

STAND UP FOR
RESPECT

Life Ed Queensland

Submission to the Australian Government
Anti-Bullying Rapid Review
20 June 2025





Background and summary

Life Ed Queensland strongly supports the anti-bullying rapid review to develop recommendations to create a consistent national standard for responding to bullying and its underlying causes in schools. This submission relates to the following consultation questions of the rapid review:

- *What policies, models and/or practices (i.e. interventions) do you feel are successful in helping prevent and address bullying in schools? Describe the effectiveness of these approaches at a whole of school community level.*
- *What policies, models or practices (i.e. interventions) do you feel are not working?*
- *What resources are available for school staff to support action on bullying? What else would help build capability to support staff to prevent and manage bullying?*
- *What guiding principles or other elements could be helpful in developing a consistent national standard for responding to bullying?*

As Queensland's largest non-government provider of health and wellbeing education for primary and preschool-aged children, Life Ed Queensland is deeply concerned by the growing incidence of bullying among young Queenslanders and the widespread impact this is having in schools and communities.

We believe urgent and coordinated action is needed to educate children on the harms of bullying and to disrupt the long-term link between early bullying behaviours and future violence.

In 2025, Life Ed Queensland will partner with approximately 1,000 schools and early learning centres, supporting nearly 10,000 classroom teachers and reaching 170,000 children and their parents through evidence-based programs focused on physical health and social-emotional wellbeing. Since 1987, more than 1.8 million Queensland children have taken part in the Life Ed program.

Working across metropolitan, regional and remote communities, we maintain close partnerships with schools and parents that provide us with meaningful, real-time insight into the health and wellbeing challenges facing young people.

In this submission, we present key findings and insights from our 2024 and 2025 pilot programs conducted in 14 Queensland schools, and outline opportunities to scale effective, whole-of-school bullying prevention strategies.

STAND UP FOR RESPECT

Stand Up for Respect is a whole-of-school bullying and violence prevention pilot program co-developed by Life Ed Queensland and Social Marketing @ Griffith University. Designed to enhance existing school-based prevention strategies, the program ultimately aims to reduce long-term rates of domestic and relational violence across Queensland and mitigate mental health harms.

The program draws on international best practices in bullying prevention, incorporating foundational elements from evidence-based models such as KiVa, the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, the Viennese Social Competence Program, and The Expect Respect Project—all of which have shown success using comprehensive, whole-of-school approaches (Gaffney et al., 2019; Meraviglia et al., 2003).

In 2023, Queensland police recorded an average of 5,576 incidents of violence and sexual assault per month—a total of 66,912 cases annually—not including unreported instances. The national economic burden of domestic violence is estimated at \$21.7 billion per year (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2024), reflecting its long-reaching physical, psychological, and generational toll.

Stand Up for Respect addresses bullying as a precursor to future violence. Extensive research shows that children who are bullied—or who bully others—are more likely to experience poor quality relationships in adulthood, regardless of family or psychiatric history (Wolke et al., 2013). Disrupted social relationships and conduct problems in the childhood years are key predictors of future violence (Costa et al., 2015). Data from the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC) also reveals a strong link between bullying and increased risk of mental health issues, including self-harm and suicide (Daraganova, 2016). With one in three Queensland children experiencing bullying (Queensland Family and Child Commission, 2023), early intervention is critical for equipping young people with the tools to build respectful, safe relationships.



In 2024, the program was piloted in two phases:

- Term 2: Four schools implemented a classroom-only delivery model.
- Term 3: Another four schools trialed a comprehensive, whole-of-upper-primary approach that included curriculum-aligned lessons, teacher and parent training, educational resources, structured playground interventions, and a dedicated school communications toolkit.

Evaluation by Griffith University found that the comprehensive model led to a measurable reduction in bullying victimisation. In contrast, the classroom-only model saw increased rates of both perpetration and victimisation—underscoring the importance of system-wide engagement.

Looking ahead to Term 3, 2025, a second pilot will expand to six Queensland schools and adopt a full whole-of-school model from Prep to Year 6, co-designed in partnership with school communities. This collaborative, inclusive approach will support students, educators, and families alike.

Life Ed Queensland looks forward to sharing the full evaluation results of the 2025 pilot and continuing to drive meaningful, evidence-based change.



