YACVic's submission to the Inquiry into the Impact of Violence on Young Australians

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Acknowledgements

In submitting to this Inquiry, YACVic will be drawing from two submission that have been made to previous Victorian Parliamentary Committee Inquiries and would like to acknowledge the other organisations who co-authored those submissions with YACVic. They are the Centre for Multicultural Youth, the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare and the Youth Referral and Independent Persons Program.

Youth Affairs Council of Victoria

The Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic) is the peak body representing the youth sector in Victoria. YACVic provides a means through which the youth sector and young people voice their opinions and concerns in regards to policy issues affecting them. YACVic works with and makes representations to government and serves as an advocate for the interests of young people, workers with young people and organisations that provide direct services to young people. YACVic also promotes and supports the participation of young people in debate and policy development areas that most affect them. YACVic's resources are primarily directed towards policy analysis and development, research and consultation and to meeting the information, networking, education and training needs of our constituency.

Introduction

Just as young people are not a homogenous group, their experiences of violence are varied and complex and influenced by a range of factors such as gender, racism, homelessness, cultural perceptions of masculinity, to name a few. This submission will draw on research to highlight the vulnerability of particular groups of young people to violence, with a focus on:

- young women,

- young people with a disability,

- young people who are homeless,

- Indigenous young people,

- young people from refugee or migrant backgrounds,

- young people who are same-sex attracted.

YACVic made a submission with the Centre for Multicultural Youth last month to the Victorian Parliamentary Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee Inquiry into Strategies to Reduce Crimes against the Person, much of which has relevance to this inquiry. As such excerpts from that submission appear reproduced where indicated.

YACVic also co-authored a submission with the Centre for Multicultural Youth, the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare and the Youth Referral and Independent Persons Program, to that same Parliamentary Committee in September 2008 in response to their Inquiry into Strategies to Prevent High Volume offending by young people. That submission is drawn on in discussion around strategies to reduce violence and its impact among young Australians.

This submission will also draw from a recent YACVic policy report *Sticks and Stones and mobile phones: Bullying in the New Millennium'.* The report was produced following a YACVic policy forum hosted earlier this year and informs the section of this submission exploring relationships between bullying and the wellbeing of young Australians.

YACVic's submission will give comment on:
- o Violence and young people: perceptions and realities.

- o The relationship between bullying and the wellbeing of young Australians.

- o Social and economic factors that contribute to violence by young Australians.

- o Strategies to reduce violence and its impact among young Australians.

Violence and young people: perceptions and realities.

While YACVic acknowledges the importance of people 'feeling' safe, it is critical that policy and programmatic responses to reduce violence are based on evidence rather than on perceptions of violence.

The reality of violence experienced by young people can be quite different from commonly held perceptions. While mainstream perceptions of violence may be focused on young men and alcohol use in public places, the reality is much more complex. Evidence suggests that there are specific concerns and vulnerabilities relating to safety experienced by young women, young people with a disability, young people who are homeless, Indigenous young people, young people from refugee or migrant backgrounds and same-sex attracted young people.

How do young people feel about their safety?

Research tells us that it is common for young people to hold concerns about their safety in certain circumstances. The October 2009 report, the *State of Australia's Young People: A report on the social, economic, health and family lives of young people* released by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, reveals that:

> '(a)bout one quarter of young people 18-24 years state that they feel unsafe or very unsafe when walking alone in their local area after dark. In addition about 10 per cent of young people 18-24 years feel unsafe in their homes at night…A number of these young people felt unsafe walking around their neighbourhoods at night…'[1]

Gender is a key determinant in how safe a young person may feel. The report goes on to explain that:

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[1] Muir, K., Mullan, K., Powell, A., Flaxman, S., Thompson, D., Griffiths, M. (2009) *State of Australia's Young People: A report on the social, economic, health and family lives of young people.* p.115.

'The single largest demographic factor associated with feeling unsafe is gender. Women are significantly more likely to feel unsafe walking home at night in their local area and feel unsafe at home at night. Mission Australia (2008) also found that women aged 11 – 24 years were more concerned about physical abuse than young men. Indeed, females are more likely to be the victim of sexual crimes like rape. This is likely to have a strong bearing on the extent to which young women feel safe.'[2]

The report also tells us that young people with a disability are also more likely to hold concerns about their safety:

'The General Social Survey (2006) shows that young people aged 18-24 with a disability are also more likely to feel unsafe at home at night. This is understandable considering young people with a disability are more likely to have been the victim of violent crime, and it raises critical questions about the safety and security of young people with a disability.'[3]

The report also explores the issue of trust, as a factor influencing young people's perceptions of safety and draws from a 2006 survey to tell us that 'around 30 per cent of young people aged 18-24 years stated that 'in general people cannot be trusted.'[4] The report qualifies that that figure is similar amongst adults. Other survey results highlighted in the report of note are:

- Young people 18-24 with a disability are significantly more likely to be distrustful of people in general;

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[2] Muir, K., Mullan, K., Powell, A., Flaxman, S., Thompson, D., Griffiths, M. (2009). *op.cit.* p.116
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] *Ibid.*

- Distrust of police is higher among young people compared to the broader population, with about 15 per cent of young people 18 to 24 years stating that the police couldn't be trusted.

- Young men and young people with a disability were more likely to distrust the police.

Interestingly the report also drew a link between young people with a disability, illicit drug use, experiences of violence and distrust:

> 'Young people with disabilities were also found to be significantly more likely to use illicit drugs. This suggests a complicated nexus for young people 18-24 years with disability of feelings of being unsafe, distrustful, being more likely to be the victim of violent crime and more likely to be using illicit drugs. It is likely that mental health problems are an important factor here.'[5]

This data touches on the complex array of factors that influence perceptions of safety, ranging from culturally ingrained influences to circumstantial and experiential parts of a young person's life. The *State of Australia's Young People* explains that:

> 'The general level of crime in society, along with the extent to which young people are personally exposed to bullying, racism or other forms of discrimination, are central factors that determine how safe individuals feel. The extent to which people feel safe in society is important in terms of their quality of life and general well-being. Fabiansson (2007) found that perceptions of safety are strongly affected by the media, even when they live in a relatively safe location with strong community cohesion.'[6]

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[5] *Ibid.*

[6] Muir, K., Mullan, K., Powell, A., Flaxman, S., Thompson, D., Griffiths, M. (2009). *op.cit.* p.115.

The media regularly suggests that young people are both unsafe and more often than not, a reason for others to feel unsafe.

Representations in the media and perceptions of young people as violent

The following information first appeared in a submission that YACVic and CMY made in November 2009 to the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into Strategies to Reduce Crimes against the Person:

Images of young people as a violent threat and as anti-social are perpetuated through the media. Australian research conducted ten years ago on young people and the media concluded that '(t)he dominant issue to which young people are linked in the media is crime, and the role in which they are cast is frequently that of the criminal, especially young men.'[7] Recent newspaper headlines that appeared in the Victorian press would suggest that this is still the case. The following are just a few examples:

- *Kids riddled with booze and drugs: Pre-teens hooked on heroin*[8]

- *Police vow to be tough as schoolies run amok: Teen yobs face jail*[9]

- *Gangs, alcohol fuel another weekend of violence: Fear on our streets*[10]

- *Blood flows as the madness goes on: Youths battle in streets*[11]

- *Crackdown on youth gangs brings peace to streets*[12]

The 2003 YACVic policy paper, *In the Spotlight: Young people and the media* highlighted the link between media portrayal of young people as criminal and community perceptions about young people as a threat to the safety of others:

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[7] Bessant, J., Sercombe, H. & Watts, R. (1998) 'Youth and the media' in *Youth Studies: An Australian Perspective*, (Melbourne, Longman). p. 137.

[8] McArthur, G. 'Kids riddled with booze and drugs: Pre-teens hooked on heroin.' Herald Sun, 23/10/09 p.2

[9] Flower, W. 'Police vow to be tough as schoolies run amok: Teen yobs face jail.' Herald Sun, 26/11/09 p. 19.

[10] Hastie, D. '*Gangs, alcohol fuel another weekend of violence: Fear on our streets*.' Herald Sun, 25/02/08 p. 4.

[11] Johnston, M., Roberts, B. & Mitchell, G. *Blood flows as the madness goes on: Youths battle in streets.'* Herald Sun, 15/4/09.

[12] Andreson, P. '*Crackdown on youth gangs brings peace to streets.'* Herald Sun, 15/4/08.

'The association between young people and crime can significantly influence the way young people are perceived by the wider community and their ability to access public space. For example, community consultations in Melbourne found that the presence of young people, especially in groups, made many people feel unsafe in the city.'[13]

The reality: young people and violence

'The state of Australia's young people' report tells us that 'young people are more likely to become victims of some violent crimes (including rape, other sexual offences and assaults) and are less likely than older victims to report a violent crime.'[14] The report also tells us that, '(i)n a 12 month period, just over 3 per cent of young people aged 14-24 years were the victim of a violent crime.'[15] Victoria Police Crime Statistics for the 2008-09 year show that young people under the age of 18 were 19.3% of victims of offences against the person.[16]

In the Victorian context, as Youthlaw first reported to this inquiry in their submission, police statistics for 2008-09 indicate that:

- Youth crime (under 18 years) against the person (homicide, rape, robbery, assault and abduction) is down by 3.3% (following three years of increases)

- Assaults committed by young people are also down 3.7%.

By comparison:

- Adult crimes against the person are have increased by 5.1%, and

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[13] City of Melbourne (2002) Here and now: connecting young people, community and the city of Melbourne, youth strategy 2001-2003. p.13 in Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, *In the Spotlight: Young people and the media* (2003) available for download from http://www.yacvic.org.au/policy/items/2009/01/259258-upload-00001.pdf

[14] Muir, K., Mullan, K., Powell, A., Flaxman, S., Thompson, D., Griffiths, M. (2009). *op.cit.* p.114.

[15] Muir, K., Mullan, K., Powell, A., Flaxman, S., Thompson, D., Griffiths, M. (2009). *op.cit.* p.115.

[16] *Victoria Police Crime Statistics 2008/09* Released August 2009, p.18. Available for download from http://www.police.vic.gov.au/content.asp?Document_ID=782

- Assaults committed by adults have increased 7%.[17]

The State of Australia's Young People report tells us that youth violent crime is:

- much more likely to be perpetrated by young men than young women;

- likely to be inflicted on young men by someone they don't know in public (three quarters of young men were attacked by a stranger, often in licensed venues or another public place);

- likely to be inflicted on young women by someone they do know in a private space (over 80 per cent of women physically assaulted by a man knew their attacker and were most likely attacked in their own home or the home of someone they knew).

In addition to the data regarding young women's vulnerability to sexual violence and young people with a disability's vulnerability to assault already mentioned, the following groups of young people experience particular vulnerabilities to violence:

> *The following information first appeared in a submission that YACVic and CMY made in November 2009 to the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into Strategies to Reduce Crimes against the Person:*

Indigenous young people:

The *State of Australia's young people* report draws on ABS data to tell us that Indigenous young people are more likely to be a victim of violence than non-Indigenous young people, 'with 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. Key stakeholders also confirmed that young Indigenous people were more likely to be the victims of assault than other young people.'[18]

Young people who are homeless:

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[17] *Victoria Police Crime Statistics 2008/09* Released August 2009. Available for download from http://www.police.vic.gov.au/content.asp?Document_ID=782
[18] *Ibid.*

Young people who are homeless face significant vulnerabilities to violence. Melbourne based research found that almost all homeless males (96%) and three-quarters of homeless females (74%) had experienced physical violence since leaving home. It is worth noting that often these young people had been rendered homeless by violence. Young people who are homeless are also less likely to report their experience of violence to the police.[19]

Same-sex attracted young people:

The La Trobe University report *Writing themselves in again: 6 years on – The 2nd national report on the sexual health and well-being of same sex attracted young people in Australia* recorded a large survey sample of same-sex attracted young people's experiences of verbal and physical abuse related to sexuality and found that:

> 'In 2004, almost half (44%) reported having been verbally abused (compared with 46% in 1998), and 15% reported physical abuse (compared with 13% in 1998). More young men than young women reported verbal (46% males vs 43% females) and physical abuse (19% males vs 9% females).'[20]

In relation to physical abuse the report tells us that:

> '…the abuse ranged from having clothes and possessions ruined, to severe bashings, rape and hospitalization. The type of abusers ranged from family members to fellow students and strangers…The most common context for abuse was the school… (and) of the young people who were

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[19] Adler (1990) sited in Halstead, B. (1992) *Young people as victims of violence*. (Hobart, National Clearinghouse for Young Studies).
[20] Hillier, L., Turner, A., & Mitchell, A. (2005) *Writing themselves in again: 6 years on. The second national report on the sexuality, health and well-being of same sex attracted young people in Australia.* Australian Centre in Sex, Health & Society, (Melbourne, La Trobe University).p. 37
* Please note that YACVic uses the term 'same-sex attracted' young people to include gay, lesbian, transgender, intersex and queer youth.

abused, 46% experienced abuse in public places in the community.'[21]

Refugee and Migrant Young People:

In many parts of Melbourne, young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds express a great deal of concern regarding violence directed towards them. In working with these young people, the Centre for Multicultural Youth has found that violence is a major fear in their communities, particularly where it is a result of racism. Australian-Sudanese young people in particular have expressed fears that they may be attacked because of assumptions in some communities that these young people are dangerous or are in gangs.[22]

The relationship between bullying, violence and the wellbeing of young Australians.

Bullying is itself an act of violence. It is widely experienced by young people in a range of contexts and had serious, at times detrimental impacts on their wellbeing. In November 2009, YACVic released the report *Sticks and Stones and Mobile Phones: Bullying in the New Millennium: Outcomes of a forum on bullying and young people in Victoria*. The following information has been drawn from that report, to explore the relationship between bullying as a form of violence and the wellbeing of young people. A copy of the report accompanies this submission as an appendix.

YACVic hosted *Sticks and Stones and Mobile Phones* at the Melbourne Town Hall in August this year, in response to increasing concern in the community and amongst youth services about the prevalence and impact of bullying in all its forms, on young people in

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[21] Hillier, L., Turner, A., & Mitchell, A. (2005) *Writing themselves in again: 6 years on. The second national report on the sexuality, health and well-being of same sex attracted young people in Australia.* Australian Centre in Sex, Health & Society, (Melbourne, La Trobe University).p. 38-39.
[22] Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (2008) *Rights of Passage: The Experiences of Australian-Sudanese young people*, see:
http://www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au/publications/reports%20and%20discussion%20papers/ accessed 19/10/2009

Victoria. The forum brought together experts in research, representatives from relevant government departments, youth service providers, principles/teachers and young people themselves.

The forum featured a keynote presentation, *Bullying and Peer Relationships: What We Need to Know* by Dr. Barbara Spears, Senior Lecturer in the School of Education, University of South Australia. It also involved presentations from a panel of experts on bullying experienced by young people in the following areas:

- in the school setting;

- on-line;

- in the workplace;

- in sport;

- bullying experienced by young people with a disability, and

- bullying experienced by same-sex attracted young people.

Dr. Spears shared some trends in the data collected by Professor Donna Cross for the *Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence Study*. The Study revealed that 23.2% of the Victorian students who engaged with the comprehensive survey reported being bullied.

Bullying at school and cyber bullying:

The prevalence data tells us that bullying at school is still the most commonly experienced form of bullying. In Victoria 6% of students reported that they had experienced cyber-bullying. Dr. Spears highlighted the importance of programs or strategies to reduce cyber bullying that revolve around supporting the development of young people as competent cyber-citizens, promoting cyber literacy and socially responsible behaviour in the use of digital technology.

