

Submission to the Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety

From

The Australian University Cyberbullying Research Alliance (AUCRA)

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BACKGROUND:

The **Australian University Cyberbullying Research Alliance** (AUCRA) is a collaboration which aims to: inform policy and practice through evidence-based research; and to improve outcomes for young people in the area of cyberbullying in particular and cyber-safety in general. AUCRA comprises leading researchers from Edith Cowan University; Flinders University; Queensland University of Technology and the University of South Australia. The Alliance has significant international links with organizations concerned with the issue of cyberbullying and cybersafety including the:

- United States 'Children's National Medical Centre'
(<http://www.childrensnational.org/advocacy/KeyIssues/Bullying.aspx>);
- Canadian PREVNet 'Promoting Relationships and Eliminating Violence' National web site:
(<http://prevnet.ca/Home/tabid/36/Default.aspx>) and
- International Observatory on School Violence (<http://www.ijvs.org/> and the
- National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children
http://www.missingkids.com/missingkids/servlet/PageServlet?LanguageCountry=en_US&PageId=169

We commend the Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety for this initiative and appreciate the opportunity to make a submission to this significant Senate inquiry in terms of our expertise on cyberbullying.

We note that in 1994, the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training called for submissions for the "*Sticks and Stones: Report on Violence in Australian Schools*". This was a timely inquiry, when national bullying research was in its infancy, and Professor Slee, as one of the country's leading researchers in that emerging field, contributed significantly to that document which subsequently influenced policy, schools and education for the next decade or so.

This submission by AUCRA, builds upon the original national and international research foundation in the fields of aggression, bullying and violence, and demonstrates the importance of research and providing an evidence-base in addressing the latest bullying iteration: cyberbullying and associated online safety concerns for young people in this country.

THIS SUBMISSION ADDRESSES THE FOLLOWING TERMS OF REFERENCE:

- **with particular attention to cyberbullying, and**
 - **where relevant to our expertise, to cyber-safety.**
- i. *the online environment in which Australian children currently engage, including key physical points of access (schools, libraries, internet cafes, homes, mobiles) and stakeholders controlling or able to influence that engagement (governments, parents, teachers, traders, internet service providers, content service providers);*
 - ii. *the nature, prevalence, implications of and level of risk associated with cyber-safety threats, such as:*
 - *abuse of children online (cyber-bullying, cyber-stalking and sexual grooming);*
 - iii. *Australian and international responses to current cyber-safety threats (education, filtering, regulation, enforcement) their effectiveness and costs to stakeholders, including business;*
 - iv. *opportunities for cooperation across Australian stakeholders and with international stakeholders in dealing with cyber-safety issues;*
 - v. *examining the need to ensure that the opportunities presented by, and economic benefits of, new technologies are maximised;*
 - vi. *ways to support schools to change their culture to reduce the incidence and harmful effects of cyber-bullying including by:*
 - *increasing awareness of cyber-safety good practice;*
 - *encouraging schools to work with the broader school community, especially parents, to develop consistent, whole school approaches; and*
 - *analysing best practice approaches to training and professional development programs and resources that are available to enable school staff to effectively respond to cyber-bullying;*
 - vii. *analysing information on achieving and continuing world's best practice safeguards;*
 - viii. *the merit of establishing an Online Ombudsman to investigate, advocate and act on cyber-safety issues*

**THIS SUBMISSION MAKES THE FOLLOWING 12
RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING CYBERBULLYING IN
PARTICULAR AND CYBER-SAFETY IN GENERAL: THAT:**

- 1) Longitudinal, multi-disciplinary, cross cultural research into cyberbullying and cyber-safety practices be initiated and be ongoing to register changes in nature and prevalence across time, technological environments and location.
- 2) Consideration be given to funding the formal establishment of a national and international University Cyberbullying Research Alliance for informing policy and sustainability in cyberbullying intervention.
- 3) Students and young people from diverse and inclusive communities be encouraged to actively contribute their voice, to inform and shape policies and practices which are age-appropriate, concerning cyberbullying and cyber-safety strategies.
- 4) Legal, technological and educative solutions be considered collaboratively and supportively.
- 5) Advice for schools is evidenced based and/or informed by research which ensures educational, ethical and legally defensible policies to be put in place to deal with cyberbullying.
- 6) Cyber-safety advice for young people is age –appropriate and addresses the primary concerns that young people have: namely cyberbullying, privacy concerns and threats to hardware.

- 7) Significant consideration be given to the matter of pre-service teacher education in the prevention and intervention of all forms of bullying and cyber-safety issues.
- 8) Research opportunities be fostered enhancing cooperation with significant
- 9) International researchers and or organisations addressing the matter of cyber safety.
- 10) Research opportunities be developed enhancing cooperation with National stakeholders focused on cyber-safety issues.
- 11) Specific research be undertaken regarding issues associated with coping with cyber bullying as it evolves in relation to emerging technologies: such as coping mechanisms and strategies and the role of bystanders in cyberspace.
- 12) A public media campaign be funded to engage parents in issues of cyber safety and cyber bullying.

THE SUBMISSION:

ACCORDING TO THE TERMS OF REFERENCE.

(I) THE ONLINE ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN CURRENTLY ENGAGE

Children and young people perceive the online environment as a wonderful, exciting opportunity for finding information, for learning and for socialising. They perceive their learning and socialisation online as the same world as offline. In contrast to adults, who make distinctions between the online and offline environments, there are no parallel universes for them that separate a “real” and a “virtual” world. In fact they say they ‘couldn’t live without’ their mobile phones and the Internet (Campbell, 2005b). It is also important to know and understand how young people are using technology in positive ways to support their learning and relationships, as these benefits must not be underestimated, particularly when considering interventions. In fact, recent data from the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA, 2009) provides strong evidence that the majority of young people use the Internet and related information and communication technologies (ICT) in positive and healthy ways.

The world of digital natives and digital immigrants of which Prensky wrote in 2001, is fast becoming passé, as Hare (2010) reports that the next generation, the “Zeds” or the “iGeneration” will be “profoundly shaped by the wireless, hyperlinked, user-generated world into which they are born” (See Technology Guide in www.educationreview.com.au). They will be borne of parents who are those “digital natives” today. The current generation and those to come, will be the most technologically literate generations ever: they multi-task, value speed over accuracy, and will only ever have known how to conduct relationships and learning, in an always-on environment.

Educators and policy makers need to reflect on this as we consider how to support young people: to operate safely, respectfully, considerately, morally and ethically, not only now, but for their rapidly changing technological futures. Policy and legislation put in place today must have relevance for the current and the next generations, who will be in our schools in 5 years' time, and our universities by 2025. Providing safe boundaries and understanding digital citizenship and the responsibilities that go with that, are integral adult responsibilities as young people learn to navigate their lives in the online environment.

Along with these issues, electronic communications technologies and new media are affording children and adolescents new means of bullying one another.

Cyberbullying refers to bullying and harassment of others by means of new electronic technologies, primarily mobile phones and the internet. This is an adult and media-generated term, and whilst young people have come to understand it, it is not a term they have intrinsically employed (Child Health Promotion Research Centre (September, 2009). In Australia, Campbell (2005a) has explored the impact of mobile phones on young people's social lives in Australia, taking note that the mobile phone has shifted from being a technological and safety device, to a social tool which indicates social connectedness and status.

