KEEPING OUR CHILDREN SAFE FROM BULLYING

TAKING SERIOUS ACTION

2036
2036 will mark our state’s bicentenary

By the time our State turns 200 years old, I want South Australia to be a place of prosperity.

Planning and delivering on my vision for a better future starts now.

This policy is just one part of our plan to deliver a clear and responsible pathway to recovery and success.

See where it fits in below

1.0 GROWING OUR ECONOMY

2.0 THE BEST EDUCATION SYSTEM

   2.1 Delivering the best schools in Australia by improving education outcomes and teaching standards

   2.2 Returning decision making to parents, principals, teachers and local school communities

3.0 BEING A HEALTHY STATE

4.0 STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES

5.0 BUILDING OUR STATE

6.0 ENSURING SAFETY AND JUSTICE

   6.5 Delivering a safer community through a fair and transparent justice system

7.0 PROTECTING OUR ENVIRONMENT

8.0 EMBRACING OUR UNIQUE CULTURE

9.0 RUNNING AN EFFICIENT AND STABLE GOVERNMENT
“Bullying in any form is unacceptable in any educational context.”
THE PROBLEM

Studies show that more than one in four, just under 30 per cent, of students in Australia in years 4 to 9 are bullied every few weeks or more.

These figures drastically increase for the number of students experiencing cyber bullying, with one report identifying as many as 64% of young women in years 6 to 12 being cyber bullied.

For many children suffering from bullying in the past, home could provide a safe haven – a place to escape from bullying at school. Today the near universal use of mobile phones and other electronic devices among students means bullying can take forms that are both constant and covert.

Community concern about this issue has grown – and justifiably so. There have been well publicised examples of fatal consequences to young South Australians who had their whole lives ahead of them. Their wounds cannot be healed but their tragedies are a call to action for our state.

Even in less extreme cases, bullying has both short-term effects, with rates of depression and anxiety sky rocketing among young people, and long-term effects with bullying affecting many children well into their adult life.

Despite evidence that bullying can be reduced through school-based interventions, the so-called ‘Safe Schools Anti-bullying Initiative’ is the only anti-bullying program financially supported by the Weatherill Labor Government.

This program, originally commissioned by the former Federal Labor Government, has been widely discredited for a range of reasons and it was de-funded by the Federal Coalition Government.

Despite this, the Weatherill Government has provided state funding for a replacement program that focuses exclusively on supporting LGBTI students – notably through ‘supporting gender diverse and transgender students to be their true selves at school’.

While it remains critically important to support children and young adults identifying as LGBTI, the Safe Schools program does not even pretend to address the needs of students who are victims of bullying for reasons unrelated to sexuality or gender identity.

With no other broad anti-bullying initiatives funded across our system, bullying policies in schools remain ad-hoc arrangements – with different schools taking different approaches across South Australia.

Some schools are doing a great job at addressing bullying but many are struggling, particularly with technology constantly evolving and changing making bullying increasingly difficult to detect and respond to.

According to a recent University of South Australia study, nearly half of parents who said their children had been bullied reported concerns with the way in which the school handled their child’s case – with stronger punishment for bullies a clear demand from many.

Our children deserve to undertake their studies in a safe and nurturing educational environment, free from harassment, discrimination and bullying.

The Liberal Party’s ambition is for South Australia to have the best schools in Australia.

That’s why everything that can be done must be done to stamp out bullying at the earliest opportunity.
THE STATE LIBERALS’ PLAN

Our package will not only better protect students, it will also give schools the opportunity to enhance their own anti-bullying initiatives.

If elected in March 2018, a Marshall Liberal Government will take serious action to tackle bullying in our schools. Our package of measures will include:

- ensuring all schools maintain strictly enforced anti-bullying policies which are readily available to all members of the school community and which address all types of bullying including cyber bullying and other non-physical forms of bullying;
- ending funding to the Weatherill Government’s ‘Safe Schools Antibullying Initiative’, and instead providing evidence-based, comprehensive anti-bullying resources to schools, including curriculum resources;
- providing training and support services for teachers and students to replace the ‘Safe Schools’ service currently offered;
- developing new resources for both students and teachers to help schools detect and respond to online bullying;
- strengthening legislation to make it easier to prosecute bullies and to ensure penalties are appropriate.

While schools will retain the opportunity to enhance their own local anti-bullying initiatives, a Marshall Liberal Government will also develop resources to identify, prevent, and respond to bullying based on the model successfully introduced in New South Wales schools when they moved away from the Safe Schools program.

Our approach will be evidence-based and comprehensive – covering the broad spectrum of things children and teenagers may be bullied about as opposed to the very narrow approach of safe schools.

It will ensure that school policies can prevent bullying, respond to bullying, and ensure that those engaged in bullying know there are serious consequences for their actions.

Building on the success of the New South Wales model, our approach will focus on:

- interventions that take a holistic, whole of school approach;
- educational content that allows students to develop social and emotional competencies and learn appropriate ways to respond to bullying;
- providing support and professional development to teachers and other school staff; and
- using systematic implementation and evaluation of approaches, strategies and programs.

Vitally, we will develop an approach and resources that specifically address online bullying and how to keep children and teenagers safe online.

New resources will be provided to school communities along with opportunities for professional development, including training on how to identify and respond to online bullying and resources to use to ensure our schools and students are cyber safe.

A Marshall Government will also build upon anti-bullying legislation introduced in other states to make it easier to prosecute bullies where appropriate and to ensure that penalties reflect the serious mental and physical harm caused by bullying.
“All students deserve to spend their school days in a safe and nurturing educational environment, free from harassment, discrimination and bullying.”

Steven Marshall, State Liberal Leader
If you would like to provide feedback on our policy or learn more about our plan, please get in touch via:

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