# STAFF BULLYING IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

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*This article reports the findings of research into staff bullying in the Catholic schools of a large metropolitan area in Australia. A summary of the responses from over two hundred staff members to a survey instrument containing both closed-format and open-ended components is presented. It was found that a large percentage of teachers (97.5%) perceive they are or have been bullied. Specific examples of staff bullying and the adverse effects of bullying upon the targets and employers are included. This article highlights the relevance of the research to the teaching profession and identifies some of the legal and industrial implications of the phenomenon. Protocols and strategies aimed at preventing and responding to claims of bullying are advanced as well as the identification of a need for additional research.*

## I Introduction

At the Australian Council for Educational Leaders Conference in 2003, Duncan and Riley presented a paper that drew upon material detailing workplace bullying and highlighted its relevance in general terms to the education profession. The interest in the presentation led to a second paper at the International Conference for Catholic Educational Leaders in Sydney in 2004. This article attracted similar interest and drew upon selected aspects of the first paper but focused more upon the pending research into the existence or non-existence of staff bullies in Catholic schools. As indicated by Duncan and Riley (2003), there is evidence of workplace bullying, for example, in March 2002, the Premier of Queensland, Peter Beattie, when announcing the recommendations of the Report of the Queensland Government Workplace Bullying Taskforce said, 'They represent the most significant step forward anywhere in Australia in tackling a growing problem that is costing this country an estimated $13 billion a year' (Hay-Mackenzie 2002, p. 115). Other evidence included a 1998 Morgan poll, a 2000 ACTU Occupational Health and Safety survey and a 2001 VicHealth survey all of which revealed the widespread practice of workplace bullying in Australia (Richards and Freeman, 2002). Cases such as *Go Kidz Go v Bourdouane* [EAT 10 September 1996] and *Burton and Rhule v De Vere Hotels* (EAT [1996] IRLR 596) highlight the duty of employers to provide a safe workplace in relation to bullying. In addition to the presence of such bullying, there are also the additional costs of bullying to the organisation. In Victoria, since 1996, almost 1000 teachers and principals in the state have received $34 million in compensation for stress and injury to health caused mostly by excessive workloads, abuse, lack of support and recognition, and having to deal with difficult students [CCH 14-965]. All of these have legal and industrial implications.

Such is the concern about workplace bullying in Australia that, for almost a decade, the Beyond Bullying Association has endeavoured to increase public awareness and response to bullying and its 'destructive abuse of power' in contemporary organisations (Beyond Bullying Association 2003, see also McCarthy et al., 1998 and 2001). As adverse and widespread as

bullying is reported to be, the Beyond Bullying Association (2003) found no Australian research surveying the general population or representative employee groups, and, as a result, there seem to be no reliable statistics related to the Australian workforce. Thus there appears to be no answer to the question, is staff bullying evident in Catholic schools?

## II Definition

One of the difficulties in this area is the lack of clarity about what behaviour constitutes bullying. If it cannot be identified, how can it be prevented? Another difficulty is the lack of clarity in relation to the term itself. Is it 'bullying or harassment?' The term 'bullying' is used in the literature (McCarthy et al. 2001; Richards and Freeman 2002; Salin 2003). The Queensland Government Division of Workplace Health and Safety uses the term 'bullying' in relation to the workplace, where it is seen as a broad term, encompassing discrimination and sexual harassment [CCH 53-760]. Consequently it was decided to use the term 'bullying' in the workplace in this research. As noted in Duncan and Riley (2003, 2004) bullying has many names including mobbing, emotional abuse, harassment, mistreatment and victimisation (Einarsen 1999, p. 16). Bullying has been defined as the 'repeated oppression, psychological or physical, by a more powerful person or group of persons' (Rigby 1996). However, the definition adopted for this research was that used by Salin (2003, p. 10):

> … repeated and persistent negative acts towards one or more individual(s), which involve a persistent power imbalance and create a hostile work environment.

The term 'staff bullying' was used in this research and related to situations where a staff member was either the perpetrator or target of bullying.

These definitions were included in the survey used in the research to clarify the meaning of the term for all respondents—as already noted, bullying can take a variety of forms. While each incident or experience, taken in isolation, may appear trivial and not actionable, the persistence of such incidents over an extended period of time may constitute bullying.

