Commissioner for Children and Young People
Western Australia

Addressing Bullying Behaviour in Children and Young People

27 October 2015

Commissioner for Children and Young People
Western Australia

Jenni Perkins

Acting Commissioner for Children and Young People

Commissioner for Children and Young People
Western Australia

Sam and Niamh

Cyber Savvy Ambassadors

Professor Donna Cross

Telethon Kids Institute; University of Western Australia

A Most Preventable Cause of Mental Illness: Bullying

Donna Cross

Winthrop Professor

The University of WA

25th Anniversary Australia signing the UN's Children's Rights Convention
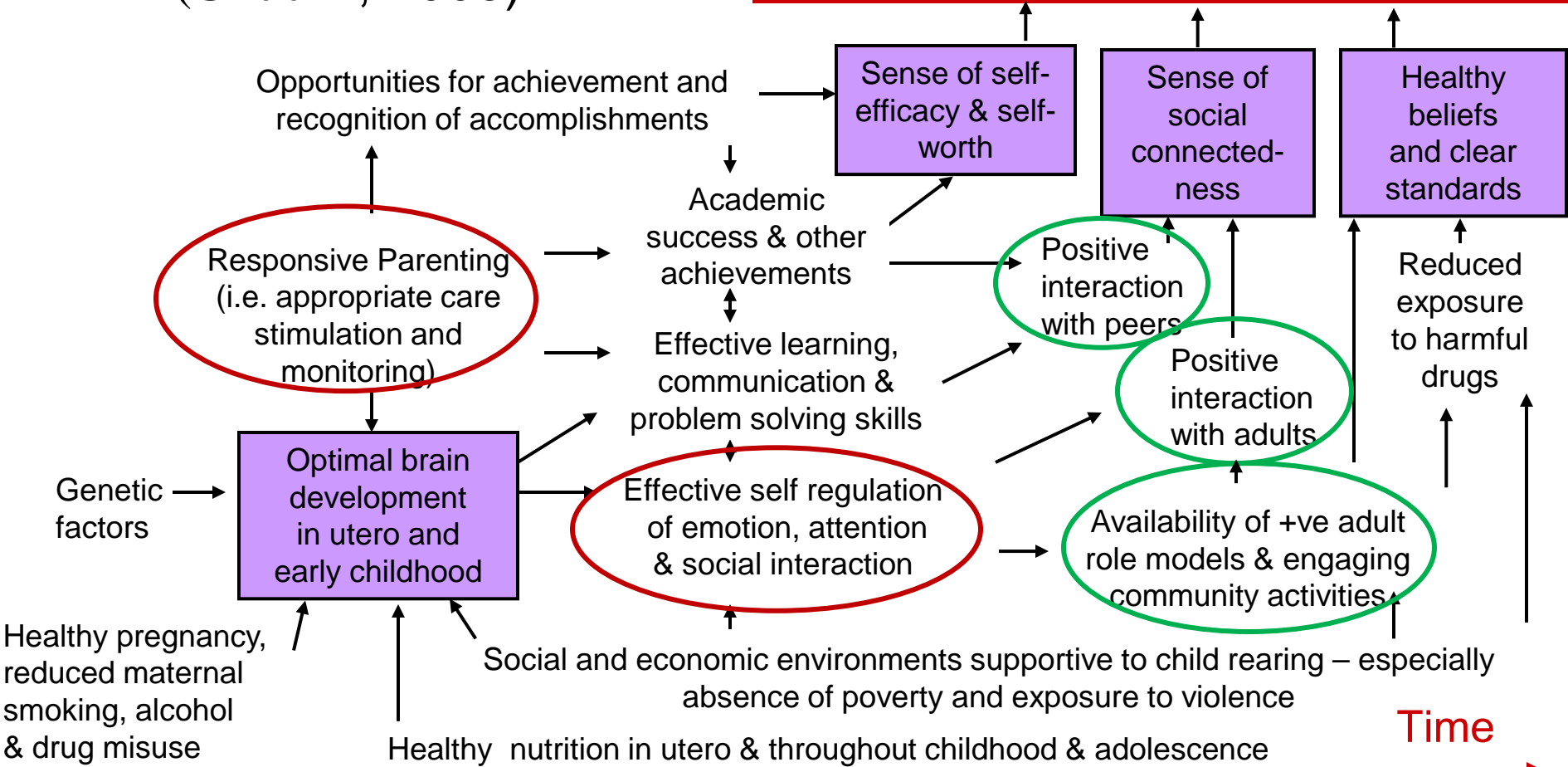
Celebrates the right of children to enjoy childhood

