REDUCING AND PREVENTING VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS

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1. **Introduction**

Violence is endemic within Australian society. Since colonisation, violence has been a part of the Australian way of life. Such violence has ranged from brutalisation of convict transportees to the attempted genocide of the indigenous population. These were early forms of what we now know as organisational and institutional violence. But violence can be defined as more than a set of physical exchanges involving floggings or murder. Violence is the abuse of power and as such violence will be found wherever power relationships exist. Thus, in societies where class, inequalities, racism and patriarchy are structural realities, violence becomes part of that reality. Exploitation or bullying in the workplace, the deaths of Aboriginal children through inadequate health care and domestic violence are all examples of violence to be found in the day-to-day realities of the Australian cultural context. Violence may not result directly in personal injury, but may serve to reduce the overall quality of the life of the individual. Equally, fear of violence may impact upon individual or collective well-being.

The notion that school is a context upon which the prevailing culture of violence is projected, is not new. Schools have long been recognised as institutions which are primary sites of violence. Indeed, violence is recognised as a structural feature of schooling. As Slee (1995: 20) states:

> "The pervasive, deleterious impact of authoritarian teachers and school disciplinary structures became an uncharacteristic focus when an Australian magistrate handing down his judgement in a Queensland court.... argued that a student's assault of a younger boy was but a reflection of the indefensible authoritarianism of the school's culture and that the school was culpable in the production of bullies."

Violence can be found potentially in every aspect of schooling. Piecemeal approaches to its amelioration will do no good and usually serve only to locate the causes of this violent behaviour within the individual. An example of this is the suggestion of Tattum and Herbert, "an ethos needs to be developed where violent behaviour is abhorred, exposed and eliminated" (p10). These kinds of suggested solutions have a prima facie appeal however, according to Slee, such an ethos and such piecemeal approaches

> Do not challenge the deleterious affects of patriarchy, class, ethnocentrism and racism in schools which each collude in the idiosyncratic mixes of pedagogy, curriculum and organisation in our schools to produce cultures of violence (p17).

It is essential, therefore, to acknowledge the role of schools and schooling in creating the situational context in which violence can occur, the role of schools and schooling in fostering and perpetuating violence and the role of schools in reproducing the culture of violence to be found in the wider society.

It would be glib to speak of such recent tragedies as Dunblane as simply being extreme manifestations of school violence. Indeed, it may be accidental that this outrage occurred on school grounds. In the annals of criminological history, such events may be more likely classified along with the Port Arthur massacre or indeed, the Balangalo State Forest serial killings. More closely related to school violence perhaps is the recent massacre at Lyttleton,

Colorado where two teenagers ran amok with high-powered rifles killing their classmates and teachers. Here, there may be a clearer link between the frustrations that the Lyttleton protagonists apparently felt at school-frustrations associated with being ostracised, stigmatised and bullied by their classmates and teachers-and violence as a learned response to such frustration. Lyttleton is a powerful example of the apparent cultural acceptance of using violence in one form or another as a problem-solving technique. To what extent was this response learned in the very environment which became the theatre in which the response was finally enacted? It is time to reassess the situation. It is time to examine the antecedents of violence generally and in schools in particular in order to construct preventive strategies that will be effective in reducing or preventing violence in the community, including violence in families.

The purpose of this paper is three-fold. First, to review the extant literature on violence and on violence in schools. Second, to describe the PeaceBuilders®program – a long-term early intervention program which is school-based and community-wide. Third, to report some preliminary outcomes from implementing the PeaceBuilders®program in one near Brisbane community.

1.1. **Violence**

Australian statistics point to some important trends. These include an increase in involvement in juveniles in offences against the person and an increasing involvement of females in all forms of juvenile offending (National crime Prevention, 1999). In addition, suicide has become the third biggest killer of young Australian men. In 1994, 437 people under the age of 25 took their own lives, with six (6) of those under 14 (Youth Studies Australia, 1996). Almost 25,000 children were abused or neglected in Australia in 1993-1994, which represented a twelve (12) percent increase on the previous year (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 1995). Ninety (90) percent of Australian homicides relate to some form of marital conflict (Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education and Training "No Fear" kit, 1995). Up to 5,000 Australian women and children seek shelter from violence in the home each night (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 1995).

In the United States, violence and youth violence in particular, is considered one of the most serious and challenging issues facing contemporary society (Gelles and Loseke, 1993; Valois, McKeown, Garrison and Vincent, 1995). The incidence of interpersonal violence in the United States has reached epidemic proportions (Zins, Travis, Brown and Knighton, 1994). Violent behaviours are a significant cause of injury-related deaths and long term disability. For school age youth, the chances of being a victim of a violent crime are greater than being hurt in a traffic accident (Smith, Mercy and Rosenberg, 1086; Hechinger, 1992) and homicide is the second leading cause of mortality among children and adolescents across all ethnic group in the united States (Zins et al, 1994). Teenagers are victimised by violent crime (rape, robbery and assault at twice the rate of the general population and have the highest victimisation rates for crimes of violence and theft (Valois et al, 1995). Unlike the response to unintentional physical injuries, there are no clear signs that significant progress is being made to combat the problem of interpersonal violence (Commission on Violence and Youth, 1993). Zins et al (1994) believe that fatal and non-fatal interpersonal violence is now a major public health problem, with substantial resources being used to attend to victims and to deal with offenders.

2. Violence In Schools

Violence in schools, as indicated, takes many different forms. Assaults can range from derogatory remarks to criminal assault. A survey of young people in Australia found that between 50 and 60 percent of boys and 40 percent of girls surveyed had homophobic feelings (Youth Studies Australia, 1996). In schools in Western Australia in 1992, boys were suspended for physical assault twenty-five times more often than girls, and boys were suspended four times more often than girls for verbal assault. In schools in Victoria, 83 percent of students suspended were boys. Boys were suspended mostly for physical and verbal abuse, while girls were suspended for smoking (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, education and Training, "Sticks and Stones", 1992). Student suspensions from new South Wales schools increased by 50 percent from 1994 to 1996 (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training, "Truancy and Exclusion from School", 1996). An increase in the occurrence of violent behaviour among very young children was acknowledged by the Australian Capital Territory legislative Assembly (1996):

> "The Committee is concerned that evidence it has received indicates a significant increase in the occurrence of violent behaviour among very young children in primary schools, kindergartens and pre-schools".

The problem of violence in schools, which is part of the overall problem of violence in society, has become one of the most pressing educational issues in the United States. In many school districts, concerns about violence have surpassed concerns about academic achievement, traditionally the most persistent theme on the nation's education agenda, as the highest priority for reform and intervention. Public clamourings over the need to do something about violence in schools brought the issue to a critical juncture. According to Noguera (1995), schools failing to respond decisively to the problem risk endangering popular support for public education.

Two comprehensive national studies of the incidence of school violence have been carried out in the United States: The Violent Schools/Safe Schools Study – VSSS, (National Institute of Education, 1977) and The School Crime Supplement of the National crime Victimisation Survey – SCS, (Bastian and Taylor, 1991). Findings from the VSSS study indicated that over a one month period the level of victimisation experienced by junior high and high school students was cause for concern. Approximately 2.4 million students were the victims of theft and 282,000 students were physically assaulted. Further analysis of these data performed by Gottfredson and Gottfredson (1985) found that personal victimisation of students were self-reported at a disproportionate rate, with males experiencing nearly three times more physical attacks than females. The SCS investigation found that 9 percent of 12 to 19 year old students reported being the victim of at least one crime at school in the six months prior to the survey.