Bullying experienced by same-sex attracted young people:

In the panel session, the forum heard Dr. Lynne Hillier describe the prevalence and serious consequences of bullying experienced by young people who are same-sex attracted. Dr. Hillier co-authored the 1998 research report *Writing themselves in: A National Report in the Sexuality, Health and Well-Being of Same-Sex Attracted Young People'* and the follow up 2005 report *Writing themselves in Again: 6 years on.* She reported that 35% of the young people surveyed in the collection of data from the second report had said they had self-harmed as a result of homophobic bullying.[23]

Bullying in the workplace:

Danielle Archer, from the Young Unionist Network raised concerns at the forum that workplace bullying is often readily accepted and in some workplaces a culture of bullying was 'institutionalised'. She described workplace bullying as an Occupational Health and Safety concern and reminded the audience of young people's vulnerability to it and of the under-reporting of bullying in the workplace.

Bullying experienced by young people with a disability:

Dr. George Taleporos, Coordinator of the youth Disability Advocacy Service raised serious concerns at the forum regarding the prevalence of bullying experienced by young people with a disability. In the absence of Australian specific data, George shared statistics from the UK that approximately 80% of students with an intellectual disability reported experiencing bullying. Disturbingly, George also described a common experience for parents of children with a disability in feeling bullied within the school system themselves.

Bullying in Sport:

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[23] Hillier, L., Turner, A., & Mitchell, A. (2005) *Writing themselves in again: 6 years on. The second national report on the sexuality, health and well-bing of same-sex-attracted young people in Australia.* Australian Centre in Sex, Health & Society, La Trobe University. Melbourne.

The multi-levelled ways in which bullying occurs in sport was discussed at the forum. Bullying in Sport occurs between peers, perpetuated by coaches or by parents and spectators of a game or can be ingrained in a structural way within a club.

The relationship between racism, bullying and assaults

The following information first appeared in a November 2009 submission that YACVic and CMY made to the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into Strategies to Reduce Crimes against the Person.

The sector is aware that there is a causal link between bullying and retaliatory violence, which can quickly escalate out of control. Pervasive and overtly racist bullying against young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds is widespread in certain areas of Melbourne, with young refugees subjected to verbal and/or physical attacks, who then retaliate in a similar fashion. These experiences affirm the findings of longitudinal research undertaken by the La Trobe Refugee Research Centre, which reported that racist bullying is a major cause of violence.[24] According to the research based on the experiences of 88 young people aged 12 to 20 years of age from refugee backgrounds:[25]

- 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.

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[24] Refugee Health Research Centre (2007), GOODSTARTS for Refugee Youth, Broadsheet #4, November.
[25] *ibid*

Anecdotal evidence also describes the all too common experience of racism for Indigenous young people. The report *VIYAC Voices telling it like it is: Young Aboriginal Victorians on Culture, Identity and Racism* contains oral evidence such as this, offered by a 24 year old Yorta Yorta man: "Racism is everywhere you look. It's everywhere. It's in the 'You're doing really well for one of those'. It's the stigma associated with walking into the supermarket with my cousins. Like, I can walk into a supermarket and do my shopping by myself or with my mainstream mates, very comfortably – I walk in with a couple of cousins, and we're followed."[26]

Social and economic factors that contribute to violence by young Australians

Already in this submission, YACVic has drawn the Committee's attention to the way in which particular groups of young people in the community experience particular vulnerabilities to violence, based on gender, disability, if they are Indigenous or experiencing homelessness. YACVic asserts that this reflects structural societal factors such as discrimination on the basis of gender or race. Alongside these structural concerns and also impacting on the incidence of violence in Australia are cultural frames of masculinity that support the use of violence and a cultural acceptance of violence in some sport.

Cultural acceptance of violence

The following information first appeared in the November 2009 YACVic, CMY submission made to the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into Strategies to Reduce Crimes Again the Person.

Consideration needs to be given to the influence of cultural frames of masculinity and cultural acceptance of violence that are prevalent in Australian society. The 'typical Australian male' is often portrayed as 'tough' and 'unemotional'. Men can struggle in this culture to find ways to resolve anger productively or to communicate effectively about their feelings.

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[26] Victorian Indigenous Youth Advisory Council & Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (2005). *VIYAC Voices Telling it Like it is: Young Aboriginal Victorians on Culture, Identity and Racism*. (Melbourne, VIYAC & YACVic). p.28.

There is a cultural acceptance of violence and almost a glorification of it, in some popular sports in Australia. In *Sticks and Stones and Mobile Phones*, YACVic reported on discussions between forum participants who noted 'the cultivation of aggressive behaviors sometimes encouraged in sport'[27] as a factor that made it difficult to identify and address bullying in sport.

To create lasting meaningful change, strategies to reduce violence and the occurrence of assault need to consider the cultural perceptions of masculinity and the acceptance of violence in mainstream culture as displayed through some sports.

Strategies to reduce violence and its impact on young Australians

Strategies to reduce violence and its impact on young Australians need to reflect young people's diverse experiences of violence, including, but extending beyond alcohol related violence in public places. These strategies need to focus on address the causes behind the vulnerability of some groups of young people to violence. They need also to engage young people themselves in the development of solutions.

Community organisations and youth services play a critical role in reducing the incidence of violence in the community. They play a critical role by providing early intervention, generalist supports to young people, they also provide specialist support to particular groups of more 'vulnerable' young people and they can also roll-out very specific interventions to reduce violence and assault. The organisation Step Back Think 'seeks to represent Melbourne's youth as a voice of unity against street violence' and are developing

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[27] Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (2009). *Sticks and Stones and Mobile Phones Bullying in the New Millennium: Outcomes of a forum on bullying and young people in Victoria.* (Melbourne, Youth Affairs Council of Victoria). p.40.

a range of community focussed initiatives including a Pilot Education program targeting years 9 and 10 students.[28]

In the case of strategies to reduce young people offending violent crimes, YACVic recommends that all programmatic responses be guided by the following principles:

- Early and non-stigmatic intervention;

- Build up young people's 'protective factors';

- Promote a sense of connectedness;

- Keep young people outside the justice system as far as possible.

YACVic have also made a number of recommendations specific to reducing bullying in the report *Sticks and Stones and Mobile Phones: Bullying in the New Millennium* which has been submitted to the inquiry as an attachment to this report.

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[28] For further information on Step Back Think see their website http://stepbackthink.org accessed 13/10/09.

Centre for Multicultural Youth and Youth Affairs Council of Victoria response to the Inquiry into Strategies to Reduce Crimes against the Person

INTRODUCTION

The Centre for Multicultural Youth
The Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY) is a statewide community-based organisation in Victoria that advocates for the needs and rights of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds. In supporting young people, CMY combines policy development and direct service delivery within a community development framework. This approach gives CMY strong connections with young people and their communities while enabling change on a local, state and national level.

The Youth Affairs Council of Victoria
The Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic) is the peak body representing the youth sector. YACVic provides a means through which the youth sector and young people voice their opinions and concerns in regards to policy issues affecting them. YACVic works with and makes representations to government and serves as an advocate for the interests of young people, workers with young people and organisations that provide direct services to young people. YACVic also promotes and supports the participation of young people in debate and policy development areas that most affect them. YACVic's resources are primarily directed towards policy analysis and development, research and consultation and to meeting the information, networking, education and training needs of our constituency.

ABOUT THIS SUBMISSION

CMY and YACVic welcome the opportunity to respond to the Drug and Crime Prevention Committee's Inquiry into Strategies to Reduce Crimes against the Person.

Data shows us that young people aged between 10 and 24 are significantly more likely to be victims of assault than other Victorians. Whilst assault is likely to be under-reported, research tells us that young people are less likely to report a violent crime than older people.[1] Victoria Police crime statistics for 2005-06 tell us that young people aged 10-24 make up 24 per cent of all victims of assault reported to police. 15 to 24 year olds are most likely to be victims of assault, with males more likely to be the victims of assault than females. Importantly, Victoria Police data reveals a trend that from 2001 to 2006 there was a 20% increase in the number of reported cases of assault by the 18 to 24 year group.[2]

The focus of this inquiry into the impact of assault on vulnerable groups and strategies to reduce and address these crimes, must then consider the experiences and needs of 'vulnerable' young people in the community.

This submission focuses strongly on the needs of refugee and migrant young people in

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[1] Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the Department of Planning and Community Development (2008). *The State of Victoria's Young People: A report on how Victorian young people aged 12-24 are fairing. p.128.*
[22] Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the Department of Planning and Community Development (2008). *The State of Victoria's Young People: A report on how Victorian young people aged 12-24 are fairing. p.128 -129.*

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Victoria, however it also considers other 'vulnerable' cohorts of Victoria's youth population.

It provides brief demographic and background information on the experiences of these groups and then highlights some key issues and recommendations under the Inquiry's terms of reference.

The submission draws on CMY's 20 years of experience working with young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, their communities and the youth and settlement sectors. It is further informed by consultations with CMY youth workers who work directly with refugee and migrant young people in metropolitan Melbourne and by a review of relevant literature in the subject area.

It is also informed by YACVic's extensive experience in research and advocacy in young people's issues and draws specifically from data and evidence gathered by YACVic on issues relating to public space and young people, strategies to reduce high volume offending among young people, the impact of bullying on young people and the critical importance of early intervention, generalist youth services in supporting vulnerable young people in the community.

BACKGROUND

Defining vulnerability

Given the focus of this inquiry on the impact of assaults on 'vulnerable' groups, it is valuable to briefly explore the demographic data relating to 'vulnerable' young people within Victoria. Whilst the term 'vulnerability' can be a contentious term, definitions of 'vulnerability' are appearing in State Government policy frameworks relating to young people and in reports of wellbeing data relating to children and young people in Victoria.

The *Vulnerable Youth Framework* discussion paper, developed by the Department of Human Services, the Department of Planning and Community Development and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, outlines a policy framework to those young people in our community experiencing vulnerability with a strong focus on prevention and early intervention. The draft framework depicts vulnerability as a layered experience through which young people display risk factors of graduating seriousness. For example, a young person who has experienced a traumatic event in their life or who is displaying difficulty in relating to peers may require the support of generalist youth or family services, whereas a young person displaying high level risk factors such as chronic drug and alcohol or mental health problems requires intensive interventions to support them. This framework highlights then that there are a range of vulnerabilities that young people can experience, but that early identification and intervention are key to providing support across all levels of risk.[3]

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[3] Department of Human Services, Department of Planning and Community Development, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (2008). *Vulnerable Youth Framework discussion paper.* (Melbourne, Department of Human Services).

Whilst vulnerability may be broadly experienced by young people at a range of levels, there are particular cohorts of young people who are more likely to experience vulnerability in Victoria. *The State of Victoria's young people* report developed by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and by the Department of Planning and Community Development presents, through data analysis, a picture of how young people in Victoria are faring on a range of wellbeing indicators. It paints a picture of particular groups of young people experiencing vulnerabilities to poor outcomes:

> *While the majority of young Victorian's are faring well, the available evidence suggests that some young people are not faring as well as they might. These inequalities in outcomes are particularly notable for young Indigenous people.*
> *Other groups of young people who tend to fare less well include young people with a disability, young people in out-of-home-care, young homeless people and young people in the youth justice system.*[4]

The report refers to 'limited information on outcomes' for culturally and linguistically diverse young people (including refugees), however there are a number of factors that mean that refugee and migrant young people typically face particular challenges and vulnerabilities, which are illustrated in this submission by the evidence collected by CMY.

Whilst this issue needs further examination, in relation to vulnerability to violence (although not necessarily specifically assault), evidence suggests that these are specific concerns relating to safety experienced by young women, young people with a disability, young people who are homeless, Indigenous young people, young people from refugee or migrant backgrounds and same-sex attracted young people. This evidence is discussed in more detail on page 7 of this submission.

Demographic Overview: Young Victorians

According to the 2006 Australian census, 3.5 million (18%) of Australia's total population of 19.9 million were aged between 12 and 24 years. Victoria has the second largest youth population compared to other States and Territories, with 902,796 young people (17.6% of the Victorian population as a whole) representing around a quarter of the national population of young people. Just over 70% of Victoria's young people are living in metropolitan areas.[5]

Indigenous young people
2006 census data suggests that 0.6% of Victoria's population identify as Indigenous, totaling approximately 30,000 people.[6]   Around half of the Victorian Indigenous

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[4] Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the Department of Planning and Community Development (2008). *The State of Victoria's Young People: A report on how Victorian young people aged 12-24 are fairing.*p.22.

[5] Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the Department of Planning and Community Development (2008). *The State of Victoria's Young People: A report on how Victorian young people aged 12-24 are fairing.* See Chapter 1.

[6] The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (2009). *The State of Victoria's Children 2008: A report on how children and young people in Victoria are faring.* (State of Victoria: Melbourne).The report clarifies that this data 'does not include approximately 5 per cent of the population who did not provide information on their Indigenous status.' p. 22.

population live outside Melbourne and more than half of Indigenous Victorians are aged under 25, with more than a third aged under 15 years.[7] This population structure is markedly different from that of the non-Indigenous population, with only around a third of the population under 25.

Young people with a disability
There are challenges in reporting accurate demographic data on young people with a disability, as definitions of 'disability' vary and are not always adequately recorded in census data. The ABS 2003 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers indicates that approximately 77,500 young people aged between 12 and 24 in Victoria have a disability (approximately 8.3% of the Victorian youth population). More males than females have a disability in Victoria.[8]

Young people experiencing homelessness
There are also challenges in accurately reporting data on the number of young people experiencing homelessness in Victoria. Census data only records those experiencing homelessness on the night of the census count, and again there are barriers to identification.

The ABS report Counting the Homeless 2001, revealed that 7281 young people were homeless on census night. This equated to the disproportionately high figure of 35% of the homelessness population.[9]

Young people in out-of-home-care
At June 2006 there were 2502 children and young people aged 10-17 in out-of-home-care in Victoria (1552 aged between 10 and 14 years and 950 aged between 14-17 years).[10] Indigenous young people are vastly over-represented in the child protection system in Victoria. Of the 2502 young people in out of home care recorded in the 2006 data, 263 of those identified as Indigenous (a rate of 33.1 per 1000 for Indigenous young people).[11]

Young people in the youth justice system
Whilst some young people become involved in criminal activities, in the majority of cases this will be a one-off incident. The proportion of young people who become involved in more serious, repeat offending is very small.

The State of Victoria's young people report draws on data from the Australian Institute of Health and Wellbeing to outline the vulnerability typically experienced by those young people who engage in serious, repeat offending:

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[7] Department of Planning and Community Development (2008). *Victorian Government Indigenous Affairs Report 2007/08.* p.7.
[8] Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the Department of Planning and Community Development (2008). *The State of Victoria's Young People: A report on how Victorian young people aged 12-24 are fairing.* p. 24.
[9] Chamberlain, C & McKenzie, D (2004) *Counting the Homeless 2001: Victoria,* Swinburne University and RMIT University, Melbourne.
[10] Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the Department of Planning and Community Development (2008). *The State of Victoria's Young People: A report on how Victorian young people aged 12-24 are fairing.* p. 139.
[11] *Ibid.*

Risk factors for involvement in crime include parenting experiences (such as a lack of parental supervision and involvement) truancy, the influence of peers and unemployment and substance abuse. Young people who repeat offend are often socioeconomically disadvantaged and may have experienced physical abuse and childhood neglect, with neglect being one of the strongest predictors of youth offending.[12]

Victoria has the lowest rate of young people under youth justice supervision in Australia, with a rate of 2.6 per 100. As is the case across Australia, Indigenous young people are over-represented in the Victorian youth justice system. In Victoria, 2005-06 data tells us that 159 Indigenous young people were under youth justice supervision, at a rate of 23.8 per 1000 young people compared to the rate of 2.0 per 1000 for non-Indigenous young people.[13]

Refugee and Migrant Young People:
ABS census data 2006 shows that 15% of Victorians aged between 12 and 24 years were born overseas.[14] Additionally, 20% of Victorians aged 12-24 years speak a language other than English at home.[15] The number of resettled young refugees in Victoria is also significant. Based on Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) data, 5291 young humanitarian entrants arrived into Victoria between the financial years 2004/05 to 2008/09 (comprising 28% of all humanitarian entrants to Victoria during that period).[16]

The Refugee Experience

Young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds demonstrate high levels of strength, resilience, resourcefulness and understanding.[17] However, this group also faces particular barriers to accessing services and opportunities, including language, culture, unfamiliarity with Australian systems and processes, racism and discrimination. These factors can place them at greater risk of social and economic disadvantage within Australian society, which in turn can lead to social isolation.[18]

The pre-arrival experience of young refugees further contributes to their risk of social isolation and social and economic disadvantage. While each individual refugee experience is different, refugees have, by definition, been forced to flee their country of origin because of a well-founded fear of persecution. The refugee experience is by its

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[12] Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the Department of Planning and Community Development (2008). *The State of Victoria's Young People: A report on how Victorian young people aged 12-24 are fairing.* p. 144.

