

# Violence Prevention and Response in Schools (Minister's Roundtable Participants)

Plan of Action Consultation Questions

## Response from the Sammy D Foundation – 5 July 2023

<p>1. What has worked at schools to prevent violence</p>	<p>From what our partner schools, and our own research, have told us a positive school culture is key to preventing bullying and violence in schools. This positive school culture should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• encourage and support reporting of incidents</li><li>• promote and actively model respectful relationships</li><li>• involve student voice and student led approaches</li><li>• educate the whole school community on what bullying, and violence is, and providing clear communication that it will not be tolerated</li><li>• training and development for all staff (not just teachers) around identifying and addressing behaviours early through targeted interventions and supported referrals.</li></ul> <p><b><u>Reporting of incidents</u></b> It's easier to ignore, and harder to address, something that "isn't happening".</p> <p>Context is key. Encouraging and supporting the reporting of incidents of violence, facilitates the gathering of local data to identify trends, patterns, and anomalies. This contributes to the development of a sound evidence base from which to identify and tailor specific solutions relevant to the local context. <a href="https://tinyurl.com/yx2dmz5z">https://tinyurl.com/yx2dmz5z</a></p> <p>Key reasons young people don't report incidents include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• a lack of trust in the system that they will be taken seriously, and that something will change due to their report</li><li>• feeling ashamed, embarrassed, or powerless</li><li>• fear of retaliation or making the situation worse for others</li><li>• a lack of confidence/self-belief, or belief they may have contributed/caused the incident</li><li>• doubting themselves and thinking they are overacting.</li></ul> <p><a href="https://www.cfchildren.org/blog/2016/09/why-dont-kids-report-bullying">https://www.cfchildren.org/blog/2016/09/why-dont-kids-report-bullying</a></p>
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The downside to encouraging the reporting of incidents can be a perception there has been an increase in incidents, when the reality is they are already occurring, just underreported, and not being addressed.

<https://tinyurl.com/yx2dmz5z>

### **Model respectful relationships**

Respectful relationships are already identified as a key education focus for young people through the Australian Curriculum and Keeping Safe: Child Protection Curriculum.

The learning behind this is undermined if these relationships are not embedded and modelled across the whole school community: staff to staff; staff to parents; staff to students; students to students; students to staff; and staff parents to staff.

<https://raisingchildren.net.au/pre-teens/behaviour/encouraging-good-behaviour/being-a-role-model>

### **Student voice and student led approaches**

We strongly supported the planned actions of the student forums and student summit, which align to Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

<https://www.unicef.org.au/united-nations-convention-on-the-rights-of-the-child>

We would also encourage the Department to look at a range of ways to engage, and seek contribution from, young people less likely to engage in structured discussions, as they may be the people most at risk of violence. The same reasons why young people may not report an incident apply here. In addition, this includes young people who:

- lack the confidence or ability to articulate their thoughts in a structured public forum
- have differing points of view.

### **Primary Prevention Education**

Investment in primary prevention (being proactive rather than reactive), can save lives and public funds.

<https://nida.nih.gov/about-nida/noras-blog/2022/04/investing-in-prevention-makes-good-financial-sense>

The Sammy D Foundation's expertise lies in the primary prevention space. As the leading violence prevention organisation in South Australia, we would recommend strategies that incorporate:

- clear expectations of behaviour, and consequences for breaches of behaviour, as well as an outline of safe and healthy practices such as respectful relationships
- education about what violence is, what contributes to a culture of violence, the impact of violence, and strategies to prevent violence
- positive behaviour modelling by adults

- consistent application of the rules and consequences
- investment in repeated delivery of age-appropriate key messages/strategies across a young person's education to reinforce positive messages and behaviours.

Current primary prevention education is focussed predominately on students. We believe this education should extend to the whole school community (Governing council, school leadership, all school staff not just teachers, co-located services, students, and parents).

As previously discussed in our funding proposal '*Be the Mate: a bullying and violence prevention initiative*', sent to the Minister in June 2022, we strongly believe a community education campaign, like our proposed Be the Mate Campaign, can raise awareness of the impacts of bullying and violence to individuals and the broader community, and call out negative behaviours, and/or promote positive behaviours, similar to the messaging of road safety campaigns.