2.1. Bullying in Schools

This specific form of violent victimisation is commonly defined as the repeated physical and/or psychological harm perpetrated by one or more students on another student (Batsche and Knoff, 1994). According to self reports from over 7,500 students in Australia, approximately 20 percent of students aged between 5 and 17 years were bullied at least once a week. Bullying was overall more prevalent in primary than in secondary schools and boys were bullied almost exclusively by boys, while girls were bullied equally by girls and boys (Ribgy, 1995).

In recent years, bullying in schools has also become an issue of public concern in the United Kingdom. Suggestions that indiscipline might be a problem in the nation's schools prompted the government to commission an investigation into the matter [Report of the Committee of Enquiry (1989)]. The resulting report "Discipline in Schools" (referred to as the Elton Report) expressed concern about bullying in schools. Two topics in particular were addressed: the considerable suffering of individual pupils and the effect that bullying had on the school atmosphere. The Elton Report recommended that head-teachers and staff "be alert to signs of bullying and racial harassment; deal firmly with all such behaviour; and take action based on clear rules which are backed by appropriate sanctions and systems to protect and support victims" (p103)

Results of a survey of twenty-four schools in England indicated that, on average, 27 percent of primary age pupils and 10 percent of secondary age pupils have been bullied more than once or twice during the school term prior to the administration of the survey (Ahmad, Whitney and Smith, 1991). Of these, 10 percent and 4 percent respectively, reported being bullied once or several times per week. For these pupils, being bullied was a regular feature of their experiences in school. The problem was apparently worst at younger ages. Name-calling was the most prevalent form of bullying. The range of bullying behaviours mentioned included extortion, physical violence, rumour spreading, exclusion from groups or play, damaging belongings and threatening behaviour. Boys seemed to be involved in physical forms of bullying and bullying involving threats. Girls reported more verbal and socially based bullying. Name-calling, exclusion from the peer group or being the victim of rumour campaigns were common.

The playground was the most common place for bullying to occur, especially in primary schools. In secondary schools this was not so marked, but secondary schools tended to operate an "open school" policy which enabled pupils to spend breaks and lunchtimes in classrooms and corridors. Most bullying occurred in the school grounds rather than during the journey to or from school (Sharp and Smith, 1991).

Bullying victimisation is estimated to affect 10 to 20 percent of the United States student population (Batch and Knoff, 1994). Verbal teasing and intimidation is the most common form of teasing perpetrated by students on their peers (Hazler, Hoover and Oliver, 1991; Hoover, Oliver and Thomson, 1993).

2.2. Gangs, Hate Crimes and Racism

In Australia, racism has been identified as the major cause of violence in school communities. The long-term effects of racism have also been blamed for much of the violence which occurs within indigenous communities. "There is no doubt that the dominant issue confronting indigenous students throughout their school life is racism": (Herbert, 1996, p11).

In the United States, the Los Angeles County office of Education and the Human Relations Commission reported that hate crimes occurred in one third of the county's junior and middle schools (Bodinger-DeUriarte and Sancho, 1992). In a nation sample of high school students, 32 percent cited incidents of racially motivated violence having occurred at their school (Educational Communications, "Who's Who Among American High School Students", 1992). Research conducted by the California Commission on Teacher's Credentially Advisory Panel on School Violence (1993) found that schools were ill prepared to intervene in, much less prevent acts of hate against identified target groups. They attributed this primarily to the absence of a plan by administration, lack of educator cultural awareness and sensitivity, lack of parental cultural awareness in the schools and poor teacher communication skills.

2.3. Emotional and Behaviour Disorders and Chronic Aggressive Behaviour

The challenge of managing discipline in schools is intensified by the growing presence of students identified with emotional and behavioural disorders. According to the Eleventh Annual Report to the US Congress, the school dropout rate for students with behaviour disorders was 42 percent, compared with 26 percent for students with learning disabilities and 21 percent for students with mental retardation (US Department of Education, 1989). Bellamy (1989) stated that within three years of completing school, approximately 50 percent of students with behaviour disorders were either incarcerated or placed on probation. These figures were significantly higher than the corresponding figures for students without disabilities or for students with disabilities other than behavioural.

Disruptive behaviour in school harms both the misbehaving individual and the school community. Students who misbehave also drop out of school, use drugs and alcohol and engage in delinquent behaviour at higher rates than their more conforming peers (Gottfredson, Gottfredson and Hybl, 1993). Later, they tend to make poor occupational and marital adjustments (Robins, 1966; Bachman, Green and Wirtanen, 1971; Wolfgang, Figlio and Sellin, 1972; Jessor and Jessor, 1977). These predictable outcomes reflect a stable pattern of antisocial behaviour for some individuals, but they also suggest that school misconduct may play a part in producing negative outcomes. Suspension (which limits students' opportunities to learn) is a common response to school misconduct. Larson, (1994) identified a link between academic under-achievement and antisocial behaviour.

Children at high risk for later adolescent conduct problems, including aggressive behaviour, can be reliably predicted from early childhood characteristics such as high rates of aggressive responses to social problems (Lochman, Lampron and Rabiner, 1989), hostile attribution biases (Dodge, 1986), a tendency to evaluate aggressive behaviours as having positive outcomes (Dodge and Coie, 1987) and related risk factors such as coercive parenting style within the family Reid and Patterson, 1991). Studies that have followed individual students from pre-school and first grade through adolescence show that teachers' ratings of classroom disturbance, impatience, disrespect and defiance (Kellam and Brown, 1982), ego under-control (inability to defer gratification) and emotionality (being easily irritated and angered) (Block, Block and Keyes, 1988), predict misbehaviour and psychological problems during adolescence. Disorderly behaviour in schools apparently reflects troubling but stable characteristics of certain individuals. There is evidence that excessive aggressiveness in children is an indicator of antisocial behaviour in youth and adulthood (Loeber, 1982; Spivak and Cianci, 1987). Physical fighting in children is an example of an indicator of later antisocial behaviour according to Zins et al (1994). Although it may be looked upon as a normal aspect of growing up, fighting results in hundreds of deaths and non-fatal injuries each year among adolescents (Department of Health and Human Services, 1991).

The stability of aggressive behaviour has been repeatedly demonstrated (Olweus, 1979). This suggests that waiting for the child to outgrow the behaviour is inappropriate. Children who display aggressive behaviour during early and middle childhood, who fail to respond to prevention efforts, frequently present at high school with serious conduct problems. Attempting to provide preventive intervention with these chronically aggressive youth in the secondary school setting can be a daunting task.

Misbehaving students are more likely to be male than female (Kazdin, 1987). Misbehaving youths display less academic competence, have limited career and educational objectives, dislike school, have more delinquent friends and have lower levels of belief in conventional social rules than their more confirming peers (Hirschi, 1969; Gottfredson, 1987). They tend to display poor interpersonal relations and are often rejected by peers because of their aggression and poor social skills (Coie, 1990). They are less likely to defer to adult authority and be polite in their interactions with adults and they are deficient in problem solving skills such as identifying alternative solutions to problems and accepting the perspectives of others (Kazdin, 1987).

Difficulties in peer group interactions in the UK were highlighted by primary school teachers in the Elton Report (Report of the Committee of Enquiry, 1989). Primary school teachers had significantly greater experience of and concerns about physical aggression towards other pupils than did secondary teachers (Imich and Roberts, 1990). Young children in the elementary grades who demonstrated chronic patterns of aggressive behaviour were at serious risk, not only for continued aggression, but for numerous other negative outcomes including delinquency and substance abuse (Lochman, White and Wayland, 1991). According to Lochman (1984) and Dodge (1986), cognitive errors and distortions among aggressive children were seen to contribute to high anger arousal. In particular, aggressive children misperceived the neutral or benign intentions of others as hostile. These attribution errors became self-reinforcing as the child's angry reactions created aggressive counter-responses from peers, resulting in increased aggression and further peer rejection (Lochman, Lampron, Gemmer and Harris, 1986).