[13] Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the Department of Planning and Community Development (2008). *The State of Victoria's Young People: A report on how Victorian young people aged 12-24 are fairing.* p. 147-148.

[14] *Ibid. 23*

[15] *Ibid.*

[16] Information received by personal communication from DIAC and also accessed from the online Settlement Reporting Facility (www.immi.gov.au, accessed 10 November 2009).

[17] Francis, S. and Cornfoot, S. (2007) *Working with Multicultural Youth: Programs, Strategies and Future Directions*, (Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues: Melbourne , for the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth).

[18] Coventry, L., Guerra, C., Mackenzie, D. and Pinkney, S. (2002) *Wealth of All Nations: Identification of strategies to assist refugee young people in transition to independence* (Australian Clearinghouse for Youth Studies: Tasmania)

nature traumatic, and young people who are refugees are likely to have experienced all or some of the following:

- A dangerous escape from their country of origin, traveling long distances;
- Long periods of living in unsafe, insecure and threatening environments;
- Physical and emotional harm including trauma and torture;
- Separation from family or significant others, including the loss of loved ones; and
- Extended periods of time spent in transition countries or refugee camps, limiting their physical, educational and social development.[19]

For young people who are refugees in Australia, the developmental tasks of adolescence are compounded by the traumatic nature of the refugee experience, cultural dislocation, loss of established social networks and the practical demands of resettlement.[20]

Assaults occurring in public places

The impact of assaults on vulnerable groups

CMY and YACVic believe that all young people should feel safe and secure in their communities. Unfortunately this is often not the case for some groups of young people and there are a number of issues we believe should be addressed:

Community safety

Whilst the majority of young people feel relatively safe in Victoria[21], some young people express specific concern for their safety. Whilst the issue needs further examination, evidence suggests that there are specific concerns relating to safety experienced by young women, young people with a disability, young people who are homeless, Indigenous young people, young people from refugee or migrant backgrounds and same-sex attracted young people.

Victorian young women report feeling less safe than young men, particularly when accessing public spaces after dark.[22] Young women who are visibly different, for example, young African women or young women who wear a hijab feel particularly unsafe. The State of Australia's young people draws on HILDA data to highlight that young people with a disability aged 15-24 years are significantly more likely to be the

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[19] The average length of time spent in a refugee camp is 7 years and for some young people, this is the majority of their lives before arriving in Australia.
[20] Refugee Resettlement Advisory Council (Relations. (Canberra, Commonwealth of Australia).p.115.
[20] *Ibid.*
[20]2002) *Strategy for Refugee Young People* (Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs: Canberra).
[21] Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the Department of Planning and Community Development (2008). *The State of Victoria's Young People: A report on how Victorian young people aged 12-24 are fairing.* p. 126-127.
[22] *Ibid.*

victim of a violent crime.[23] Young people with a disability are also more likely to feel unsafe at home at night and are significantly more likely to be distrustful of people in general.[24]

The report also draws on ABS data to tell us that Indigenous young people are more likely to be a victim of violence than non-Indigenous young people, 'with 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.'[25]

Young people who are homeless face significant vulnerabilities to violence. Melbourne based research found that almost all homeless males (96%) and three-quarters of homeless females (74%) had experienced physical violence since leaving home. These experiences of violence often are experienced by young people for whom violence made it unsafe for them to remain at home. Young people who are homeless are also less likely to report their experience of violence to the police.[26]

The experience of violence and assault experienced by same-sex attracted young people is captured in the La Trobe University report *Writing themselves in again: 6 years on – The 2nd national report on the sexual health and well-being of same sex attracted young people in Australia.* The report drew from evidence captured in the survey responses of 1749 young people to report on a range of sexual health and well-being issues. It reported on same-sex attracted young people's experiences of verbal and physical abuse related to sexuality and found that:

> *In 2004, almost half (44%) reported having been verbally abused (compared with 46% in 1998), and 15% reported physical abuse (compared with 13% in 1998). More young men than young women reported verbal (46% males vs 43% females) and physical abuse (19% males vs 9% females).[27]*

In relation to physical abuse the report tells us that:
> *…the abuse ranged from having clothes and possessions ruined, to sever bashings, rape and hospitalization. The type of abusers ranged from family members to fellow students and strangers…The most common context for abuse was the school… (and) of the young people who*

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[23] Muir, K., Mullan, K., Powell, A., Flaxman, S., Thompson, D., Griffiths, M. (2009). *State of Australia's young people: A report on the social, economic, health and family lives of young people*. Report for the Office for Youth, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. (Canberra, Commonwealth of Australia).p.115.

[24] Muir, K., Mullan, K., Powell, A., Flaxman, S., Thompson, D., Griffiths, M. (2009). *State of Australia's young people: A report on the social, economic, health and family lives of young people*. Report for the Office for Youth, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. (Canberra, Commonwealth of Australia).p.116.

[25] *Ibid.*

[26] Adler (1990) sited in Halstead, B. (1992) *Young people as victims of violence*. (Hobart, National Clearinghouse for Young Studies).

[27] Hillier, L., Turner, A., & Mitchell, A. (2005) *Writing themselves in again: 6 years on. The second national report on the sexuality, health and well-being of same sex attracted young people in Australia.* Australian Centre in Sex, Health & Society, (Melbourne, La Trobe University).p. 37

were abused, 46% experiences abuse in public places in the community.[28]

Refugee and Migrant Young People:
In many parts of Melbourne, young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds express a great deal of concern regarding violence directed towards them. In working with these young people, CMY has found that violence is a major fear in their communities, particularly where it is a result of racism.   Australian-Sudanese young people in particular have expressed fears that they may be attacked because of assumptions in some communities that these young people are dangerous or are in gangs.[29]

The fear and insecurity felt by these young people was highlighted in a community meeting organised by the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) in August 2009. The meeting followed the raids and subsequent arrest of a group of Somali men accused of organising a terrorist plot. During the course of the meeting it emerged that, in the period after the arrests, children were frightened to go into the schoolyard, abuse was shouted at people in the streets and shocking hate text messages and emails were sent to African-Australian members of the community.

Public space and public transport

Young people have identified the use of public space as a key contributing factor to negative interactions with police and security personnel.[30] They relate this problem to high visibility, stereotypes and strained police relations.[31]

'Hanging out' in public space has particular value and meaning for young people who do not yet have access to their own private spaces. As such, public spaces become an important realm in which to develop independence and experience important social activities. Unfortunately young people's use of public space can be viewed with suspicion and fear and stereoytpes of young people, fuelled by negative media, as dangerous and trouble makers are cultivated. This is reflected in law and order policies that attempt to restrict young people's access to public spaces, such as policies that seek to introduce youth curfews or move on powers for police or authorised officers.[32] An effect of moving young people on, particularly vulnerable young people who do not have safe, private spaces to go home to, is that they are moved into more dangerous, less visible spaces in which the risk of their being assaulted is increased.

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[28] Hillier, L., Turner, A., & Mitchell, A. (2005) *Writing themselves in again: 6 years on. The second national report on the sexuality, health and well-being of same sex attracted young people in Australia.* Australian Centre in Sex, Health & Society, (Melbourne, La Trobe University).p. 38-39.

[29] Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (2008) *Rights of Passage: The Experiences of Australian-Sudanese young people*, see:
 http://www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au/publications/reports%20and%20discussion%20papers/   accessed 19/10/2009

[30] National Crime Prevention (1999) *Hanging out: Negotiating young people's use of public space* (Attorney-General's Department: Canberra).

[31] *ibid.*

[32] Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (2005). Space Invaders? Young people and public space forum report. Available for download from http://www.yacvic.org.au/policy/items/2009/01/256835-upload-00001.pdf

Young people who are homeless and Indigenous young people can be highly visible in public spaces. Young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds are also particularly visible in public spaces due to 'ethnic' markers such as physical appearance and language. Recently arrived refugee and migrant young people may also be more likely to congregate in public spaces due to a lack of space at home to socialise, family conflict, limited money for entertainment, and geographic isolation.

As a group hanging out in a public space, they become much more obvious and can be targets for racism, violence and over-policing. However, young people from refugee or migrant backgrounds - who are not associated with gangs - often travel and hang out in large groups in public spaces for their own safety, particularly if they have been bullied or intimidated by others.

While young people are the highest users of public transport, they perceive that the system is not safe, particularly after hours and on weekends. Young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds from certain regions in Melbourne will not go to their local train stations at night, for fear of being attacked.

<u>The relationship between racism, bullying and assaults</u>

Despite overwhelming acceptance in the community of cultural and linguistic diversity, racism is an ever-present reality for refugee or migrant young people. They often relate to CMY their experiences of harassment, violence, teasing and the general feeling that they don't belong. Racial or cultural tension can exist between young people from refugee or migrant backgrounds and second generation plus Australians, as well as between young people from different newly arrived communities.

The sector is aware that there is a causal link between bullying and retaliatory violence, which can quickly escalate out of control. Pervasive and overt racist bullying against young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds is widespread in certain areas of Melbourne, with young refugees subjected to verbal and/or physical attacks who then retaliate in a similar fashion. These experiences support the longitudinal research undertaken by the La Trobe Refugee Research Centre, which has found that racist bullying is a major cause of violence.[33] According to the research based on the experiences of 88 young people aged 12 to 20 years of age from refugee backgrounds:[34]

- 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.

One experience related to CMY by a young person illustrates these statistics: "We were walking in the street, me and my mate, coming from basketball, and the car stopped and they were calling us niggers."

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[33] Refugee Health Research Centre (2007), GOODSTARTS for Refugee Youth, Broadsheet #4, November.
[34] *ibid*

Anecdotal evidence also describes the all too common experience of racism experienced by Indigenous young people. The report *VIYAC Voices telling it like it is: Young Aboriginal Victorians on Culture, Identity and Racism* contains oral evidence such as this, offered by a 24 year old Yorta Yorta man: "Racism is everywhere you look. It's everywhere. It's in the 'You're doing really well for one of those'. It's the stigma associated with walking into the supermarket with my cousins. Like, I can walk into a supermarket and do my shopping by myself or with my mainstream mates, very comfortably – I walk in with a couple of cousins, and we're followed."[35]

It is also well documented that racism has serious health, social and economic consequences for affected individuals and their families.[36] Recent research by VicHealth on the health consequences of discrimination found that young people from refugee backgrounds who have experienced racism are significantly more likely to report poorer psychological and environmental wellbeing than those who have not experienced racism.[37] Racism also has strong detrimental effects on the life chances of these young people.

Some key findings from the VicHealth report include:

- nearly two in every five individuals from non-English speaking backgrounds reported being treated with disrespect or called names and insulted on the basis of their ethnicity at some time;
- experiences of discrimination are common amongst refugee and migrant communities and that these have serious health, social and economic consequences for affected individuals and their families; and
- there is a strong relationship between discrimination and poor mental health, especially depression.

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. One CMY worker reported that a female student from a refugee background, who was engaging well with school, was expelled for retaliating on two occasions to racist attacks. The worker highlighted concerns that some schools are simply moving students on rather than dealing with the culture of racism and bullying within their schools.

Cultural acceptance of violence
Consideration needs to be given to the influence of cultural frames of masculinity and cultural acceptance on violence that are prevalent in Australian society. The 'typical Australian male' is often portrayed as 'tough' and 'unemotional'. Men can struggle in this culture to find ways to resolve anger productively or to communicate effectively about their feelings.

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[35] Victorian Indigenous Youth Advisory Council & Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (2005). *VIYAC Voices Telling it Like it is: Young Aboriginal Victorians on Culture, Identity and Racism*. (Melbourne, VIYAC & YACVic). p.28.
[36] VicHealth (2007), 'More than tolerance: embracing diversity for health', Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne
[37] Refugee Health Research Centre (2007), GOODSTARTS for Refugee Youth, Broadsheet #4, November.

There is a cultural acceptance of violence and almost glorification of it, in some popular sports in Australia. In a recently released policy report on young people's experiences of bullying, YACVic reported on discussions between forum participants who noted 'the cultivation of aggressive behaviors sometimes encouraged in sport'[38] as a factor that made it difficult to identify and address bullying in sport.

Strategies to reduce violence and the occurrence of assault need to consider the cultural perceptions of masculinity and the acceptance of violence in mainstream culture as displayed through some sports to create lasting meaningful change.

Representations in the media

Images of young people as a violent threat and as anti-social are repeatedly perpetuated through the media. Australian research, conducted ten years ago on young people and the media, concluded that 'The dominant issue to which young people are linked in the media is crime, and the role in which they are cast is frequently that of the criminal, especially young men.'[39] An analysis of media reporting today would suggest that this is still the case.

The YACVic policy issues paper, *In the Spotlight: Young people and the media* highlighted the link between media portrayal of young people as criminal, and community perceptions relating to young people and public space:

> *The association between young people and crime can significantly influence the way young people are perceived by the wider community and their ability to access public space. For example, community consultations in Melbourne found that the presence of young people, especially in groups, made many people feel unsafe in the city.[40]*

Refugee and migrant young people and the media:
The general perception of refugee and migrant young people is that the media plays a crucial role in how they are perceived by the community. This is particularly the case when there are media stories regarding terrorists (such as the arrest of Somali men as described above): racial vilification and physical assaults against culturally diverse communities increase in the wake of such media attention. Often it is women who are the main target of these attacks, particularly when they are wearing a hijab or burqa.

In some parts of Melbourne, local authorities have been proactive in working with the local media to encourage positive images and stories about the Australian-Sudanese community. However broader media representation is mostly limited to the controversial and constructs young people as problematic. Evidence of this is seen in statements

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[38] Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (2009). Sticks and Stones and Mobile Phones Bullying in the New Millennium: Outcomes of a forum on bullying and young people in Victoria. (Melbourne, Youth Affairs Council of Victoria). p.40.
[39] Bessant, J., Sercombe, H. & Watts, R. (1998) 'Youth and the media' in *Youth Studies: An Australian Perspective*, (Melbourne, Longman). p. 137.
[40] City of Melbourne (2002) Here and now: connecting young people, community and the city of Melbourne, youth strategy 2001-2003. p.13 in Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, *In the Spotlight: Young people and the media* (2003) available for download from http://www.yacvic.org.au/policy/items/2009/01/259258-upload-00001.pdf

made by former Immigration Minister Kevin Andrews in 2007 about the difficulties Sudanese refugees face in settling in Australia. By drawing on one incident – the tragic murder of a young Sudanese refugee – the comments by the former Minister led to a public perception that all young people from the group were having difficulty settling in Australia.