Zapf et al. (1996) suggest five forms of bullying: 'forcing somebody to carry out tasks that make them feel self-conscious, … refusal to be talked to, … criticising a person's private life, … shouting at or cursing loudly at a person, … and spreading rumours' (quoted by Rigby 1996, p. 5). Others (Richards and Freeman 2002, p. 7) see bullying as having two forms: physical and psychological. Essentially, it is the misuse of power; it is a repetitive pattern of behaviour aimed to 'torment, wear down, or frustrate a person, as well as repeated behaviours that ultimately would provoke, frighten, intimidate or bring discomfort to the recipient' (Einarsen 1999, p. 16). It is suggested the perpetrator may be students, colleagues, executives or community members. The targets may be one or more members of these groups.

## III Causes of Bullying

In earlier papers, Duncan and Riley (2003, 2004) reported the assessment of Richards and Freeman (2002, pp. 83-84) who believe bullying is more common 'between staff in schools than it is between students'. This is a damming assessment, particularly when as many as 20 per cent of students in Australian schools are reported to have been bullied (Healey 2001, p. 1). Richards and Freeman identify numerous contemporary pressures that are inherent in teaching that contribute to the existence of bullying between staff members:

> The modern teacher has a complex job that incorporates education, parenting, mentoring, research and social work. Teachers are not only expected to teach, … they are also expected to share responsibility for children's social education …, to handle discipline and behaviour problems, and to take on welfare roles …. Add to that the pressures of inadequate funding, inadequate staff and resources, job insecurity, large class sizes, and ever-expanding curriculum, ongoing skill training, work correction, student reports, parent-teacher interviews and after-school activities, … (Richards and Freeman 2002, p. 4).

These pressures may act as precursors to bullying because of frustration levels, inexperience of executive staff, parental expectations, stress within the work group, an authoritarian approach to resolving differences of opinion and the need to identify scapegoats for failures. An inherent responsibility for school executive and staff members is to ensure these pressures are addressed or their adverse effects minimised. Should such pressures not be resolved, a climate for bullying may eventuate.

Of particular interest to schools was a common finding that 75-80 per cent of bullies are managers. 'Managers, principals and chief executive officers are rarely brought to account. Yet, they are not only responsible for bullying in the ranks – too often they are the bullies' (Richards and Freeman 2002, p. 16). Namie and Namie identified 89 per cent of bullies as bosses, found 94 per cent of respondents to their survey thought the bullies 'get away with it' and that there was little support for targets of bullying within the organisation (2000, pp. 18, 93). Add to this list, the research of Marr and Field (2001) who note that, since 1996, teachers in the United Kingdom have reported being bullied by peers and executive staff, especially head teachers. Blasé and Blasé (2003) presented findings from a study of over fifty teachers in the USA and Canada who had experienced 'long-term principal mistreatment/abuse' (p. 377). These results are supported by this research in that, when ranked by frequency, executives were identified first as bullies, and principals, ranked by both mean and frequency, were third (ranking by mean, parents were first!). It is important to remember that, while bullying is commonly reported to occur from the 'top down,' it does also take place 'horizontally' and from the 'bottom up' in organisations. Thus one may also expect bullying to occur between members of an organisation and clients, customers or members of the public. Hay-Mackenzie (2002, pp. 123-124) provides a number of cases concerning bullying in schools. For example: a New Zealand teacher in 2000 sought $350,000 for personal grievance against the school's board of trustees because of bullying by the English Faculty Head. In 1998 a former deputy principal in Britain won over £100,000 in damages because of bullying by colleagues, while, in May 2000, a British teacher accepted £300,000 in compensation for bullying by a new female head teacher. In a more recent case in November 2003, a British teacher was awarded more than £86,000 due to bullying and harassment by the head teacher (Curtis 2003, p. 1).

These cases reveal the existence of bullying within overseas schools and the financial costs associated with failure to address claims of bullying. They also highlight the costliness for an employer not providing a safe workplace and ensuring that his/her duty of care extends to the employees. A safe workplace includes physical safety, freedom from harassment and discrimination and freedom from bullying. The obligation also extends to keeping employees safe from the acts of non-employees such as parents and students!

However, the fundamental question remains, is staff bullying experienced in Australian schools? There is a dearth of research regarding this phenomenon. Anecdotal evidence suggests that staff bullying does occur. To address the question and test the anecdotal evidence, it was

decided to investigate a Catholic school system which advocates policies and practices that respect the inherent value of the individual.