3.   Factors Underlying Violence

It is difficult, if not impossible, to find a single or dominant influence in the search for the "cause" of violence. Violence is a complex phenomenon and there are many factors that contribute to its development and perpetuation. The circumstances and background of those who commit acts of violence, for example their socioeconomic status, family life and relationships, together with their school, work and community experiences can be significant. The stratified nature of society and the emergence of ever-widening gaps between those who are economically, technologically or environmentally "rich" and those who are not, can be a powerful catalyst for violence, as can the influence of the mass media and media-based entertainment (The Australian Council of State School Organisations, 1996).

In Australia, risk factors associated with antisocial and criminal behaviour have been listed in the national crime Prevention Report "Pathways to Prevention" (1999). The risk factors have been categorised under the headings: Child Factors; Family Factors; School Context; life Events; and Community and Cultural Factors. Child factors include disability, low self-esteem, poor social skills, alienation and impulsive behaviour. Family factors include teenage mothers, father absence, family violence and disharmony, harsh inconsistent discipline, long-term parental unemployment and low involvement in the child's activities. In the school context, factors include school failure, deviant peer group, bullying, peer rejection and inadequate behaviour management. Life events include divorce and family break up and the death of a family member. Community and cultural factors are socioeconomic disadvantage, population density and housing conditions, neighbourhood violence and crime and social or cultural discrimination are among the risk factors listed.

Several themes dominate the literature on factors contributing to antisocial behaviour including aggression, violence and delinquency in youth. Gottfredson, Gottfredson and Hybl (1993) attribute antisocial behaviour in school to both individual and environmental determinants. They believe that some environmental characteristics raise the probability of disorderly behaviour and some personal characteristics make it more likely that a particular individual will misbehave. This concept is endorsed by Valois, Mckeown, Garrison & Vincent (1995) who link risk behaviours to a constellation of personality, environmental and behavioural attributes. Salts, Lindholm, Goddard & Duncan (1995) indicate that delinquent behaviour is associated with personal characteristics of the individual and of the family, peer, school, and neighbourhood systems in which the individual is a member. Of the themes discussed in the literature, the family is consistently presented as having the greatest influence on the development of antisocial and criminal behaviour in children.

3.1. Family Influences

Parents and families are a significant influence on their children's attitudes. In Australia, The National Committee on Violence (Australian Institute of Criminology, 1990) published a report entitled "Violence: Directions for Australia". The report notes that the influences of the family are paramount in determining whether or not an individual becomes violent in their behaviour:

> Families constitute the training ground for aggression. It is within the family that aggressive behaviours are first learned; to the extent that families fail to instill non-violent values in their children, those children will be more likely to develop a repertoire of violent behaviours as they negotiate life in society at large. (Australian Institute of Criminology, 1990, pxxiv).

Family size, structure and relationships, as well as socio-economic status as measured by neighbourhood poverty and community arrest rates, have been correlated with delinquent behaviour (Wolfgang, Figlio & Sellin, 1972; Kapsis, 1978; Zins, et al., 1994). Kreft and Soriano (1993) found that factors such as unemployment and poor access to economic resources, and a high incidence of alcohol and drug abuse were major risk factors for multi-generation allegiance to gangs. School related factors such as low expectations by parents and teachers, and little positive parent involvement with the child's school were also typical in gang-involvement, antisocial and delinquent behaviour. Kreft & Soriano (1993) interviewed school counsellors in the U.S. over a three-year time span and identified several major risk conditions for involvement in gangs. Family influences such as high levels of family stress and conflict, bicultural family stress (differential rates of assimilation for children and adults), punitive discipline practices including corporal punishment, and a high incidence of domestic violence rated highly. These risk factors closely resemble those identified as precursors to aggression, violence and antisocial behaviour in youth.

Zins et al., (1994) consider that there are a myriad of factors potentially associated with violence and aggression including child maltreatment and poor parental child-rearing practices. Additional factors that have been hypothesised as associated with an increased likelihood of young people engaging in delinquent and antisocial behaviours include the following: experiencing harsh and inconsistent parental discipline; inadequate parental supervision; marital discord and lack of family cohesion; parental rejection; and witnessing violent acts (Jessor & Jessor, 1977; Leitenberg, 1987; Elliot, Huizinga & Menard, 1989; Hawkins, Catalano & Miller, 1992). Among African-American and Caucasian families, low levels of affection and high levels of family conflict are associated with delinquent behaviour

(Doane, 1978; Gove & Crutchfield, 1982; Tolan & Lorian, 1988; Henggeler, 1989). Delinquent behaviour also appears to be more prevalent in homes where the mother is the sole parent (Canter, 1982; Gove & Crutchfield, 1982; Dornbusch, Carlsmith, Bushwall, Ritter, Leiderman, Hastorf & Gross, 1985; Steinberg, 1987).

From a social interactive perspective, delinquent behaviour is thought of as the outcome of an extended process characterised by two general stages (Patterson, 1982). The first stage usually begins during preadolescence and the catalyst is a breakdown in family management procedures. This disruption produces both an increase in antisocial child behaviour and an impairment in the child's development of social and academic skills. When the preadolescent child is exposed to this process, they are placed at risk for rejection by non-delinquent peers and eventual academic failure. In the second stage, during adolescence, continued disruptions in the parents' monitoring practices and poor social skills place them further at risk for contact with a deviant peer group. The association with deviant peers, poor monitoring by parents and academic failure during adolescence all contribute to the likelihood that the young person will engage in high rates of delinquent activities (Patterson & Dishion, 1985).

Patterson and his colleagues (Patterson, 1982; Patterson, DeBarsyshe & Ramsey, 1989; Reid & Patterson, 1991) expanded Bandura's (1977) conceptualisation of aggression into a social-interaction model referred to as the "coercive family process" (Reid & Patterson, 1991, p719). In this conceptualisation the child is "trained" to be aggressive through early coercive familial interaction patterns. Patterson hypothesised that aggression is initially developed and subsequently maintained through the daily interaction of children, their parents and their siblings. As the child grows, the manner in which parents ineptly manage their child's aversive behaviour becomes increasingly coercive, ineffective and non-contingent. Parents model and children learn coercive behaviours to escape negative stimuli. As the child's aggressive, non-compliant behaviours increase in strength, so do the parents' ineffective and increasingly aversive attempts to control the non-compliant behaviour. The family social system becomes chronically negative. Bi-directional interaction, characterised by high rates of harsh, inconsistent discipline, poor supervision and negative parental modelling becomes the norm. A "coercive rut" (Reid & Patterson, 1991, p719) is established between parent and child, preventing positive socialisation. In this manner, the child entering school has been trained to be aggressive.

3.2.   **Individual Personal Characteristics**

Individual personal characteristics such as low self-esteem, poor communication skills and a pervasive sense of hopelessness and cynicism have been linked with delinquent behaviour (Kreft & Soriano, 1993; Salts, Lindholm, Goddard & Duncan, 1995). Some researchers propose that low self-esteem is a key determinant of delinquent behaviour (Gold, 1978; Kaplan, 1980). Although comparison studies examining self-esteem find that delinquents have lower self-esteem than non-delinquents, Wells & Rankin (1983) concluded that self-esteem alone is not an accurate predictor of delinquency. When other covariates such as family relations and school performance are considered, a more accurate predictive pattern is established. Poor social skills, characterised by aversive or coercive interaction styles, lead directly to rejection by non-delinquent peers (Hartup, 1978). Polk (1975) found a reasonably consistent correlation between academic failure and antisocial behaviour. He reported that, in the context of a random sample of 309 high school students, 54 percent of those students with low academic grades had a court record of a previous arrest, whereas only 23 percent of those students with high grades had evidence of police contact. Polk (1975) did not discuss whether the antisocial behaviour was the precursor to academic failure or vice versa.