There has been much research and action on traditional forms of bullying in schools in the past 30 years, with some success, but cyberbullying has arisen in relation to new media and there is strong suggestive evidence that its incidence has increased in the last few years, in concert with the technological shift from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 platforms: from email to social networking sites and virtual worlds. It must also be recognised that bullying is not a problem isolated to schools. It is a societal problem, occurring in workplaces, tertiary institutions, families and any other environment in which power is misused

deliberately and repeatedly to harm another individual or group. Cyberbullying in these environments must also be an issue for consideration.

Researchers, pupils, parents, teachers, unions, and local, regional and national authorities, are all in various ways starting to grapple with the issues involved in cyberbullying, in consultation with mobile phone companies and Internet Service Providers. As children's use of electronic communications technologies is unlikely to wane in coming years, continued attention to cyberbullying is critical.

Bullying itself, is an age-old problem, but has morphed according to the times, the social mores and social context. Exploring the notion of cyberbullying, Campbell (2005b) reports on various methods being used: texting derogatory messages on mobiles; with students showing the message to others before sending it to the target; sending threatening emails; forwarding a confidential email to all address book contacts; others gang up and bombard with "flames"; set up a derogatory website dedicated to a target student and emailing others the address, inviting their comments; polling booths (biggest loser, sluttiest girl etc); continually excluding someone in a chat room or using MSN (online chat). The use of such strategies is seeing a different generation of aggression and bullying develop, as individuals make use of these devices for more indirect, relational and social methods of asserting their power and intimidation of others. Certainly, as bullying moves behind the screen, and behind the scenes, the result is greater access to targets, at all hours of the day, a capacity to conceal identifying information (e.g., gender, age and location), making the line between school and home blurred (Li, 2006).

This of course has implications for any intervention or school policy. Simultaneously, particularly insidious forms of bullying combining overt physical aggression with mobile phone video technology has seen the evolution of Happy Slapping (Saunders, 2005). Girls' seeming increasing use of physical violence (Van Der Woerd, Cox and McDiarmid, 2006) is also more apparent with the advent of mobile phone picture and video technology that

can film these aggressive incidents. The advent of sexting amongst young people - often between intimate partners (Pew Internet and American Life Group, 2009), occurs when they take sexually explicit, intimate, nude or near nude photographs and video footage of one or both parties. When that relationship falters, the images are often then distributed to others for the purposes of humiliation and denigration of reputation. This raises moral, ethical, legal and parenting concerns. This is particularly important as it is occurring at a significant period in young people's lives, just as they are developing their sexual identity and engaging in early romantic relationships.

In order to fully comprehend the online environment in which children and young people operate, this submission makes the following recommendation:

RECOMMENDATION 1:

THAT LONGITUDINAL, MULTI-DISCIPLINARY, CROSS CULTURAL RESEARCH INTO CYBERBULLYING AND CYBER-SAFETY PRACTICES BE INITIATED AND BE ONGOING TO REGISTER CHANGES IN NATURE AND PREVALENCE ACROSS TIME, TECHNOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENTS AND LOCATION.

(II) THE NATURE, PREVALENCE AND IMPLICATIONS OF AND LEVEL OF RISK ASSOCIATED WITH CYBER-SAFETY THREATS: ABUSE OF CHILDREN ONLINE (CYBER-BULLYING, CYBER-STALKING);

While much is now known about the nature, prevalence, and impact of conventional bullying that occurs “offline” in school settings, research is only beginning to help us understand “online” bullying and the overlap between the two. It is important to note at the outset that recent studies are reporting that almost all young people who are bullied online, are bullied offline, indicating that there are not separate and distinct groups (eg Mason, 2008). Young people who are being bullied, therefore need support in both environments.

There has been a dramatic rise in reports in the last 5 years referring to the use of communication media to intimidate, control, manipulate, put down, and humiliate others, with suggestions that this form of bullying may have greater impact than conventional bullying because it can occur at anytime (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008; Smith et al., 2008; Willard, 2007a, 2007b; Wolak, Mitchell, & Finkelhor, 2007). Many of these studies have sought to identify the behaviours employed and to determine the extent of cyberbullying, yet without an agreed upon definition, or consistent measures, comparison of studies remains difficult (Palfrey, 2008).

What is evident is that as technologies have shifted in concert with Web 1.0 (pre-2004) to Web 2.0 (post-2004) environments, the definitions have come to reflect not only bullying in a cyber environment, but also the increasing sophistication of the technologies in use. Smith et al. (2008) captured the necessary components of the conventional bullying definition: A power imbalance and repetition and a deliberate intent to harm (Olweus, 1993), when defining cyberbullying as an “aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual, using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself.” Belsey’s

current website (n.d.) (<http://www.cyberbullying.ca>) defines cyberbullying as “involving the use of information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behaviour by an individual or group, that is intended to harm others.” Earlier definitions reflected the text-based technologies in use at that time: Willard (2003, cited in Shariff, 2008) referred to cyberbullying as “[on-line] speech that is defamatory, constitutes bullying, harassment or discrimination, discloses personal information or contains offensive, vulgar or defamatory comments.” Patchin and Hinduja (2006) also suggested it is “willful and repeated harm inflicted through the medium of electronic text.” The advent of cameras in mobile phones and the ability to upload them to social networking sites make the idea that cyberbullying is solely “speech” or “text” somewhat simplistic when considered alongside Internet ready mobile phones. What is evident is that as new technologies emerge and Web 3.0 evolves, the definition of cyberbullying will need to be continually revisited.

Bullying via technology has meant that bullying has shifted from being “behind the scenes,” where a conspiracy of silence often kept it removed from teachers’ view, and where much bullying was covert and subtle, to “behind the screens” where identity can be hidden and where the acts of bullying appear in different forms via e-technologies, available to millions rather than a select few: for example, as text messages, video clips, e-mails, websites, or virtual worlds. Third generation, Internet ready phones mean that computers no longer reside only in the home, but are in the pockets of young people, challenging how parents and teachers can monitor internet usage and its impact. Cameras in mobile phones present opportunities for abuse unavailable with the early phones in the past, with far-reaching consequences. Photographs released into cyberspace cannot be fully retrieved and may turn up years later. Game consoles now link to the Internet, enabling access direct from a so-called toy, and virtual worlds can be occupied readily from within a game, where avatars interact, controlled by individuals in the “real” world.

Smith et al. (2008) found that there were differences in the perceived impact of cyberbullying compared with offline bullying, according to the type experienced, with misuse of photographs and phone bullying being perceived as having the greatest impact, and chat room and e-mail incidents having the least impact. Chat room and e-mail incidents are more closely associated with the more static Web 1.0 environments, and one message from these findings is that the most impact is from the more sophisticated Web 2.0 environment which supports social networking and video sharing.

If bullying is considered to be a relationship problem (Pepler, Smith, & Rigby, 2004), then recognizing the impact that cyberbullying has on relationships is paramount. Whilst young people operate seamlessly across online and offline environments, not separating the two, the “parallel universe” of cyberspace, which exists alongside family and schooling contexts, presents additional challenges for “real” world relationships. The conduct and maintenance of successful relationships in the “real” world is difficult enough for some (Mason, 2008), without the added dimension and complexity that cyberspace brings. What is not evident from prevalence studies is the human dimension of this impact: the relationship cost of the experiences, emotions, and feelings associated with covert and cyberbullying. (Spears, Slee, Owens & Johnson, 2009a)

In 2007 the Child Health Promotion Research Centre conducted the Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence Study (ACBPS; Cross et al, 2009) on behalf of the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR; the report can be obtained from www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/NationalSafeSchools/Pages/research.aspx).

