analysis of responses.

It should be noted that not all respondents finished the survey. While all questions were mandatory, it was possible to close down the survey browser to exit without completing the survey. Therefore the graphs and data presented reflect that not all respondents answered all of the questions.

The Respondents

Overall, there were 1,379 respondents to the survey. Of these, 48% were male and 52% female. Half of the respondents were from a capital city, 36% from a regional city and 14% were from rural/remote locations. Over half (58%) were under 18 years old and the remainder were aged 18 to 24 years.

The Survey Preamble

The survey was preceded by the following preamble.

Are you aged between 12 and 24 years and have experienced physical violence, directly or indirectly, or know someone who has experienced it, or have a view on youth violence in your neighbourhood, town or city? If so, we would like to hear about your experiences and your views on youth violence generally.

The Australian Parliament is holding an inquiry into the impact of violence on young Australians, and would really like to hear your views. What we mean by violence is the sort of violence that's physical and is more likely to happen out on the street or in a public place.

This survey will be completely anonymous. We ask that you provide your age, sex and location so that we can get an idea of what's happening across the country. It will not be possible to identify anybody who participates in this survey.

*The information you provide will be used to inform the House of Representatives
Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth about the experiences young
people have had with violence. It will also be used to help shape the final report, which will
contain recommendations to the Australian Government on what to do about this issue.*

*If you wish to provide us with more information about your experiences, or have an idea of
what sort of strategies could be used to reduce violence, please send an email to
fchy.reps@aph.gov.au.*

For more information about the inquiry please visit www.aph.gov.au/youthviolence.

Young People's Perceptions of Violence

The survey started by asking respondents a number of question regarding their own perceptions of violence, including whether it had increased and its severity. It also asked about perceptions of their own safety.

Q1. Thinking generally of physical violence (e.g. fights, hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, using weapons, etc) that can occur among young people when they are out and about, would you say that each year physical violence among young people ...

- *seems to be increasing ( )*

- *seems to be decreasing ( ) or,*

- *has remained the same ( )*

Figure D.1   Young people's perceptions of whether physical violence is increasing

*Source: FCHY Committee Youth Violence Survey 2010*
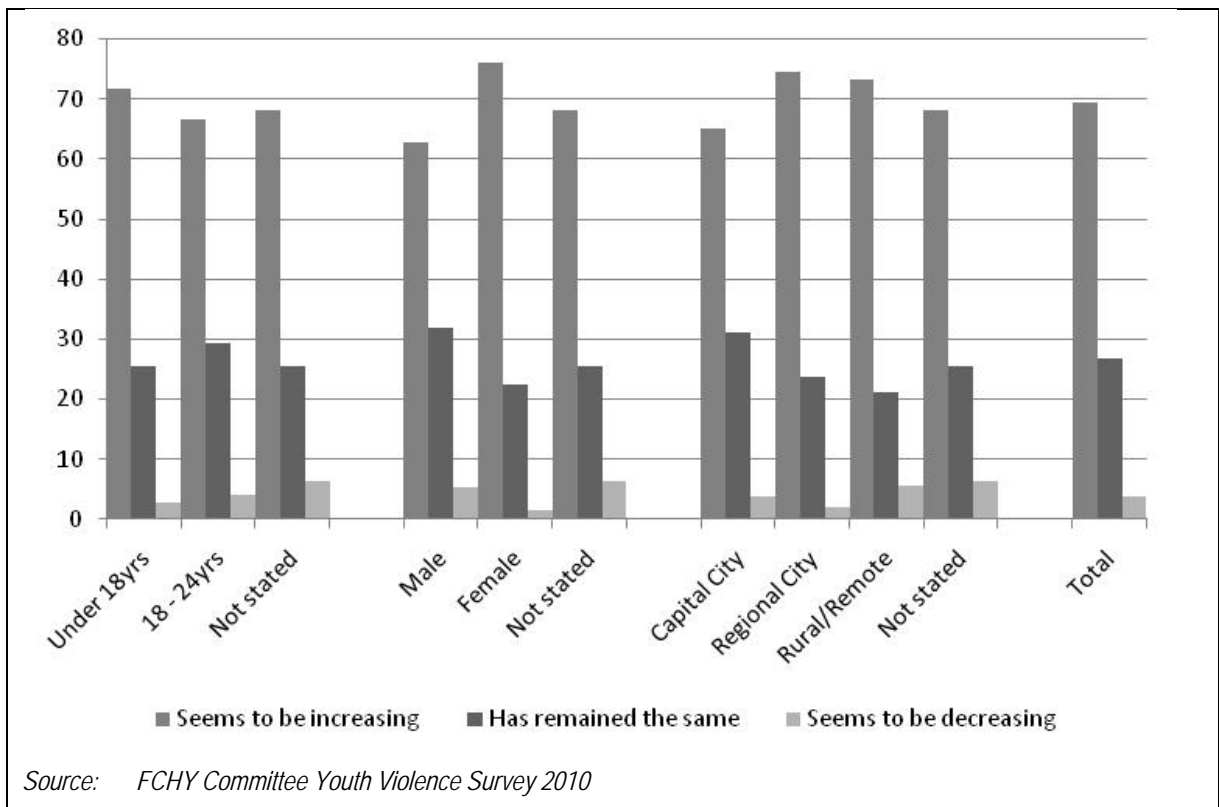
Of all the respondents, nearly 70% believed that violence seems to be increasing, with only 4% believing that it was decreasing. This varied depending on the age, sex or location of the respondent. For example, respondents aged less than 18 years were more likely than those aged 18 to 24 years to think that violence was increasing. Females much more likely than males to believe violence is increasing, and interestingly those who live in regional cities or rural/remote locations were more likely to think violence was increasing than those living in capital cities.

Q2. Do you think violence among young people is becoming more severe, less severe or is about the same as it always has been?

- *more severe ( )*

- *less severe ( )*

- *about the same ( )*

Figure D.2   Young people's perceptions about the severity of physical violence

*Source: FCHY Committee Youth Violence Survey 2010*
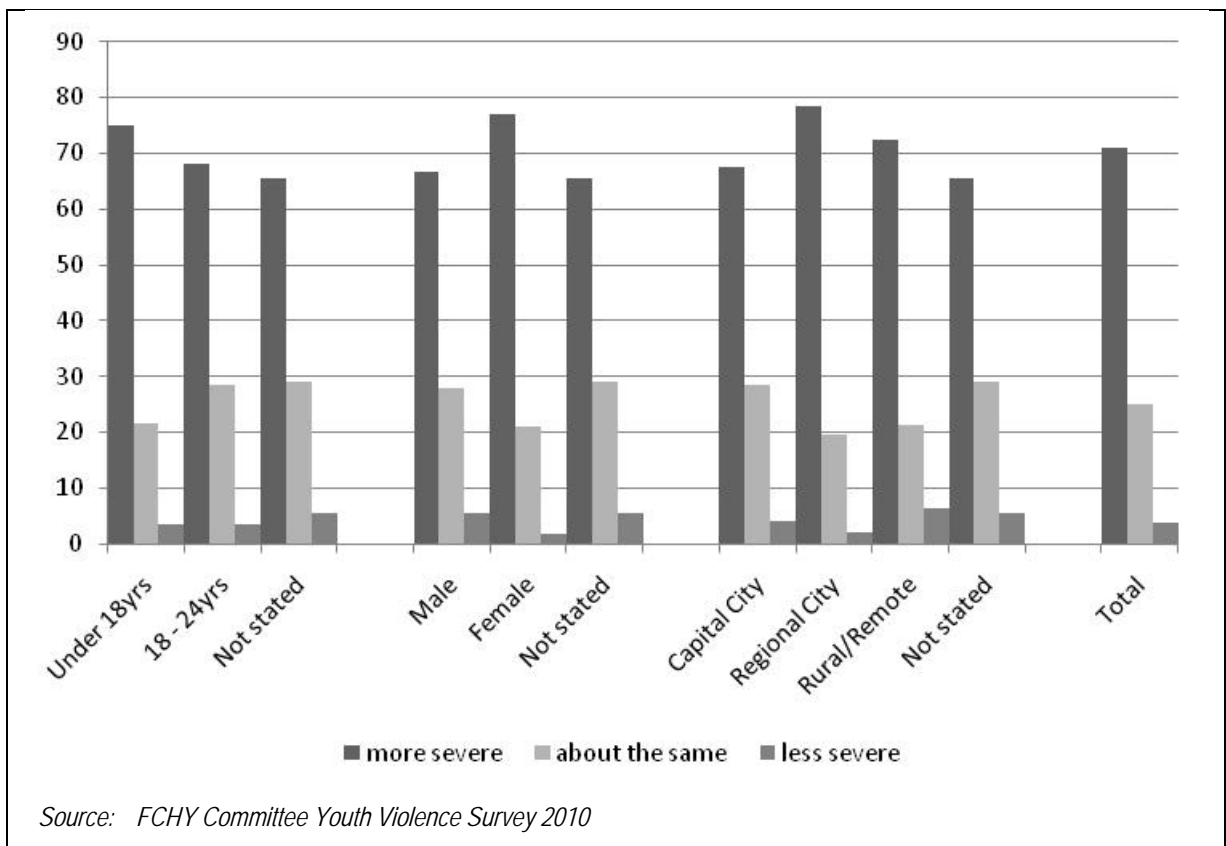
The results regarding the severity of violence were similar to the results on whether violence had increased. Just over 70% of respondents believed that the severity of violence had increased. Respondents aged less than 18 years, females and those living in regional cities were most likely to think that the severity of violence had increased.