## IV Research Methods

The research sample consisted of 40 primary schools and 10 secondary schools within one of the regions of a large Catholic education system in a metropolitan area. This represented a population of 1174 primary teachers and support staff and 832 secondary teachers and support staff, giving a total of 2006 overall.

The instrument used in the research was constructed in the light of the literature review, pre-existing instruments and original items. It was also trialled in a pilot survey. The questionnaire consisted mostly of closed-format items to avoid bias and to reduce reluctance to respond. Participants' background demographic data, such as position and gender, school type—primary and secondary—was sought in an effort to establish any relationship between such information, the experience of staff bullying and its relevance for school leadership. The open-ended component aimed at identifying strategies successful in combating bullying. The survey was conducted in both an online format and a paper-based format and, as mentioned, it contained a definition of bullying.

The data collection period was over a given two-week period and steps were taken to ensure that no respondent could respond more than once. The quantitative data gathered from the returns was collated in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and then downloaded into the Statistics Package for the Social Sciences, (SPSS) (Version 11.5) for analysis (SPSS, 2002) and the qualitative data underwent a content analysis.

## V Research Results

The results of the research proved to be very interesting. Firstly, the fact that so many (97.5%) of the respondents had experienced bullying means it is a part of workplace life that cannot be ignored, even though, for most people, it could be considered a relatively infrequent occurrence and for many no issue at all. One out of every two, in the sample of over 200 people, experienced a third of the situations listed in the survey and 9 out of 10 experienced bullying at some time. In this regard it is interesting to consider the suggestion by Richards and Freeman (2002) that the numerous contemporary pressures inherent in teaching may contribute to bullying between staff members. The finding concerning unreasonable expectations/deadlines (Item 2), which was experienced by 87% of respondents, tends to support this suggestion. A pertinent question here is: Does this stem from a culture of high work ethic and work expectations in Catholic schools? If so, it has obvious implications for leaders in providing 'safe workplaces'? Only 2.5% of staff had never experienced bullying and all five suggested forms of bullying identified by Zapf et al. (1996) ('forcing somebody to carry out tasks that make them feel self-conscious (Item 5 - 44%), … refusal to be talked to (Item 22 - 56.06%), … criticising a person's private life (Item 23 - 33%), … shouting at or cursing loudly at a person (Item 13 - 47.76%), … and spreading rumours (Item 21 - 41.29%') were present to a greater or lesser extent.

### A *Personal Confrontation*

The most significant form of bullying experienced by respondents was termed personal confrontation, where respondents' work was the target of negative comments and the highest

ranked item in this area was withholding of praise or recognition. At least a partial explanation for this finding could be that the poorly performing teacher views attempts by the principal or executive staff to improve performance as bullying. If this is the case, this presents a further challenge for executive staff and principals in how they deal with such staff members. An alternative explanation is, the culture in Catholic schools and the teaching profession does not encourage acknowledgement of professional achievement.

The challenge of ensuring a safe workplace seemed to be accentuated in large secondary schools, as staff bullying was found to be more significantly present here than in smaller, especially primary, schools. In such an environment, it is probably easier for the bullying to remain more hidden than in a small school.

One implication of the findings suggests it may be that school leaders need to be more conscious of the needs of 'new' teachers in relation to bullying behaviour, as it was found these teachers, that is those with less than five years experience of teaching, were least affected by bullying, whereas one could have expected these teachers to be targets of bullying by those more experienced. A possible explanation is perhaps that their relative 'newness' means they are naive about what behaviour constitutes bullying. This is supported by quotes in the qualitative data such as: 'some intimidation of younger staff by older staff', indicating it does happen but remains unrecognised. At the other end of the experience spectrum, surprisingly, in view of the fact that bullying is seen as abuse of the power relationship between the bully and the target (Spiers, 1996), it was staff of more than 16 years experience who reported being bullied to a significant extent. However, in one case, in the qualitative data, this was reversed and the more experienced teachers were identified as the bullies.