- ARTICLE 19: You have the right to be protected from being hurt and mistreated in body and mind

- ARTICLE 39: You have the right to help if you have been hurt, neglected or badly treated

Personal achievement, social competence and emotional resilience

(Silburn, 2003)

Opportunities for achievement and recognition of accomplishments

Sense of self-efficacy & self-worth

Sense of social connected-ness

Healthy beliefs and clear standards

Responsive Parenting (i.e. appropriate care stimulation and monitoring)

Academic success & other achievements

Positive interaction with peers

Reduced exposure to harmful drugs

Genetic factors

Optimal brain development in utero and early childhood

Effective learning, communication & problem solving skills

Positive interaction with adults

Effective self regulation of emotion, attention & social interaction

Availability of +ve adult role models & engaging community activities

Healthy pregnancy, reduced maternal smoking, alcohol & drug misuse

Social and economic environments supportive to child rearing – especially absence of poverty and exposure to violence

Healthy nutrition in utero & throughout childhood & adolescence

Time

Mental Health Problems in Australia

- **Largest source of disability**

- **3rd** largest source of **burden of disease** (after cardiovascular disease and cancer)

- **$30 billion per annum**: annual financial cost of mental illness in people **ages 12-25** (disability and premature death)

Origins in Childhood

- **65%** who experience an anxiety or affective disorder have their **first episode before 21 years of age**

- **50%** of lifetime mental health problems **start by the age of 14**

- Mental health problems are the **largest single burden** of disease **affecting 0-14 year olds**

Prevalence in Children

- 1 in 6 WA children (4-17 years) experiences a mental health problem

- >6% of the children have clinically significant mental health problems at age 2 and 5 years

- **12-25 year olds** have the **highest levels of mental illnesses (25%) than in any other age group**

Effects of mental health problems on children

High levels of distress

Less able to do the normal things expected of children

Poorer quality of life and emotional wellbeing

Poor social skills and few friendships

Self-harm

Less ability to cope with challenges

Poor physical health

Low educational achievement

Low self-esteem

Mental health disorders later in life

Thoughts about suicide

Suicide

How well do we offer help? (Cross et al, 2009)
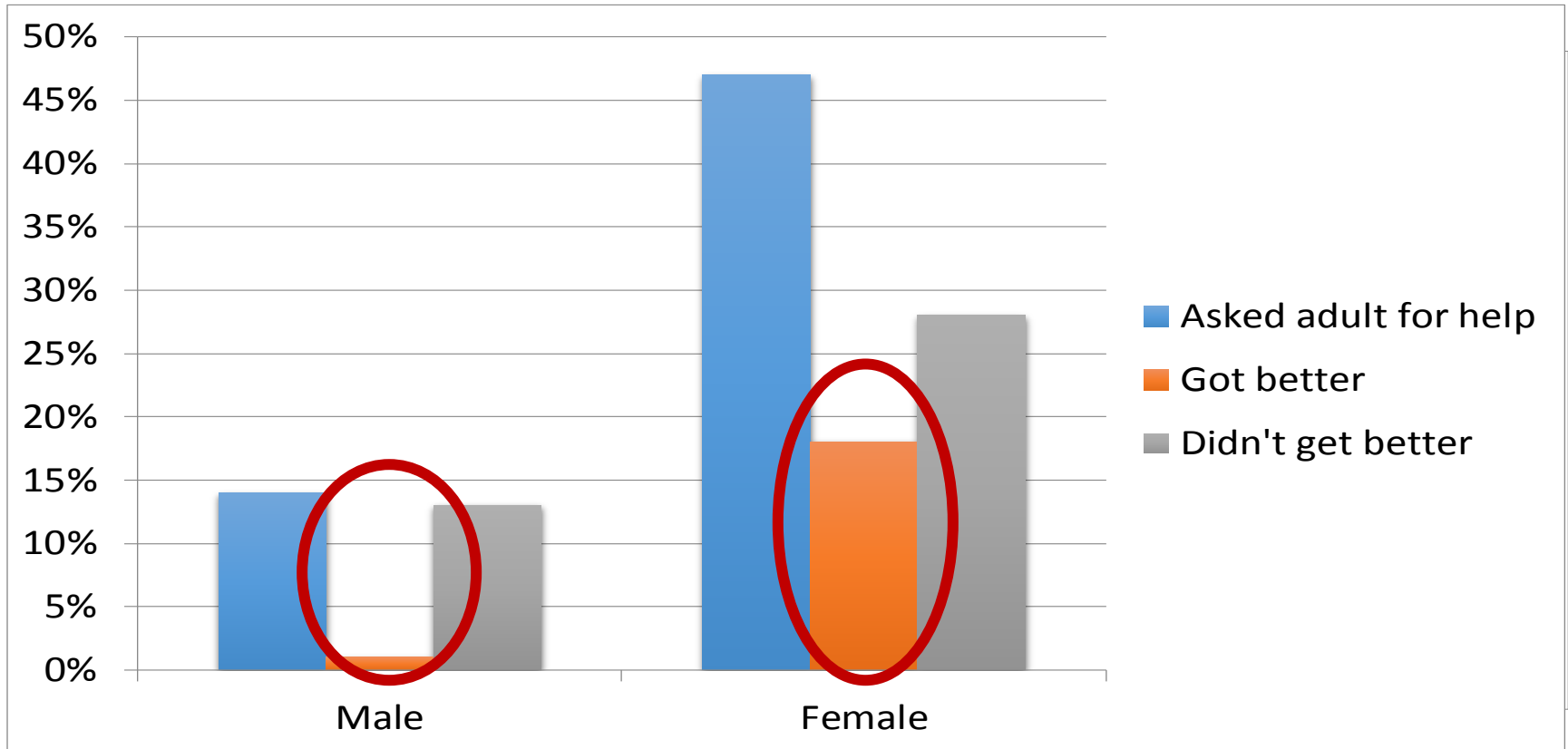
Premise…