The study involved 7,418 students from 106 schools across the country. The primary objective of the study was to ascertain the prevalence of covert bullying (bullying that is not easily seen, e.g., social exclusion, gossiping, rumour spreading), cyber bullying and others forms of offline bullying (referred to as face-to-face bullying). There were a large number of important findings from this study which provided important insights into the extent of cyber

bullying in schools, the practices and consequences associated with cyber bullying behaviours as well as teacher perceptions of the problem.

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE AUSTRALIAN COVET BULLYING PREVALENCE STUDY :

1. Being bullied every few weeks or more often (considered to be frequent) overtly and/or covertly during the last term at school is a fairly common experience, affecting approximately one in four Year 4 to Year 9 Australian students (27%). Frequent school bullying was highest among Year 5 (32%) and Year 8 (29%) students. Hurtful teasing was the most prevalent of all bullying behaviours experienced by students, followed by having hurtful lies told about them.
2. The vast majority of Year 4 through Year 9 students had not experienced cyber bullying, with only 7-10% of students reporting they were bullied by means of technology over the school term.
3. Slightly higher rates of cyber bullying were found among secondary students and students from non- Government schools.
4. Cyber bullying was not observed by or reported to as many staff members as other forms of bullying, but was not rare (20%).
5. The majority of staff (67%) felt other teachers at their school needed more training to enhance their skills to deal with a range of issues related to covert bullying, such as dealing with incidents or addressing covert (including cyber bullying) within the curriculum.
6. Of great concern, of those young people who were cyber bullied and informed an adult, 45% of them reported that things either stayed the same or got worse. This reflects the need expressed by school staff for further training in how to deal with bullying, in particular cyber bullying.

Table 1. Prevalence rates for forms of bullying by gender and school sector (from Cross et al., 2009).

Prevalence Rates – Type of Bullying by Gender and Sector						
	Males			Females		
Being Bullied	All Forms	Covert	Cyber	All Forms	Covert	Cyber
Government	27.4%	15.7%	4.0%	27.9%	18.6%	6.9%
non-Government	27.0%	13.1%	7.2%	22.5%	15.7%	9.5%
Total	27.2%	14.7%	5.2%	26.2%	17.7%	7.7%
Bullying Others						
Government	9.9%	5.0%	2.2%	6.6%	3.6%	1.9%
non-Government	12.5%	6.1%	6.3%	8.6%	4.9%	6.5%
Total	10.9%	5.4%	3.8%	7.2%	4.0%	3.3%

As illustrated in Table 1, the prevalence of offline bullying is greater than online bullying. Of those bullied online, nearly 90% were also bullied offline and, in the majority of cases, the bullying incident had its origins offline before transferring online. This is a very important finding as it provides strong evidence that cyberbullying is part of a pattern of bullying behaviours that are used to support offline acts. Furthermore, there is good evidence of the overlap between face-to-face and cyber bullying which supports recent theoretical discussions (e.g., Dooley, Pzyalski, & Cross, 2009). Consistent with this, Palfrey (2008), suggested that youth reports of (conventional) bullying remain more common than those of online harassment, reminds us that both forms coexist in young people's lives, making the possible impact for some, considerable.

Evidence from the ACBPS also revealed that the strategies undertaken to cyber bully change with age in a developmental association to the uses of, interests in and availability of technology. For example, more students in Year 9 cyber bullied others using social networking sites than did students in Year 4 (see Table 2).

Table 2. Strategies used by students in Years 4-9 to cyberbully

	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7 – Primary*	Grade7 – Secondary*	Grade 8	Grade 9	Total
Sent nasty messages on the internet	6.6%	8.3%	8.3%	6.0%	17.6%	15.7%	28.6%	13.5%
Deliberately ignored or left out of things over the net	6.0%	3.5%	8.4%	10.8%	15.5%	18.5%	15.4%	11.2%
Sent nasty text messages or prank calls to your mobile phone	1.9%	6.2%	4.8%	2.7%	7.3%	13.7%	19.6%	8.8%
Sent threatening emails	4.3%	10.0%	4.8%	4.1%	6.1%	6.3%	21.7%	8.5%
Used your screen name or passwords	2.5%	11.0%	10.6%	1.3%	6.6%	.9%	10.4%	6.4%
Posted mean or nasty comments or pictures on websites	1.9%	2.2%	5.0%	3.4%	21.2%	4.2%	10.6%	6.4%
Sent your private emails, messages, pictures or videos to others	2.2%	4.6%	1.9%	1.0%	2.8%	2.3%	8.8%	3.5%
Sent mean or nasty messages or pictures about you to others mobile phones	.9%	2.1%	1.4%	.1%	3.7%	.6%	10.6%	2.8%

Also In 2007, Spears, Slee, Owens and Johnson (2009) conducted the second DEEWR study: *Behind the Scenes: Insights into the Human Dimension of Covert Bullying* study for DEEWR

<http://www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/NationalSafeSchools/Pages/research.aspx>)

This qualitative study examined stories from students, teachers and parents of some of our most vulnerable students, those with Asperger's syndrome, about their experiences of covert and cyberbullying. It was designed to capture the voices of stakeholders in our schools to provide an authentic resource. This study demonstrated that the shifting of the social environment to cyber space, is an indication of transformational youth culture at work, ready to adapt to the latest mode of communication and turn it into a vehicle for social interaction, whether positive or negative. Parenting young people in this environment therefore requires a new awareness of boundaries and responsibilities.

Spears et al found (2009b) found that: covert and cyberbullying are complex relationship issues that present conceptual challenges; highlighting the complexity that technology brings to our attempts at understanding covert and cyberbullying.

The following examples (See boxes) capture the complexity of the behaviours involved in cyberbullying and serve to illustrate the nature of the relationships which underpin it. Qualitative studies do not produce prevalence rates, but enable the authentic voice and the lived realities of those experiencing the phenomenon, to be visible. In this way, this study provides complementary evidence to the ACBPS undertaken by Cross et al (2009).

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE INSIGHTS INTO THE HUMAN DIMENSION OF COVERT BULLYING STUDY:

(1) Reputation and status amongst peer group relationships with friends is vitally important and covert and cyber bullying are weapons in the repertoire which enable manipulation of reputation; denigration or elevation of status and stalking

[A] girl who wanted to be “popular”...stripped for a guy over webcam...he recorded it...posted it on YouTube...She became embarrassed and isolated herself...started hanging out with the “wrong” crowd

[My] friend broke up with her boyfriend...[he] abused her on MSN, then Pixa....[he] sent her hate mail...[he] stalked her across different sites and [her] phone.

[A] family went away for the weekend...[they] left someone to look after the house...They had a party...strangers used their computer.. then a random person contacted the daughter online....She just accepted him...he described her house in detail...She was frightened that he knew where she lived and had been through her things...

(2) Cyber-bullying was hurtful and harmful, reflecting feelings of powerlessness and issues of safety.

Cyberbullying feels [like]: “cruel torture; vicious; obscene; silent; powerful “(See Report, p6)

Victims stories captured the psychological impact: damage to self esteem; fear of going to school; of leaving home; invasion of privacy; stayed away from school; moved house; changed school; left the town; avoided others; public humiliation; loneliness (See Report p 8)

(3) Cyberbullying arose in the context of covert bullying in this study, yet is neither uniquely *covert* nor *overt* in its execution. Where the goal is to be circuitous, cyberbullying is secretive, hidden and concealed. Where the goal is to raise status and gain infamy, then it is open and deliberate (See Report p11).