A link between academic skill deficits and antisocial behaviour problems was found in children as young as elementary school age in a study conducted on the Isle of Wight (Rutter, Tizzard & Whitmore, 1970). The lack of skill in relating to non-delinquent peers was thought to contribute directly to the drift into commitment to a deviant peer group. There was some indication that academic failure contributed directly to delinquent behaviour, however the literature on the link between academic ability and delinquency is inconsistent. Some authors attribute the delinquency to lack of academic ability (Rutter, et al., 1970), while others view the delinquency as the precursor to class withdrawal, suspension or exclusion from school and ultimately, academic failure (Larson, 1994).

3.3.   **School Influences**

Gottfredson, Gottfredson & Hybl, (1993) add another potential contributing factor to the list. They suggest that classroom organisation and management practices influence the behaviour of students. Disorderly behaviour occurs more frequently in the absence of clearly defined classroom activities that constrain and structure student behaviour (Doyle, 1986). Evertson and Emmer (1982) highlighted the importance of teachers' organisational practices in maintaining order. Their observations of effective and ineffective classroom teachers revealed differences in the clarity of communication, the styles of monitoring and responding to student behaviour, the extent of student responsibility and accountability for work and the methods of organising instruction.

According to Gottfredson & Gottfredson, (1985) disorderly schools tend to be characterised by: teachers with punitive attitudes; rules that are loosely enforced and perceived as unfair and unclear; ambiguous responses to student misbehaviour; disagreement among teachers and administrators about the rules and appropriate responses to misbehaviour; students with low levels of belief in conventional social rules; and a lack of resources needed for effective teaching. School orderliness, according to Duke (1989), is related to the presence of: a clear focus on appropriate student behaviour; extensive communication about the rules, sanctions and procedures to be used; formal discipline codes; classroom management plans; and expressed concern for students as individuals.

In an earlier study, Emrich (1978) suggested that crime and violence in schools may actually produce crime and violence in the communities in which schools are located. "The problem of school violence demands that the community, the school administration, the Principal, the teachers and the students recognise that their actions create the climate in the schools and do more than anything else to affect the level of crime" (Emrich, 1978, p273).

4.   **Potential Solutions To Violence**

Traditional approaches to managing problem behaviour are often reactive, if not punitive (Mortimore & Sammons, 1987; Cotton, 1990; Jones, 1993). When schools confront social behaviour problems, the general management response is a reactive one that is ineffective for many students with severe or chronic behaviour problems. These students are temporarily removed from the general education environment and many of them eventually drop out of school. Perhaps the most profound and undisputed assumption in managing behaviour problems in general, is that punishment will change behaviour. To manage behaviour, school discipline plans typically rely on reprimand, penalty, loss of privilege, detention, suspension, corporal punishment and expulsion. It is assumed that students who experience these reactive

consequences will learn the "right" way of behaving and be motivated sufficiently to comply with the expectations of the school. Although many students learn to follow school rules to avoid punishment, students with behaviour disorders do not escape the reactive management cycle (Colvin, Kameenui & Sugai, 1993).

Attempting to implement simplistic or quick fix approaches to the problem of violence is unlikely to be successful, particularly in the long-term. Addressing the patterns and causal links may yield more positive results. Being aware of the indicators of potential violence in the school, home or community setting, and acting on these indicators may have the potential for reducing violence in these settings (Australian Council of State School Organisations, 1996).

In Australia, protective factors associated with antisocial and criminal behaviour are listed in the National Crime Prevention Report "Pathways to Prevention" (1999). The protective factors have been categorised under the following headings: Child Factors; Family Factors; School Context; Life Events and Community and Cultural Factors. Child factors include social skills and competence, attachment to family, empathy, problem solving, optimism, school achievement and good coping style. Family factors include, supportive caring parents, family harmony, small family size and a secure and stable family. In the school context, a positive school climate, a pro-social peer group, opportunities for some success and recognition of achievement, school norms concerning violence and a sense of belonging are considered protective. Life events and community and cultural factors that can be protective are those which involve commitment to and participation in community identity and cultural norms (National Crime Prevention, 1999). It would seem to follow then that solutions to the problem of violence, particularly violence in schools, could be achieved by focussing on those protective factors which can be developed in the individual, the family and the school.

4.1.   **School as a Locus of Intervention**

The school is a logical setting for implementation of interventions designed to reduce the problem of violence. Schools have several advantages as settings in which to base preventive efforts. They provide access to virtually all children on a consistent basis over most of a child's formative years, and most parents and guardians can be accessed through them. In addition, schools have readily available physical resources (classrooms, recreation facilities) useful in these preventive efforts. Professional staff are available to implement interventions and ancillary staff can provide support in the implementation of programs designed to reduce violence.

The National Health Strategy (Australia) identified schools as excellent places in which to promote better health (Department of Health, Housing and Community Services, 1993). However, the commonly held belief that schools can change behaviour simply by informing students of the dangers associated with particular behaviours is being eroded by poor long term results from several school-based programs (Flay, Koepke & Thomas, 1989; Kischuk, O'Loughlin & Paradis, 1990). Information alone is not enough as many influences on children's lives contribute to how children behave. Prevention of adolescent violence calls for creative approaches in school and community settings and requires long-term intervention strategies, focussed on adolescent behaviour change and environmental modifications (Valois, Mckeown, Garrison & Vincent, 1995).

4.2.　The School Environment

According to Gottfredson, Gottfredson and Hybl, (1993) research results imply that misbehaviour in schools has determinants at three levels. Some individuals are more likely than others to misbehave, some teachers are more likely than others to produce higher levels of misconduct in their classrooms by their management and organisation practices, and some schools, more often than others, fail to control student behaviour. Behaviour change programs that reduce risk for misbehaviour at all three of these levels are the most likely to be effective. Heller, (1996) discusses the characteristics of well-disciplined schools. He believes that the administrators of disciplined schools realise that appropriate school discipline must be a part of every program, curriculum and practice. The entire school organisation must be designed to support and encourage student responsibility and address those issues and behaviours that are not conducive to instructional and academic success (Heller, 1996).

Zins, et al. (1994) suggest that schools are meant to provide a safe, caring environment in which children can learn. They challenge schools to take a leadership role in addressing the problem of violence with their communities. "Present efforts in dealing with youth interpersonal violence are not commensurate with the epidemic proportions of the problem and demand more effort on the part of schools and communities" (p13). Stephens (1994) believes that as young people are required by law to attend school, they must be provided with an environment that is safe, secure and peaceful.

A learning setting which fosters order and high expectations for student behaviour sets the foundation for a safe school according to Prothrow-Stith, (1995). A safe environment frees students to focus on academic achievement and performance. Prothrow-Stith (1995) suggests that the most logical violence prevention strategy for schools is one which promotes the improvement of academic achievement of students. Students with superior language skills and analytic abilities are less likely to use force to achieve their goals. The Principal of a safe school values staff, student and community partnerships, and provides the school community with opportunities to help fashion solutions to various school problems. This cooperative environment is readily discernible in the unusual amounts of time and energy that staff and community members expend in demonstrating their belief in what students can accomplish (Prothrow-Stith, 1995).

Noguera (1995) believes that schools should be humanized to reduce the potential for violence. Improving the aesthetic character of schools by including art in the design of a school, or by making space available for students to create gardens or greenhouses, makes the school more pleasant and attractive. Overcoming the divide that separates urban schools from the communities in which they are located increases the number of adults who have authority and respect in the eyes of the children. Adults, who live within the community, can be encouraged to volunteer or, if possible, be paid to tutor, teach, mentor, coach, perform, or help with a variety of school activities. While such efforts may not eliminate the threat of random violence, they can help to make schools less impersonal, safer, and better able to provide students with a sense of security and stability in their lives.