Bullying => mental health problems

Reduction in bullying => reduction in mental health problems
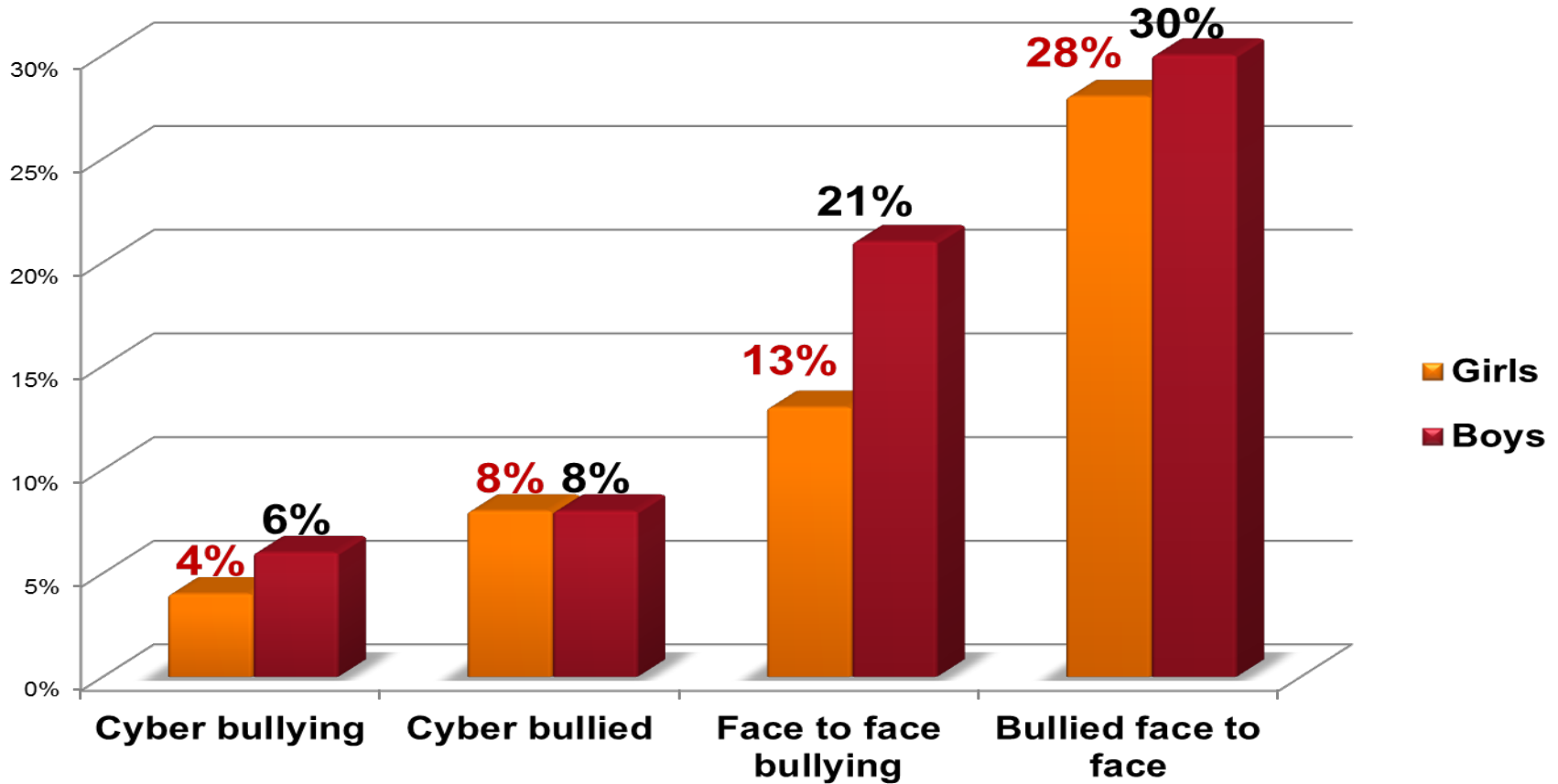