What policies, models and/or practices (i.e. interventions) do you feel are successful in helping prevent and address bullying in schools? Describe the effectiveness of these approaches at a whole of school community level.

In our experience, a whole-of-school approach is essential to effectively prevent and respond to bullying in schools.

The 2024 Stand Up for Respect pilot, led by Life Ed Queensland, provided clear evidence of this. Schools that implemented the whole-of-upper primary model recorded a 56% reduction in physical bullying and a 44% reduction in social bullying. In several cases, schools reported continued cultural shifts after the pilot concluded, with lasting initiatives such as playground interventions and upstander recognition programs becoming embedded in school life.

Building on these results, we believe that a fully expanded Stand Up for Respect model—reaching all year levels, teachers, and parents—would significantly amplify impact.

Bullying prevention requires collective action and shared accountability. By equipping the entire school community with consistent language, strategies, and expectations, schools can foster environments where respectful relationships are the norm and bullying behaviours are actively challenged and reduced—both now and in the future.

Feedback elicited by Life Ed Queensland from school communities further validates the need for whole-of-school models:

- During the development of our 2025 Stand Up for Respect pilot, 181 school community stakeholders in South East Queensland were engaged in co-design workshops. Participants included students, teachers, school leadership and parents.

Feedback from staff and parents highlighted key areas of need that can be addressed through a comprehensive, whole-of-school approach to bullying prevention.

- Professional learning and upskilling: Both groups expressed a strong desire for training opportunities, including expert-led workshops and practical resources to better manage bullying and cyberbullying. Strengthening the knowledge and confidence of trusted adults—both at school and at home—is critical to ensuring consistent and effective responses to incidents. Empowering adults with these tools also encourages more proactive, preventative engagement with children.
- Clarity and consistency in school policies: Respondents also pointed to confusion or inconsistency in how policies and procedures around bullying are communicated and implemented. A whole-of-school model offers an opportunity to strengthen these frameworks by improving communication practices, fostering shared understanding, and embedding a common language around bullying prevention across the entire school community.

Student Feedback

Students participating in the Stand Up for Respect pilot voiced important needs that underscore the value of a comprehensive, whole-of-school strategy.

- Many students expressed a desire for dedicated safe spaces within the school where they could regulate their emotions and report bullying incidents without fear or stigma.
- There was a strong call for expanded playground support to create more inclusive and safe outdoor environments, where proactive supervision and structured activities help reduce bullying risks.
- Students also highlighted the need for interactive, hands-on learning opportunities to build their socio-emotional skills—such as empathy, conflict resolution, and assertive communication—that are crucial for both preventing and responding to bullying.

Meeting these needs requires not only the active involvement of school staff but can be further strengthened through partnerships with external community organisations and wellbeing services. A whole-of-school model offers the structural capacity to integrate these supports into everyday school life—ensuring students have consistent access to the resources, relationships, and strategies they need to feel safe, supported, and respected.

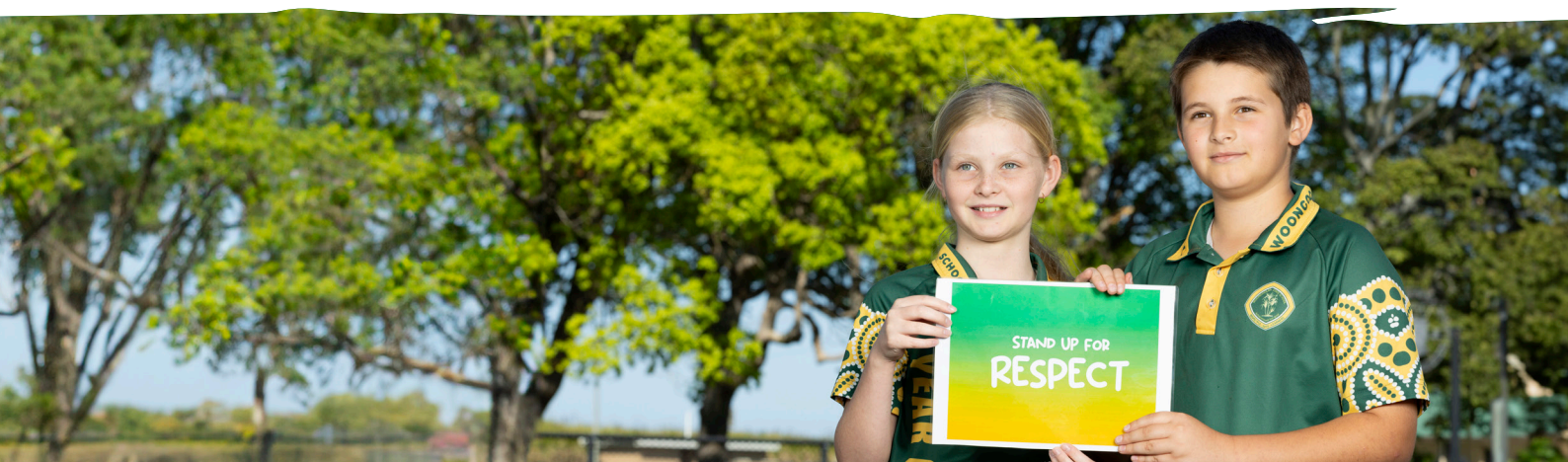
What policies, models or practices (i.e. interventions) do you feel are not working?