*Q3. How worried are you about your personal safety when you are out and about? Would
you say...*

- *worried all of the time ( )*

- *worried most of the time ( )*

- *worried some of the time ( )*

- *not worried at all ( ) - go to Q5.*

Figure D.3   Young people's concern about their personal safety while out and about

Source: FCHY Committee Youth Violence Survey 2010
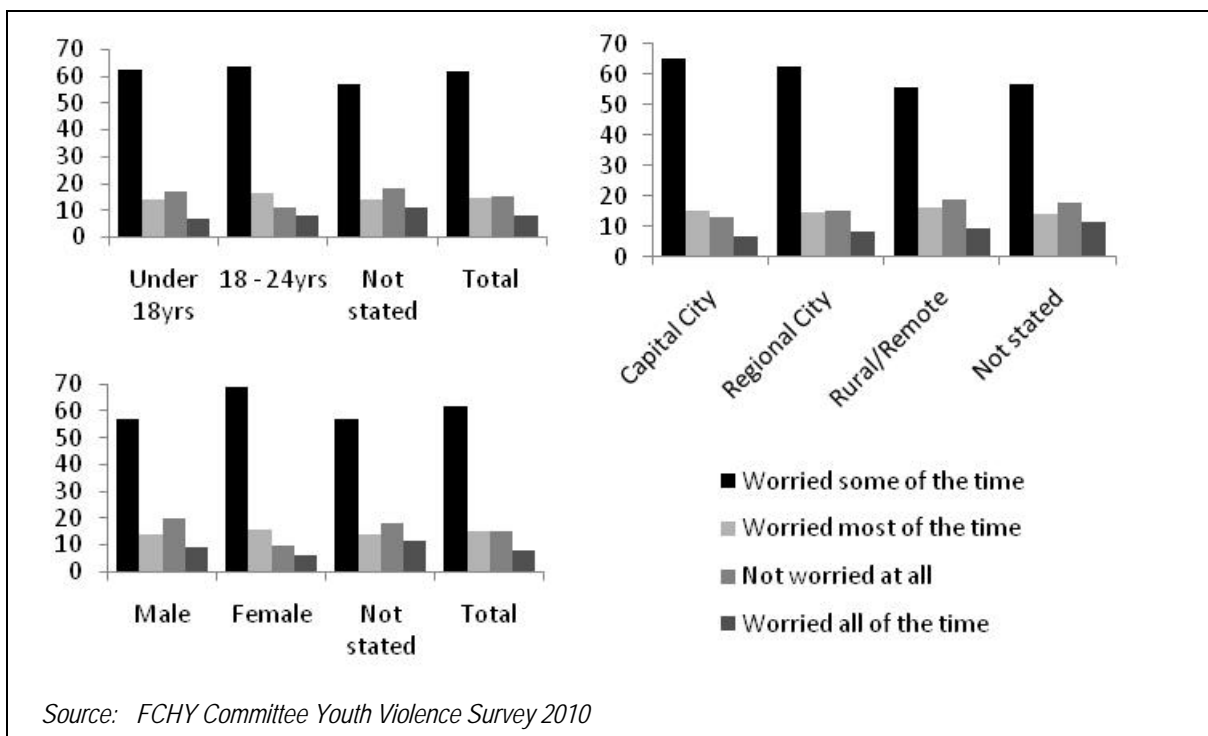
When asked how concerned they were about their personal safety while out and
about, only 15% of young people were not worried at all. Nearly two-thirds were
worried some of the time, 15% most of the time and 8% all of the time. Females
were more worried than males. Young people aged 18-24 years were more
worried than those under 18 years, and those in capital cities were more worried
than those living in rural or remote locations.

Q4. Are you worried more about your personal safety ...

- *at night ( )*

- *during the day ( )*

- *both at night and during the day ( )*

Figure D.4   Young people who were concerned with their safety by when they were most concerned

Source: *FCHY Committee Youth Violence Survey 2010*
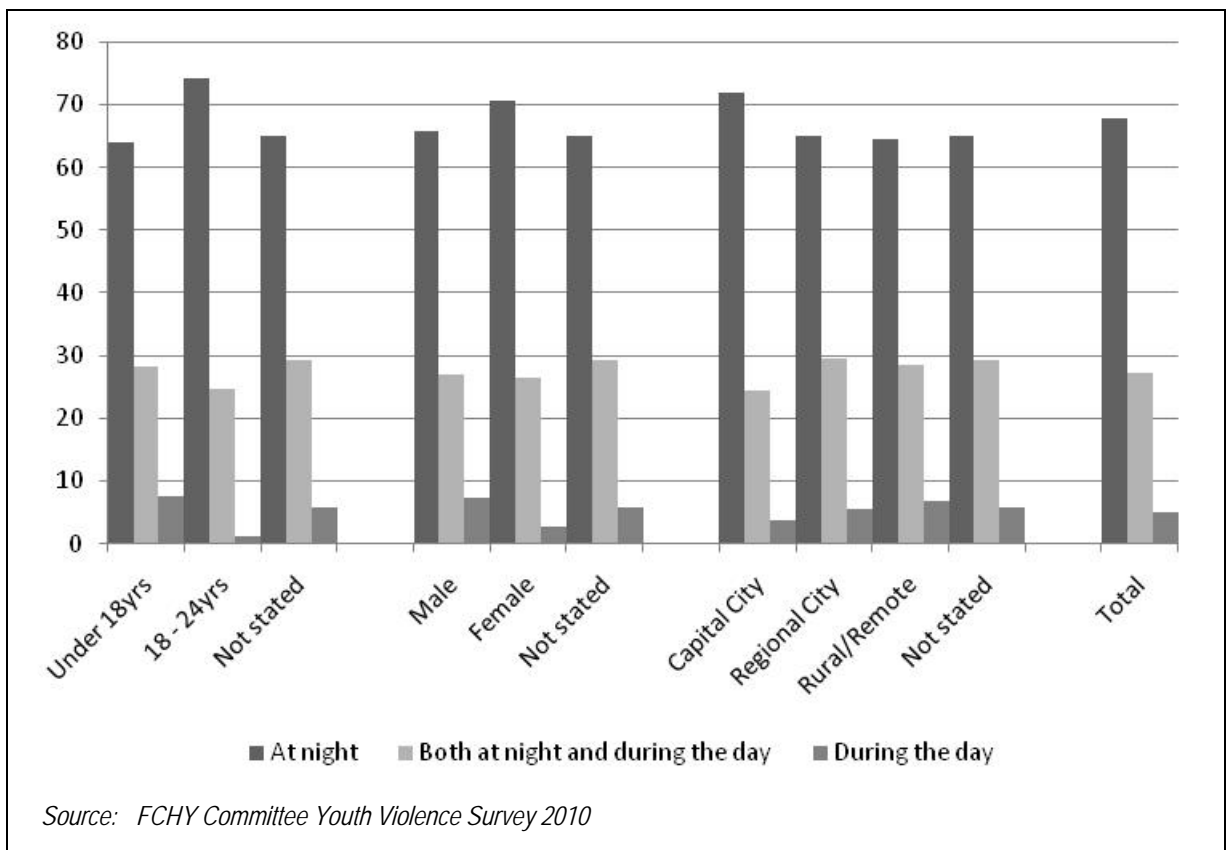
Not surprisingly, the majority of young people who were concerned with their safety were concerned at night. A quarter of the respondents were concerned both during the night and day. Young people aged 18–24 years were more concerned at night than those under 18 years, which could reflect that the older group are more likely than the younger group to be out at night.