...a girl got drunk at a party...mobile phones secretly recorded drunken and sexual behaviour...was then uploaded to password protected websites for some to access, whilst excluding others (covert)

sometimes fights are set up so a film can be taken and uploaded onto the internet (overt)...increases the stress for the victim, and the use of technology adds to the injury

(4) The full spectrum of bullying behaviour is available through technology, as it shifts across location, time and space. Physical interactions morph into cyberbullying when fights are filmed and uploaded to video-hosting websites. A broader audience is linked through technological means, increasing the bully's status and elevating the humiliation.

Two boys have an argument, which escalates into a physical fight...it was filmed by others on a mobile phone and uploaded...the loser was subsequently harassed and humiliated ...he isolated himself to avoid the taunts...eventually he left the school

(5) Bystanders are present, but remain unseen in most of these cyber-interactions, and little is known how to harness their potential to support victims. Deliberately choosing to visit denigratory websites and contribute to nasty blogs, online slam-books, and shout-out boxes or using such sites as *www.formspring.me* relate to the same choices that individuals have offline, and all these actions, such as forwarding photos, nasty SMS messages and visiting derogatory/hate websites contribute to the problem. However,

choosing *not* to pass/forward on, *not* to visit websites or watch videos, makes silent individuals in cyberspace part of the *solution*, as their decisions entail some moral engagement with what is occurring and a clear decision to not be part of the problem (see report p 15).

A shout out box was created and people started posting comments targeting one certain person. People spoke of her as a slut and started speaking of all the people had sex with and started spreading rumours. People from any school started to participate in these discussions.

(6) There is a cyclical and boundary-less nature to cyberbullying, as the sequence of transference and continuation of the bullying across different media and locations occurs. In cycling between home and school, the method of bullying changes from offline, as physical, verbal or social bullying to online: where complete strangers can participate in any public humiliation and denigration. This will require rethinking previous understandings of bullying as being discrete types of behaviour, associated with gender, place or time. This also suggests that it is a community problem, and not the sole jurisdiction of any one school or family, which has implications for the legal responsibilities of both.

(7) Cyberbullying is not gender specific: Both genders engaged in manipulation, exclusion and the isolation of others, but perhaps used different activities to do so. Boys used exclusion in sport, for example, and technology has seemingly provided a way for boys to “upskill” in the use of these socially manipulative behaviours which have more oft been associated with girls’ preferred styles of aggression.

...[A] boy was subtly bullied at school....and then on MSN...purely to get a reaction from him back at school ...which was filmed....coz he was easily angered...

A boy said he was being picked on ...and then they used a mobile phone to rally others ...to come and get him.

(8) Students need support in making decisions to safely report (See Report p 21). Trust of adults [teachers and parents] is a real challenge. School counsellors deal directly with managing all forms of behaviour, including bullying, so are well versed in the complex dynamics of young people's relationships and form a strategic link between parents and school.

Some Year 7 girls had friendship issues....fluctuating relationships... They were attractive, very bright, involved.....Parents were also very involved with the school. One girl approached a counsellor, upset at being left out and receiving nasty messages on MSN...I later discovered, that after the girl had spoken with her mother about it, her mother had been on MSN chat and had sent messages back to the other girls, pretending to be her daughter.

...She was dumped by his best friend just before the formal...via text message and called a slut and a bitch. She was distressed, so hadn't studied for a test...She was worried her parents would be angry if she didn't perform at school and would take her mobile phone away. She was so upset, she had to go home.

In order to fully comprehend the nature, prevalence and implications of and level of risk associated with cyber-safety threats: abuse of children online (cyber-bullying, cyber-stalking) this submission makes the following recommendation:

RECOMMENDATION 2:

THAT CONSIDERATION BE GIVEN TO FUNDING THE FORMAL ESTABLISHMENT OF A NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY CYBERBULLYING RESEARCH ALLIANCE FOR INFORMING POLICY AND SUSTAINABILITY IN CYBERBULLYING INTERVENTION.

(III) AUSTRALIAN AND INTERNATIONAL RESPONSES TO CYBER-SAFETY THREATS: EDUCATION, FILTERING, REGULATION AND ENFORCEMENT: THEIR EFFECTIVENESS AND COSTS TO STAKEHOLDERS

a. *Education:*

One component of the 2010 Australian/European Research Training School on cyberbullying (See (iv) below) , was the development of a *Youth Statement*, which arose from the work done with young people who came to speak with the researchers. It is evident that young people want a voice, and want to be involved in the education of each other and parents. This is a critical component of any future work as young people are the experts in their own technological lives and should be heeded by adults who are trying to understand the role technology plays in positive and negative behaviours.

Statement from Young People from the Australian/European Training School on Cyberbullying:

We want:

- ▶ A clear definition of what cyberbullying is, including the effects and consequences
- ▶ Clarity around policy i.e. what inappropriate behaviours are we talking about?
- ▶ Education and to educate parents and peers: in cyber-safety; how to use Facebook, e.g. privacy settings and what they really mean
- ▶ Adults to acknowledge the importance of how children cope with cyberbullying
- ▶ Research in every country to figure out the nature of the problem which feeds into addressing the issues
- ▶ Increased communication between students and teachers
- ▶ To promote the notion that it's ok to talk about experiences of cyberbullying to help those who are victimized in the future
- ▶ Researchers to identify strategies for parents to give support/advice to their children

The call for whole school approaches to intervention is being made nationally and internationally, but the role that pre-service teacher education can play, is often omitted. These young adults, predominantly aged 18-25 yrs in current programs at Universities across the country, are the “Net Gen”. They are already skilled at operating in the online environment and understand the role that social networking plays in their own social lives, so are well placed to support the young people who will be in their care in schools, from the time they graduate in 2010 and for the foreseeable future.

As the aging, predominantly “digital immigrant” teaching force is replaced with this cyber-savvy, digital native cohort, approaches and strategies to challenge cyberbullying, will have to be considered in light of the knowledge and understanding they bring from having the lived experiences of being an online generation. Pre-service teacher education itself, will need to ensure that it is adequately preparing already cyber-savvy young adults for schooling of the future. Like the students currently in schools, they are multi-tasking, and conducting relationships online, and have a level of media literacy that the previous generation does not.

Spears, Campbell, Slee and Tangen (2010) explored pre-service teachers’ knowledge and understandings of face-to-face bullying and cyberbullying, and presented preliminary findings at the National Centre Against Bullying Conference in Melbourne in April, 2010. Approximately three quarters (75%) of the 700 participants reported that they felt very informed (10%) or informed (65%) about bullying with 8% reporting feeling very capable and 65% feeling capable of dealing with it. More females (31.9%) reported feeling not capable of dealing with bullying, compared with males. In terms of recognising cyberbullying, 90-99% were able to discern cyberbullying incidents from other online conflicts, such as fighting, with 87-96% determining that the cyberbullying incidents were serious to really serious.

In terms of the advice they would give, they seem to be relying on strategies which are drawn from traditional bullying interventions, many of which unfairly place the responsibility back on the student being victimised. E.g. : *Say stop, and tell them how you feel; Stand Up For Yourself; Be Brave.* Other categories included telling someone you trust; seeking help, ignoring it and dealing with it yourself. They also offered classroom practices, school procedures and playground based strategies, which may have been drawn from their limited experiences in school placements. What this clearly demonstrates however, is that whilst this cohort has knowledge of bullying and cyberbullying, and feels capable of dealing with it, much work still needs to be done in terms of intervening and supporting children and young people.