#### **Staff training and development**

We welcome the proposed actions including the online training and supporting resources, and online learning modules. We also believe this learning needs to be embedded in higher education courses for teachers as well as any other education pathways for employment in education.

We believe this training should include a focus on understanding peer dynamics and developmental trajectories, and how that aligns to their role across a tiered approach to violence prevention (primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention).

<https://tinyurl.com/yc4tcka7>

With different children following different trajectories, a tiered approach to violence prevention would involve:

- a. A universal tier (primary prevention) - providing a whole school approach (students, parents, and staff) aimed at eliminating violence before it occurs.
- b. A targeted tier (secondary prevention) - providing additional support to identified individuals to reduce the impact of violence that has already occurred and to try and prevent re-occurrences.
- c. An intensive tier (tertiary prevention) - providing tailored approaches for the management of non-responsive individuals (tertiary prevention)

<p><b>2. What has worked at schools when responding to violence</b></p>	<p>Programs that focus on removing risk factors and building protective factors are the most effective in responding to violence. We would, strongly recommend that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• perpetrators of violence be educated on the consequences of their actions, which stem far beyond any impact to themselves or their victim, but to innocent bystanders, friends and family, and the broader community and supported to develop alternative approaches to resolving issues through violence</li> <li>• those responding to incidents of violence be educated on the risk and protective factors that can contribute to these types of behavioural responses and understand that addressing the violent behaviour alone does little to resolve any underlying contributing factors.</li> </ul> <p>Our key area of expertise is primary prevention, and we strongly believe an increased consistent focus on primary prevention education can contribute to a reduction in bullying and violence in education.</p>
<p><b>3. Do the immediate actions adequately cover the key themes?</b></p>	<p>The immediate actions do well to cover the key themes from a departmental perspective, but don't clearly outline what schools are/could/should be doing themselves and the role of the broader community (external providers and parents, carers, and families).</p> <p>As previously raised with the Minister we are seeing two trends in the bullying and violence prevention space:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an increase in requests from schools for bullying and violence prevention programs that exceeds our current capacity to deliver</li> <li>• a lack of financial resources is a leading barrier to schools booking bullying and violence prevention education programs, especially for regional and rural schools.</li> </ul> <p>While the action plan includes some much-needed additional wellbeing funding for schools, not every school will have access to additional resources and it's unclear what will be expected of those schools in taking action to prevent violence.</p>
<p><b>4. What longer term actions are required?</b></p>	<p>There is a larger issue that the key themes do not present a cohesive policy approach/framework to violence prevention in schools.</p> <p>There is a significant amount of great work already being done by the Department in this space, as well as the additional actions proposed through the Action Plan, but the key themes themselves don't clearly align to the evidence base on what works to prevent violence in schools. "Best practice says schools and school communities should be doing a, b, and c, and have in place x, y, and z. We will be</p>

	<p>taking the following action to support schools and school communities to achieve this by implementing these initiatives (action plan)."</p> <p>With a cohesive framework in place this will also support external providers to be able to frame to their school partners how they can best support what they are trying to achieve.  <a href="https://tinyurl.com/yx2dmz5z">https://tinyurl.com/yx2dmz5z</a></p> <p>Outside of this, evaluations are costly and beyond reach of many not-for-profit organisations. Collaboration between the Department for Education and external providers around sharing of de-personalised data would assist with program evaluation and measuring the success of interventions across sites. It would also be extremely useful in contributing to the evidence base for what does and doesn't work in preventing bullying and violence.</p>
<p><b>5. Any other ideas to improve violence prevention and how we respond.</b></p>	<p>Bullying is a form of violence, however, approaches to preventing bullying and violence in the education sector appear to be viewed and managed separately. Responding to, and preventing, bullying early can contribute to reduced incidents of violence in later years.</p> <p>It would be great to see clearer alignment between the Department's approaches to address both bullying and violence along the education continuum from early childhood through to primary then secondary schooling.  <a href="https://tinyurl.com/yc4tcka7">https://tinyurl.com/yc4tcka7</a></p>