Q5. How safe do you feel in your suburb or local area? Would you say you feel …

- *safe all of the time ( )*

- *safe most of the time ( )*

- *safe some of the time ( )*

- *safe very little of the time ( )*

- *not safe any of the time ( )*

Figure D.5   Young people's perception of their personal safety in their own suburb or local area


Source: FCHY Committee Youth Violence Survey 2010
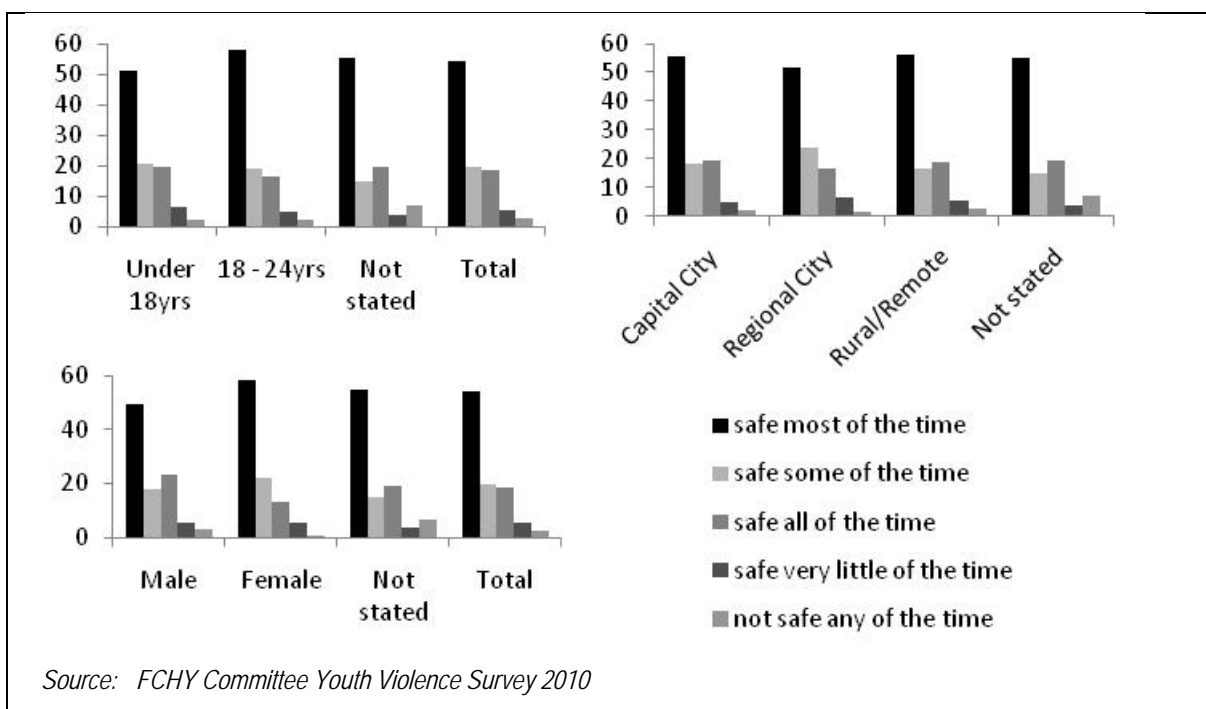
Interestingly, although most of the respondents were concerned about their safety at least some of the time, the majority believed they were safe in their own suburb or locality at least most of the time. Where they lived did not seem to influence their feelings of safety, but males tended to feel safer in their own locality than females.

Q6. When do you think violence among young people is most likely to occur? (Choose one)

- *Anytime during the week or weekend ( )*

- *During the week in the daytime ( )*

- *During the week at night ( )*

- *On weekends during the day ( )*

- *On weekends at night ( )*

Figure D.6   Young people's perceptions of when violence is more likely to occur



Source: FCHY Committee Youth Violence Survey 2010
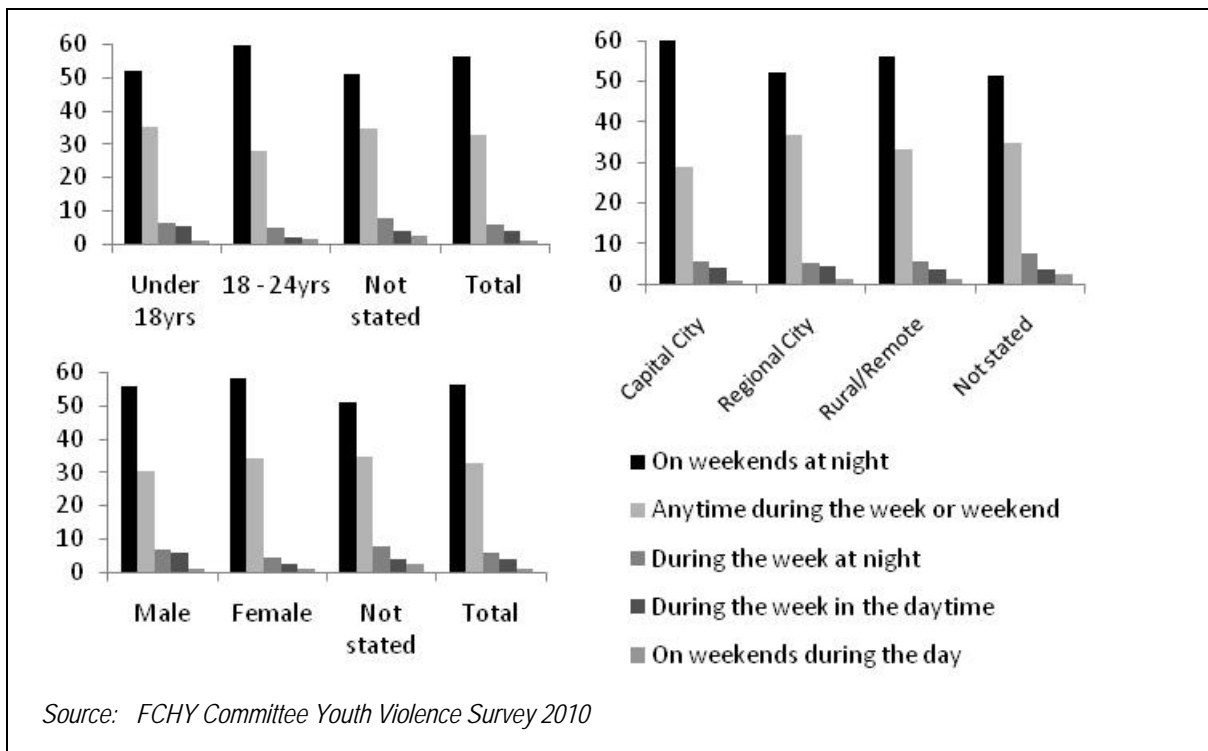
Over one half of respondents believed that violence is most likely to occur on weekends at night, while a further third believed that it can occur at any time.

Q7. Who do you think is most often responsible for physical violence among young people?

- *Males under 18yrs ( )*

- *Males 18-24yrs ( )*

- *Females under 18yrs ( )*

- *Females 18-24yrs ( )*

- *Don't know ( )*

Figure D.7   Young people's perceptions of who is most often responsible for physical violence among young people

Source: *FCHY Committee Youth Violence Survey 2010*
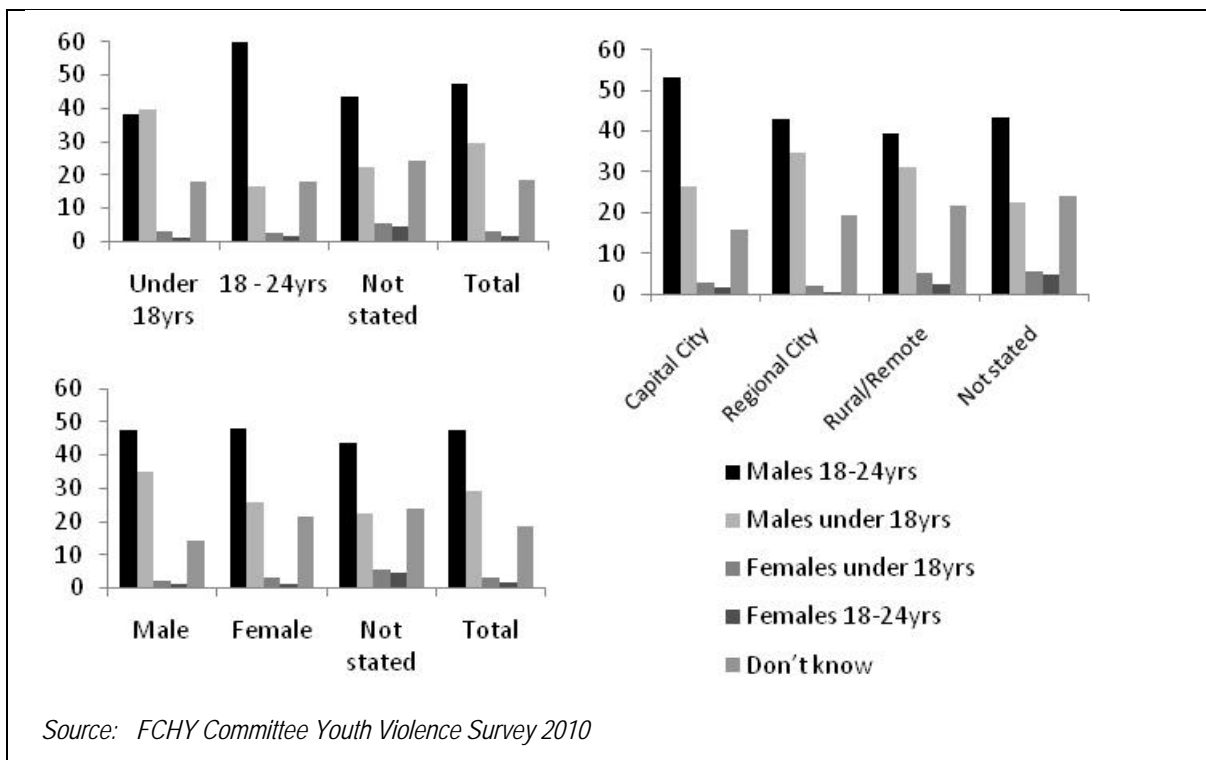
Overall, around three-quarters believed that males were most often responsible for violence. Only 5% believed females were most often responsible for violence. When breaking down the data by age, sex and locality of respondents, all but under 18 year olds believed that males aged 18–24 years were the most likely of all four age groups to be responsible for the violence. Marginally more under 18 year olds thought that males aged under 18 were the group most often responsible for violence, followed closely by males aged 18-24 years.