Indeed, Murray-Harvey and Slee (in preparation) found that strategies rated as effective by adults are not generally used by young people e.g. talk to a professional at school; use the school anti-bullying policy. Instead, young people prefer to use strategies rated as ineffective by experts: e.g. wishing for a miracle; hoping it will stop; taking it out on others; using drugs to feel better; pretend to be cheerful. Preservice teachers in this study were advocating advice and strategies which young people do not use. This discrepancy is a problem that needs addressing.

b Filtering

While filtering might be useful to stop children accidentally visiting sites they do not wish to, most technologically savvy young people know how to use proxy servers to access banned sites if they so wish.

Education that is age-appropriate and relative to the safety concerns and online practices that children identify as important as they grow into young adults, is preferable to mass filtering. The cyber-safety report completed for the Australian Department of Broadband Communications and the Digital Economy identified that children's concerns centre around cyberbullying, privacy concerns and threats to hardware (Dooley et al., 2009). Targeted

filtering for younger children may be appropriate under certain circumstances, in the same way one might fence a swimming pool, but unless they are supported and educated to make informed, ethical decisions about their online practices, they risk not developing their own moral compass and may fail to become ethical digital citizens in their early adulthood. To continue the pool analogy: unless they are given swimming lessons early and learn how to behave in and around the pool, they won't learn to treat it with a healthy respect nor engage in safe behaviours when older and when on their own.

It is important for young people to learn to self regulate in the online environment in the same way they do offline: with guidance, and direction, boundaries and education. Parents are the best filter for young children and early adolescents: they must engage in parenting “through the screen”, in the same way they parent offline, by establishing age appropriate boundaries. As children grow, however, perhaps the best filter, is as Belsey suggests : “between the kids’ ears” (pers com, NCAB Keynote)

c Regulation

The call to regulate the online environment needs to be considered carefully, particularly in terms of the fact that young people are blending their learning and relationships seamlessly across both online and offline environments. Indeed, as previously stated: young people do not differentiate between the two when it comes to their social experiences. They also continuously have demonstrated their capacity to bypass filters and use proxy servers to access sites blocked or not permitted by school authorities. Engaging their moral compass and harnessing the critical literacies of young people is crucial if they are to grow and develop in these environments as technology changes rapidly around them. They are not developing in a static technological environment and the call to regulate implies a static approach to a dynamic situation.

The message is clear: young people are technologically savvy and require developmentally relevant, age-appropriate mechanisms which allow them to learn and explore safely whilst very young, and which simultaneously contributes to their growth as ethical digital citizens, ensuring that by the time they leave school, they have a sense of responsibility for themselves and others online. Excessive regulation will not enable this generation to learn the skills they need to operate as the future business, community and family leaders of the future.

One regulation strategy being considered by schools is the banning of mobile phones in order to reduce cyberbullying. Whilst no study in Australia has explored this, there is anecdotal evidence that schools and parents think this might be a worthwhile approach. Our colleagues, Steffgen, König and Pfetsch (2009) from COST Action ISo801 reported on such a study using a control/intervention methodology from Luxembourg secondary schools, and found no evidence to support the notion that banning mobile phones decreases cyberbullying.

(http://www.gold.ac.uk/media/Abstract_book_1st_Workshop.pdf, p42)

It is important to remember that cyberbullying is the latest iteration of bullying, and that it is the behaviours which are significant: the technology is the medium. Regulating the technology will not change behaviours.

d Enforcement

To date there has been little detailed examination of the legal issues associated with bullying (see Slee & Ford, 1999), with even less examination of the legal issues of cyberbullying (Campbell, Butler, & Kift, 2008; Butler, Kift, & Campbell, 2010). Schools' responsibility under the civil law for cyberbullying and the criminal ramifications of such conduct are not well understood.

In Australian and New Zealand law, bullying and therefore cyberbullying, is not a criminal offence per se. State by state comparison of law is beyond the parameters of this submission, hence this discussion is deliberately general. The law names criminal offences most associated with bullying as assault, threats, extortion, stalking or harassment. However, bullying by students is usually seen more as a disciplinary matter in schools and not a crime. The police are rarely involved and prosecutions are uncommon. In many instances, cyberbullying can constitute criminal conduct, especially when the behaviour is seriously threatening, harassing or intimidating. While there may be a natural tendency to seek to avoid the criminalisation of young people in this context, criminal sanctions are appropriate to more cases than are generally appreciated, while very few young people seem to appreciate their potential for attracting criminal liability. Media reports and other accounts, however, have recently highlighted that schools themselves, if not teachers and parents also, are increasingly inclined to resort to the criminal law; often out of fear, frustration or in the interests of community safety (Campbell et al. 2008). It is imperative to consider the issue of either criminalising or providing formative discipline for these behaviours.

Additionally, civil law may be invoked when targets who may feel powerless in the face of bullying behaviour turn to the courts to exact some measure of reparation from those responsible. Again this submission is deliberately general in this regard. When the cyberbullying takes place in a school context, the target of the behaviour (the 'plaintiff' in any legal action) may seek to obtain compensation against either the perpetrator or the school authorities who failed to take steps to prevent it (the 'defendants' in any action). In the case of the perpetrator, depending on circumstances, such an action might be framed as action for the tort of 'assault', an intentional infliction of psychiatric harm, defamation or the embryonic tort protecting privacy. Unlike criminal law, age is no barrier to a civil liability to pay compensation for cyberbullying. The decision whether to bring an action against a child perpetrator is therefore

more likely to involve more practical considerations such as whether he or she has sufficient financial resources to make him or her worth suing. Whatever the position in other countries, under Australian law parents are generally not legally liable for the acts of their children and thus it is usually schools which are involved in civil litigation (Butler et al., 2010). While we do live in an increasing litigious society it needs to be considered how much the often unrealistic fear of being sued is hampering schools to be able to respond appropriately. There is also the issue of the school's duty of care extending to off site student behaviour at any time of the day or night.

In order to address the Australian and international responses to current cyber-safety threats (education, filtering, regulation, enforcement) their effectiveness and costs to stakeholders, this submission makes the following recommendations:

RECOMMENDATION 3:

THAT STUDENTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE FROM DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES BE ENCOURAGED TO ACTIVELY CONTRIBUTE THEIR VOICE TO INFORM AND SHAPE POLICIES AND PRACTICES WHICH ARE AGE-APPROPRIATE, CONCERNING CYBERBULLYING AND CYBER-SAFETY STRATEGIES.

RECOMMENDATION 4:

THAT LEGAL, TECHNOLOGICAL AND EDUCATIVE SOLUTIONS BE CONSIDERED COLLABORATIVELY AND SUPPORTIVELY.

RECOMMENDATION 5:

THAT ADVICE FOR SCHOOLS IS EVIDENCED BASED AND/OR INFORMED BY RESEARCH WHICH ENSURES EDUCATIONAL, ETHICAL AND LEGALLY DEFENSIBLE POLICIES TO BE PUT IN PLACE TO DEAL WITH CYBERBULLYING.

RECOMMENDATION 6:

THAT CYBER-SAFETY ADVICE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IS AGE -APPROPRIATE AND ADDRESSES THE PRIMARY CONCERNS THAT YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE: NAMELY CYBERBULLYING, PRIVACY CONCERNS AND THREATS TO HARDWARE.