### B *Workload*

It is suggested that the second most significant form of bullying identified—workload—needs attention and has implications for industrial relations. This related to impossible expectations and deadlines being set; and, performance affected by information being withheld and tasks being set outside job descriptions. This form of bullying presents a particular challenge in relation to provision of a safe workplace, as a number of sources (e.g. NSW Teachers Federation 2004 and Richards and Freeman 2002) suggest the problem of insufficient resources is a fact in education. A hidden cost of workplace bullying could be related to the finding that a significant number of teachers with past executive experience, and a large number of these with less than five years such experience, were found to have experienced workplace bullying. This factor could contribute to teachers' reluctance to apply for the principalship. This is supported by the research of d'Arbon et al. (2002) who found that the most significant scale of perceptions of reasons why people were not applying was 'personal and family impact'. Two of the items in this scale were 'the time pressures were too stressful' and 'the role intrudes too much on personal and family life'. It is quite possible that workplace bullying is part of this scale, especially as it relates to workload.

The presence of these two main forms of bullying (personal confrontation, including withholding praise, and workload) may be considered as manifestation of institutionalised bullying where the culture of the school expects all staff to contribute a disproportionate amount of time to school activities and responsibilities. The NSW Teachers Federation (2004) called such a culture a 'cult of managerialism' and identified four practices in government schools that increase the workload of teachers. The practices were enlarged and intensified work attached to teaching and learning; increased pressure on teachers to perform additional tasks; pressure to perform non-teaching tasks and insufficient resources in schools.

## C *Isolation*

The third major form of bullying identified was that of isolation. This form included excessive teasing and sarcasm, threats, physical isolation and workspace or facilities changed without any consultation. The last mentioned was the highest ranked item of this form and was familiar to one in three respondents.

These three most significant forms of staff bullying (personal confrontation, workload and isolation) support the Victorian findings of 1996, mentioned earlier [CCH 14-965].

## D *Less Significant Forms*

Of less significance (2nd lowest in the survey) was abuse, comprising physical abuse insulting emails, messages and phone calls. Nevertheless it would be hoped it was non-existent in a Catholic school. The same is true for both discrimination and harassment. Again, it would be hoped that this type of bullying was not present at all in a Catholic school, especially in the case of discrimination, as it is also behaviour banned by Australia's anti-discrimination legislation. In relation to bullying in the context of sexual harassment, our results did not reveal that gender was significant. However, the qualitative data did reveal some cases of it, surprisingly in one case, the reverse of what could be expected: 'As an executive member I was constantly bullied by a female principal. I am male'; in another: 'I have been sexually harassed by two male teachers…. discreet touching, accidental bumping, severe leering and inappropriate comments'. Other forms of bullying identified in the research, but not found to be significant, were a form we called work conditions which included behaviour related to excessive supervision and pressure not to claim entitlements.

A further finding, although, again, not significant, was that the health of some respondents had suffered as a result of bullying, reference was made to asthma attacks and staff 'moving on'. In fact, seven people indicated their health was affected constantly or frequently by bullying. The qualitative data provided some details of the consequences of this, for example: 'They had ignored my pleas for help, and had ignored the fact that I was experiencing staffroom bullying. It wasn't until I suffered the asthma attack that something happened—and if things had gone badly, it could have been too late'. Bullying had caused some staff to move to another school, or, in some cases, teachers left the profession or almost left. Other respondents reported feelings of helplessness.

As well as the impact on health, the presence of these forms of bullying suggests there is a cost to employers who do not take steps to keep their employees safe from bullying. A CCH commentary [14-965 Australian & NZ Equal Opportunity Commentary] suggests such costs could include turnover from employee resignations, and decreased productivity due to employee morale, although this is difficult to measure in education and litigation.

## E *The Bullies*

Respondents were asked to rank their perceptions of who were the bullies and who were the targets. Colleagues and students were seen less frequently as bullies, whereas school executives and parents were considered most likely to be bullies, followed closely by principals. In the qualitative data collected, principals were most frequently identified as the bullies. Numerous writers (Marr and Field 2001, Namie and Namie 2000, Richards and Freeman 2002) support the findings in this research that executive staff and principals rank highly as bullies, perhaps indicating a misuse of power as suggested by Einarsen (1999). This has implications for the

provision of a safe workplace. If the bully is the most senior manager on the local site, where does the staff member who is being bullied by the principal go for protection/action? In education, in the case of most schools, there is always even more senior management at the system level and the obligation to provide a safe workplace would come back there. A finding of this research was that, despite the existence, in the system, of detailed procedures, protocols and information about bullying of staff, the data, especially the qualitative data, indicated that many staff were unaware of its existence. Even so, as found in other research, bullying was not confined to management level. King (1996) found the presence of bullying at all levels of the workforce. Perhaps the surprising finding in the identification of the bully was the perception that parents were most often seen as bullies when ranked by mean, suggesting a need to develop some protocols to assist staff in dealing with such parents, as this also is relevant in providing a safe workplace.