A recent report by the Victorian Equal Opportunities and Human Rights Commission found that young Australian-Africans feel highly scrutinised and negatively portrayed by the media and the wider community.[41] There is a sense in the community that only 'bad' stories make the news and that this is out of proportion to reality. Participants interviewed in the study felt that they were being publicly punished and shamed by negative comments made by public figures. It also found that young people see a clear link between the way they are portrayed in the media and how they are perceived in the community. Reports tend to associate young people as the perpetrators of crime when, in fact, young men in particular are more likely to be the victims of crime.

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

Strategies to address the negative representation of refugee and migrant young people in the media are outlined later in this submission under the third term of reference.

Reporting violence

There are a range of barriers that young victims of crime face when reporting a crime to police.[42] These are compounded for refugee and migrant young people who are often fearful and mistrustful of police and authoritative figures due to their experiences in their country of origin.[43] Often authorities have persecuted and tortured them rather than provided protection.

Young people from refugee or migrant backgrounds may be fearful of the repercussions of reporting crime to the police, have a more limited understanding of their legal rights and the Australian legal system and feel that they are negatively stereotyped as a group. Some young people have been reluctant to report crimes against themselves to the police for fear of being sent back to their home countries.

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.

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[41] Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (2008), 'Rights of Passage: The Experiences of Australian-Sudanese young people', see
http://www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au/publications/reports%20and%20discussion%20papers/ accessed 19/10/2009

[42] For example, see http://www.youthlaw.asn.au/yoursay.php, accessed 1/10/09

[43] Coventry et al (2002)

The role of community policing and local community organizations in reducing assaults

<u>Community Policing</u>

YACVic and CMY strongly support community policing approaches to reducing assaults. Community policing approaches provide an opportunity to engage in preventative, early intervention activities that create increased communication and the building of relationships between police and vulnerable young people.

Given their frequent and visible use of public space and public transport however, young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds can be targets for over-policing. This is compounded by often less than satisfactory relationships between refugee young people and police.

In CMY's experience, police are increasingly moving large groups of young people on from public spaces, including train stations. This is particularly challenging for young people from a refugee or migrant background, given their reliance on public transport. There is also a perception among young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds that Authorised Officers on the public transport system target them unfairly and can be intimidating when patrolling in groups.

The tension is fostered by a range of stereotypical images pertaining both to young people ('ethnic youth gangs') and to the police (repressive figures associated with authoritarian regimes). There is a lack of adequate police training, especially cross-cultural training, in dealing with people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, particularly refugees and recent migrants. Various studies have also shown that refugee and migrant young people are more likely than other groups of young people (with the exception of Indigenous young people) to be stopped by the police for questioning.[44]

A study of Vietnamese Australian youth and police relations in Melbourne identified a number of factors that influenced the relationship between the young people and authority figures.[45] These included:

- unwarranted targeting and harassment of young people in public spaces;
- high incidence of body search procedures used by police;
- denial of young people's legal rights;
- verbal, psychological, and physical mistreatment by police;
- non-reporting of police mistreatment through formal channels; and
- general lack of respect towards each other, demonstrated by subtle and overt means.

The above still generally holds true for certain groups of young people coming into contact with the police. The Western Young People's Independent Network (WYPIN) in

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[44] National Crime Prevention (1999) *Hanging out: Negotiating young people's use of public space* (Attorney-General's Department: Canberra).

[45] Lyons, E (1995:170) "New Clients, Old Problems: Vietnamese Young People's Experience with Police" in C. Guerra and R. White (Eds.) *Australian Youth Subcultures: On the Margins and in the Mainstream.*(Australian Clearinghouse for Youth Studies: Hobart).

Melbourne also reports that refugee and migrant young people often feel targeted and 'hassled' by police due to racial, religious, ethnic and cultural stereotypes.[46]

In one region in which CMY works, young people have experienced frequent police harassment by being regularly stopped and questioned. In one case, a young person reported that he had been hit in the face by a police officer and told, 'if you report it, it won't go anywhere'. Refugee and migrant young people are often unaware or unable to make use of their rights and find formal complaints procedures inaccessible or ineffective.

On the other hand, community policing has the potential to create a better understanding between young people and the police. It is an approach that CMY supports and has helped to lessen stereotypes on both sides and build connections with the communities generally.

CMY's experience is that Victoria Police multicultural liaison officers (MLO) and youth resource officers (YRO) are generally effective in their engagement with, and support to, young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds in their communities. For example, in an outer Melbourne region police officers are attached to local schools and are well placed to respond to instances of bullying or violence that have the potential to escalate otherwise. In the same region, the YROs, senior sergeants and the District Inspector invest a lot of time facilitating or attending various community events. This has been an effective way to forge positive relationships with young people and their families from refugee and migrant backgrounds.

However, as most MLOs and YROs work standard business hours, they are not the officers on duty who respond to crisis calls. In CMY's experience, many officers on duty are limited in their understanding of different cultures and in communication with young people from a refugee background. This impacts on their ability to interact well with young people from different cultural backgrounds and can result in situations easily escalating beyond what is necessary. It is vital that on-duty officers have an awareness of the refugee experience and the cultural needs of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds.

The attitude of senior police officers towards young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds is a major contributing factor to the attitudes of other police officers in the station. It is therefore vital that a culturally aware community policing approach receives endorsement at the highest levels in each station. CMY has heard both inspiring and worrying accounts of the culture in various police stations in this regard.

Training for all police in working with young people from diverse cultural backgrounds would go a long way to reducing the potential for conflict. Tension often arises as a result of simple misunderstandings and miscommunications relating to language, culture and body language. The Victorian Government's 'Police and Community Multicultural Advisory Committee', a joint committee between the Victoria Police and the Victorian Multicultural Commission established in 1985, is an excellent example of Police engaging in dialogue with communities to ensure a culturally appropriate response to offending issues.

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[46] Francis, S. and Cornfoot, S. (2007) *Multicultural Youth in Australia: Settlement and Transition* (Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues: Melbourne for the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth).

An approach focused on building relationships and trust between police and young people is vital to address some of the tensions that exist. Francis and Cornfoot, for example, suggest the effectiveness of programs which increase dialogue between police, young people, multicultural communities and service providers to tackle difficult relationships and look at strategies for prevention and addressing anti-social behaviour.

<u>Community Organisations</u>
Community organisations play a critical role in reducing the incidence of violence in the community. They play a critical role by providing early intervention, generalist supports of young people, they also provide specialist support to particular groups of more 'vulnerable' young people and they can play a role in rolling out very specific interventions to reduce violence and assault. The organisation *Step Back Think* 'seeks to represent Melbourne's youth as a voice of unity against street violence' and are developing a range of community focussed initiatives including a Pilot Education program targeting years 9 and 10 students.[47]

YACVic and CMY (along with co-authors the Centre for Excellence in Child and family Welfare and the Youth Referral and Independent Persons Program) highlighted the critical importance of generalist youth services in preventing crime by providing critical early interventions to young people who may be experiencing vulnerabilities to this Committee in response to the *Inquiry into strategies to prevent high volume offending by young people*. The following is an excerpt from that submission:

> *The focus in Victoria on diversion strategies for young offenders and the unique 'dual track' system, offering the possibility of a young person aged between 18-20 avoiding having to serve time in an adult prison, should be commended. What must exist alongside this focus on diversion and rehabilitation and of equal importance is a focus on prevention and early intervention when it comes to reducing youth offending. In considering improving prevention and early intervention supports for young people it is critical to consider:*

> o *the role of the youth sector in prevention and early intervention approaches to reducing youth offending;*

> o *the current lack of a comprehensive youth services system and the impact of the ad-hoc availability of services on a young persons capacity to access prevention or early intervention supports;*

> o *the potential for schools to be better supported to identify young people who are vulnerable and to keep them engaged in education;*

> *The opportunities that exist within the newly released Vulnerable Youth Framework discussion paper[48] prepared by the Department of Human Services, the Department of Planning and Community*

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[47] For further information on Step Back Think see their website http://stepbackthink.org accessed 13/10/09.
[48] Department of Human Services, Department of Planning and Community Development and Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. (August 2008) <u>Vulnerable Youth Framework discussion paper: Development of a policy framework for Victoria's vulnerable young people.</u> Available from www.cyf.vic.gov.au

Development and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, to develop a comprehensive youth service system in Victoria. The draft Framework includes actions for change that seek to:

- *develop a service system that better supports young people from a prevention/early intervention end,*
- *to improve schools capacity to engage vulnerable young people amongst other things.*
- *identify vulnerable young people as part of a local planning process and therefore formulate effective responses.[49]*

Strategies to address these crimes, to reduce their incidence and increase the apprehension and conviction of offenders

There are a range of strategies that can be adopted to reduce the impact of assaults on vulnerable groups, including refugee and migrant young people.

Strategies to reduce offending by young people:
Whilst young people experience violence and assault in a range of ways, often this is experienced at the hands of peers. The YACVic, CMY, the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare and the Youth Referral and Independent Persons Program submission to response to the *Inquiry into strategies to prevent high volume offending by young people,* outlined the following key elements of effective crime prevention and reduction strategies to reduce youth offending:

1. An effective generalist youth services system in Victoria to deliver preventative and early intervention service to young people experiencing vulnerabilities;
2. Strategies to reduce the structural issues of social inequality so often experienced by young people who offend and strategies to build the protective factors operating in a young person's life thereby reducing the risk factors they experience through their life transitions, such as:
    o Strategies that support parents and families to best support their children;
    o Strategies to improve the connectedness of young people to schools and vocational pathways;
    o Strategies which reduce alienation for young people through connecting them to their communities.
3. An approach to reducing youth offending that recognises the following general principles of effective interventions
    o Early and non-stigmatic intervention
    o Building up protective factors
    o Promoting a sense of connectedness
    o Keeping young people outside the justice system as far as possible.

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[49] YACVic, The Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, CMY, YRIPP (2008) *A response to the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee Inquiry into Strategies to prevent high volume offending by young people.* p.7-8.

Strategies to reduce offending by young people from refugee or migrant backgrounds:

While perceptions may exist in the community about high levels of offending by newly arrived refugees or migrants in Australia, there is very little empirical information to highlight the extent of this problem. In respect of those young people who have offended, there are a number of strategies that can be adopted to reduce the occurrence and impact of the offending.

CMY has found that many refugee young people are not easily able to engage with 'mainstream' programs, thus compounding their disadvantage. This demonstrates the need for young people and communities to be involved in the planning and development of services. In line with this, we welcome the *Vulnerable Youth Framework*, which recognises the need for engaging vulnerable groups in service planning
Francis and Cornfoot, in their research on refugee and migrant young people, suggest that interventions should be targeted at multiple levels: individual level (e.g. through support and information), family and community level (e.g. through community education) and in the broader context (e.g. through recreation programs and education and employment pathways).[50]

They also identify some key crime prevention responses for refugee and migrant youth:

- Improved community police-youth relations (discussed above);
- Knowledge about laws - forums and resources which are culturally appropriate and in relevant languages assist in understanding of the law as well as rights and responsibilities;
- Youth friendly public spaces - young people need safe spaces where they can just spend time with their peers without being labelled or stereotyped as 'gangs'; and
- Culturally appropriate responses to violent behaviour.

Other strategies to reduce offending by young refugee or migrant offenders can be found in *Strategies to Prevent High Volume Offending and Recidivism by Young People*.[51] Key strategies include:

- Quality education and a positive schooling experience – this is the key factor for successful interaction of young refugees and migrants, and also a protective factor mitigating against criminal and antisocial behaviour;
- Targeted and relevant alternative programs for those students who have been expelled or otherwise 'let go' from mainstream education;
- The use of peers in a mentoring system – helps to break down barriers between refugees/migrants and school teachers and police;
- Addressing a lack of communication and language skills;
- Flexibility and cultural appropriateness on the part of the police and youth justice system – programs don't necessarily have to be culturally specific but it is important to ensure cultural awareness and 'cultural competencies' for staff who work with refugee and migrant young people; and
- The Youth Referral and Independent Person Program (see discussion later in this submission).

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[50] Francis, S. and Cornfoot, S. (2007) *Working with Multicultural Youth: Programs, Strategies and Future Directions*, (Centre for Multicultural Youth Isssues: Melbourne , for the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth).
[51] Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee, Parliament of Victoria (2009) *Inquiry into Strategies to Prevent High Volume Offending and Recidivism by Young People, Final Report*.

Strategies to reduce negative media and political representation of young people from refugee or migrant backgrounds:

Media representation of refugee and migrant young people can contribute to a negative public perception of young people. This can have serious implications for the safety of young refugees or migrants. It can create a false stereotype about these young people, particularly where the coverage relates to 'ethnic gang' violence.

Strategies to address negative media representation should seek to reinforce positive messages about refugee young people. Some specific strategies include to:

- 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, the Australian Communication and Media Authority, and other media-monitoring mechanisms, as well as information about relevant legislation, such as the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006;
- Distribute information on good media practice (e.g. the VEOHRC Media Guide) and 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.

The Youth Referral and Independent Person Program

The Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee has previously 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.[52]

Funded by the Victorian State Government and jointly managed by YACVic and CMY, YRIPP is delivered in partnership with community legal centres in metropolitan Melbourne and UnitingCare in rural areas of Victoria. Victoria Police is also a key partner in the program's implementation.

YRIPP provides volunteer Independent Persons (IPs) to support young people through police interviews where a parent or guardian is unavailable. The IPs are encouraged to develop an awareness of the experiences faced by a young person from a refugee background and how best to work with the young person. They assist in the interaction between police and the young person to ensure that the rights of the young person are upheld and that they are appropriately supported through the interview process. The program also refers young people to culturally appropriate health and welfare support services to reduce their chances of future offending.

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[52] *Ibid.* (2009: 261).

YRIPP operates a 1300 telephone number that police can call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to obtain an Independent Person for interviews with young people under 18. The IPs are trained in relevant police and legal processes, as well as in working with Indigenous and refugee and migrant young people. YRIPP also provides information in 18 languages to parents about the law and the police interview process.

Some recent figures on YRIPP:

- Between 31 December 2008 and 30 June 2009, YRIPP responded to 974 callouts and of these, 98% resulted in interviews with young people;
- In 23% of interviews, YRIPP clients were directly referred to support services;
- An additional 18% of clients received information for later self-referral;
- 24% of all YRIPP clients who were born outside of Australia were directly referred;
- 44% of YRIPP clients had some level of previous involvement with DHS (45% of whom were involved with Child Protection and 40% with Youth Justice).
- Of all young people who weren't involved with DHS, 48% were either directly or indirectly referred to support services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

CMY recommends that:

Vulnerable young people and assault:
1. That strategies developed to reduce violence and assault experienced by young people extend beyond strategies to simply curb alcohol related violence experienced by young men but also recognise the diversity of young people and the ways in which vulnerable young people experience violence, (such as young people experiencing homelessness, young women, refugee and newly arrived and young people and Indigenous young people). Strategies to reduce the experiences of violence and assault of these vulnerable groups need also to be devised.

Youth engagement in the development of solutions:
2. That young people are supported to engage in the development and roll-out of anti-violence strategies and initiatives such as those developed by *Step Back Think*.

Public space:

1. Young people are consulted and actively involved in the planning of public spaces, such as shopping centres, and that the creation of 'youth friendly' safe spaces be made a priority, particularly in growth corridors.

Community initiatives:

3. That State Government invests in the Vulnerable Youth Framework and in the provision of generalist youth support services with a prevention/ early intervention role in supporting young people in their communities.

4. More programs are initiated that promote anti-racism, diversity and inter-faith dialogue in schools and local communities (including more intercultural recreational activities) and focus on developing skills to combat and overcome racism and bullying.

5. An initiative be developed that brings together media, young people, government and community to address the negative representations of young people in the media, with a focus on the portrayal of young people from refugee and newly arrived communities.