*Q8. Who do you think is most often the victim of physical violence among young people?
(Choose one).*

- *Males under 18yrs ( )*

- *Males 18-24yrs ( )*

- *Females under 18yrs ( )*

- *Females 18-24yrs ( )*

- *Don't know ( )*

Figure D.8   Young people's perceptions of who is most likely to be the victim of violence

Source: FCHY Committee Youth Violence Survey 2010
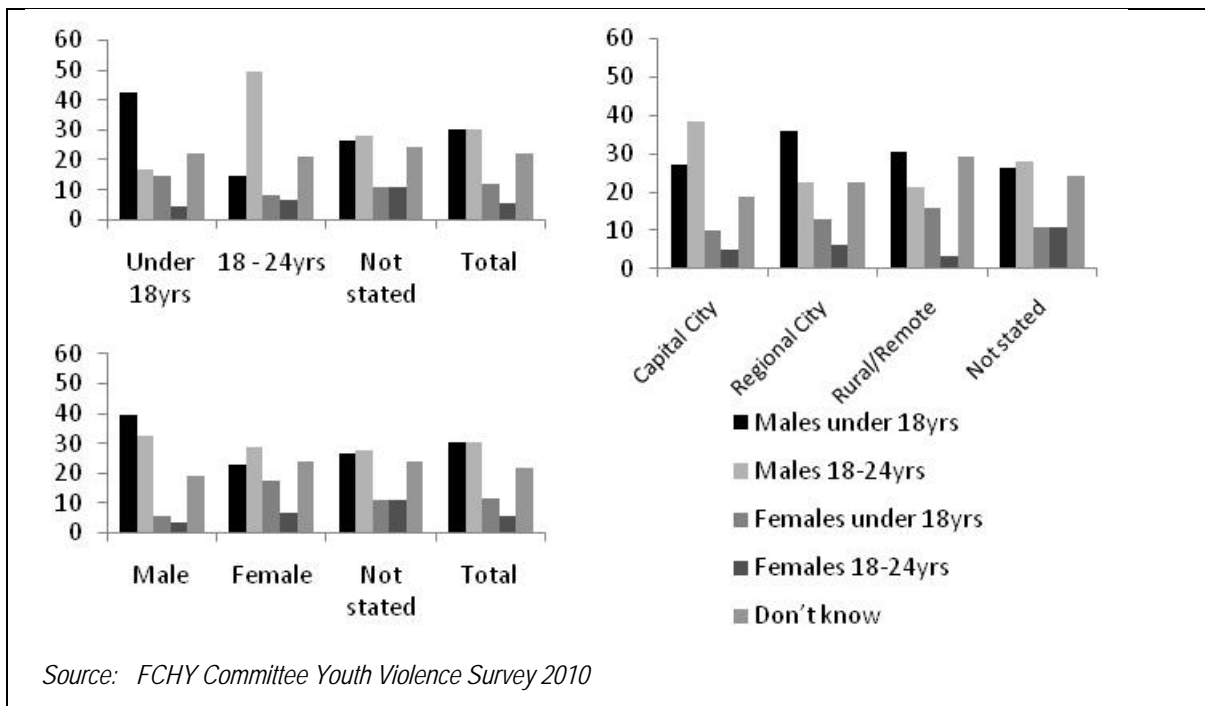
Around 60% of respondents believed that young men were most likely to be the
victim of physical violence. However, when breaking the data down by the sex,
age and locality of respondents interesting factors emerged. When looking at age
group, under 18 year olds are much more likely to believe that under 18 year olds
are the victims, while 18–24 year olds believe that 18–24 year olds are. While
females believe that males aged 18–24 year olds are most likely the victim, they
also believe more than male respondents that females are likely to be victims. The
locality of the respondent also had an effect on who they believed were the most
likely to be a victim of violence.

Young people's experiences with violence

Respondents were asked a number of questions regarding their experiences with violence. The first section concentrated on those that had seen violence in the past 12 months and respondents were asked a few questions about what they had seen. The second part focussed on victims and perpetrators of violence.

Q9. In the last 12 months, have you seen (but not been involved) in physical violence while you were out in the street, at a club/pub, at school, or in a public place?

- *yes ( )*
- *no ( ) - go to Q14*

Figure D.9   Young people by whether they have seen physical violence in the past 12 months

Source: *FCHY Committee Youth Violence Survey 2010*
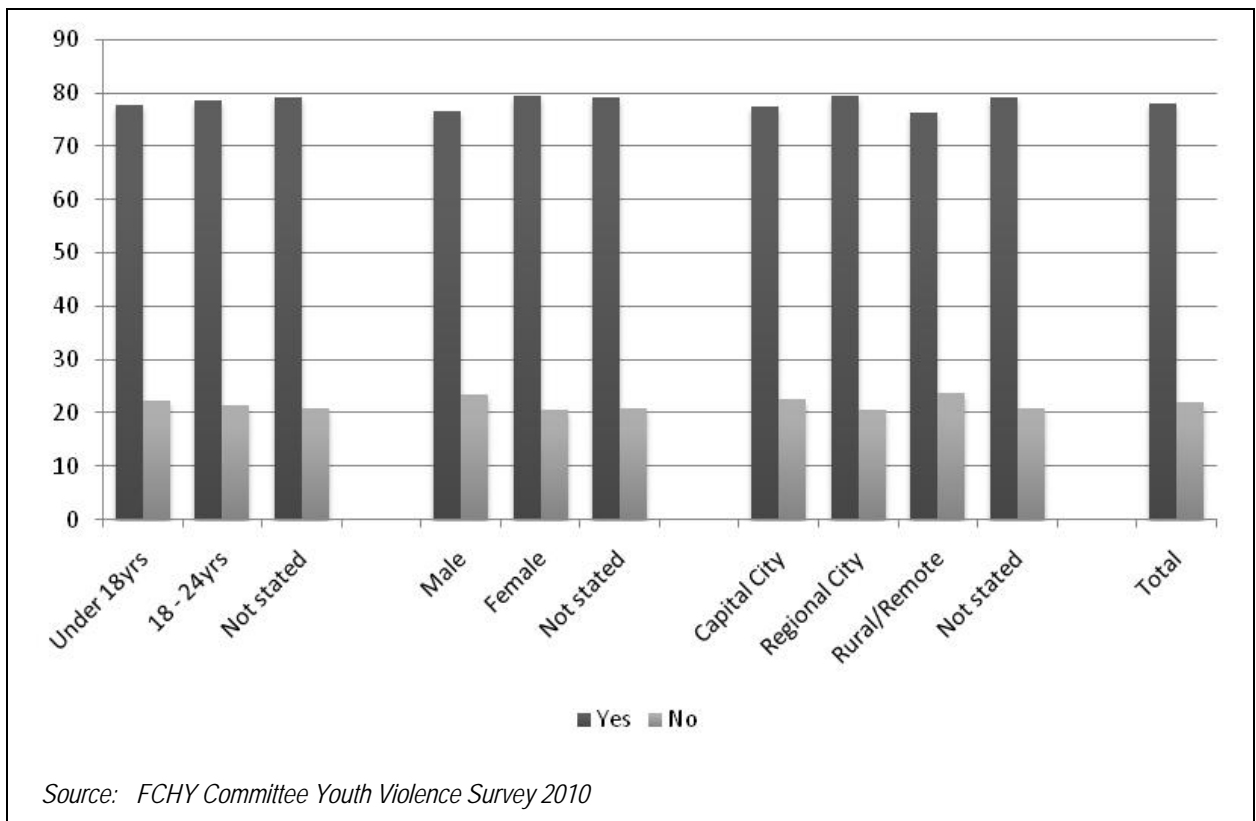
Nearly four in five young people had seen physical violence in the past 12 months. This is true regardless of age, sex or locality. However, males and those living in a rural or remote location were slightly less likely to have seen violence in the past 12 months.