## VI Recommendations

Some of the recommendations made as a result of the research included:

- Consideration be given to the establishment of an ombudsman type of position at the system level.
- That the employing authority and schools' executive staff work with parents on appropriate procedures to foster good parent school relationships.
- All school staff be invited to discuss any experience(s) of staff bullying with the employing authority or designated representative/ombudsman.
- Those in leadership positions to reflect on their leadership behaviour in regard to their relationship with their staff and there be awareness raising about the phenomenon of bullying of staff and how it should be handled in induction of staff into any formal leadership position.
- Priority for participation in any awareness raising in-services be given to the most likely perceived bullies (executive staff) and the most likely perceived targets (teachers with sixteen years or more of service).
- In view of the fact that this research does indeed indicate the existence of workplace bullying, a further recommendation is to conduct research aimed at identifying the most effective grievance procedures.

## VII Strategies

The open-ended questions invited respondents to suggest strategies to overcome bullying in the workplace. The suggestions included; establishing more realistic workloads and meeting schedules; ensuring adequate time for principal and teacher consultations; discussion and recording of expectations; clearer definition of exactly what constitutes staff bullying; ensuring concerns of staff bullying are taken seriously; establishing support networks and documenting incidents of staff bullying; executive staff to model appropriate anti-bullying behaviour; recognition of the need to confront the bully; plus generating an appropriate school climate beginning at induction. The need for an explicit set of guidelines for each school, to raise awareness of the forms of bullying, its bullying and effects, was identified.

The above suggestions revealed a lack of awareness of the existence of relevant policies in specific workplaces. However, some literature about workplace protocols and strategies was identified by Duncan and Riley (2004). For example Rafferty (2001) provides information about

the sequence in the development of relevant policy and practice. He suggests, firstly the need to identify the existence of bullying, then a relevant policy should be developed, a contact person appointed and the policy implemented. Rafferty also suggests that, to ensure success, staff need to be provided with professional development, and there should be regular review and evaluation of the policy (2001).

In Sweden, since 1994, employers have been aware of the adverse effect of work-related stress generated by sustained bullying and they recognised that it is imperative that employees' concerns are addressed. Here behaviour such as 'adult bullying, mental violence, social rejection and harassment' in the workplace has been collectively identified as victimisation, and to deal with it, Swedish employers are required to focus on the planning and organisation of work so that victimisation cannot occur. Part of this strategy includes the provision of routines for the early detection of any factors such as unsatisfactory working conditions or problems of work organisation, which could provide a basis for victimisation. If there are signs of victimisation, then counter-measures need to be immediately implemented and management must make it clear that victimisation is unacceptable (Porteous 2002).

Similar to the Swedish thinking, there are several strategies employers may adopt to address workplace bullying. These include implementation of a clear policy on bullying which sets out the disciplinary action which offenders will face. Obviously there must be distribution of the policy to staff through leaflets and posters on notice boards and identification of forms of bullying in the policy. These were steps commonly found in the literature. Further to that, ensure staff know how they can help, be watchful for signs of stress amongst colleagues and it must be communicated to staff that complaints will be dealt with in confidence, taken seriously and dealt with swiftly. To aid in the reduction of workplace bullying, as Hay-Mackenzie suggests, there should be training for aggressive managers in stress and anger management (2002 p. 134).

## VIII Employees

If the phenomenon of staff bullying is to be successfully addressed there is need for a two-way approach. Consequently, the target can also assist in reducing bullying by taking certain measures, which include keeping comprehensive notes of all incidents, particularly details of witnesses or participants. Targets and interested individuals need to check the school's relevant policy, seek avenues of support within the school, seek assistance from the union, report any psychological injury to a medical practitioner, where relevant, submit a WorkCover (or similar) claim, report incidents to the workplace health and safety inspector, check grievance procedures in the employment contract, policy and awards, seek intervention of dispute resolution services and check the potential ramification of any pending action (Rafferty 2001).

Although there is no specific legislated redress for targets of bullying there are a number of possible avenues for those aggrieved. For example, if an employer in Queensland does not conform to the standards laid out in the 'Prevention of Workplace Harassment Advisory Standards' (2004), the target could prosecute under the *Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995 (Qld)* (WHS Act). These Standards, identify, for the employer, a number of ways of preventing the risk of injury or illness in the workplace due to harassment (Queensland Department of Industrial Relations 2004).