Friendly Schools Research
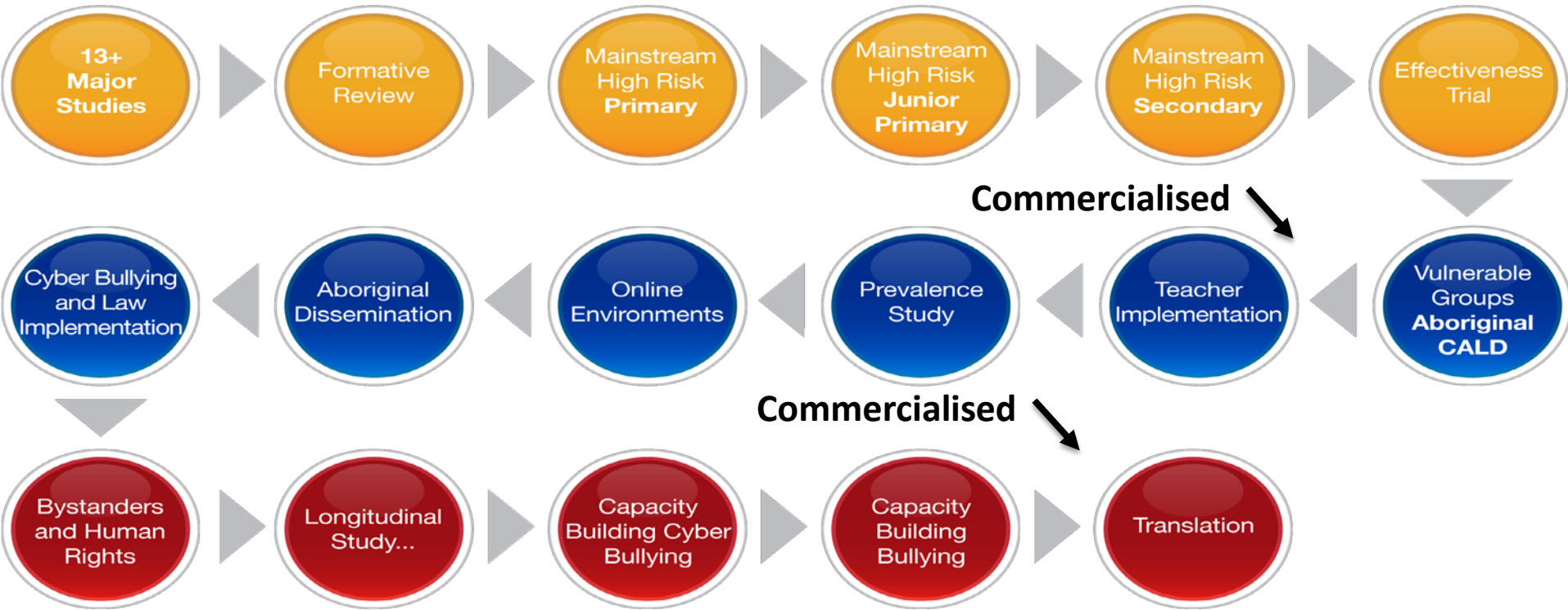
Student Reference Committees

Face to face bullying

Cyber bullying

%

(Cross et al, 2009)