Increasing numbers of schools (particularly in America and Britain) are resorting to physical security measures in response to the threat of violence. However, students report similar levels of violent crime in schools with and without such measures, and the students associate security measures with greater fear of an attack (Bastian and Taylor, 1991). In the U.S. state of California, laws were passed during the 1994 legislative session that: allow public school

districts to adopt dress codes to combat gang influences (Senate Bill 1269, 1994); allocate $1 million for the procurement of metal detectors to be used in schools (Assembly Bill 777, 1994); make it a felony to carry a firearm within 1000 yards of a school (Assembly Bill 645, 1994); permit public schools to expel students who harass, threaten, or intimidate other students thereby contributing to a hostile school environment (Assembly Bill 2752, 1994); and empower school boards to create volunteer police reserve corps to supplement salaried school police (Senate Bill 281, 1994), (Furling, Chung, Bates & Morrison, 1995).

Increased security measures in American schools may have been prompted by the threat of litigation resulting from violent incidents in schools. The failure to provide staff training, crisis planning, crime prevention through environmental design, effective communication systems, or enhanced student supervision can leave a school and its staff in a precarious situation. Stephens (1994) believes that schools will be required by law to develop safety plans. He describes a school safety plan as "a continuing, broad-based, comprehensive and systematic process to create and maintain a safe, secure, and welcoming school climate, free of drugs, violence, and fear" (p205).

Schools that are true communities of learning ward off violent, aggressive behaviour even in the middle of communities full of crime and ugliness. Academic success leads to resiliency that enables a youngster from destructive surroundings to break through to positive adult experiences. In virtually every discussion of resilient children, "the importance of structure and control – the need for order and predictability in a safe, disciplined, but not rigid environment" is underscored (Garbarino, Dubrow, Kostolny & Pardo, 1992, p157).

4.3. Social Skills Training in Schools

The distinction between social skills training (communication skills, problem solving, conflict resolution) and violence prevention is blurred according to Larson (1994). He believes that much of what goes on in the regular pursuit of quality educational opportunities for all children could have the secondary effect of preventing school violence. In Britain, the Report of the Committee of Enquiry, "Discipline in Schools" (1989) recommended that schools provide personal and social education programs for all pupils. Evidence suggests that wider teacher expertise in social skills training at primary school level would be valuable (Imich & Roberts, 1990). The interpersonal relationships that children establish with teachers and peers in school play a role in the acquisition of fundamental social attitudes, beliefs and values. This in turn influences the child's understanding of society and their place in it (Dreeben, 1968). The social environment of the school is a microcosm of the larger social system in which it is embedded. Given that early school experiences can have important implications for later social development and functioning, it is understandable that promoting the positive social development of students is an important goal for many elementary school teachers (Prawat, 1985). Research literature indicates that intervention efforts are more successful with children between the ages of four and ten than with older subjects, but there are gender differences in susceptibility to change. Girls typically change their behaviour more than boys do (Raskin & Israel, 1981; Serbin, Connor & Citron, 1981; Ashton, 1983; Kourilsky & Campbell, 1984).

Even with a concentrated effort in social skills training it is unlikely that conflicts will disappear from schools. Conflicts fascinate and draw children. Students start them, watch them, hear about them and discuss them. In order to make schools orderly, peaceful places in which high quality education can take place, conflicts must be managed constructively without physical or verbal violence (Johnson & Johnson, 1996). Educators readily accept that

learners must start at their level of ability in Mathematics or English to move forward. Similarly, educators should not ignore the developmental differences in students in their ability to manage interpersonal relationships and exercise self-control. By the time students reach the secondary school level, negative patterns of communication and interaction with others develops from acting out or sullen withdrawal, to lashing out and retaliation. Before school administrators can address the issue of school violence, they must realise that in some cases they will be dealing with student and family problems that are beyond their ability to control or manage. Schools will never be able to eliminate all acts of student violence, and any other belief is unrealistic. The goal of today's schools must be to develop strategies and provide resources that will reduce acts of student violence, in both number and intensity (Heller, 1996).

Tabachnick (1990) proposes that "peace" should be studied in elementary schools. "A world at peace is not, and can not be, a world without disagreement and conflict. Resolving in a peaceful way, conflicts that occur between nations, between interest groups and between individuals, is a key part of living in the "Peaceable Kingdom". It is also possibly the most important part of peace education aimed at elementary age children" (p169).

4.4.   **Behaviour Modification Packages and Programs for use in Schools**

An extensive range of resource materials has been produced in many countries in recent years. These have been designed with a view to creating safe and supportive learning environments through curriculum, teaching and structural reform. In Australia, resources developed in the last five years include social skills training materials and courses to encourage positive relationships and manage student behaviour. Interventions designed to reduce child and adolescent stress, violence (including domestic and gender violence), harassment (including sexual harassment), racism and bullying have also been developed (Australian Council of State School Organisations, 1996).

Anti-bullying campaigns have been developed and implemented to counteract the problem of bullying in schools. In Norway, a nationwide anti-bullying campaign was launched in 1985. Evaluation results suggest that the interventions used in the campaign have reduced bullying by 50 percent (Olweus, 1989). The campaign involved surveys to establish the extent of the problem, information packages on bullying for teachers and parents, and a video on bullying to stimulate classroom discussion. A similar campaign based on the Norwegian model was developed in England. The DES Sheffield Bullying Project involving 23 schools was a pilot project designed to look in detail at the effects of different bullying interventions (Sharp & Smith, 1991). The findings, to be made available for educational authorities on a national basis, were unavailable at the time of writing.

In Australia, Education Queensland launched and distributed a bullying package to all state schools in 1998. The kit entitled "Bullying – No Way!" is a professional development resource for school communities. It aims to increase levels of awareness and understanding about how to identify, deal with and minimise bullying in school environments. A video and book provide source material for examining the issue of bullying and identifying approaches for achieving positive change ("Bullying Package", Education Views, 1999). Early responses to the package have been favourable, with the package described as "...a well developed resource for addressing the problem of bullying and harassment" (Rigby, 1999 p18). It is important to remain mindful, however, of the entreaty by Slee (1995:22) that "adding anti-violence to the school curriculum is not an adequate response to the pervasive problem of violence".

Chard, Smith & Sugai (1992) found many unique and promising features in packaged discipline programs such as "Assertive Discipline" (Canter, 1976), "Positive Discipline" (Clarizio, 1981) and "Specific Problem Solving Approaches" (Dreikurs, Grunwald & Pepper, 1982). The major limitation of packaged discipline programs was, according to Chard, Smith & Sugai (1992), a lack of clear procedural implementation guidelines. Many programs recommended the use of school-wide awards to acknowledge demonstrations of appropriate behaviour and to establish a positive school climate. However, detailed information on critical variables such as how to establish criteria, features of the awards, format for presentations, dissemination procedures, and particularly how to obtain consistency of implementation among staff, were clearly lacking. Similarly, Cotton (1990) conducted a synthesis of findings from research studies on effective classroom and school-wide disciplinary practices. Many effective and independent practices were identified, but a comprehensive model designed to address the discipline needs of all students in a school was lacking. Such a model needs to be empirically based and built on the systematic organisation of effective practices, supported with clear procedural guidelines (Cotton, 1990).

According to Cotton (1990), features of a proactive school-wide discipline model are: a consistent, if not consensual, approach to managing problem behaviours; the viewing of school discipline as an instrument for student success; the management of problem behaviours with positive, preventive strategies; a significant trend in managing behaviour at the school level; and the active involvement and support of the school leadership An important feature is the application of effective staff development practices and teacher change strategies (Cotton, 1990). This requirement seems logical given that teachers would be heavily involved in the implementation of school-based discipline packages.