6. A targeted strategy be developed to educate refugee and newly arrived young people and their families about their legal rights and responsibilities in Australia. The education strategy should include information about how to seek redress through formal complaints procedures regarding maltreatment by members of the police force.

Community Policing:
7. Community forums and workshops are undertaken to improve relations between refugee and newly arrived young people, police, multicultural communities and service providers.

8. All police should receive training in working with vulnerable young people including young people from diverse cultural backgrounds, with a particular focus on understanding the issues faced by refugees, young people with a disability and Indigenous young people.

9. Existing community policing approaches be audited for cultural sensitivity and good practice models be developed and shared across all community policing programs. Good practice community policing models should receive active and visible involvement and promotion by senior members of the police force.

<u>Youth justice:</u>

10. Strategies to reduce youth offending and relating to youth justice continue to be built on a rehabilitative and diversionary approach that recognises the following general principles of effective interventions:
    o Early and non-stigmatic intervention;
    o Building up protective factors;
    o Promoting a sense of connectedness;
    o Keeping young people outside the justice system as far as possible.

11. Young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds be involved in the planning and development of strategies to reduce youth offending.

12. Young people are supported to engage with the rehabilitative functions of the youth justice system, so that they can address the issues which have led to offending.

13. The government recognise that the police interview is a key point of intervention and diversion for a young person and that the provision of a trained Independent Person capable of providing culturally appropriate referrals is an important factor in improving police/youth relations and legal outcomes and in reducing recidivism.

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Sticks & Stones
+MOBILE PHONES

Bullying in the New Millennium

Outcomes of a forum on bullying
and young people in Victoria

youthaffairs
COUNCIL OF VICTORIA INC.

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- Dr. Barbara Spears for her keynote address and contributions to the panel discussion.

- Lucas Ryan for his facilitation of the event.

- Panellists Dr. Lynne Hillier, Danielle Archer, Erika Turner, Ryan Lim, Michael Cahill and Dr. George Taleporos.

- Forum participants for contributing to the group discussions and providing guidance and advice on each of the small group topics of conversation.

Contents

About YACVic

The Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic) is the peak body representing the youth sector. YACVic provides a means through which the youth sector and young people voice their opinions and concerns in regards to policy issues affecting them. YACVic works with and makes representations to government and serves as an advocate for the interests of young people, workers with young people and organisations that provide direct services to young people. YACVic also promotes and supports the participation of young people in debate and policy development areas that most affect them. YACVic's resources are primarily directed towards policy analysis and development, research and consultation and to meeting the information, networking, education and training needs of our constituency.

Introduction

The 'Sticks and Stones and Mobile Phones – Bullying in the New Millennium' forum

The 'Sticks and Stones and Mobile Phones – Bullying in the New Millennium' forum was hosted on the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic) at the Melbourne Town Hall on the 27th of August 2009. The impetus for the forum came from increasing concern about the impact of bullying on young people raised through youth service networks, reflected in current research and articulated by young people themselves. YACVic had heard anecdotal evidence from youth workers/services, teachers, parents and young people that bullying in all its forms is of increasing concern.

This concern was being reflected in research. In May 2009, the findings of the 'Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence Study' were released. The research, commissioned by the Federal Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations and conducted by the Edith Cowan University, found that 'evidence suggests that a less direct, face-to-face 'covert' bullying is becoming more prevalent and insidious, fuelled in part by the growth of new forms of Information and Communications Technology (ICT).'[1] Youth workers, teachers and parents have voiced their anxiety that they do not feel adequately equipped to identify and respond to these forms of bullying.

At a meeting of the Regional Youth Affairs Network Convenors in July 2008, the Hon. James Merlino Minister for Sport and Recreation and Youth Affairs, heard the concerns of

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[1] Cross, D., Shaw, T., Hearn, L., Epstein, M., Monks, H., Lester, L., & Thomas, L. 2009. *Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence Study (ACBPS)*. Child Health Promotion Research Centre, Edith Cowan University, Perth. p. xix.

youth service providers about bullying experienced by young people and indicated his willingness to take up the issue within government. As such, YACVic hosted the 'Sticks and Stones and Mobile Phones – Bullying in the New Millennium' forum to bring together young people, teachers, youth service providers, researchers and advocates to examine the prevalence and impact of bullying in Victoria and to look for ideas for interventions and solutions. 87 participants attended the forum.

Whilst the forum addressed the issue of cyber-bullying, the focus of the forum was broad and considered various forms of bullying experienced by young people. Alongside cyber-bullying, bullying at school, bullying in the workplace, bullying in sport, bullying experienced by same-sex –attracted young people and bullying experienced by young people with a disability were all discussed by guest speakers and considered in focus group discussions at the forum.

Facilitated by Lucas Ryan, the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria's Young Media Spokesperson, the forum began with a keynote address from Dr. Barbara Spears, Senior Lecturer in the School of Education from the University of South Australia. Dr. Spears presented her paper *Bullying and Peer Relationships: What We Need To Know* , recorded in summary in this report.

Dr. Spears' keynote was followed by a panel discussion bringing together a range of speakers to discuss young people and bullying in a variety of contexts. Dr. Lynne Hillier, social psychologist and VicHealth Senior Research Fellow at the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society presented evidence from her research on the levels and impact of bullying experienced by same-sex attracted young people. Danielle Archer, Coordinator of the Young Unionist Network spoke on the issue of young workers and workplace bullying. Erika Turner, Senior Policy Officer with the Department of Education and early Childhood Development presented on school based bullying and initiatives from the Department in place to reduce it. Ryan Lim, a member of the Victorian Student Representative Council spoke about bullying from a young persons perspective. Dr.

George Taleporos, Coordinator of the Youth Disability Advocacy Service then gave some insights into bullying commonly experienced by young people with a disability. Michael Cahill, Group Manager of Policy and Sector Development in Sport and Recreation Victoria presented on issues to consider in bullying in sport. Following the panel presentations, a discussion was opened with forum participants.

Small group discussions were then conducted with forum participants, around each of the forms of bullying addressed in the keynote and by the panel. These discussions asked the group to consider the following issues in relation to the target group/interest area that was their focus (for example, same-sex-attracted young people and bullying):

- the prevalence of bullying;

- the particular issues/concerns for those young people;

- the barriers to identification of the bullying they experienced;

- any good interventions or support programs available to those young people; and

- opportunities for young people to be involved in the development of solutions to bullying.

A summary of the key issues raised within these discussion groups is recorded in this report.

The Minister for Youth Affairs, the Hon. James Merlino, joined the forum during the proceedings to express his concern about bullying and his interest in the findings of the forum. A copy of this report will be presented to the Minister to inform the development of future State Government responses to bullying.

An outline of this report

Following the format of the forum itself, this report will provide a summary of information presented at the forum and of issues raised by forum participants in focus group discussions. Finally, the report makes some recommendations stemming from the day's proceedings. The report provides:

- A summary of the key note address 'Bullying and Peer Relationships: What We need to know' presented Dr Barbara Spears, Senior Lecturer in the School of Education, University of South Australia.

- A summary of the Panel Discussion, including a report of key issues raised by each of the panel experts in addressing the forum.

- A summary of the issues raised in each group discussion around the areas of focus for the forum - bullying and disability; school based bullying; cyber bullying; bullying in sport and recreation; same-sex-attracted young people and bullying; young workers and bullying; and the young people only focus group.

- A list of recommendations for moving forward in addressing bullying.

- A list of resources mentioned in the forum as an Appendix.

Bullying and Peer Relationships: What We Need To Know.

A summary of themes presented in the key note address by
Dr. Barbara Spears.

Introduction

Dr Barbara Spears is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Education, University of South Australia and is recognised nationally and internationally for her work on girls' peer relationships and bullying behaviours. She is a member of the Centre for Peace, Conflict and Mediation the Social Sustainability, Citizenship and Wellbeing research group of the Centre for research in Education and is an affiliate of the Hawke Research Institute for Sustainable Societies. She is a member of the KidsMatter Evaluation team, the Beyond Blue Mental Health initiative in Primary schools and a chief investigator in the Cyber Bullying and the Law Australian Research Council project, led by the Queensland University of Technology. She led the creative use of technology Covert Bullying research project: 'Insights into the Human Dimension of Covert Bullying' and co-authored the 2008 report prepared for the Federal Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR).This project brought stories and qualitative insights from young people, teachers, counsellors and parents about covert and cyber bullying in school settings and complemented the Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence Study[2] led by Professor Donna Cross, which surveyed approximately 7500 students from primary and secondary schools across Australia.

The following information is an account of key messages and findings presented to the forum in Dr. Spears' address, prepared by the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria. It is not a reproduction of Dr. Spears' original, authored work. It appears with Dr. Spears' permission

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[2] Available for download from
http://www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/NationalSafeSchools/Documents/covertBullyReports/ACBPS%20chapter%201.pdf

and cannot be reproduced. Links to Dr. Spears' published works are listed in Appendix B of this report.

Dr. Spears presented her paper *Bullying and Peer Relationships: What We Need To Know* to the forum. Dr. Spears' paper canvassed the following areas:

- Contextual issues relevant to understanding bullying behaviour, such as the nature of social relationships and networks, the developing body of evidence and research examining bullying over time to today and considerations for the future.

- Definitional issues. Dr Spears provided information to address the questions:

    o What do we know about bullying?

    o What do we mean by 'covert' and 'cyber' bullying?

    o What is the role of gender and of peer group composition in influencing bullying behaviour?

- Findings from the National Prevalence data on bullying in schools.

- Elements of 'risk' to bullying. Given that young people are not a homogenous group, what might increase risk and vulnerability to bullying?

- Strategies – ways forward to reduce bullying.

Defining bullying

In exploring definitional issues relating to bullying, Dr. Spears listed the following 'core elements' to bullying behaviour:

- ***It is done with a deliberate intent to harm.*** Therefore it is wilful, proactive and not accidental.

- ***It involves a power imbalance between the perpetrator and the victim.*** It is important to ask, who has the power in the situation? The target may feel powerless, it is not 'fighting' as such and the parties involved may not have equal social status, size, or position within a group.

- ***It is repeated.*** Bullying is usually perpetrated in an ongoing way, over time. It is not an isolated incident.

Dr. Spears categorised the forms that bullying takes into two broad spheres:

- 'Direct and Overt', such as physical or verbal bullying; and

- 'Indirect and Covert', such as social or relational bullying.

Dr. Spears highlighted the range of roles that are played out when bullying occurs, including the role of the bully, the victim and bystanders (be they assistants, reinforcers, outsiders or defenders). She described the range of impacts of bullying, including physical, social, psychological and emotional impacts, and the broad range of contexts in which bullying may occur (from the school, to the workplace, to the sports ground and beyond).

Whilst 'direct/overt' bullying may be evident and exposed, Dr. Spears described the characteristics of covert bullying as 'secret, hidden, clandestine, stealthy, underground and concealed.' Covert bullying was described as 'complex' and relating to 'social or relational' situations, for example it may involve the spreading of rumours about an individual within a social group.

Dr. Spears considered the characteristics of cyber bullying, describing cyber bullying as 'repeated, wilful, on-line communications that seek to:

- Intimidate

- Control

- Manipulate

- Put down

- Humiliate.'

Dr. Spears suggests that whilst it is possible that cyber-bullying may essentially be an 'old problem' taking shape in a 'new form', older people such as parents and adults do not generally have a clear sense of what normative behaviour is in on-line environments.

Dr. Spears raised a range of challenges specific to understanding and responding to cyber-bullying.

The first related to repetition and containment of bullying behaviour in on-line environments. Dr. Spears posed the question, "how do you measure repetition that is 'viral'?" The notion that 'what goes on line, stays on line' means that information used to bully someone can be broadly and repeatedly circulated and impossible to contain or remove.

The second related to the power dynamics in cyber-bullying. Dr. Spears asked if the power dynamics were different in on-line environments where the victim of bullying is able to retaliate anonymously. This related again to the question of 'what is normative behaviour in online environments?'

The third related to the nature of the fast and constant evolution and convergence of digital technology (computers and mobile phones) through which new programs, spaces and realms are created and utilised. Keeping up with new technology, its value and implications, is a very difficult task for parents and educators, creating challenges in supporting young people to be both confident and safe in using this technology.

The fourth related to the role of 'bystanders' to bullying using digital technology. While in overt bullying in the 'real' world the role of bystanders, witnesses, supporters or reinforcers of bullying is clear and identifiable, how do we identify bystanders to cyber-bullying or bullying done over mobile phone, and what is their role? Dr. Spears highlighted the peer pressure to pass on an image or message that young people experience and the need for young people to develop skills and techniques to respond to bullying on the net or by phone as bystanders or witnesses.

Whilst there are a number of challenges in understanding and measuring the prevalence of cyber-bullying, particularly given that this bullying is taking place in spaces not well known to 'older' people in the community (parents/teachers), Dr. Spears impressed on the participants, the critical importance of engaging with young people as co-researchers and ensuring they have a meaningful role in 'co-constructing meaning' where we examine young people's experiences of cyber-bullying.

Prevalence

Dr. Spears also shared some trends in the data collected by Professor Donna Cross for the Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence Study[3]. The study surveyed students form 106 schools approximately half primary and half secondary, with a total of around 7,500 students surveyed.

In relation to Victoria, the data revealed that a total of 7.9% of surveyed students reported they had bullied others. These students were more likely to be male and more likely to come from a non-government school and from a non-metro area. A total of 23.2% of students surveyed reported being bullied. Again, they were more likely to be male, but in this case were marginally more likely to come from Government schools and metro areas. The rate of bullying reported in Victoria was lower (in many cases marginally) than all states except South Australia and the ACT.

Nationally, years 5 and 8 were when students experienced bullying the most, although the Victorian data suggested that bullying was at its highest in years 4 and 5, dropping significantly in year 6 and then rising significantly in years 7 and 8 back to almost the levels experienced in years 4 and 5 (approximately between 25% and 27% of students). Victoria also reported relatively low levels of covert bullying compared to other states, with the ACT

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[3] Available for download from
http://www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/NationalSafeSchools/Documents/covertBullyReports/ACBPS%20chapter%201.pdf

the only area to report less. Again years 4 and 5 were significant year levels for the reporting of covert bullying in Victoria.

Cyber bullying reported in Victoria was close to the average rate for all states (with 6% of students reporting they had experienced cyber bullying), however this was slightly lower than most states or territories. The data did record a significant leap in the numbers of young people being cyber bullied once they reached year 9.

In general, the data revealed that approximately 1 in 4 Year 4 to Year 9 students were being bullied every few weeks or more, with frequent bullying highest in Year 5 (32%) and Year 9 (29%). Hurtful teasing was the most commonly reported form of bullying, and the majority of young people who had been overtly bullied, also experienced covert bullying.

Risk

Dr. Spears highlighted the fact that young people are not a homogenous group and that there are a range of experiences or factors that may make some young people more vulnerable to being victims of bullying than others. She described Nancy Willard's[4] four 'states of being' that may shed light on young people's level of risk of being involved with cyberbullying as:

- 'Savvy': with effective knowledge, skill, and values to make good decisions.

- 'Naïve': lacking sufficient knowledge and skills to engage in effective decision making.

- 'Vulnerable': lacking the necessary knowledge and skills and also going through a period of difficulty such as parental discord, difficulty at school, the break-up of a relationship.

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[4] Willard, N. (2007) *Cyber-Safe Kids, Cyber-Savvy Teens*. John Willey & Sons Inc. For further information see http://www.cskcst.com/

- 'At risk': those who are 'at risk' in other areas of their life. They may be facing ongoing challenges related to personal mental health, school and/or peers.

Dr. Spears described the range of relationships that young people have in their lives and the technologies used to communicate within them. For example, a young person may interact with friends using Facebook, MySpace, MSN, email or phones. They may also interact with strangers using social networking sites. Dr. Spears posed the questions "Which relationships are safe/healthy?"

