



## Department of Education & Training

Early Childhood & School Education Group

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Ms Bob Buckley  
[convenor@a4.org.au](mailto:convenor@a4.org.au)

Dear Mr Buckley

Thank you for your email to the Hon James Merlino, MP, Minister for Education regarding bullying of children and young people with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The Minister has asked me to respond to you directly regarding the matters raised.

Bullying is a serious issue for everyone in a school community and devastating consequences. Victorian government schools do not tolerate bullying, whether it is physical, verbal or online. All Victorian schools are required to develop and implement a bullying and cyberbullying prevention policy in collaboration with their school communities, to ensure all students, including those with an ASD, are provided with a safe learning environment where they feel physically and emotionally secure.

The Department has invested significantly in a range of initiatives and strategies to prevent and respond to bullying, abuse and unacceptable behaviour in schools including:

- \$11.5 million partnership with the Alannah and Madeline Foundation (AMF) which has led to over 1600 Victorian schools participating in eSmart schools - a framework designed by AMF that assists schools to develop a culture that promotes the safe, smart and responsible use of technology
- \$4.5 million for the Bully Stoppers initiative developed to provide the teaching workforce and school communities with support, clear guidance and practical tools to effectively prevent and respond to bullying.

The Bully Stoppers toolkit is available to all Victorian schools and families and can be accessed at: [www.education.vic.gov.au/bullystoppers](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/bullystoppers). Many Victorian schools are using resources from the toolkit to implement whole-school initiatives, including classroom programs and activities that aim to prevent and respond to bullying in their school community.

The Department has a range of support in place to improve the schooling experience of children and young people with an ASD. These include extensive professional learning opportunities for teachers and school staff including post graduate studies through the Autism Teaching Institute (ATI) and Inclusion Online Learning. The Department has worked in partnership with Aspect (Autism Spectrum Australia) to provide training to teachers to implement students focused programs such as, peer education training and Aspect movie club.

The Teacher led peer education program is based on Carol Gray's work (Sixth Sense II) for upper primary and secondary school classes. The program introduces mainstream students to the features of ASD and how they can develop the skills and sensitivities to support their peers at school. Aspect Movie Club is a training program that enables teachers in Victorian schools to develop the skills to run a social skills program that has been developed by Aspect in response to the need for an age appropriate program for secondary school students. Further information can be found here: [www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/needs/Pages/partnerships.aspx](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/needs/Pages/partnerships.aspx).

If you would like further information about supports for children and young people with an ASD in Victorian government schools, you may contact Mr Mark Tainsh, Director, Inclusion, Access and Participation, Wellbeing, Health and Engagement Division, Early childhood, School Education Group, on: (03) 9637 3844 or by email [tainsh.mark.t@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:tainsh.mark.t@edumail.vic.gov.au).

Yours sincerely



**Carol Kelly**  
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