*Q10. In the last 12 months did you see physical violence on one or on more than one
occasion?*

- *once only ( )*

- *more than once ( )*

**Figure D.10   Young people who have seen violence in the past 12 months by how often they had
seen it**

Source: FCHY Committee Youth Survey 2010
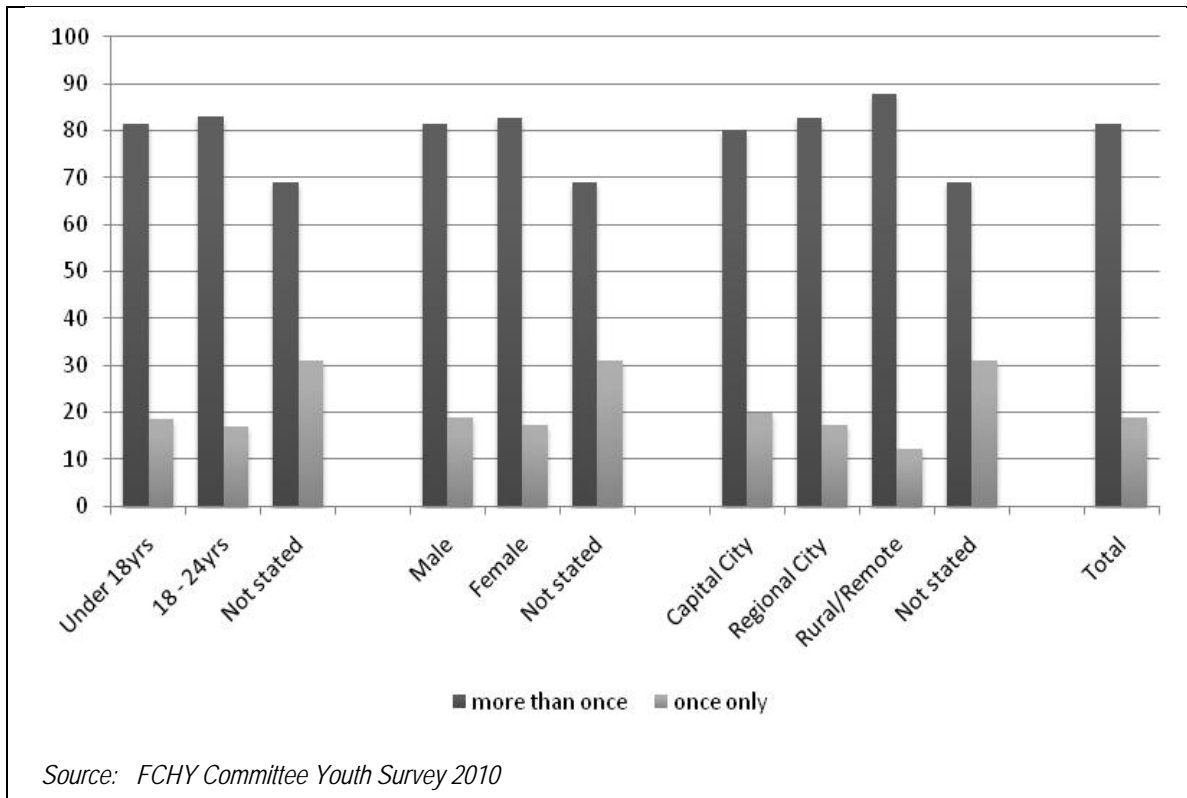
Of those who have seen violence in the past 12 months, over 80% had seen it more
than once. Those living in rural or remote locations were the most likely to have
seen violence on more than one occasion.

Q11. In the last 12 months and on the last occasion you saw physical violence in a public place, what did you see? (Choose one only)

- *street violence ( )*

- *gang violence ( )*

- *racial violence ( )*

- *pub/club violence ( )*

- *school/workplace violence ( )*

- *bullying ( )*

- *violence in park/beach ( )*

- *violence at a party ( )*

- *violence on public transport ( )*

- *violence at station/bus stop ( )*

- *road rage ( )*

- *other (free text option)*

Table D.1   Young people who have seen violence in the past 12 months by type of violence

	Sex		Age (years)		Locality				
Table D.1	Male	Female	< 18	18–24	Capital city	Regional city	Rural/ remote	Not stated	Total
street violence	23	22	19	27	26	18	19	23	22
pub/club violence	13	18	4	33	21	12	10	13	16
school/workplace violence	14	14	22	3	12	16	19	15	14
bullying	8	11	13	4	6	12	14	18	10
gang violence	9	5	8	5	5	8	7	10	7
violence at a party	6	7	10	2	5	8	8	0	6
violence at station/bus stop	5	4	4	4	5	4	4	5	4
racial violence	6	3	4	5	4	6	2	3	4
violence on public transport	2	3	1	5	4	2	0	2	3
Other	14	13	15	12	12	14	17	11	14
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**

Source: FCHY Committee Youth Violence Survey 2010

Note: Other includes violence at a park/beach, violence at a sporting event, road rage, don't know and a free text option.

Overall, street violence was the most common (22%) type of violence seen by respondents in the past 12 months. This was followed by pub/club violence (16%), school/workplace violence (14%) and bullying (10%). However, this varied depending on the respondents' age, sex and locality.

Young people aged less than 18 years were more likely to witness school or workplace violence, followed by street violence, bullying and violence at a party. Those aged 18–24 years were most likely to see street violence or pub/club violence. Street violence was the type of violence most likely to have been witnessed regardless of respondents' locality. Pub/club violence was less frequently witnessed by those living in regional cities and rural/remote locations while school/workplace violence and bullying was witnessed more frequently.

In the 'other' category, respondents were able to provide free text responses. These included: all of the above, homophobic violence, drunken violence and violence to impress others.

Q12. On this last occasion do you think the person responsible for the violence had been drinking or had used drugs?

- *Yes, I think the person had been drinking ( )*

- *Yes, I think the person had been using drugs ( )*

- *No ( )*

- *Don't know ( )*

Figure D.11   Of those who had seen violence in the past 12 months by whether they believed drugs or alcohol were involved

Source: FCHY Committee Youth Violence Survey 2010
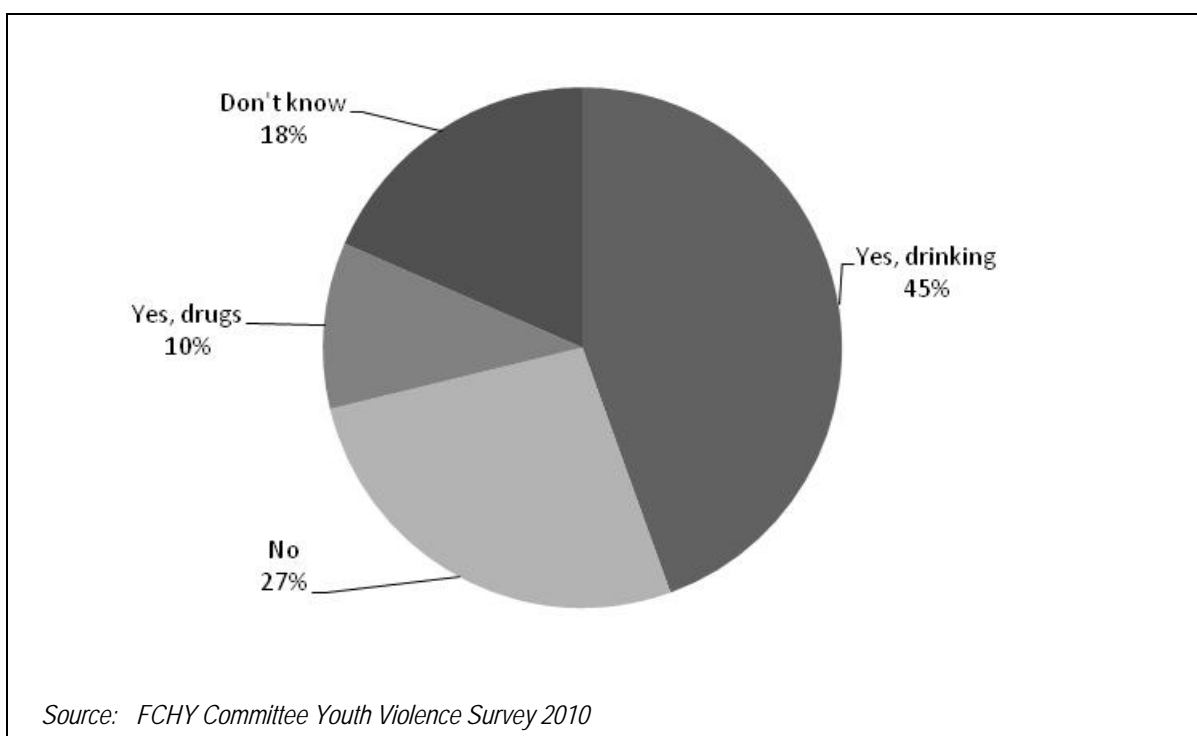
Respondents were also asked whether they believed alcohol or drugs were involved in the latest incident they witnessed. Overall, 45% believed that the person responsible had been drinking, 10% that the responsible person had been using drugs and 27% believed that the responsible person had been doing neither.

Whether the person responsible had been drinking or using drugs depended on the type of violence witnessed. Alcohol was more likely to have been used in pub/club violence, street violence, violence at a party and gang violence. Drugs were likely to have been used in street violence, pub/club violence, gang violence and violence at a station or bus stop. The person believed responsible was less likely to have been drinking or using drugs in school/workplace violence or bullying.