RECOMMENDATION 7:

THAT SIGNIFICANT CONSIDERATION BE GIVEN TO THE MATTER OF PRE-SERVICE TEACHER EDUCATION IN THE PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION OF ALL FORMS OF BULLYING AND CYBER-SAFETY ISSUES.

(IV) OPPORTUNITIES FOR CO-OPERATION ACROSS AUSTRALIAN STAKEHOLDERS AND WITH INTERNATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS IN DEALING WITH CYBER SAFETY ISSUES

AUCRA, through its existing international links has already demonstrated maximising opportunities for co-operation and most recently through its involvement in the European based COST Action ISO 801 *Cyberbullying: Coping with Negative and Enhancing Positive Uses of New Technologies, in Relationships in Educational Settings*

An Australian Training School: *From Research to policy and practice: Innovation and sustainability in cyberbullying prevention* was successfully held in Melbourne, Australia, from April 11-16, 2010. It was the first venture to be held jointly between COST in Europe, and the Australian Department of Innovation, Industry, and Science Research. It brought together 30 European and 18 Australian early career researchers and PhD candidates working in cyberbullying research and related fields.

In addition to 28 European countries, four Australian institutions are signatories to this COST Action; the 4 Australian representatives are Prof. Phillip Slee, Prof. Donna Cross, Dr. Barbara Spears and A/Prof. Marilyn Campbell. The aims of this international examination of cyberbullying include:

1. To share scientific and professional knowledge and expertise in multi-disciplinary areas of study related to cyberbullying
2. To make links from research expertise and findings to evidence-based practice and policy
3. To disseminate the outcomes of the training school to the global community of researchers, practitioners and policy-makers.

The website link is<

<http://sites.google.com/site/costis0801trainingschoolsite/home>

Such national and international affiliations will assist in analysing information on achieving and continuing world's best practice safeguards (**Term of Reference vii**)

RECOMMENDATION 8:

THAT RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES BE FOSTERED, ENHANCING COOPERATION WITH SIGNIFICANT INTERNATIONAL RESEARCHERS AND OR ORGANISATIONS ADDRESSING THE MATTERS OF CYBERBULLYING AND CYBER-SAFETY

(V) EXAMINING THE NEED TO ENSURE THAT THE OPPORTUNITIES PRESENTED BY, AND ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF, NEW TECHNOLOGIES ARE MAXIMISED

New technologies and new media bring new opportunities for both benefit and negativity. It must be remembered that the shift behind the screens is not necessarily evidence of new behaviours, but is evidence of the ability of humankind to creatively adapt to the changing environment by devising new ways of asserting dominance and intimidation in a technologically driven world.

Using technology for positive outcomes is one way that can maximise the economic benefits of new media. Intervening against cyberbullying is also a way of maximising the economic benefits of new technologies, as the cost for government of *not* intervening is substantial, in terms of the cost to the community for subsequent mental health and youth suicide prevention, promotion and intervention.

AUCRA is currently involved with many initiatives which promote the positive uses of technology. Examples are as follows, and the establishment of a formal university research alliance would serve to build upon this significant, world leading research, to maximise the benefits of new media in working with young people.

Professor Cross and her team from the Child Health Promotion Research Centre at Edith Cowan University have developed an extensive range of web-based materials for parents, students and schools to address cyberbullying and cyber-safety. These resources have been developed for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal young people as part of the extensive and ongoing research being conducted by the CHPRC on cyberbullying. Three of the major projects and their web-based resources are described:

Solid Kids Solid Schools Project (SKSS): This project is an Aboriginal bullying prevention project led by Juli Coffin and coordinated by Dionne Paki and Professor Donna Cross. The Healthway funded SKSS project (2006-2009) aimed to identify, facilitate and encourage strategies to enhance the capacity of local communities to address bullying by involving Aboriginal people in sustainable and positive ways. SKSS involved extensive community consultation to protect the interests of the community and young people participating in the collection of data. An Aboriginal Steering Committee was recruited to enable the involvement of the wider Yamaji community, to advise the community on the project, and to advise on culturally appropriate research processes and protocols.



The project's outcomes included enhancing cultural awareness of and supporting the development of knowledge and skills to reduce the harm from bullying specific to Aboriginal young people. The project also attempted to improve teacher understanding of Aboriginal children's behaviour and its management, and promote a culturally secure whole-of-school approach to addressing bullying issues. A large component of this website is around cyberbullying and bullying, which is 3-5 times higher in Aboriginal

communities. One of the important outcomes of this study is the use of technology as a tool to connect younger and older generations.



Following extensive ongoing community consultation, the SKSS project formatively developed and pilot tested resources, including an interactive SKSS website <http://www.solidkids.net.au>, developed for Yamaji children, their parents/carers and teachers. The SKSS research was an important extension of the six years of Friendly Schools and Families primary school and the three-year Supportive Schools secondary school and three-year cyber bullying prevention research projects conducted by the CHPRC from 2000-2010 with largely mainstream children.

Cyber Friendly Schools Project: In 2010 the CHPRC (with Professor Slee) were awarded funds by Healthway to complete a 3-year trial of a cyber bullying resource. This group randomised control trial is a world first and involves 37 schools in WA (there are 20 schools in the intervention group and 17 in the control group totalling close to 4000 students).

All cyber bullying research to-date has focused on early stage prevalence assessment rather than more downstream intervention development and testing. It also builds on four large formative studies conducted by this team of

researchers which involved two large prevalence studies of cyber bullying in 2007 and 2008 (n=7,500 Australian students; n=3,000 WA students) as well as conducting widespread consultation with students, parents and teachers via focus groups and interviews, to understand their many concerns and needs in this area; and to develop and pilot test our proposed interventions during 2009.

Cyber Bullying / Cyber Worlds / Top Tips / Knowledge Base / FAQ / News

:-) CYBER FRIENDLY

Students / Families

Cybersearch go

How to report cyber bullying

Cyber Friendly — a comprehensive web resource to reduce cyber bullying

The CHPRC compiled this cyber friendly website based on over 10 years of research with 40,000+ students. It offers new insights into what young people, families and other adults can do to reduce cyber bullying.

more for students

more for families

Cyber Worlds

- Mobile phones
- Using the internet
- Social Networking
- File Sharing
- Video hosting
- Gaming Sites

The aim of this project is to test the effectiveness of an innovative school cyber bullying prevention program that actively engages young people in its development and implementation. The intervention will provide whole-school policy and practice to ameliorate the harms associated with this form of bullying and will be implemented with a trained group of Year 10 student leaders in cooperation with trained pastoral care / IT teams within schools supported by online and written materials and training for teachers (and parents under the banner of the Telstra Foundation funded project). This research will help to develop effective interventions in the area of cyber bullying, an identified national priority for young people's health, and help to

translate these research findings into policy and practice to increase their public health impact and enhance prevention and early intervention.

Cyber Friendly Parents' Intervention Trial: This Telstra Foundation funded project (2008-2011) responds to an expressed need from parents of school-age children to help them to help their children use virtual social networking technology more safely and to ideally prevent or cope more effectively with bullying should it occur when children are online or using their mobile phone. The formative strategies outlined in this proposal are designed to determine from parents and their 10-15 year old children the usefulness of a home-based education intervention that aims to build parents' computing skills capacity and their self efficacy to address factors that support and protect children.