Strategies

Dr. Spears shared some strategies developed as part of the Covert Bullying project 'Insights into the Human Dimension of Covert Bullying'. The 'Cyberbullying stories' website (www.cyberbullyingstories.org.au) was created to enable some of the stories to be heard, as well as providing information and strategies to use to reduce cyberbullying. The site 'presents the voices of students, parents, teachers and school staff with a view to informing, supporting and assisting school communities' understanding of covert and cyber bullying.'[5]

Dr. Spears highlighted the critical importance of teachers knowing their students well to assist in identifying students at risk of bullying or being bullies themselves. Dr. Spears reported that there are a range of strategies available from the 'Cyberbullying stories' site that can be employed to:

- empower victims

- empower bystanders

- make bullies understand their behaviours.

Information on the site is directed at students, parents and teachers and showcases relevant research and links to other websites providing valuable information on bullying.

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[5] From the homepage of www.cyberbullyingstories.org.au Accessed on the 16/09/09.

Dr. Spears' presentation contained five specific strategies for addressing covert and cyber bullying in a range of ways. These included:

Strategy 1: Where am I?

This strategy is broadly about raising awareness of personal decision-making in on-line social spaces. It asks the individual to consider such questions as,

- What message am I giving to the world with my photos and my on-line name?

- How am I portraying myself to others and why?

- What is the impact on myself, my parents, my siblings, my friends?

- What do I really think about these cyber issues from a moral/ethical viewpoint?

- Does gender impact on the on-line experience?

Strategy 2: Educating Parents

This strategy considers the nature of the adolescent world in the 21st century. It urges parents to engage early in setting appropriate boundaries and controls for children and young people's engagement with digital-technology and discusses a range of shifting 'age-appropriate' controls parents can consider putting in place. For example, children's engagement with the internet may involve the use of 'bookmarks' and filters and may be supervised. Teenagers however may be better supported by being taught lessons in life balance; privacy and issues related to addiction to cyber interactions to help them stay safe.

Strategy 3: Critical Literacy

This strategy is focussed on the development of critical skills to analyse the written, visual and spoken text young people access through digital technology. This encourages young

people to question the attitudes, values, beliefs and assumptions that lie beneath the information they see. It also asks young people to consider information to uncover social inequities and injustices.

Strategy 4: Discount Model

This strategy takes us through levels of understanding of bullying from 'discounting to acceptance that there is a problem'. It describes various levels of understanding, relating to the below factors:

- Denying the existence of bullying;

- Underplaying the significance of the bullying;

- Solvability of the problem: acknowledging the existence of the problem but feeling overwhelmed by the scale of the issue;

- Acknowledging that things can be done about bullying but not feeling empowered as an individual to act;

- Acceptance – feeling empowered that they can do something about bullying.

Strategy 5: Healthy Resistance

This strategy outlines four actions as part of building a healthy resistance to bullying. They are:

- Read it: examine and reflect on the message being given. Who has the power?

- Name it: acknowledge it. Is it bullying? Or conflict?

- Oppose the Negative Force: Take action to defy or circumvent, or avoid it.

- Replace it: taking a stand by resisting bullying.

Conclusion

Spears concluded that bullying is acknowledged as a *relationship* problem that requires *relationship* solutions. Cyberbullying is a *social* relationship problem enacted through the rapid uptake of *social* media. This challenges adults to learn about this parallel universe in which young people operate their relationships. Engaging young people as *co-researcher*s, so that together we can co-construct shared meaning of what cyberbullying is and means to *them*, will enable greater understanding and therefore ways forward to be found.

Panel discussion

Following Dr. Spears' presentation, the forum heard from a panel of speakers with expertise in a range of forms of bullying experienced by young people. The following is a summary of the panellists and some key points delivered in their address.

Same sex attracted youth and bullying - Dr Lynne Hillier

Dr. Lynne Hillier is a social psychologist and VicHealth Senior Research Fellow at the Australian Research Centre in Sex Health & Society (ARCSHS). Her research over the last 14 years has focused mainly on the sexual health and well being of marginalised youth, in particular, same sex attracted young people. In 1997, Dr. Hillier carried out the first national survey of the health and wellbeing of same-sex-attracted young people. The research, titled *Writing Themselves In*[6] won the Victorian Public Health

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[6] Hillier, L., Dempsey, D., Harrison, L., Beale, L., Matthews L., Rosenthal, D. (1998) *Writing Themselves In: A National Report in the Sexuality, Health and Well-Being of Same-Sex Attracted Young People*. Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University. Melbourne.

Award for Research Excellence and Innovation in 1999. In 2005 she launched a second national follow up study *Writing Themselves In Again – 6 years on.*[7]

The following key issues were raised in Dr. Hillier's presentation to the forum:

- Dr. Hillier highlighted the critical importance of ensuring that the bullying of same-sex-attracted young people is recognised, named and discussed as part of the dialogue about bullying.

- Approximately 10% of the youth population were same-sex-attracted or unsure of their sexual preference.

- Same-sex-attracted young people generally were not getting good information about safe sex and were the victims of homophobia. This was resulting in a range of negative impacts.

- 35% of the young people surveyed in the collection of data for the report *Writing themselves in again – 6 years on* had said they had self-harmed as a result of homophobic bullying.

- Homophobic bullying was different to other forms of bullying for the following reasons:

  o It can be found throughout history and has the backing of powerful institutions (such as the church and legal systems) that project and enforce negative messages about homosexuality such as 'it's unnatural', 'a phase' or 'a sin.'

  o Homophobic bullying is more difficult to challenge than other forms of bullying. This is because sometimes teachers and others are fearful of a backlash from parents or community if they challenge homophobia, or may be afraid of being labelled as homosexuals themselves.

  o Same-sex-attracted young people may feel a pressure to keep their sexuality secret.

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[7] Hillier, L., Turner, A., & Mitchell, A. (2005) *Writing themselves in again: 6 years on. The second national report on the sexuality, health and well-being of same sex attracted young people in Australia.* Australian Centre in Sex, Health & Society, La Trobe University.Melbourne.

- It is usually harder for same-sex-attracted young people to access support if they are experiencing bullying. A key reason for this is that to receive help they need to disclose their sexual preference.

- The alienation that same-sex-attracted young people experience is often more extreme. After disclosing their sexuality they may be alienated at home or loose the support of their parents.

- Sexuality is a very intimate, personal part of the self and the process of discovery that adolescents are undertaking in relation to their sexuality means that this is a particularly vulnerable time for same-sex-attracted young people.

- Dr. Hillier described the Victorian State Government as showing leadership in this area by including a chapter on challenging homophobic bullying in the *Safe Schools are Effective Schools*[8] policy for Victorian schools and in the development and distribution to all Victorian Government schools of the 2008 booklet *Supporting Sexual Diversity in Schools.*

Young workers and work place bullying – Danielle Archer, Young Unionist Network.

Danielle Archer is a journalist and has taught at the University of Western Sydney and TAFE. She was Programme Director for a national youth radio network and has worked as a manager of a youth centre. She is currently Co-ordinator of the Young Unionists Network.

The following key issues were raised in Danielle Archers presentation to the forum:

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[8] Department of Education and Training (2006) *Safe Schools are Effective Schools: A resource for developing safe and supporting school environments.* Available for download from http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/stuman/wellbeing/SafeSchoolsStrategy.pdf

- Workplace bullying is often readily accepted and in some case expected. Institutionalised bullying in the workplace is common.

- Danielle offered the following description of workplace bullying: 'Workplace bullying is repeated, unreasonable behaviour directed towards a group of employees or an individual that poses a risk to health and safety. It can take many forms.'

- Individual contracts, the casualisation of the workforce and 'Youth wages' all disempower young people in the workplace.

School based bullying - Erika Turner, Senior Policy Officer, Student Wellbeing Division Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

Erika is a senior policy officer with the Department of Education & Early Childhood Development (DEECD) and a social worker with ten years experience working in Australia and the UK. Erika has a particular interest in social justice and quality systems, services and policies that contribute to good governance and sustainability within our communities, particularly for the most vulnerable and socially excluded.

On returning to Australia Erika has held a policy position with the Office of Women's Policy working on the whole of government and whole of community women's safety agenda, violence prevention and secretariat responsibilities for the Statewide Advisory Committee to Prevent Sexual Assault. Erika commenced her current role with DEECD to develop policy in relation to respectful relationships of which bullying and cyber bullying is a major component.

Erika shared the following information with the forum with regards to the approach being taken by the Department in assisting schools to respond to bullying:

Bullying in schools:

- All forms of bullying, whether it is physical, verbal or cyber-bullying are not tolerated at any level in Victorian government schools.

- Schools are required to involve students, staff and parents in the development of policy and strategies to promote cyber safety and respond to all forms of bullying including cyber-bullying.

- Schools should ensure they raise awareness in the school community about cyber safety and the seriousness of cyber bullying.

- This should include:

  o the school's policy and strategies to address cyber bullying

  o prevention methods such as protecting students' phone numbers

  o not responding to SMS messages

  o advice that cyber bullying is a criminal offence.

- Bullying issues are also addressed through the general resourcing for student wellbeing which includes:

  o Students Support Services Officers

  o Student Welfare Coordinators

  o Primary Welfare Coordinators

  o Secondary School Nurses Program

  o Alternative Education Programs (for children and young people who have difficulties adjusting to mainstream schooling).

Cybersafety:

- The Department requires that cybersafety and ethics are explicitly taught as part of school curriculum.

- It is recommended that when dealing with or teaching cybersafety or ethical behaviours, it is helpful to take the 'technology' out of the incident to actually help identify the behaviours which are occurring.

- Students need to be educated on the safe and ethical use of new technologies. Ensuring that young people have the critical thinking skills they need to make safe, ethical and smart online decisions requiring a coordinated response from many different parts of the community.

- The Loddon Mallee Cyber Safety Project – Developing Ethical Citizens community lead project is an example of a successful program to combat cyber-bullying. It was funded by the Telstra Foundation Community Cybersafety Grants to research ethical usage of cyber technology and to develop peer led modules.

Safe Schools are Effective Schools:

- DEECD has policies and guidelines to assist schools to develop and implement comprehensive student wellbeing and anti-bullying policies. One of these policies relevant to today's forum is *Safe Schools are Effective Schools*:

  o *Safe Schools are Effective Schools* is based on comprehensive research undertaken in 2005 by Deakin University and the Alannah and Madeline Foundation into effective bullying practices in schools.

  o Unfortunately there is no "silver bullet" – no simple fix – to stop bullying. The prevention of bullying relies on cultural change – it involves teaching students social competencies and it also involves modelling respectful relationships in the school and the broader community.

  o *Safe Schools are Effective Schools* includes strategies for implementing whole-school approaches to bullying prevention.

  o *Safe Schools are Effective Schools* also includes:

- strategies for parents to manage bullying incidents when their child is being bullied, is bullying others, or when they observe bullying behaviour; and

- case studies of good practice in schools.

Respectful relationships:

- DEECD is currently developing the Respectful Relationships Education in Schools initiative to better respond to and support students, teachers and parents with an emphasis on a whole school approach to violence prevention.

- There is a powerful rationale for focusing efforts on fostering respectful relationships among children and young people. Early interventions with children and young people can have a lasting effect on their relationships in the future.

- Many children and young people are exposed to and influenced by violence in relationships and families, including in their own dating relationships, and violence-supportive attitudes, norms and relations are already visible among young people.

- Equally, there is a powerful rationale for locating respectful relationships and violence prevention education in schools. Schools have distinct advantages as sites of violence prevention education, and schools-based prevention education has been shown to work.

- DEECD engaged VicHealth to map current practice in Victorian Secondary Schools to identify best practice. This has resulted in a comprehensive report that will be used to further develop respectful relationships education in schools.

Dr. George Taleporos – Coordinator, Youth Disability Advocacy Service

Dr George Taleporos is the Co-ordinator of the Youth Disability Advocacy Service, (YDAS). YDAS is a partnership between the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, the Disability

Discrimination Legal Service and Youthlaw and is funded by the State Government of Victoria.

George holds a PhD in Psychology and a first class honours degree in Sociology. George has been published in several books and in international peer-reviewed journals including 'Social Science and Medicine' and 'Sexuality and Disability'.

Dr. Taleporos raised the following key issue in his address to the forum:

- The Youth Disability Advocacy Service provide one-on-one support through the individual advocacy service and also work on broader social issues affecting young people with disabilities through systemic advocacy. This broader work is directed by the YDAS steering committee whose membership is made up exclusively of young people with disabilities from across Victoria.

- Statistics from the UK tell us that approximately 80% of students with an intellectual disability are bullied.[9]

- Bullying accounts for 20 – 30% of the cases that come to YDAS for individual advocacy work.

- Mainstream schools have increasing responsibility for students with a disability, and historically have not developed a strong understanding of how to meet the needs of students with disabilities. This in turn means that many schools are not necessarily well equipped to respond to bullying experienced by young people with a disability.

- Teachers need to be better equipped to work effectively with students with a disability. It is currently not compulsory in Victoria for teachers to be trained in working with students with special needs.

- It is not uncommon for parents of children with a disability to describe feeling bullied themselves at school when they try to advocate for their child's needs.

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[9] See BBC News article 'Clampdown on disability bullying' accessed 20/10/09 from http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/education/7401382.stm

- Cyber-bullying of people with a disability often happens under the guise of humour, making it harder to detect.
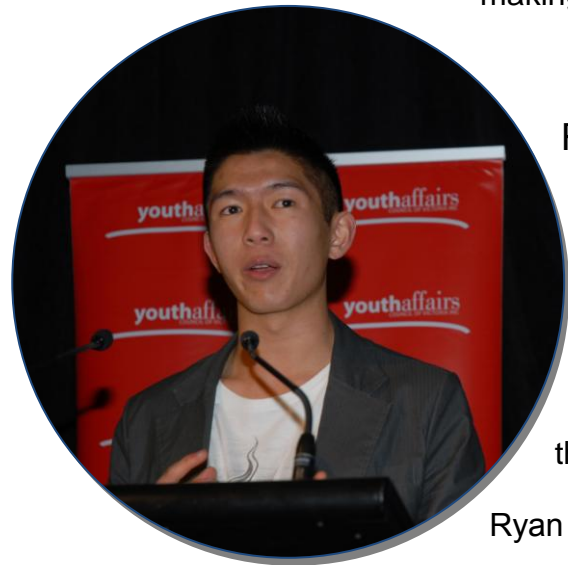
Ryan Lim: Victoria Student Representative Council representative

Ryan Lim, 15, is currently a member of the Student Executive of the Victorian Student Representative Council (VicSRC), a democratic network of Student Representative Councils working together to strengthen the voices and take action on behalf of students throughout Victoria.

Ryan is passionate to see his peers' voice heard by governing bodies as well as provide them with opportunities for them to impact and influence the community and beyond.

In mid 2008, he founded the Western Metropolitan Student Alliance, which operates as the regional cluster to the VicSRC.

Ryan raised the following issues in his panel presentation:

- The VicSRC has a Congress once a year in which students raise a number of issues for discussion and debate that are important to them. At the Congress hosted this year, bullying was as strong focus with two workshops exploring the theme and two resolution made during the Congress relating to cyber bullying and government's role in responding to bullying in the community.

- Bullying impacts on not just the young person being bullied, but also the surrounding friends and class mates. Ryan saw value in peers supporting each other to prevent and respond to bullying they witnessed.

- In Ryan's experience, bullies tend to target those who are different.

- Ryan has various social media accounts that he values highly and has witnesses cyber bullying frequently, including physical assaults recorded via mobile phone and posted on youtube.

- Ryan advocates strongly for involving young people in developing solutions for bullying and feels it is critical to talk with young people about their experiences of bullying.