Just over one third of respondents under the age of 18 years believed that the
person hadn't been drinking or using drugs compared to just 12% of those aged
18–24 years. This may be because the younger age group are more likely to
witness bullying and school or workplace violence rather than street violence or
pub/club violence.

Q13. Did the police become involved?

- *Yes, they turned up ( )*

- *Yes, it was reported later ( )*

- *No ( )*

- *Don't know ( )*

Figure D.12   Of those who had seen violence in the past 12 months by whether the police were involved

Source: FCHY Committee Youth Violence Survey 2010
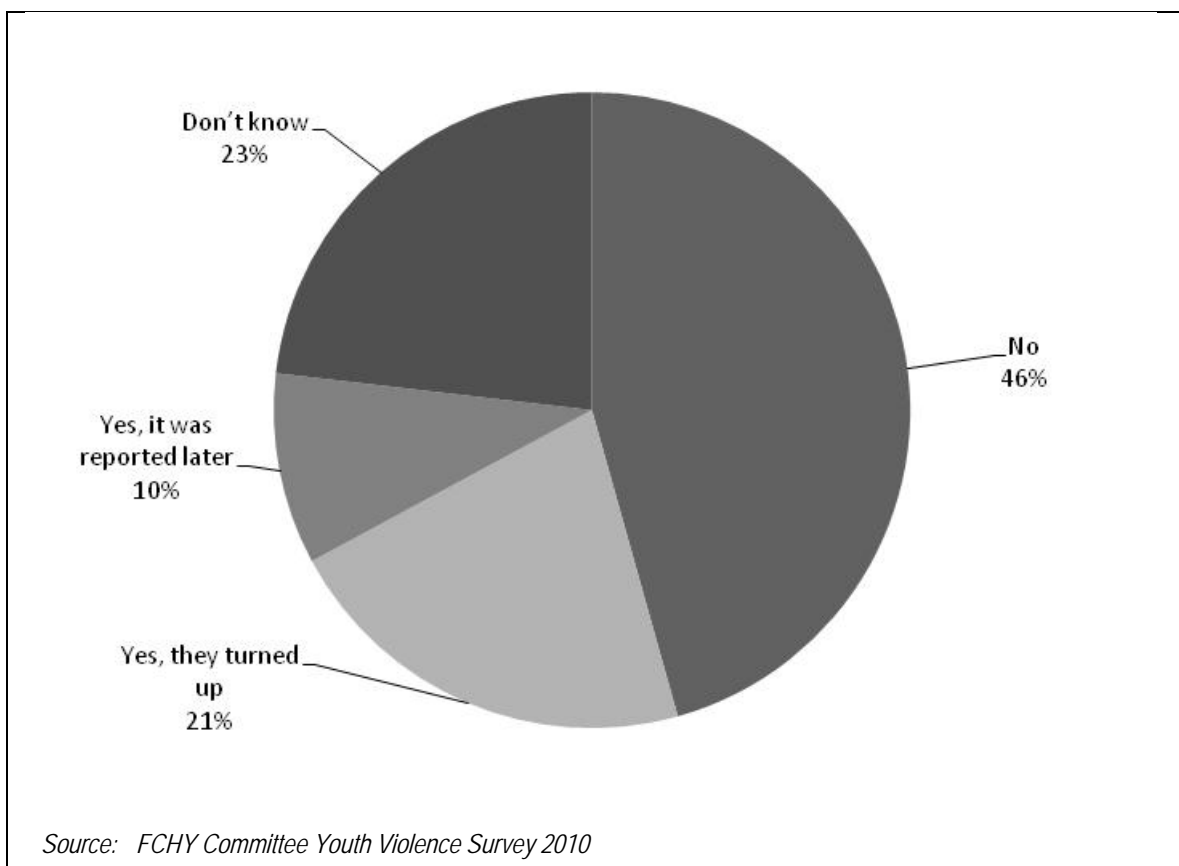
Police were involved in only 31% of incidences witnessed by the respondents. This is similar to results from the Crime and Safety Survey which states that only a minority of young people (20%) will report their assault to the police. This is for various reasons. The most common reasons for not reporting incidents were the belief that it was too trivial or unimportant, followed by it being a private matter or one that they would take care of themselves.[2]

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[2]   Australian Bureau of Statistics (2006), *Crime and Safety, Australia 2005*, Cat No 4909.0.

Q14. In the last 12 months have you been the victim of physical violence in a public place?

- *yes ( )*

- *no ( ) - go to Q16*

Figure D.13   Young people who have been a victim of violence

Source: FCHY Committee Youth Violence Survey 2010
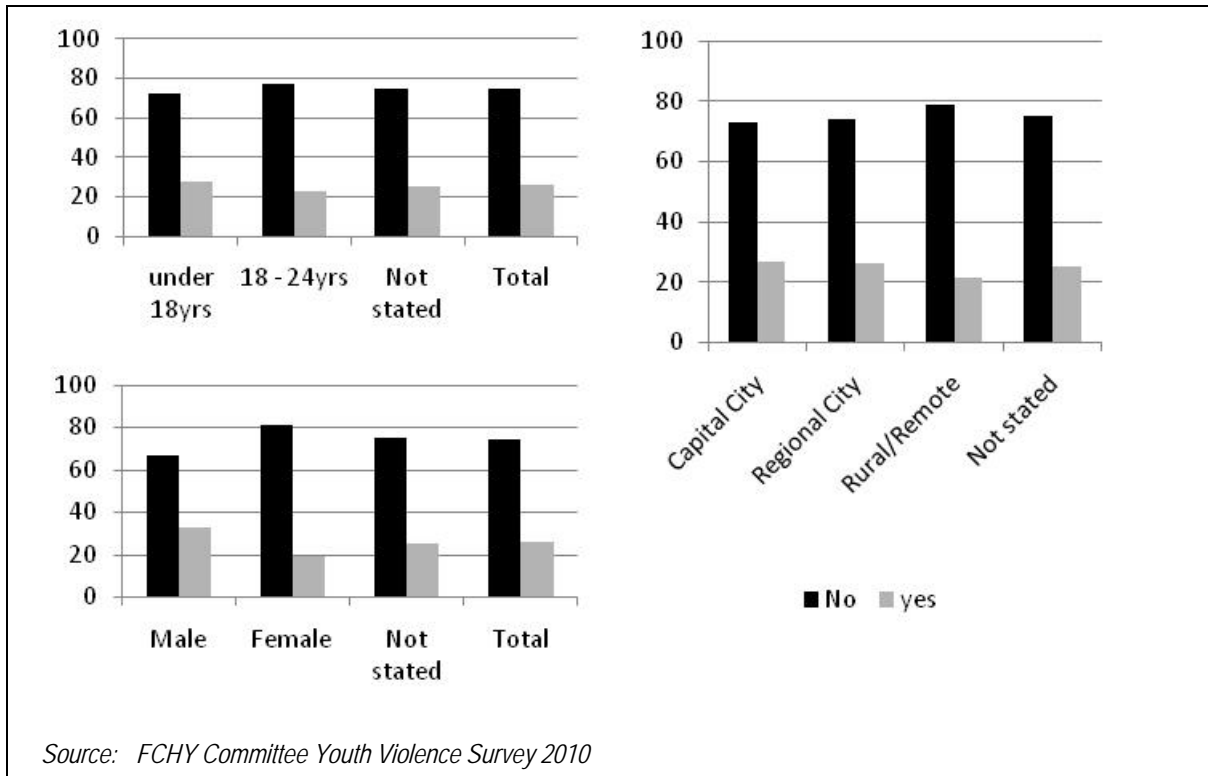
The respondents were asked whether they had been a victim of physical violence
in the past 12 months. Nearly one-quarter of respondents stated that they had.
Those aged less than 18 years were more likely to have been a victim than those
aged 18 to 24 years. Males were more likely to have been victims than females, and
those living in cities more likely to have been victims than those living in rural or
remote localities.

Q15. In the last 12 months have you been the victim of physical violence in a public place on one or more than one occasion?