The screenshot shows the website's main navigation and content area. At the top, there is a green header with the text "Cyber Bullying / Cyber Worlds / Top Tips / Knowledge Base / FAQ / News" and a large smiley face icon. Below this is a navigation bar with "Students" and "Families" tabs, a search box labeled "Cybersearch" with a "go" button, and a "Reporting cyber bullying" button. The main content area is titled "FAMILIES" and includes a "log-out profile" link. On the left, there are sections for "About your kids" and "Family agreements". The "About your kids" section lists age groups: 8 to 9 Year Olds, 10 to 11 Year Olds, 12 to 13 Year Olds, 14 to 15 Year Olds, and 16 to 17 Year Olds. The "Family Agreements" section includes an overview, tips for sharing one family computer, family time budget, family agreement for split families, tips for FIFO families, parent carer considerations, topics for discussion, and communicating with your child. There are also links for "Ideas for family agreement" and "Blank family agreement". At the bottom, there is a "Cyber Worlds" section with icons for a mobile phone, laptop, people, folder, camera, and game controller.

The intervention will comprise two key components: 1) strategies to help improve parents understanding of, and capacity in, the use of social networking technology used by their children, and 2) strategies to increase their awareness of potential harms and provide practical actions parents cause to reduce cyber bullying, or to support their children if they are bullied through the use of this technology.

Dr Barbara Spears, Professor Slee, and colleagues Owens and Johnson (2009), as part of the *Insights into the Human Dimension of Covert Bullying* project (DEEWR) constructed a website www.cyberbullyingstories.org.au which acts as a research platform for the ongoing gathering of



stories/narratives of covert and cyberbullying, nationally and internationally. It is currently being reviewed and once available again, the stories will be able

to be accessed and podcast by schools as discussion springboards for use in staff, parent and student information sessions. It also provides a benchmark against which any changes in the types of cyberbullying occurring over time can be compared.

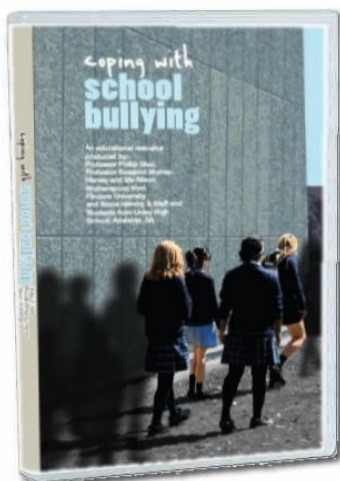
Dr Barbara Spears is co-editing a book with Professor Angela Costabile from COST Action ISO801, involving international authors from 10 countries which specifically targets using technology in positive ways to enhance relationships in education settings to challenge cyberbullying. Involving youth voice and their understanding of how new media are being used in positive ways by them is the foundation of this text. Both Professor Slee and A/Professor Campbell are contributing authors.

Dr Barbara Spears and colleagues from the Centre for Research in Education at the University of South Australia are examining cyber-bystanders through the use of online digital animations and scenarios. This pilot project involves a copyright relationship with the National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children

(http://www.missingkids.com/missingkids/servlet/PublicHomeServlet?LanguageCountry=en_US&)

to use a digital animation from the NetSmartz on-line safety program.

 (<http://www.netsmartz.org/index.aspx>). Results will be available towards the end of the year.

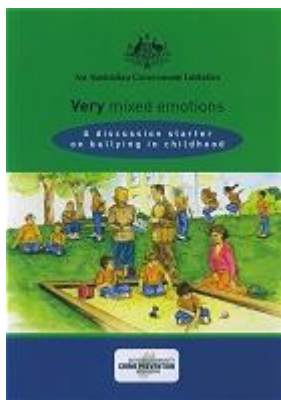


Professor Slee and colleagues from Flinders University have produced a range of resources including dvd's to address the issue of school bullying including cyberbullying.

In the DVD 'Coping with school Bullying', the scenarios and videos are the result of workshops

conducted with year 8 and 9 students at a suburban High School. Through a process of brainstorming, scripting and filming the videos reflect the way in which students see and experience bullying. Bullying is recognised worldwide as a problem for schools and the entire community. In Australia the National Safe Schools Framework requires that all schools provide a safe and supportive learning environment for all members of the school community. This DVD and its accompanying booklet goes to the heart of bullying issues in schools. The intended audience includes educators, young people, parents, community representatives and other stakeholders concerned with addressing bullying. The DVD is designed for viewing in upper primary and secondary school classrooms, staffrooms and school communities, with the aim of prompting discussion and promoting change.

In a further DVD , Bullying: "Very mixed emotions". A video discussion about



bullying amongst young children (Wotherspoon, Shute, and Slee, 2006) the issue of school bullying and young children was addressed. [Commonwealth Attorney General's Department](#): Canberra. Although the issue of cyberbullying is not addressed, this is one of the few practical resources addressing the matter amongst young children and how parents might respond.

Intervention against traditional bullying at an early age is one strategy which could impact on children's later involvement in cyberbullying.

In the DVD 'Reducing Bullying: Evidence based strategies for schools' a



resource was developed for use by educators. The points raised in the dvd regarding bullying apply to cyber

bullying e.g the need for schools to have policy and process in place.

Campbell, Slee and Spears are investigating bullying of avatars in Second Life and Campbell and Glasheen are investigating the opportunities for using online counselling in educational settings (Glasheen & Campbell, 2009).

In order to ensure that the opportunities presented by, and economic benefits of, new technologies are maximised, the positive uses of new media need to be explored, and the recognition that the cost of *not* doing anything is significantly greater in terms of the promotion, prevention and intervention costs of youth suicide and ongoing mental health issues which are recognised as being related to bullying and cyberbullying

The following recommendations are made by this submission.

RECOMMENDATION 9:

THAT RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES BE DEVELOPED ENHANCING COOPERATION WITH NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS FOCUSED ON CYBER-SAFETY AND CYBERBULLYING ISSUES.

RECOMMENDATION 10:

THAT SPECIFIC AND ONGOING RESEARCH BE UNDERTAKEN REGARDING ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH CYBERBULLYING AS IT EVOLVES IN RELATION TO EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES: SUCH AS COPING MECHANISMS AND STRATEGIES AND THE ROLE OF BYSTANDERS IN CYBERSPACE.

(VI) WAYS TO SUPPORT SCHOOLS TO CHANGE THEIR CULTURE TO REDUCE THE INCIDENCE AND HARMFUL EFFECTS OF CYBER-BULLYING INCLUDING BY:

- **increasing awareness of cyber-safety good practice;**
- **encouraging schools to work with the broader school community, especially parents, to develop consistent, whole school approaches; and**
- **analysing best practice approaches to training and professional development programs and resources that are available to enable school staff to effectively respond to cyberbullying;**

As the face of bullying in the 21st century takes on this new genderless, ageless, covert guise, the challenge for researchers and schools is to gather reliable and valid data concerning students' understandings of bullying through technology and covert bullying so that the National Safe Schools Framework and policy can be informed, and interventions and actions put in place which will be effective in protecting students from these negative interactions, can be evaluated. In order to intervene, and provide safe schools, a reliable evidence base is needed.

The aim of the National Safe Schools Framework (NSSF)

http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/school_education/publications_resources/profiles/national_safe_schools_framework.htm is to assist all school communities in building safe and supportive schools where:

- bullying, harassment and violence are minimised;
- students receive support on issues related to child abuse and neglect.