Traditional staff-development practices in the form of workshops and consulting services generally do not bring about significant changes in teacher behaviour. Two variables that have been identified as critical in bringing about teacher change are: teacher efficacy (the beliefs teachers have about their ability to bring about student changes); and collegiality (the process by which staff work effectively together) (Peterson-Miller, Harris & Watanabe, 1991). Guskey (1986) hypothesised that the majority of staff development programs fail to consider two factors: "what motivates teachers to engage in staff development; and the process by which changes in teachers typically takes place" (p6). Guskey (1986) proposed three principles which should be considered when planning and implementing staff development programs: change is a slow, difficult, and gradual process for teachers; teachers need to receive regular feedback on student learning outcomes; and continued support and follow-up are necessary after the initial training (p59). Colvin, Kameenui & Sugai, (1993) have identified four important considerations, if not challenges, associated with implementing a school-wide discipline plan that employs an instructional approach to management: administrative support; staff commitment; management of staff who do not participate; and maintaining momentum.

Webster (1993) reviewed evaluations of three popular violence prevention curriculums that are widely used in America: Violence Prevention Curriculum for Adolescents, Washington (D.C.); Community Violence Prevention Program; and Positive Adolescent Choices Training. He found no evidence that such programs produce long-term changes in violent behaviour or risk of victimisation. Wilson-Brewer, Cohen, O'Donnell & Goodman, (1991) conducted a survey of fifty one violence prevention programs and found that less than half even claimed to have reduced levels of violence and few had any data to back up their claims. Given that there is very little evidence that the violence prevention programs worked, the question needs to be asked, "Why didn't they work?" Possible reasons cited by Johnson & Johnson (1996) were:

many of the programs were poorly targeted; many programs focused on developing materials without focusing on implementation; proponents of programs confused schools and neighbourhoods as settings in which they wished to reduce violence; and many programs were unrealistic about the strength of the social forces that impelled children toward violence (Johnson & Johnson, 1996).

5 Peacebuilders®: An Early Prevention Strategy

Previous sections of this paper outlined how schools are major social institutions within which more widespread cultures of violence are reproduced. The paper has also described how conventional wisdom now recognises that there are both risk factors and resiliency factors which are associated with a higher likelihood that children will develop dysfunctional interpersonal coping strategies. These dysfunctional coping strategies are the precursors of antisocial and violent behaviour in the later years (National crime Prevention, 1999). Schools can provide an important locus for the introduction of long term crime and violence reduction strategies and have several advantages as settings in which to base preventative efforts. Successful school based prevention programs need to acknowledge the influence of these risk factors and provide conditions under which protective factors may be learned and rehearsed. In addition, successful long-term preventative programs illustrate the importance of being community-based. They also illustrate the importance of sustained effort over time and the necessity to involve parents and the community as well as children, teachers and other school staff (see for example, Olds, et al, 1988; Patterson, et al 1992; Farrington, 1991; Olweus, 1993).

Thus, it is important to recognise that any given school is reflective of the community in which it is located; that the school can only operate successfully with the support of the local community; that the school climate is critical to the successful operation of the school; that the principle and staff are key players, but can only be as effective as the relationships with children and their families will allow; and that whilst effective change to culture and/or attitudes will only occur over a long period of time, the school as a vehicle is a critical means of effecting change. The influence of the local community will be central to change. Without support from, active involvement by and determination on the part of the local community, strategies for prevention will founder. It is only when the dynamics of change are working simultaneously across all levels of the local community that preventive strategies will take effect (Martens, 1994).

The authors have designed a long-term crime and violence reduction strategy which acknowledges the prevention design constraints outlined in the paper and based upon the PeaceBuilders® program.

The PeaceBuilders® prevention strategy begins by recognising the importance of cognitive, social and imitative markers of children developmentally at risk for later violent behaviour, as developed by Embry, et al (1995), (see Table 1). By concentrating on these markers, the program can provide a targeted prevention program which has immediate and short term as well as longer term effects. By acknowledging cognitive, social and imitative markers, the program can change how children perceive, think about and act upon their physical and interpersonal environment. From this platform, PeaceBuilders7 provides a framework of prevention, self-efficacy and resiliency strategies (see Table 2). The program identifies risk factors which have been shown to be precursors to antisocial behaviours and encourages the

development of positive, protective factors within the individual, the school and the community. Having done this, specific strategies are put in place (see Table 3). Their aim is to build resiliency or coping skills in all personnel involved in the organisational setting. In the school context, for example, the program involves all members of the school community – staff, students, support staff, community members – in developing resiliency skills.

The program effectively is build upon four simple messages. These are:

1. *Give Up Put Downs*
2. *Praise People*
3. *Seek Wise People*
4. *Notice Hurts and Right Wrongs*

Table 1: Cognitive, social and imitative markers of children developmentally at risk for violent behaviour in adolescence (Embry et al, 1995)

Cognitive	Social	Imitative
• To be suspicious and hostile • Have difficulty reading non-verbal intention of others • Have difficulty reading or interpreting the emotional impact of their behaviour • Are both wary of rewards and more sensitive to immediate rewards, especially individual rewards • Less sensitive to operant punishment and classical conditioning for aversion • Have poor ability to narrate their own behaviour in the past, present and future • To be impulsive (inability to regulate or inhibit behaviour) • Show illogical thinking • Have difficulty with the spoken and written work • Show forms of cognitive distortion – black/white thinking, rigidity, over-generalisation, catastrophic predictions, ruminations	Insult peers, siblings and adults, which then triggers acts of aggression by the target Use ineffective "bids" to join play activities by other children, which typically results in rejection by peers Disrupt classroom activities, which increases the probability of teacher attention to negative behaviour Commit acts of physical aggression (hitting, kicking, biting, hair pulling, etc) against peers on the playground, the lunchroom and classroom as well as at home against siblings Commit acts of physical aggression against adults at home and school which typically elicits both verbal and physical acts of aggression back Engage in acts of vandalism and retribution	Less likely and able to imitate socially competent models Likely to imitate actions that produce immediate rather than delayed rewards (acceptance in popular group) More likely to experience implicit (Vicarious) extinction of behaviour (a situation in which the observer sees other reinforced but seldom experiences reinforcement directly), which tends to decrease pro-social behaviour in the future Require high similarity between model and self to stimulate imitation Be disinhibited by negative modelling in so-called "moral stories" Lack comprehension of instrumental behaviours in symbolic models Consume larger "diets" of symbolic models with aggressive content

Table 2: Peace Builders Prevention Matrix (Embry et al, 1995)

Competence	Prevention, Self-Efficacy & Resiliency Strategies		
	Antecedents	**Behaviours**	**Consequences**
Cognitive Read cues accurately, develop sense of hope, few distortions, predict actions, more metaphorical complexity	Prompts or signs that reduce cognitive distortions Alterations in the design of classroom materials that directly improve verbal reasoning	Self-monitoring Peer monitoring Answering a pattern of questions to untangle cognitive errors. Answering questions to foster long-term goal setting and monitoring Reduce negative attributions More accurate reading of emotions in others as consequence of own act or others= acts.	Praise from adults Group rewards Charting & graphic feedback Reduction in verbal and physical negatives from peers and adults

Table 3: Risk & Protective Factors Addressed by PeaceBuilders® (Embry et al, 1995)