Michael Cahill – Group Manager, Policy and Sector Development, Sport and Recreation Victoria.

Michael is responsible for developing responses to ethical issues in sport such as drug and alcohol abuse and member protection issues such as bullying, abuse and spectator behaviour.

Key points Michael raised with the forum included:

- The State Government encourages friendly participation, young people's involvement in healthy activities and promotion of the concept of fairness through sport. Bullying is the antithesis of these objectives.

- Sport is usually a competitive environment with participants trying to get an edge or advantage.

- Bullying can happen on a number of levels in sport. It might happen between peers, or might be done by coaches or parents. Structural bullying within the club can also be encouraged.

- It is the aim of Sport and Recreation Victoria to assist people to identify early signs of bullying, for example the social withdrawal of team members, gossip surrounding an individual, damage to a team mates property, unnecessary physical contact on the field or in training and constant criticisms or put-downs.

- There are a number of resources that can assist in the identification and reduction of bullying in sport, including:

  o The 'Play by the rules' web site and resources. 'Play by the Rules' provides information and online learning for community sport and recreation on how to:

    ▪ prevent and deal with discrimination, harassment and child abuse, and

    ▪ develop inclusive and welcoming environments for participation.[10]

  o The 'Keeping junior school sport safe' resource available from www.sport.vic.gov.au

  o 'Member Protection' training and resources. The Sport and recreation Victoria website describes what Member Protection is about:

    'Member Protection means that all people associated with an organisation or association - including players, administrators, coaches, officials and referees - can participate in the organisation's activities in an environment free from inappropriate behaviours such as harassment, discrimination or abuse.
    Member protection involves:

    ▪ protecting members from harassment, discrimination, vilification, abuse and other forms of inappropriate behaviour

    ▪ getting the right people involved in your organisation.'[11]

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[10] For further information see http://www.playbytherules.net.au
[11] Downloaded from the Sport and recreation Victoria website 20/10/09 See http://www.sport.vic.gov.au/web9/dvcsrv.nsf/headingpagesdisplay/sport+managementrunning+a+clubmember+protection for more details.

Issues raised in group discussion

Bullying and disability

Participants in the discussion about bullying experienced by young people with a disability were strongly focused on the need for more effective school based supports and increased training for teachers to supporting students with a disability. The following is an outline of discussion recorded by this group in response to the questions put to them by YACVic.

How prevalent is bullying for this target group/interest area?

Participants reported that bullying was a 'major concern' for young people with a disability. They highlighted a statistic reported by Dr. George Taleporos as part of the panel discussion that 80% of young people in the UK with an intellectual disability reported experiencing bullying.[12] They also highlighted that young people with a disability were bullied for reasons such as 'looking differently'.

Where are the particular issues /concerns for this target group/interest area?

The group reported that young people with a disability may face challenges in advocating for themselves and therefore may have difficulty in accessing support if they are being bullied. They also reported particular concern at the social exclusion that young people with a disability often experience as a form of bullying. In terms of support offered students with a disability, participants reported that teachers were inadequately supported to work effectively with young people with a disability and that there weren't adequate levels of additional support staff available to students. The group reported that they believed this increased the vulnerability of young people with a disability to bullying.

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[12] See BBC News article 'Clampdown on disability bullying' accessed 20/10/09 from
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/education/7401382.stm

What are the barriers to identification?

Barriers to the identification of bullying experienced by young people with a disability were broadly described as attitudinal and relating to a lack of understanding of how to approach and relate to people with a disability. The group identified 'attitudes within the school group' as a barrier to identification and a lack of resources to support young people with a disability as compounding attitudinal barriers.

Are you aware of any good interventions or programs in operation for this target group/interest area?

Participants listed the *Youth Disability Advocacy Service* and the *Office for Disability* as providing positive interventions or programs. They also noted that 'Righteous Pups Australia', a not for profit organisation with a mission to raise, socialize and train Autism Assistance Dogs to do a variety of practical tasks for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders and their families, was a positive program.

How can we involve young people in the development of solutions while ensuring their privacy and safety is maintained?

Young people's roles in peer support and peer mentoring initiatives were listed as important opportunities for engagement. Programs such as 'Big Brother and Big Sister Programs', 'leadership groups', 'Buddy Programs' and 'Groups within the school system' were listed as valuable ways for young people to play an active role in developing solutions to bulling experienced by young people with a disability. They also stated that young people had a key role to play in the development of guidelines for programs or initiatives to prevent bullying.

School based bullying

The forum participants recognised that school based bullying was still the most commonly experienced form of bullying for young people. Whilst they examined opportunities to improve school's responses to bullying, their discussion consider the ways in which bullying played out in the school yard may reflect issues beyond the school gate.

How prevalent is bullying for this target group/interest area?

The discussion group highlighted the fact that school-based bullying was the 'most recognised form of bullying' and described it as occurring 'daily', as 'very prevalent', as 'the most recognised form of bullying'; and as the 'main issue for counsellors in schools.'

What are the particular issues/concerns for this target group/interest area?

The group listed a range of characteristics of school based bullying. These included:

- School based bullying may involve fighting on school grounds but may extend to areas surrounding the school.

- Students could experience bullying in other public spaces such as train stations.

- That some less public spaces within the school grounds, such as locker rooms or toilet facilities may be areas where young people are vulnerable to bullying.

- Bullying that happens at school may be related to something that has happened outside of the school, for example at a sporting club over the weekend particularly in rural areas.

- That there were specific challenges in managing school bullying in some rural areas that needed to be acknowledged.

- Students who are unsafe at home and who also experience bullying at school are particularly vulnerable.

What are the barriers to identification?

The following barriers to identifying bullying at school were listed by the group:

- Teachers may be focussed on the delivery of curriculum and so not notice bullying, or in some cases may turn a blind eye to it.

- Students may use particular language to downplay bullying, for example, 'I just' and 'we only'. Challenging the language of students when they may be diminishing an incident was seen as an important role of the teacher.

- Gender differences in behaviours may mean that where in one case an action is done to bully, in another case it may be normal. For example, nick-names for boys are very common and usually affirming, however for girls a nick-name might be more likely used to bully.

Are you aware of any good interventions or programs operating for this target group/interest area?

Members of this discussion group were aware of a number of positive interventions or programs to address bullying in schools. They noted the following:

- Restorative justice practices. These offer an opportunity to examine and discuss the reasons behind the behaviour rather than simply taking a punitive approach. This approach does however take time and expertise to employ. Of particular note was the work of Pat Marshall, a peer mediation expert from the University of Melbourne who has expertise in restorative justice practices in the classroom and in responding to difficult parents.

- The 'Safe & Caring Communities' (S&CC) Project at Berry Street Victoria. Details of the S&CC Project was provided by Berry Street Victoria following the forum and appear as Appendix A of this report.

- Raising the resilience and self-confidence of students was identified as critical to curbing bullying. The YWCA Flygirl program was listed as an effective program in assisting young women to develop confidence. The YWCA Victoria website describes the program as creating 'opportunities for girls to leap and bound; move and groove; and connect and communicate in a safe and supportive environment.

Flygirl aims to build positive body image, self esteem and peer relationships, through creative avenues such as circus arts, dance, visual art and theatre.'[13]

- 'REAL' magazine offered articles and information to help build girls self-esteem. It can be accessed from www.realmagazine.net.au

How can we involve young people in the development of solutions while ensuring their privacy and safety is maintained?

The group identified that those actions that students took among themselves to combat bullying in the school were usually more effective than punishments for bullying delivered by school staff. Opportunities for students to ask questions or provide feedback anonymously were also seen as valuable. A confidential survey of year 7 students, asking them to identify who they are getting along with and if they are experiencing bullying by anyone allows for teachers to identify where bullying may be occurring and by whom. Students were then linked into individual counselling to address problems.

Cyber Bullying

The group discussion around cyber-bullying was the most popular session, attracting interest from a high number of forum participants. Some key, general messages that stemmed from that discussion included:

- The importance of remembering that whilst cyber-bullying was a serious problem, young people use digital technology in many positive ways and that discussion about cyber-bullying needed to be balanced.

- That strategies to combat cyber-bullying were beyond the scope of schools and needed a broader community response.

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[13] For further details see the Community Arts page of the YWCA Victoria web site at http://www.ywca.net/default.asp?id=85 (Accessed 28/10/09)

- That young people's participation was critical to the development of solutions to prevent and reduce cyber-bullying. This needed to engage vulnerable and disengaged or disadvantaged young people too.

How prevalent is bullying for this target group/interest area?

The group identified cyber bullying as very prevalent and as likely to be under-reported. A representative from Victoria Police commented that the number of requests they were receiving from schools to speak with students as a measure to combat cyber bullying had risen dramatically over the last few years. The incidence of cyber bullying was thought to be rising due to increased access to technology, such as increasing numbers of young people with internet ready mobile phones.

The group did note however that it was important to understand the issue of cyber-bullying in context, in the sense that there was evidence that it was not the most prolific form of bullying experienced by young people and that there were a number of very positive outcomes for young people from engaging with the internet and social media spaces.

What are the particular issues/concerns for this target group/interest area?

A key concern raised in discussion was that parents and teachers were not necessarily 'keeping-up' with the technologies and social media spaces that young people were using. There was a clear need for parents and teachers to be trained in internet-literacy and to be familiar with the social networking sites that young people might be engaging with.

The group also reported that there was confusion regarding the legal implications of bullying, for example, clarity was needed around when bullying behaviour become an offence or crime. Clarity was also needed in terms of the responsibility of the school for

bullying behaviour between students that takes place outside of school hours or off-campus. It was suggested that schools would benefit from further guidance from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development around the legal implications of forms of cyber-bullying behaviour and the role of schools in combating cyber-bullying. It was also suggested that Victoria Police Officers may require some training in strategies to employ with schools and with young people to combat cyber-bullying. The group believed that there was a role for police in conducting community policing aimed at reducing bullying alongside responding to situations where the law may have been broken in a bullying incident.

Whilst the role of schools was a focus of discussion, participants in this group discussion were keen to highlight the importance of thinking 'beyond the school gate' in understanding cyber-bullying and in developing strategies to reduce it. With increasing numbers of young people carrying mobile phones with cameras, video and internet capacity, cyber-bullying can be related to young people's experiences in a range of contexts. The group reminded us that images and information can be collected on a night out or in other public settings. As such, participants stated that 'we can't just leave it up to schools' to combat cyber-bullying. Instead, whilst schools play a key role, a 'whole of community' response is required to nurture the development of responsible cyber-citizens.

What are the barriers to identification?

A key barrier to identification of cyber-bullying was described as 'ignorance' on the part of many parents, teachers and youth workers of the digital technologies young people use and the social networking sites or other cyber-sphere's that young people use. The group stated it was difficult to 'keep up' with technology.

The groups also suggested that challenges to identifying cyber-bullying were also caused by elements of the digital technology being used. For example, it may be difficult to trace the origins of the instigator of bullying, or bullies may be technologically 'savvy' in ways that allow them to utilise various technological options or pathways to bully.

Participants wondered if there may be a reticence on the part of young people to admit to parents or teachers that they are being bullied in fear that the teacher or parent may restrict their access to their mobile phone or computer. An example was sited where a young person had been receiving death threats via text, but refused to hand their phone into police as evidence as they were not prepared to part with it.

The group also suggested that young people may be reluctant to report cyber-bullying because it may be seen as 'common-place', and that bullies themselves may find it difficult to identify and understand the impacts of their actions because the technological mediums can de-personalise the action of bullying.

Are you aware of any good interventions or programs operating for this target group/interest area?

Participants cited a number of programs and resources that they believed were valuable in reducing cyber-bullying. These included:

- The SuperClubsPLUS Australia social media space.[14] The following blurb is from the website: 'SuperClubsPLUS is a safe alternative to the wider-known social networks and actively encourages and stimulates children to practice how to be, and how to keep, safe online at all times. It has won multiple awards internationally for its education value, its innovation and of course, its cybersafety. It is supported here in Australia by Telstra Foundation. SuperClubsPLUS Australia is led by Dr Martyn Wild – Cybersafety Expert and Honorary Professor at La Trobe University.'

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[14] The SuperClubsPLUS Australia social media space can be found at http://yourkidsed.com.au/info/link-super-clubs-plus

- Reachout.com and the Inspire Foundation.[15]

- Initiatives that enabled police to work with schools to educate students about the potential legal implications of cyber-bullying and to promote safe behaviour on-line.

Participants also discussed the merits of using 'restorative justice models' in schools to counter bullying and other negative behaviours. Northland Secondary College was mentioned as an example of a school adopting a 'restorative justice' model as part of the student discipline process.[16]

The group stated that it was important that programs and resources were broadly accessible and available in an ongoing way allowing for emerging good practice to be built upon.

The group also suggested that solutions that focussed on developing capacity (capacity of young people to be responsible cyber-citizens and the capacity of teachers/parents/youth workers to understand the digital technologies and social media spaces that young people engage with) hold value, whilst approaches that foster fear and suspicion around new technologies were unhelpful.

How can we involve young people in the development of solutions while ensuring their privacy and safety is maintained?

The group highlighted the critical importance of hearing from young people about their experiences of cyber-bullying and creating spaces for them to have their say in the development of solutions. The group acknowledged that young people are 'the experts' when it comes to the ways in which they engage with digital technology and what they experience in those spaces. They will, therefore, have invaluable insights into how to

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[15] To find out more about Reach Out or Inspire visit http://au.reachout.com and www.inspire.org.au

[16] The Northland Secondary College website www.northland.vic.gov.au outlines the schools behaviour policy, which includes a restorative justice approach to assisting students to understand the consequences of their actions. See http://www.northland.vic.edu.au/PDFdocs/09behaviourandrespectpolicy.pdf accessed 10/10/09.

develop strategies to reduce cyber-bullying and how to support those young people involved.

The group also reminded us of the critical importance of not just focussing on solutions and supports for young people within the education system, but on finding ways of supporting all young people with experiences of cyber-bullying, including those disengaged from education.

Bullying in sport and recreation

Participants identified bullying within sport as reflecting cultural elements that required a community response. This response needed to engage all stakeholders, including young people, parents, spectators, coaches, umpires and club administrators. They suggested that a range of interventions could assist in reducing bullying in sport, ranging from the development of universal codes of conduct to education programs targeting not only young people, but adults involved in sport such as parents and volunteers.

How prevalent is bullying for this target group/interest area?

Participants suggested that they believed that bullying in sport was a regular occurrence, both on and off the field. There was however some debate within the group about the line between behaviours that might reflect an aggressive approach to a competitive sport and bullying itself. The group identified that young people were not the only people displaying bullying behaviour in sports. Parents, coaches, friends and spectators could all be bullies in sport.

They also stated that umpires could also be the target of bullies, and that it was not uncommon for bullying to be taking place within a sports team between team-mates. Bullying on the grounds of racial diversity was also identified as a common problem

in sports, and participants suggested they thought it was more common for boys to bully in sport than girls.

Participants suggested that the prevalence of bullying would differ depending on the type of sport or recreation being engaged in. They suggested that in some sports, including Australian Rules Football, a culture that is accepts and normalises abuse can be developed.

Where are the particular issues/concerns for this target group/interest area?

A key issue identified by the groups as particular to bullying in sport was that there are elements of sport culture that can encourage bullying, for example by placing value in 'toughness' and on winning and in fostering competition. The importance of developing a cultural shift in sports so that bullying behaviours were not encouraged was described as a challenge. The group also reported a concern was that often parents or community volunteers take on coaching roles in sports clubs and may not have the skills to coach in a way that discourages bullying within the club or in the game, and in some cases may be bullies themselves.

What are the barriers to identification?

The groups felt that the key barriers to the identification of bullying in sport were cultural. The competitive nature of sports and the cultivation of aggressive behaviours sometimes encouraged in sport mean bullying may slip under the radar.