The Framework consists of a set of nationally agreed principles for a safe and supportive school environment and includes appropriate responses which schools can adopt to address issues of bullying, violence, harassment, and child abuse and neglect.

If, as Slee, (2001) and Pepler et al (2008) suggest, bullying is indeed a relationship issue requiring relationship solutions, then placing bullying and cyberbullying within a positive, well-being framework would seem to have more opportunities for successful intervention than framing it as a deficit model, where the bully is demonised and the victim “problematized”.

There are many ways to support schools which involve prevention and intervention of cyberbullying. There are legal issues, technological issues and educative issues. Unfortunately to date there is scant evidence for any of these ways to support schools effectively. However, as Cross et al.'s (2009) work shows that most young people who are involved in cyberbullying as bullies or victims are also involved in bullying face-to-face then the 30 or so years of research on face-to-face bullying prevention and intervention would seem to be applicable. Importantly, the team at the CHPRC (under the direction of Professor Cross) are currently conducting a randomised control trial evaluation of a cyberbullying intervention (Cyber Friendly Schools Project described above) which will provide valuable evidence about the efficacy of a standardised approach to reducing cyberbullying (in addition to offline bullying) in schools. Overall, there is strong research evidence that the programs in schools need to be whole school (Moore, 1997) and long term (Tofti & Farrington, 2010). Parental education also needs to be undertaken as they are the ones who buy the mobile phones and computers and raise the children.

A cautionary note, however, is to be aware that schools are complex, busy, diverse and demanding places, for students, teachers and parents. Whilst they are microcosms of the environments in which they are placed, reflecting the cultural contexts and societies which surround them, they have an increasingly crowded curriculum and are being asked by governments to take on more, e.g. NAPLAN tests, and the new national curriculum. Each of these brings with it a responsibility and accountability to parents, to the children and to the government.

In an increasingly litigious society, this submission advises caution with regard to proceeding with any program in schools which adds to that load, by insisting that schools “sign off” as being accredited/certificated in cyber-safety practices, or as cyberbullying free zones. No school can guarantee that all children will be 100% safe, and whilst the intervention evidence is promising, it must be recognised that there are different pathways to bullying generally, which has implications for any cyber-safety and cyberbullying interventions.

Four developmental bullying trajectories through adolescence have been identified by Pepler, Jiang, Craig & Connelly, (2008) using 8 waves of data over 7 years: 9.9% reported consistently high levels of bullying; 13.4% reported early, moderate levels which desisted over time, to almost no bullying at the end of high school; 35.1% reported consistently moderate levels of bullying; and 41.6% almost never reported bullying. How these translate to cyberbullying is not yet clear, however, given the overlap that is recognised between the traditional and cyberbullying, almost 10% of young people in our schools will have consistently high levels of bullying: making risk management in schools in terms of being accredited as “cyber-safe” or “cyberbullying free” problematic.

Schools need to work with their communities, to minimise harm and reduce risk for their students. It is of concern that schools themselves could be at risk of litigation if they ascribe to being “accredited”, and one young person suicides as a result of any bullying or cyberbullying that occurred in that context.

Thus, in order to address ways to support schools to change their culture to reduce the incidence and harmful effects of cyber-bullying, this submission makes the following recommendations:

RECOMMENDATION 4:

THAT LEGAL, TECHNOLOGICAL AND EDUCATIVE SOLUTIONS BE CONSIDERED COLLABORATIVELY AND SUPPORTIVELY.

RECOMMENDATION 5:

THAT ADVICE FOR SCHOOLS IS EVIDENCED BASED AND/OR INFORMED BY RESEARCH WHICH ENSURES EDUCATIONAL, ETHICAL AND LEGALLY DEFENSIBLE POLICIES TO BE PUT IN PLACE TO DEAL WITH CYBERBULLYING.

RECOMMENDATION 11:

THAT A PUBLIC MEDIA CAMPAIGN BE FUNDED TO ENGAGE PARENTS IN ISSUES OF CYBER-SAFETY AND CYBERBULLYING.

(VII) ANALYSING INFORMATION ON ACHIEVING AND CONTINUING WORLD'S BEST PRACTICE SAFEGUARDS;

As previously noted in this submission, the Australian University Cyberbullying Alliance (AUCRA) collaborates nationally and internationally to undertake research, to analyse current research trends and outcomes and to determine world's best practices in cyberbullying interventions and associated cyber-safety practices.

The Australian/European Research Training School on cyberbullying is evidence of the quest for world's best practice in developing the next cohort of internationally collaborative researchers. All current promotion, prevention and intervention work on

cyberbullying is benchmarked to international findings.

This submission makes the following recommendations:

RECOMMENDATION 1:

THAT LONGITUDINAL, MULTI-DISCIPLINARY, CROSS CULTURAL RESEARCH INTO CYBERBULLYING AND CYBER-SAFETY PRACTICES BE INITIATED AND BE ONGOING TO REGISTER CHANGES IN NATURE AND PREVALENCE ACROSS TIME TECHNOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENTS AND LOCATION.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

THAT CONSIDERATION BE GIVEN TO FUNDING THE FORMAL ESTABLISHMENT OF A NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY CYBERBULLYING RESEARCH ALLIANCE FOR INFORMING POLICY AND SUSTAINABILITY IN CYBERBULLYING INTERVENTION.

RECOMMENDATION 8:

THAT RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES BE FOSTERED, ENHANCING COOPERATION WITH SIGNIFICANT INTERNATIONAL RESEARCHERS AND OR ORGANISATIONS ADDRESSING THE MATTERS OF CYBERBULLYING AND CYBER SAFETY

RECOMMENDATION 9:

THAT RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES BE DEVELOPED ENHANCING COOPERATION WITH NATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS FOCUSED ON CYBER-SAFETY ISSUES E.G. AUSTRALIAN COMMUNICATIONS AND MEDIA AUTHORITY (ACMA); AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL POLICE (AP).

(VIII) THE MERIT OF ESTABLISHING AN ONLINE OMBUDSMAN TO INVESTIGATE, ADVOCATE AND ACT ON CYBER-SAFETY ISSUES.

An Ombudsman is defined as “a government official responsible for impartially investigating citizens' complaints against a public authority or institution and trying to bring about a fair settlement” (Online Dictionary).

This submission can see the merit in having an online ombudsman to advocate and act on cyber-safety issues, and would suggest that it could be structured in such a way that enables and promotes engagement with education/academia/research, in addition to police and industry. It would be important that it not be a figurehead solely for the police, for example.

As cyber-safety is not the explicit expertise of this submission, AUCRA abstains from making a recommendation, but highlights instead, the issue above for consideration by the Inquiry.

SUMMARY

As outlined in this submission from the "Australian University Cyberbullying Research Alliance" (AUCRA) comprising researchers from four of Australia's leading institutions:

- Edith Cowan University,
- Flinders University,
- Queensland University of Technology and
- University of South Australia,

important messages and recommendations from the cyberbullying research community, have been made for the committee to consider. Our submission draws on the significant research experience of AUCRA where the particular strengths of members of the Alliance relate to a strong evidence based approach with a focus on translating research into policy and practice.

We would be happy to elaborate on any of the content or recommendations submitted here and/or appear before the Joint Select Committee.

Professor Phillip Slee,

Professor Donna Cross,

A/Professor Marilyn Campbell,

Dr. Barbara Spears,

Dr Julian Dooley

REFERENCE LIST

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