- *once only ( )*

- *more than once ( )*

Figure D.14   Young people who have been a victim of violence by how often

*Source: FCHY Committee Youth Violence Survey 2010*
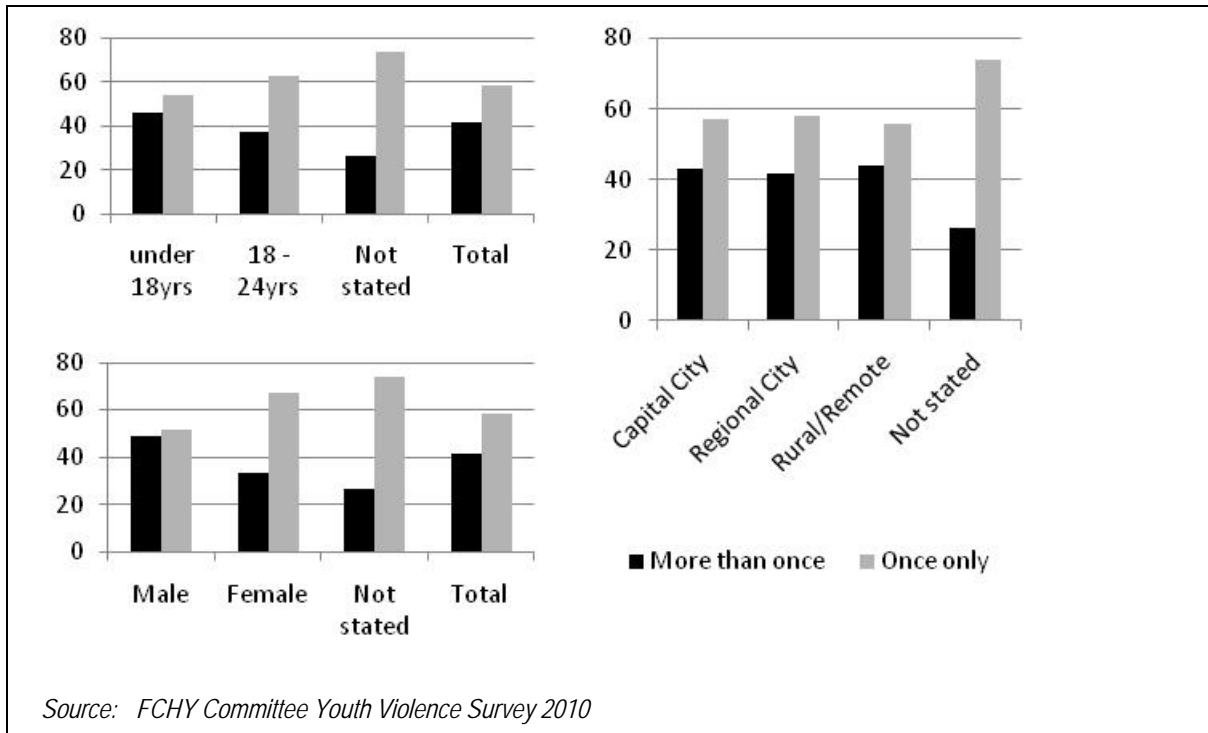
Of those young people who had been a victim of violence in the past 12 months, 58% stated that it was once only. However, the remaining 42%, a sizeable proportion, had been a victim more than once.

Males were more likely to have been a victim more than once, as were people aged less than 18 years. Locality did not appear to make a difference.

Q16. And in the last 12 months have you been directly involved in physical violence (for example in a fight) in a public place?

- *yes ( )*

- *no ( )*

Figure D.15   Young people who have been directly involved in violence

Source: FCHY Committee Youth Violence Survey 2010
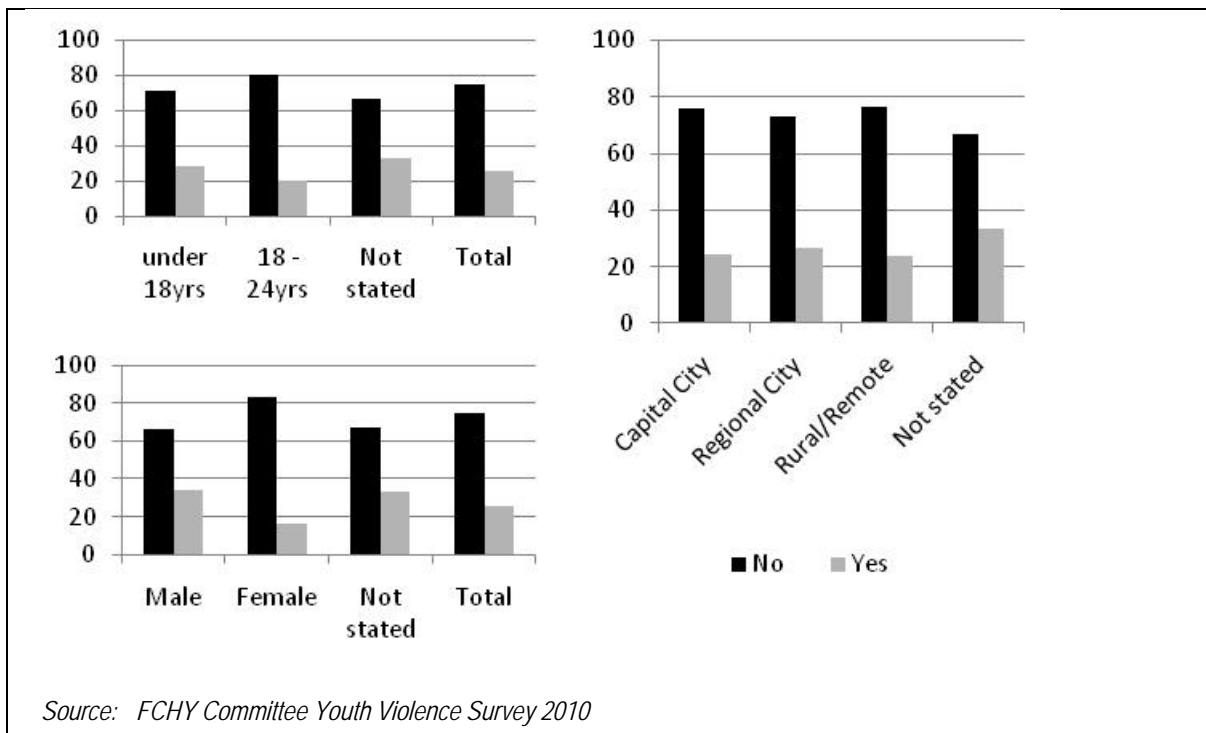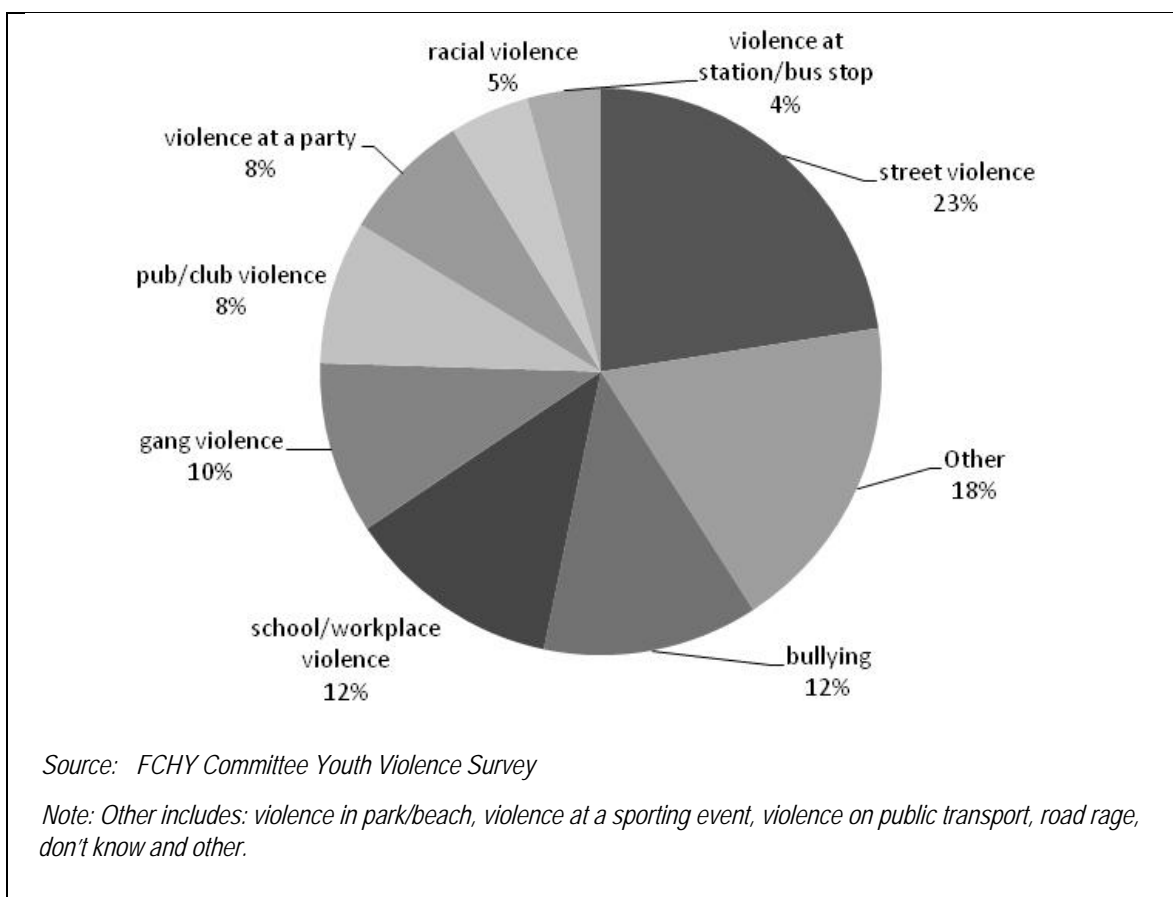
Respondents were also asked whether they had been directly involved in physical violence in the past 12 months either as a perpetrator or as a victim. One-quarter stated that they had. Respondents aged less than 18 years were more likely that the older age group to have been directly involved in violence, and males were more likely than females to have been directly involved in violence.