Risk Factor	Protective Factor
Community norms favourable toward drug use, firearms and crime	Positive norms promoted by live and symbolic models: rewards provided for PeaceBuilding
Media modelling of violence	Models of PeaceBuilding in story/print as well as TV
Transition and mobility	Intervention across schools, district or city
Low neighbourhood attachment	Rewards and recognition for PeaceBuilding in the neighbourhood
Family management problems	Practical tools for common family management problems
Family conflict	Practical tools for children, parents and teachers to use to prevent conflict before it happens
Favourable parental attitudes and involvement in the risk behaviour	Models for and reinforcement of parents for PeaceBuilding
Early, persistent antisocial behaviour	Techniques for teacher, children, peers, staff and families to increase prosocial behaviour and decrease antisocial behaviour
Academic failure in elementary school	Common tools for teachers, staff, children and parents to increase chances of academic success
lack of commitment to school	Frequent models and rewards for commitment to school
Alienation and rebelliousness	Coaching and rewards for altruism and cooperation
Friends who engage in problem behaviour	Peer pressure to engage in positive behaviour; reduced victimisation by peers
Favourable attitude toward the problem behaviour	High saturation of cues for positive attitude & prosocial behaviour
Hostile school climate	Reinforcing, low-hostility, school climate
Early initiation of the problem	Foster early initiation of prosocial behaviours and skills
Constitutional factors	Tools for teachers, staff, children and families to ease the symptoms of attention deficit, hyperactivity, post-traumatic stress, depression and anxiety

Table 4: Nine Core Strategies of PeaceBuilders® (Embry et al, 1995)

Strategy	References	Rationale	Where Used
Common, structured language	Fritz, 1989; Burns, 1989; Nippold, 1985; Embry, 1980	Maps success; provides social marketing position; reduces cognitive distortions & peer rejection	In all materials
Symbolic (story) and live models	Kazdin, 1989; Guiseppe et al, 1985; Scheub, 1987; Stein & Goldman, 1979; Jakibchuk & Smeriglio, 1976; Embry, 1980	New behaviours acquired or generalized faster: more culturally relevant and metaphorically effective; increases children=s causal inferences in social situations; self-modelling helps behaviourally disturbed	Story/workbook for children; cartoon strips used in schools and newspapers; PeaceBuilders® Nominations at school and in mass media
Environ-mental cues and alterations	Kendall, 1993; Rutter et al, 1979; Mayer et al, 1984; Preusser & Blomberg, 1984	Increases salience of positive cues for aggressive children; posters made by children increase positive action; curing changes child behaviour in schools & community	Story/workbook for children; staff training; reproducible binders; principals manual
Role plays	Elliot & Gresham, 1993; Kendall, 1993	Children and adults to rehearse skills and learn the cues that signal when to use those skills; role plays in game context increase compliance	Reproducible Binder #2, #9 and some tactics mentioned in the manual for teachers
ANew way replays≅ or response cost	MacPherson, Candee & Homan, 1974; Cornell, 1986; Sprute, Williams & McLaughlin, 1990; Jeltma & Vogler, 1985	Provides a logical consequence and teaches the prosocial behaviours; reduces hostility among adults caring for children compared to punishment: Suppresses negative behaviour rapidly	Intensive PeaceBuilding Guide; manual for teachers; Playground Guide; PeaceBuilders® language of Arighting wrongs≅
Group rewards & individual recognition	Fishbein and Wasik, 1981; Warner, et al 1977; Olympia, 1992; Kendall, 1993	Improves responsiveness to other human beings; decreases vigilance related to post-traumatic stress; improves academic achievements; reduces negative attention-seeking	Reproducible binder 8; Intensive PeaceBuilding Guide; Principal=s Guide; story/workbook for home
Threat reduction	Nisbett, 1993; McGimsey et al, 1994; Derryberry & Tucker, 1992; Dodge & Somberg, 1985	Reduces triggers for violence; reduces crisis responding; facilitate induction of new or transfer students; improves learning	ActionGuide; staff materials; story/workbook; staff training
Self-monitoring & peer monitoring	Hogan & Prater, 1993; Lloyd et al, 1989; Harris, 1986; Dougherty et al, 1985; Ziegler et al, 1992	Increase salience of positive acts both among peers and within self; reduce cognitive distortions; increase peer acceptance and peer pressure for positive behaviour	Reproducible Binders #2; #3; #5; #9 and Intensive PeaceBuilding Guide
Generalization	Stokes & Baer, 1977; Walker et al, 1995; Embry, 1980	Planned techniques increase chance that effects will last across time, people and places	Icons, language, mass media campaign, new materials each year, and community components

5.1.   A Pilot Community

In 1997 the PeaceBuilders® program was introduced in the first pilot community in Queensland (hereinafter referred to as The Community). The Community is located within a city in SE Queensland commonly regarded as a satellite city to Brisbane.   It is some 16 km from the city centre, towards the city of Brisbane, straddles the main highway, which is the access road to the West of Queensland. The Community is a relatively old, well-established community dating back to the 1860s.   It has reinvented itself over the decades as employment patterns have changed, residential districts have developed and the population has grown. Currently, The community has a population of approximately 8,862 (June 1996), with a shopping centre, several churches, and three (3) schools. A 1997 area profile indicates a high population of young people with only 9% of the community aged 55+. A number of government agencies are located in The Community including a Police station. The important point is that The Community serves as the hub for a number of adjoining suburbs. It is close to the main Ipswich-Brisbane railway line and has a station. It is also close to the major Psychiatric Hospital of Queensland and the prison complexes of the Queensland Corrective Services Commission. There is a mixture of housing in the community district (public/private) as well as a number of Caravan Parks.

The Community is recognised publicly as a high crime and drug use area. High levels of unemployment, family breakdown, social dislocation associated with migration and racial tension exist in the community.

The population upon which The Community state school draws can be characterised generally as low socio-economic. Australian Bureau of Statistics figures indicate that the majority of families are in the income range of $0 - $20,000 per annum. There are a range of different ethnic groups represented in the school, including Samoan (22%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (12%) and Vietnamese (10%).

The State School, opened in 1870, is central to the community. Since 1996, the school has had an enrolment of approximately 420-480 students. The school population varies with a number of families moving in and out of the area during any given year. The turnover of children in any given class can be as high as 50% in a year. It is designated as a Special Programs School.

The school currently has a teaching staff of twenty-six (26) with seven (7) support staff. The current principal arrived towards the end of 1995. The principal perceived the need for positive change in a school which was experiencing a period of difficulty. During 1996, the school established a partnership program focussing on providing assistance to children who were identified as having behavioural problems. The school introduced the PeaceBuilders® program in April 1997.

5.2.   **Changes In The School Context**

During 1997, the Principal notes that:

- "the playground is a much happier, friendlier place;
- children are cooperating more with each other
- majority of children know the four main principles of the PeaceBuilders®project
- children are seeking the support of adults to solve problems as opposed to the traditional aggressive method of thump, kick or hit
- referrals to the office are now more students seeking help to solve a problem rather than having a large group of children all hot under the collar converging on the office blaming each other and wanting to continue their argument
- students are developing the concept that seeking help is different to dobbing and that individuals shouldn't have to put up with being harassed in any way."

5.2.1. *Detentions*

Figure 1 (see Appendix 1) indicates comparative data for the years 1997/1998 in relation to the number of detentions in the school per week.

Table 1 (see Appendix 1) provides the same figures in different form.

In general, the figures represent a consistent fall in the number of detentions. There are weeks where this is not the case, but the figures have helped to identify these 'trouble-spots' and often, indeed in every case, a possible reason for the increase has been established.

The number of suspensions of students from the school has dropped. The amount of truancy at the school has dropped.