Participants in the group described a cultural shift that happens over time in which at a younger age children typically play in groups of diverse and mixed skill on the basis of age and are eventually sorted into teams for competition based on a hierarchy of skill. This was seen as potentially creating an 'us and them' culture within a sport or a club which may in turn encourage bullying.

The group also suggested that a lack of clear anti-bullying policies within clubs and the absence of universal Codes of Conduct also made it difficult to identify and reduce bullying in sport.

Are you aware of any good interventions or programs operating for this target group/interest area?

The group identified a range of strategies and mechanisms they thought were useful in combating bullying in sport, including:

- Clear codes of conduct: the group suggested that these Codes needed to encompass and discuss appropriate behaviour by, and between, players, coaches, umpires, parents/spectators. The group saw value in young people's direct engagement in the development of the Code. It was also important that all parties (including coaches, parents, volunteers) were signatories to the Code.

- Mediation processes: in cases where players were bullying others, it may become a condition of their continued engagement as a team member that they participate in a mediation process to resolve conflict and stop bullying behaviour.

- Official contacts and processes for complaints, such as Member Protection Information Officers.[17]

How can we involve young people in the development of solutions while ensuring their privacy and safety is maintained?

The group saw real value in young people being involved in processes of developing codes of conduct for sports clubs or teams. They also believed that young people who modelled positive behaviour had a role to play as 'supervisors' or mentors of other young

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[17] For further information on Member Protection Information Officers see: http://www.ausport.gov.au/supporting/ethics/member_protection/member_protection_officers (accessed 28/10/09)

people.

Same-sex-attracted young people and bullying

The discussion in this group supported Dr Hillier's data regarding the prevalence and serious impact of bullying experienced by same-sex-attracted young people. The critical importance of cultural change in addressing homophobia in our community was highlighted in this group discussion.

How prevalent is bullying for this target group/interest area?

The experience of bullying for young people who are same sex attracted was described as 'massive'. Group members reported that the social isolation that same sex attracted young people commonly experienced in smaller communities in rural Victoria inspired them to move to Melbourne where they expected to find acceptance.

What are the particular issues/concerns for this target group/interest area?

The group identified a number of very serious issues and concerns for same sex attracted young people being bullied, including:

- Having no one to talk to about their experiences because of fear others won't accept their sexuality;

- Higher rates of self-harm, drug and alcohol use and attempted suicide amongst same-sex-attracted young people;

- Experiences of physical abuse within intimate relationships;

- A lack of rights awarded 'straight' people, such as right to access marriage;

- A vulnerability to the negative portrayal of same sex attracted people by the media and by the broader community.

What are the barriers to identification?

The group described the following barriers to the identification of bullying experienced by same sex attracted young people:

- Pressure to hide your sexuality;

- Conservatism and fear;

- Religious teachings that stigmatise same sex attracted people;

- Stigma created by negative images in the media of same sex attracted people;

- Double standards;

- Stereotypes of same sex attracted people such as "faggie fags", negatively labelling people as a 'particular type' of same sex attracted person.

Are you aware of any good interventions or programs operating for this target group/interest area?

The group was aware of the following positive interventions or programs:

- ZAQUE Ballarat Youth;

- "Way Out" groups for rural same sex attracted young people;

- Curriculum frameworks that incorporated positive content on sexuality;

- Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria;

- Rainbow Network;

- Gay walking and rowing groups.

How can we involve young people in the development of solutions while ensuring their privacy and safety is maintained?

The group highlighted the importance of respecting same-sex attracted young people's privacy as they may not wish to disclose their sexuality. They saw value in 'on-line'

opportunities for young people to have their say to inform the development of solutions. They thought young people could role model positive behaviours, attitudes and use of language. They also suggested that there may be value in forming an alliance of supports for young people who are same-sex attracted.

Young workers and bullying

A strong theme in the group discussion on young people's experiences of bullying in the workplace was that cultural change would be needed to effectively reduce the prevalence of this type of bullying. Notably, participants were also aware of very few programs or interventions that assisted this target group.

How prevalent is bullying for this target group/interest area?

Participants in the group made the following comments about prevalence:

- It happens 'a fair bit.'

- It happens 'much more than we know.'

- It 'makes someone not want to work.'

What are the particular issues/concerns for this target group/interest area?

The following comments were made about the nature of workplace bullying experienced by young people and its impacts:

- There are cultural expectations that young people will do 'crap jobs'.

- Young workers are more likely to be injured in the work place than other workers. Bullying is an Occupational Health and Safety Issue that can lead to injury.

- Young people general don't have a clear understanding of their rights in the workplace and can be discouraged from joining the relevant union by their employers. Many young people don't identify as 'workers' as such due to the part-

time or temporary nature of a work role they are performing and as such don't necessarily expect their rights as workers to be upheld.

- There is a lack of effective union representation in areas in which high numbers of young people are employed such as the retail and hospitality sectors.

- Experiences of being bullied in the workplace can influence a person's career choice and can have negative financial consequences.

- If you are bullied at work it is more difficult to concentrate and to do well.

What are the barriers to identification?

The group identified the following barriers to the identification of bullying experienced by young workers:

- The person being bullied may be embarrassed and not want to draw attention to it.

- The bullying may be happening 'behind closed doors'.

- Bullying in the workplace can be normalised, disguised as humour or seen as an 'initiation' for apprentices or new employees.

- Someone may be reluctant to report bullying for fear of losing their job or of appearing like a 'sook' in the workplace.

Are you aware of any good interventions or programs operating for this target group/interest area?

The group were aware of only a few positive interventions or programs in this area. They listed:

- A previously printed publication from the Young Unionist Network called the 'Young Workers Survival Guide';

- School speakers programs on young people's rights in the workplace;

- Publications previously developed by Worksafe on young workers and safety.

The conversation focussed on what should be done to reduce bullying of young people in the workplace. Some ideas included:

- Greater responsibility and expectation needs to be placed on employers to protect young people from bullying in the workplace.

- Parents need information to help them support young people as workers.

- Information about rights at work and workplace safety could be embedded in the school curriculum.

- A sustained campaign (including advertising) needed to address the culture of bullying of young people in the workplace, such as the campaign to reduce drink driving.

- Support and resources need to be given to managers in workplaces who may not be well equipped to recognise or address bullying in the workplace. They may have been bullied themselves and see bullying behaviour as normal.

- Need to challenge the cultural expectations that young people compromise their rights at work in order to gain experience or get a foot in the door.

How can we involve young people in the development of solutions while ensuring their privacy and safety is maintained?

The group believed it was important that the experiences of young workers were better understood. They suggested that focus groups conversations with young people working in a range of industries and professions would be valuable in developing a more detailed picture of young people's experiences of bullying in the workplace. They also suggested traineeships in unions for young workers as an opportunity for young people to become more involved in the protection of young people's rights at work.

The group made the general assertion that they felt young people should be granted greater social responsibility and should be able to vote from the age they are able to pay taxes as young workers.

Young people only focus group

This focus group involved only young people, sharing their opinions and thoughts on bullying with each other. Questions were tailored specifically to this group to enable a broad based discussion about bullying, young people's reporting of bullying and the groups thoughts on what can be done to reduce bullying.

How common is bullying for young people? What types of bullying happen the most regularly to young people in your opinion?

The young people participating in this group discussion listed the following types of bullying as common:

- Cyber

- Physical

- Exclusion

- Verbal

- Discrimination

- Racism

They described bullying as 'everywhere, all the time.'

How commonly do you think young people report that they are being bullied, or seek help because they are being bullied?

The group suggested that often young people won't admit to bullying. They said they 'will seek help, but not often.' They suggested that this might be because they feared that seeking help might make the situation worse. It also may be because they believe the teacher won't help 'because they don't understand', or it might depend on who the bully is and how much social influence they have.

What do you think would help reduce bullying? What might encourage young people to get the help they might need if they are experiencing bullying?

The group participants listed the following ideas of what might help reduce bullying and help support young people being bullied:

- Help about family life from school and from supports outside of school.

- Having support from friends and parents, depending on the situation.

- Support from peers.

What do you believe young people can do themselves to reduce bullying?

The following strategies were listed by the group:

- Lead the way and don't promote and encourage the bullying.

- Set an example, don't stand around and watch people bully.

- Don't retaliate and if they are giving you crap, walk away and be happy.

- Have a strong support group with close friends.

- "Think B4 U CLIK!"

Recommendations:

1. That any State, Federal or community based initiatives to reduce bullying experienced by young people recognise and reflect the critical importance of engaging young people directly in the process of developing those solutions.

2. That programs or strategies developed by government departments or community organisations to reduce the incidence of bullying recognise and reflect the value of a 'whole-of-community' approach to the issue of bullying and the many ways in which young people experience bullying, beyond the school yard or cyberspace.

3. That programs or strategies to reduce cyberbullying involve supporting the development of young people as competent cyber-citizens, promoting cyber literacy and socially responsible behaviour in the use of digital technology. These strategies should also recognise the value of promoting technological literacy amongst parents and teachers in order to empower them to support young people's responsible engagement with digital technology and social cyber-spaces.

4. That the State Government build upon the work of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) by investing $1.5 million over 3 years to fund demonstration projects and pilot initiatives with strong peer support and peer education components with a focus initially on:

    a. Same-sex-attracted young people and bullying

    b. Cyber-bullying

    c. Bullying in schools

    d. Young people with a disability and bullying

   These initiatives should be administered by the Office for Youth, extend beyond school settings and include a youth participation approach and rigorous evaluation process.

5. That training in recognising and responding to bullying behaviour be offered to all teachers as an intensive professional development opportunity.

6. That DEECD provide information to schools regarding the legal implications of bullying, clarifying when bullying actions becomes criminal actions, with a focus on cyberbullying. That information provided to schools by the DEECD also clarify the expectations the Department holds of schools in responding to cases of bullying involving students that takes place off-campus, outside of school hours, or involving the use of personal digital technology (for example mobile phones or social media).

7. That DEECD further investigate the value of restorative justice approaches in responding to bullying within schools as a potential strategy to be employed more widely in school settings.

8. That Victoria Police develop specific training for Youth Resource Officers to effectively support schools in responding to incidents of bullying, with a focus on cyber bullying as an emerging issue.

9. That the development of programs and strategies to reduce bullying reflect the findings of research and the growing evidence base on bullying. Dr Barbara Spears' work outlines a number of strategies to reduce bullying including strategies to educate parents, promote digital literacy and support the development of 'healthy resistance' in young people to bullying (see pages 17-19 of this report).

10. That Sport and Recreation Victoria provide information and resources to community sports clubs to train volunteers active in those clubs in identifying and responding to bullying behaviour.

11. That the work of Sport and Recreation Victoria be built upon to involve the promotion of strategies such as the development of Codes of Conduct in community sports clubs, engaging young people, coaches, parents and club volunteers in the development of the club code and as signatories to that code.

Appendix A: The Safe and Caring Communities Project, Berry Street Victoria.

The project was established in 2001 in response to concerns raised by families with the Murrindindi Shire Council about bullying at the local secondary college. The School Principal, Berry Street Manager and two Shire Councillors met to discuss the issues and concluded that bullying within the school was symptomatic of broader community conflict. This included intergenerational family conflicts, sporting club rivalry, etc. This small group decided to tackle this as a whole of community issue, using a community development approach, and looking at all levels of bullying, harassment and violence and in all contexts across the community. The group established a key outcome: to role model and reward appropriate behaviour using a variety of creative strategies. S&CC takes a grass roots approach – raising awareness, changing attitudes, finding local solutions to local issues and providing a focus for community and advocacy and action. The project now has 25 local partnerships and 7 sub committees. The results of this approach are highlighted in the examples below:

- The Cathedral Cluster School Principals (7 Primary Schools, 1 Secondary College and 1 Outdoor Education Group) were committed and allocated one of their teachers 0.2EFT (1 day per week) to work specifically with the S&CC Project. A funded program enabled the training of 125 teaching staff in 'Tribes', as a process of embedding 5 core values as 'social architecture' across both the schools' and community's culture. These 5 core values are:

    o Mutual Respect

    o Attentive listening

    o Appreciations/No put downs

    o Personal Best

    o Right to Pass.

- The local sporting clubs are involved. The local Football and Netball clubs are vital to the fabric of their rural communities and our S&CC Local Derby promotes the theme of 'On field rivalry, Off field harmony'. The clubs have since held 'Look after our mates' responsible drinking education, and players are moving towards signing a code of conduct prior to games.

- Workplace Occupational Health and Safety activities have included the Shire reviewing its Anti-bullying Policy as a model for small business as well as organising presentations during business Week with WorkSafe funding and support. These initiatives are looking to change local workplace cultures.

- The S&CC Project uses an Action Research model to reach out to and drive change at the community level by training volunteers to run focus groups within the sector. This process opens dialogue, enabling individuals and groups to identify issues and develop solutions. We are currently working on developing a community values statement.

- The Neighbourhood Mediation Project aims to increase the capacity of local people across the community, to deal with disputes in a constructive manner, both to settle disputes and prevent conflict. In collaboration with the Department of Justice, a target group will be identified and trained in mediation, resolving a broad range of residential and commercial disputes.

- Family and relationships is a sub committee comprising of a number of local organisations working from a common philosophy, approaching all issues faced in relationships and in families. The motto 'Respect Ourselves, Respect Others' is used to raise awareness and develop a strengths based approach, encouraging games/activities for kids, and working with the Schools' Tribes implementation committee to look at the interface between schools and families.

- Underage drinking is an area of enormous concern to a broad cross section of the community, which parallels Australia-wide trends. The Underage Alcohol sub-committee has interest from a range of partner organisations on the S&CC Committee, many of who are also parents of teenagers. To date, this group has explored the potential of implementing a local community education campaign with

support from local Police, sporting clubs, Council and community health organisations. This collaboration has potential to tackle this issue and aims 'to engage young people in creating opportunities that will support them in making healthy life choices in partnerships with the community.

Appendix B: Links to Resources

For details of the Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence Study (2009) by the Child Health Promotion Research Centre, Edith Cowan University and to download the report visit the Department of education, Employment and Workplace Relations website at:
http://www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/NationalSafeSchools/Pages/research.aspx

For a copy of the report 'Behind the scene: insights into the Human Dimensions of Covert Bullying prepared for the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations by Dr. Barbara Spears, Professor Philip Slee, Professor Laurence Owens, Professor Bruce Johnson and Annie Campbell visit:
http://www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/NationalSafeSchools/Documents/covertBullyReports/Behind%20the%20Scenes%20-%20Insights%20into%20the%20Human%20Dimension%20of%20Covert%20Bullying%20-%20Final%20Short%20Report.pdf

For information on the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development program Safe Schools are Effective Schools visit:
http://www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/safety/bullying/default.htm

Find the *Bullying no way* website at: www.bullyingnoway.com

Find the *LaTrobe University Same Sex Attracted Youth* website at: www.latrobe.edu.au/ssay/

For a copy of *Writing themselves in*: *A National Report in the Sexuality, Health and Well-Being of Same-Sex Attracted Young People* (1998) by Hillier, L., Dempsey, D., Harrison, L., Beale, L., Matthews L., Rosenthal, D. of the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University. Melbourne, visit:
http://www.opendoors.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2009/10/writing-themselves-in.pdf

For a copy of *Writing themselves in again: 6 years on. The second national report on the sexuality, health and well-being of same sex attracted young people in Australia.* (2005) By Hillier, L., Turner, A., & Mitchell, A. of the Australian Centre in Sex, Health & Society, La Trobe University, visit:
http://www.glhv.org.au/node/69

Find the *Smart Online Safe Online* website at:
http://www.soso.org.au/?gclid=COHhw6GY850CFRUwpAodOXMfJw