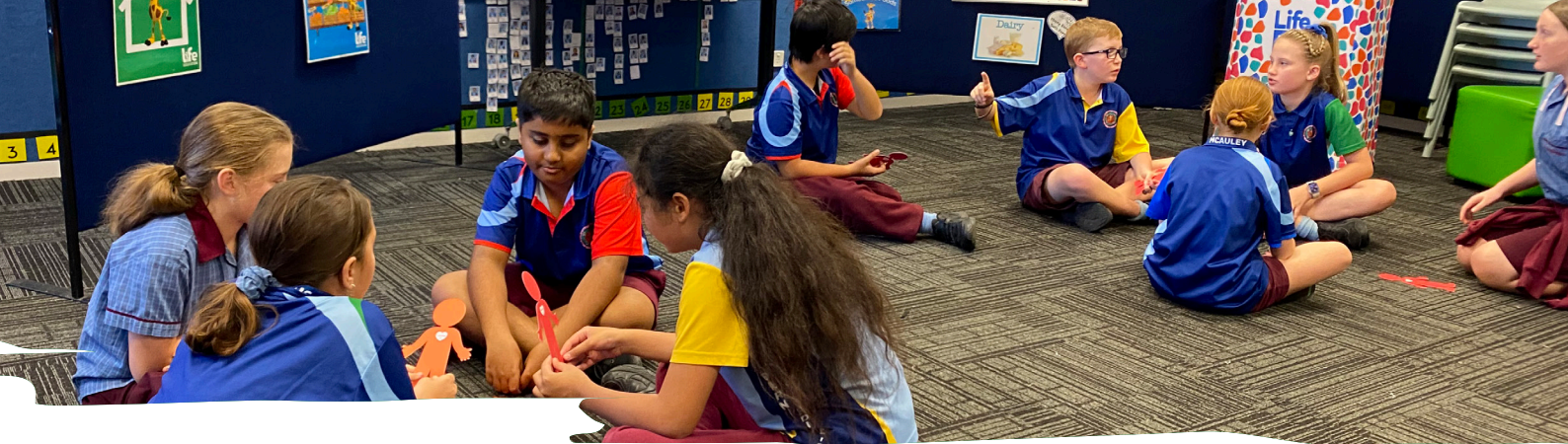
The evaluation of the 2024 Stand Up for Respect pilot highlights a critical insight: classroom-only interventions are insufficient to effectively prevent bullying without the backing of broader systemic support.

While pilot data showed a marked increase in students' confidence to recognise and respond to bullying, schools that relied solely on in-class delivery did not experience a corresponding drop in bullying incidents. In fact, some reported a rise in such behaviour. This suggests that without a unified, school-wide approach, these programs struggle to translate awareness into long-term behavioural change.

Moreover, the pilot identified a decline in student confidence around knowing who to report bullying to and where to go for help. This points to possible gaps in policy communication, or a lack of clarity and consistency in how protocols are implemented across the school community.

These findings reinforce the need for holistic, culture-driven strategies that go beyond the classroom and actively shape the wider school environment.