## IX The Legal Responsibilities of Employers

Employers' vicarious liability applies where the employee is acting 'within the course of employment'. If an employer can show the bullying was outside the course of employment, then vicarious liability will not apply and the employee will be personally liable (Porteous 2002). In circumstances where the bully is charged with a criminal matter, the bully stands alone unless the target can prove negligence on the part of the employer. What is apparent is recognition of bullying as an organisational issue and the responsibility upon employers to implement a proactive, not reactive, approach to prevention of bullying.

The research findings reinforce the duty upon employers and employing authorities to treat claims of bullying with due care and to strictly adhere to due process. The findings also reveal a need to ensure strong representation for the target. The various Catholic Education authorities have detailed sets of procedures for managing bullying. For example, Sydney Catholic Education Office sets out the steps to be taken to address complaints, both formal and informal, possible courses of action, interview procedures and possible action against the offender (Sydney CEO 2002). Broken Bay Catholic Schools Office is another such employing authority to have a clearly stated policy along similar lines (2005).

The common law imposes general responsibilities upon employers to prevent workplace bullying and provide a safe workplace, especially since bullying can adversely affect work performance while making employees feel insecure and anxious. As a consequence of bullying there may be deterioration of relationships between employees and the employer which contributes to high levels of absenteeism and staff turnover. Such a negative work environment may cause stress related illnesses among employees as well as occupational health and safety problems. The resulting cost for employers for conflict resolution, detrimental publicity and possible litigation are substantial (IEU 2003).

Where employers fail to exercise their responsibility to address workplace bullying they may be liable for any psychological injury and physical injury sustained by the target. Their duty exists:

> in tort, as negligence (failure to provide a safe workplace) and defamation; as an implied term in the employment contract, that the employer would not, without reasonable cause, destroy or seriously damage the relationship of trust and confidence between employer and worker (Rafferty 2001, p. 106).

In addition to criminal prosecution, for example for assault, action is also possible under common law whether for negligence (for not providing a safe workplace), breach of an implied term in a contract of employment or wrongful dismissal. Proceedings are also possible under the various States' occupational health and safety legislation. Human rights and equal opportunity (including sexual harassment and discrimination) legislation also provide another avenue of redress (Rafferty 2001).

What is emerging is an 'increasingly legal and industrial environment' where there will be 'severe consequences' for those engaged in or who permit bullying in the workplace [CCH 14-965]. In *Inspector Gregory Maddaford v Graham Gerard Coleman* [2004] NSWIR Comm 317 it was held there had been a serious breach under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2000* (NSW). The breach involved a workplace initiation. The company was fined $24,000 and, on appeal, the court increased the penalties to $9,000 for one director and $12,000 for another. An employer who adopts an Advisory Standard, Industry Code of Practice or reasonable management action has a defence to prosecution. Other possible direct costs of bullying for a school are intimidating,

considering the bullied teacher's weekly salary, the cost of medical and psychological treatment, the costs of a replacement while they are injured, the loss of experience and the impact on other teachers (such as the fear that if they do something that is regarded as troublesome they too will lose their jobs). Teachers may become defensive adopting a survival mode, resulting in adverse effects upon the quality of teaching and learning in the school (Field 2003).

## X Conclusion

Duncan and Riley (2003, 2004) revealed that there is a dearth of research on staff bullying in Australian schools. Despite anecdotal comments by members of the teaching profession, there is little if any published research related specifically to staff bullying in schools. The Australian education profession appears relatively uninformed about the existence, form and effects of staff bullying. For years the public and the profession focused upon the playground bully, while the staff bully was largely ignored.

One respondent considered the research:

> a very useful exercise and I hope that it helps to raise awareness of the seriousness of bullying amongst so-called "professional adults". If we are to expect our students to behave appropriately then we must model the behaviour at all times and the incentive and model for teachers should come from the Principals.

It is time to widen the focus on bullying to include adults who, for whatever reasons, are bullies in Australian schools. A study of Catholic schools has been completed and revealed that staff bullying in a sample of these schools exists. It is recommended the teaching profession undertake further research into staff bullying. Although employers in education have developed relevant policy statements, it is imperative that strategies be implemented more effectively to prevent staff bullying.

*Keywords*: Staff bullying in Catholic schools; workplace bullying; targets; bullies; employer responsibility.

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