5.2.2. *School Opinion Survey*

The School Opinion Survey is a state-wide survey of attitudes to schooling introduced in 1997 through James Cook University. Figures for our target school from the 1997-1998 School Opinion Surveys indicate the following:

(i)   that the 1997 Overall Rating for Student Satisfaction at the school was 2.82; the 1998 Overall Rating for Student Satisfaction was 3.29;

(ii)   that the 1997 Overall Rating for Student Satisfaction at the school of 2.82 was **above** the State Mean of 2.42 and **above** the Like School Mean of 2.67; the 1998 Overall Rating for Student Satisfaction of 3.29 was **above** the State Mean of 2.81 and **above** the Like School Mean of 2.73;

(iii)   that the 1997 Overall Parent Satisfaction Rating was 2.77; the 1998 Overall Parent Satisfaction Rating was 2.90;

(iv)   that the 1997 overall parent Satisfaction Rating of 2.77 was **below** the State Mean of 2.82 and **below** the Like School Mean of 2.90; the 1998 Overall Parent Satisfaction Rating of 2.90 was **above** the State Mean of 2.86, but **below** the Like School Mean of 2.91;

(v)   that on key indicators such as Quality Curriculum programs for all students and effective teaching there have been significant rises on both Student Satisfaction and Parent Satisfaction Ratings during 1998;

(vi)   Curiously, whilst the students perceive a significant rise in the development of a safe, supportive and productive learning environment, parents perceive a slight drop on this indicator; at the same time, parents perceive a rise on the indicator – confidence in public education;

(vii) It is worth noting that in 1997, the parent sample (n=12) indicates that not all parents responded (30%) whilst in 1998, all parents in the parent sample (n=40) responded.

5.2.3. *School, Learning Outcomes, 1996-98*

Changes in reading age of students has been measured across time. The figures represent testing based on chronological age (CA) compared to reading age (RA) across the period January 1996 to November 1998. Testing has been conducted across all age-ranges. The results indicate that across age groups, reading age increased relative to chronological age for many students. For example, the percentage of children reading above their chronological age increased significantly in grades three six and seven.

It should be noted that PeaceBuilders® does not undermine any existing programs but provides the environment in which other programs, eg Reading Retrieval programs, can become more effective. It is also important to note that the number of students who have moved closer to their Chronological Age in terms of their Reading Age has also increased.

5.2.4. *Parental Involvement*

It is never easy gauging the actual extent of parental involvement in a school at any given time, but the following indicators may suffice for this purpose:

• Prior to 1997, few parents would attend school functions. At recent School Award Ceremonies/PeaceBuilders® Awards, over 100 parents have attended each ceremony. These functions are held in the morning of a day in the last week of each term.

• In a survey of parents (1998) 274 completed returns were received (445 children enrolled in the school at the time). It is important to note that 109 responses mentioned the PeaceBuilders® program.

• At the PeaceBuilders® official launch in August, 1997, upwards of 1000 people (staff, parents, children, other adults) were present and many hundreds attended the Community Peace Day in 1998.

• The indicators are that more parents/adults in the community are taking more interest in the school. A further indication is that student enrolments are increasing (eg by 25% in the pre-school) and more children are moving from the pre-school to Grade 1.

• Parents are members of the School PeaceBuilders7/Partnership Committee.

5.2.5. *Staff Turnover*

Prior to 1997, it was not unusual for a number of staff to be on stress leave and/or to request transfers from the school. In 1997 and 1998, **no** members of staff requested transfers and the movement of staff, particularly leaving the school, has been dramatically reduced.

5.2.6. *Police Call-outs*

The number of police call-outs to the school have dropped dramatically. In 1996, 24 call-outs were recorded; in 1997, that number had fallen to 15; and in 1998, the number was 4.
It is important to note that although the school has not become immune to attack, it would appear that the attacks that do occur **do not** involve current students. Students enrolled in the school are taking more pride in their school and are less likely to vandalise property or attack the school in the form of break-ins or arson.

5.3. **Community Involvement**

The increase involvement of parents in the state school has been noted. The aim of the PeaceBuilders® program, however, is to establish a community-wide program assisting the community in reducing violence and preventing crime. During the period 1996-98, a number of strategies have been developed to broaden community involvement in the program.

5.3.1. *Police Involvement*

Contact was first made with the local police station in 1996. The Officer-in-charge was briefed with details of the program. In 1997, an in-house seminar was conducted with officers at the station. This was largely an information/awareness-raising session.

During 1997, the local Juvenile Aid Bureau officer became involved in school activities.

During 1997-1998, the Officer-in-charge has attended a number of functions and presentations at the school.

The Officer-in-Charge has been instrumental in encouraging other schools in the school district to adopt the PeaceBuilders® program.

5.3.2. *Involvement of other Government and Non-Government Agencies*

The number of external agencies who are becoming aware of the PeaceBuilders® program and of the work being done in the school is increasing. For example, the West Moreton District Steering Committee of the Queensland Youth future focus Network has received a presentation on Community Development and has visited the school. A regular meeting of the Steering Committee was held at the School. Agencies represented on the steering Committee include:

- Community Health and Nursing Services
- Local Government
- Queensland Police Service
- Department of Education
- Department of Employment, education, Training and Youth Affairs
- Department of Justice
- Queensland Corrections
- YUPI
- Department of Families, Youth and Community Care

- Queensland Police-Citizens Youth Welfare Association
- Community Inter-agency Group
- Youth Serving Australia
- Rural Health Services
- District Health Council
- Young People at Risk Program

The advantage of this process of raising awareness is that agencies involved in the school district can utilise their knowledge of the PeaceBuilders® program not only in their own daily activities, but also be conscious of the part the program can play in the development of their own strategies, for example, in reducing crime, youth suicide, domestic violence and so on.

5.4. **Summary**

In summary, there have been changes across a wide range of school phenomena. For example; in the school environment and school context, the school is perceived as a much friendlier and happy place. There have been changes to indices of poor behaviour. One example of this is the clear reduction in referrals to the school principal for disruptive and unruly behaviour. There have been changes to the ways in which the community is involved with the school. In this context, police call-outs to the school have decreased dramatically and the number of positive contacts between the police and the school have increased. Similarly, the incidence of parents being called to the school because of their children's poor behaviour have decreased and the number of voluntary parental visits to the school have dramatically increased. Whereas, prior to the introduction of the PeaceBuilders® program in the school, school-based events might attract half a dozen parents, recent events have attracted up to one hundred and thirty parents. There have also been changes to other school health indices. For the last two years, there have been no requests from teachers to be transferred out of the school and in both of the last two years, student enrolments in the school have increased.

The results from the first eighteen months of the program are by no means decisive. However, there are strong indications that three program is having a significant effect on the school environment, on individual student behaviour and on other indicators of school health. It is also contributing to wider community involvement with the school and to increasing positive contacts from community agencies such as the police. These indicators relate directly to risk and protective factors implicated in the development of aggressive and violent behaviour in young children.

6   **Conclusion**

This paper has provided an overview of some of the recent literature on reducing and preventing violence in schools. It has suggested that schools are major social institutions within which more widespread cultures of violence are reproduced and it has shown how the nexus between what happens in schools and long term effects on the development of aggressive and violent behaviour may be understood.

Risk factors for the development of present and future antisocial and criminal behaviour have been categorised as: Child Factors. School Context, Life Events and Community and, Cultural Factors (National Crime Prevention, 1999). The PeaceBuilders® pilot program has addressed many of these factors. Protective factors have been similarly categorised (National Crime Prevention, 1999) and these too are addressed by the PeaceBuilders®program. The paper has identified a range of risk and protective factors from the literature which are associated with the long-term development of anti-social and criminal behaviour such as aggression and violence. It has described how the literature suggests that long-term preventative strategies based on the school may hold promise for long-term violence reduction.

The paper has described one pilot PeaceBuilders® program in the near-Brisbane area. This program addresses many of the risk and protective factors identified in the literature. In its first eighteen months of operation, this program has succeeded in reducing some of the risk factors and increasing resiliency factors within the school and the community. The long-term outcomes of this program will need to be regularly assessed but the immediate results described here are promising.

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