What resources are available for school staff to support action on bullying? What else would help build capability to support staff to prevent and manage bullying?

Life Ed Queensland is proud to be actively building schools' capacity to prevent and manage bullying through the Stand Up for Respect pilot program. The initiative delivers a suite of practical, curriculum-aligned resources designed to embed a whole-school approach to bullying prevention.

Schools participating in the pilot have access to a range of targeted supports, including:

- Digital bullying prevention resources for primary school teachers (Prep – Year 6), aligned to the Australian Curriculum and Queensland's Respectful Relationships Education. These include ready-to-use lesson plans, presentations, worksheets, and in-class activities.
- Parent and community engagement tools, such as Life Ed Qld-led webinars and downloadable digital resources (including social media content and newsletter templates), to extend respect and anti-bullying messaging beyond the classroom.
- Professional development workshops for staff focused on bullying resolution strategies and capacity-building to strengthen application of school protocols.
- Playground support resources, including high-visibility vests for staff and student leaders, and structured playground activity plans to promote safe and inclusive outdoor spaces.
- Educational school posters that promote shared language and consistent understanding of bullying behaviours and school response strategies.

To ensure long-term success in bullying prevention, the following enablers are essential:

- Ongoing, sustainable funding to support scalable delivery of bullying prevention initiatives that not only equip classrooms, but also help schools strengthen their broader culture of respect and safety.
- Co-designed programs that actively involve staff, students, parents, and local community organisations. Inclusive design ensures initiatives are contextually relevant, resonate with the whole community, and foster a shared sense of ownership.
- Targeted policy development and implementation support, empowering schools to create and embed effective anti-bullying frameworks. This includes facilitated consultation with school stakeholders and clear, consistent communication strategies to ensure policies are understood and actionable by all members of the school community.



What guiding principles or other elements could be helpful in developing a consistent national standard for responding to bullying?

The following guiding principles of the Stand Up for Respect program, informed by the evaluation of the 2024 pilot and early learnings from the 2025 implementation, are intended to support the development of a consistent national standard for responding to bullying:

1. Whole-of-School Engagement

Effective bullying prevention requires the active involvement of the entire school community—students, staff, families, and leadership. Sustainable change occurs when all stakeholders share responsibility and work together to create a culture of respect, safety and inclusion.

2. Prevention Through Early Intervention

Bullying is a key early driver of later violence and mental health issues. Early, targeted interventions are essential to interrupt the cycle of harm, build prosocial behaviours, and reduce the long-term risk of domestic and relational violence.

3. Evidence-Informed Practice

Program design and delivery should be informed by global best practice and current research. Stand Up for Respect draws on proven models (e.g. KiVa, Olweus, Viennese Social Competence Program, Expect Respect) and adapts these to suit the Queensland context.

4. Systemic, Not Isolated

Classroom-only approaches are insufficient. Effective programs address systemic factors across the whole school—policies, playgrounds, peer culture, staff practice, and parent engagement—to shift the school climate and reinforce consistent messaging.

5. Capacity Building for Staff and Families

Prevention is strengthened when school staff and parents are supported with training, resources and clear policy guidance. Building their confidence and capability enables consistent, informed responses and modelling of respectful behaviour.

6. Student Voice and Participation

Programs should centre student experience and ensure young people are co-creators of bullying prevention efforts. This includes creating safe reporting pathways, peer-led initiatives, and responsive supports that reflect student needs.

7. Cultural and Contextual Relevance

Programs must be co-designed with school communities to ensure they are contextually appropriate, inclusive and locally owned. What works in one setting may not translate directly to another—community input ensures relevance and effectiveness.

8. Clear Communication and Shared Language

A shared understanding of what bullying is—and is not—is vital. Schools need accessible language, consistent definitions, and clear protocols that are understood and applied across all stakeholders.

9. Ongoing Monitoring and Evaluation

Continuous improvement is achieved through rigorous evaluation, feedback loops, and adaptation. The effectiveness of interventions must be measured—not only through attitudinal shifts, but through actual reductions in bullying behaviours.

10. Sustainability Through Policy and Resourcing

For bullying prevention to be sustained, it must be embedded in school policy, curriculum, and resourced long-term. This includes funding for delivery at scale, professional development, and policy support aligned with national standards.

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