Q17. And if you have experienced violence in the last 12 months either involved in it or as a victim, thinking of the last occasion what kind of violence was it?

- *street violence ( )*
- *gang violence ( )*
- *racial violence ( )*
- *pub/club violence ( )*
- *school/workplace violence ( )*
- *bullying ( )*
- *violence in park/beach ( )*
- *violence at a sporting event ( )*
- *violence at a party ( )*
- *violence on public transport ( )*
- *violence at station/bus stop ( )*
- *road rage ( )*
- *other (free text option)*

Figure D.16   Young people who have directly been involved in physical violence by type of violence

Source: FCHY Committee Youth Violence Survey

Note: Other includes: violence in park/beach, violence at a sporting event, violence on public transport, road rage, don't know and other.

Respondents were asked what type of physical violence they had been directly involved in. The most common response was street violence (23%), followed by bullying (12%), school/workplace violence (12%) and gang violence (10%).

Respondents were also given the option of 'other' and answers included all or nearly all of the above, homophobic bashing, being in the wrong place at the wrong time and domestic violence.

Young people's Views on What Causes Violence and What Government Can Do About It

Respondents were asked two questions on what they believe causes violence and what can the government do about it.

Q18. What do you think are the three (3) main factors that lead to physical violence among young people in public places? (Choose 3 only)

- *Drug use ( )*

- *Drinking too much alcohol ( )*

- *Mixing with the wrong crowd ( )*

- *Unemployment ( )*

- *Aggressive personality ( )*

- *Being poor ( )*

- *Gangs looking for a fight ( )*

- *Fighting over girls ( )*

- *Poor education ( )*

- *Violence on TV/in films ( )*

- *Boredom ( )*

- *Bad home life ( )*

- *Lack of respect for other people ( )*

- *A hatred of other ethnic groups ( )*

- *Other (free text option)*

Table D.2   Young people's view on the main factors that lead to physical violence

	Number	**Percent**
Drinking too much alcohol	745	63%
Lack of respect for other people	394	34%
Drug use	362	31%
Mixing with the wrong crowd	332	28%
Aggressive personality	319	27%
Gangs looking for a fight	288	25%
Bad home life	239	20%
Boredom	201	17%
A hatred of other ethnic groups	137	12%
Poor education	123	10%
Other	379	32%

Source: FCHY Committee Youth Violence Survey 2010

Note: This table cannot be totalled as respondents were asked to choose three responses. Other includes unemployment, being poor, fighting over girls, violence on TV/in films and don't know. It also includes a free text response option.

Respondents were asked to provide their views on the main causes of violence. For this question respondents were able to choose up to three factors from a predetermined list or to provide their own response. Nearly two-thirds of respondents (63%) believe that drinking too much alcohol is the main factor that leads to physical violence. This is followed by lack of respect for other people (34%), drug use (31%) and mixing with the wrong crowd (28%).

Of those that provided their own cause of violence the most common responses were: homophobia, lack of role models, trying to fit in or looking for acceptance from others, poor home life and not understanding the consequences.

*Q19. What do you think can be done to reduce the amount of physical violence among
young people?*

- *Teach people how to get on ( )*

- *Teach people how to control their anger ( )*

- *Provide more police ( )*

- *Provide more public transport at night ( )*

- *Provide more entertainment/recreation facilities ( )*

- *Provide tougher rules on selling/serving alcohol ( )*

- *Make public transport safer ( )*

- *Other (free text option)*

Figure D.17: Young people's view on what can be done to reduce the amount of physical violence

Source: FCHY Committee Youth Violence Survey
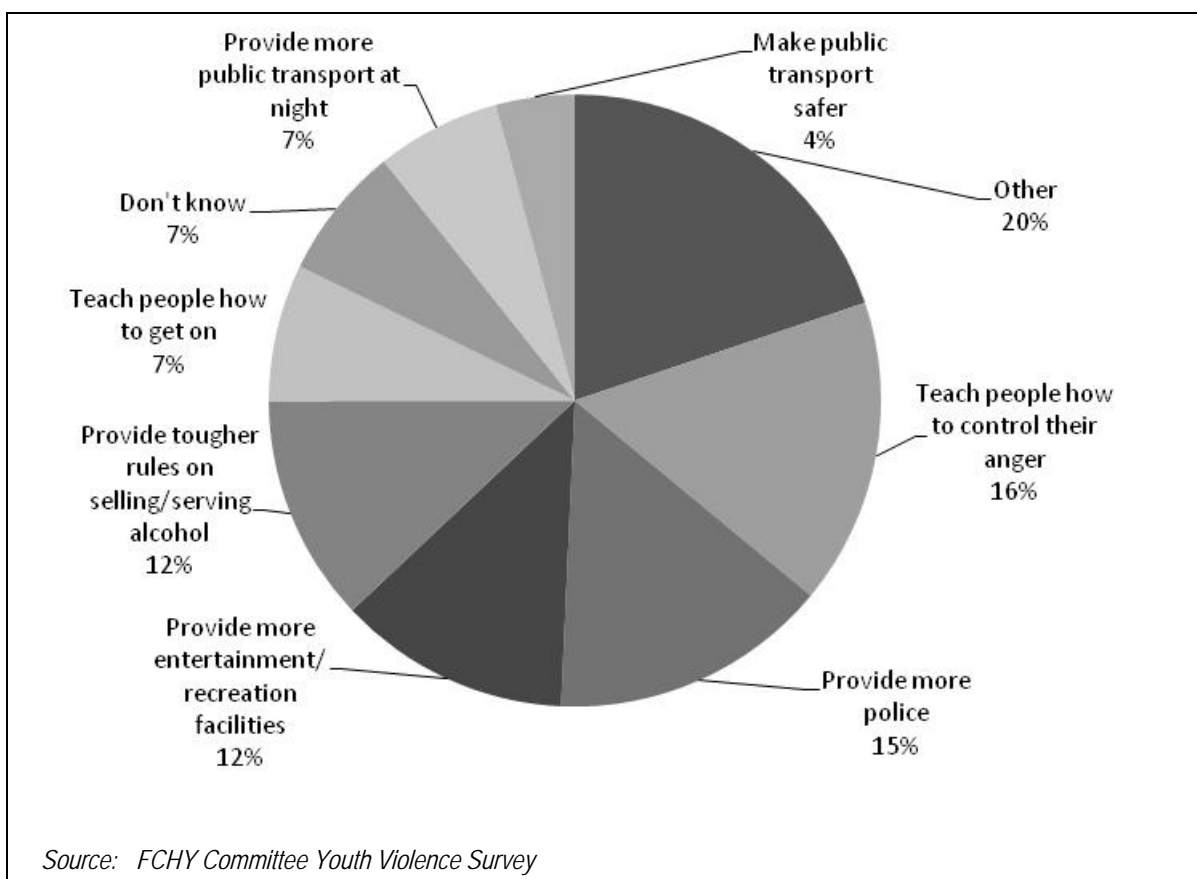
As young people are most likely to be the victims or perpetrators of violence it
was important to gather their views on what should be done to reduce the levels
of youth violence. Respondents were given a list to choose from which included
an 'Other' box. Twenty per cent of respondents chose the 'Other' category, and

within this the most common responses were harsher consequences, more education programs in schools and more support for young people and their families. The most common responses chosen from the list included teach people how to control their anger, provide more police, provide more entertainment/recreation facilities and provide tougher rules on selling/serving alcohol.

Q20. Do you have any other comments to make about youth violence?

- (*free text option*)

Respondents were invited to provide any other comments they would like to make about youth violence. Many young people took the opportunity to respond with 392 comments provided. Selected comments are interspersed throughout the body of the main report.

The survey concluded by asking for the following basic demographic information:

Now just to help us analyse the results please indicate:

- *Your sex: Male ( ) Female ( )*
- *Your age: Under 18 years ( ) 18-24 years ( )*
- *Your locality: Capital city ( ) Regional city ( ) Rural/remote ( )*

This basic demographic information was completed by 83% of respondents.

Summary

While acknowledging that the survey is not statistically rigorous in terms of population sampling, on the basis of responses received it would appear that youth violence is an issue that concerns most young people. The majority of respondents have witnessed violence and believe that both the incidence and severity of physical violence is increasing. They mainly believe that it occurs between males, although a sizable proportion perceived that females were potentially involved, primarily as victims. Youth violence appears to be occurring across Australia in capital cities, regional centres and through to remote locations. Much of the violence is street or pub/club violence although school or workplace violence is also common.

The respondents believe that alcohol and drugs and lack of respect for other people are the main reasons for violence. They believe that education programs are a way to minimise violent behaviour, but support for more police and harsher penalties for perpetrators also featured strongly. Limiting access to alcohol was also raised, but more in the context of the responsible serving of alcohol rather than increasing the legal age of drinking.