PP   Yr 1   Yr 2   Yr 3   Yr 4   Yr 5   Yr 6   Yr 7   Yr 8   Yr 9   Yr 10
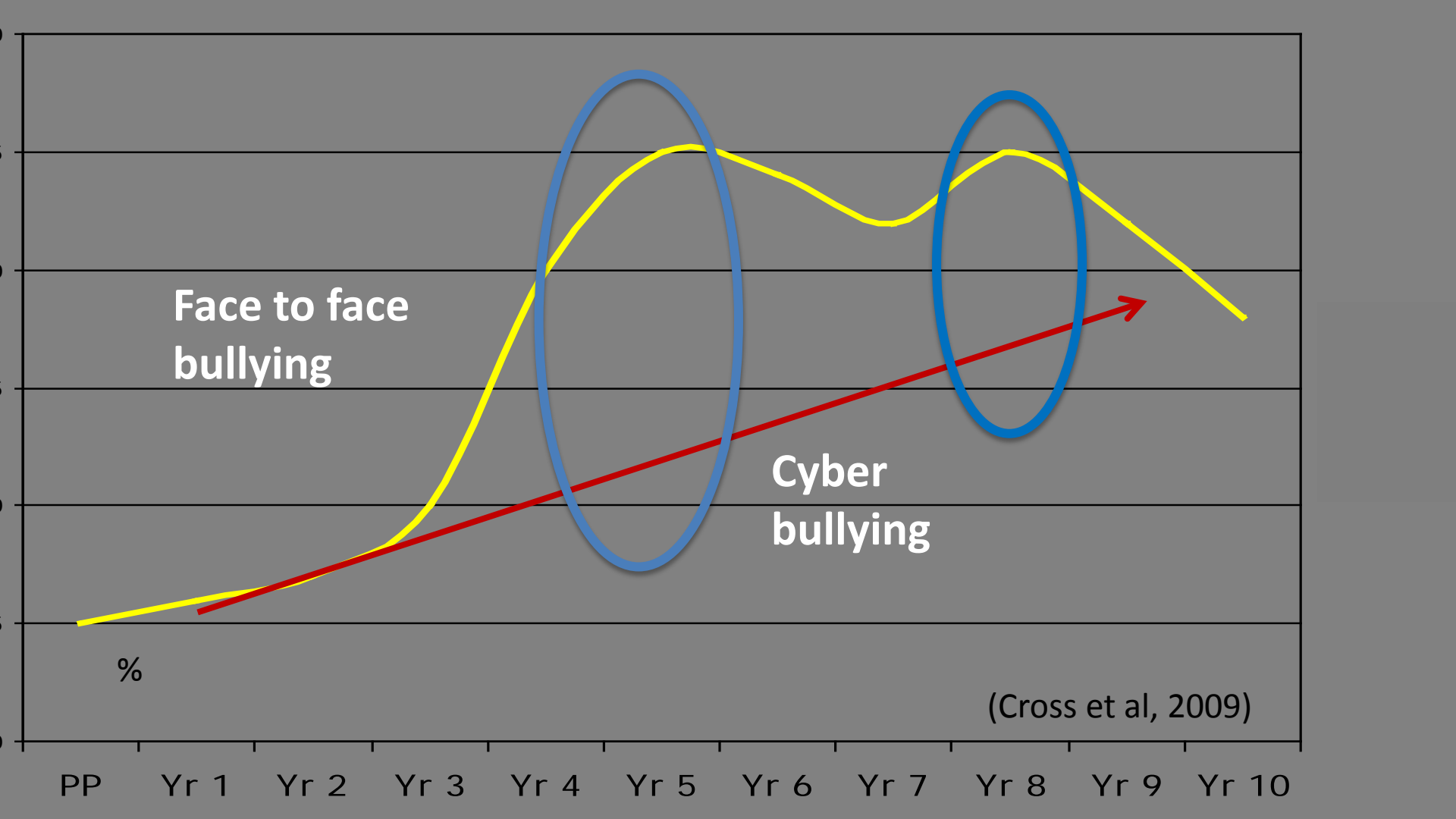
Bully/bullied students' harms

- More disliked and therefore more socially ostracized and lonely (Forero et al., 1999; Juvonen, Graham, & Schuster, 2003; Schwartz, 2000).

- Least engaged in school (Juvonen et al., 2003)

- Have the poorest psychosocial functioning (Austin & Joseph, 1996; Juvonen et al., 2003)

Bully/bullied* students' harms (cont.)

- have the lowest self esteem (Andreou, 2000a; M. O'Moore & Kirkham, 2001)

- experience the highest levels of depression and other mental health problems (Juvonen et al., 2003; Kaltiala-Heino, et al, 1999; Kumpulainen, et al, 1999)

- experience the highest levels of conduct problems (Austin & Joseph, 1996; Juvonen et al., 2003; Kumpulainen, Rasanen, & Puura, 2001)
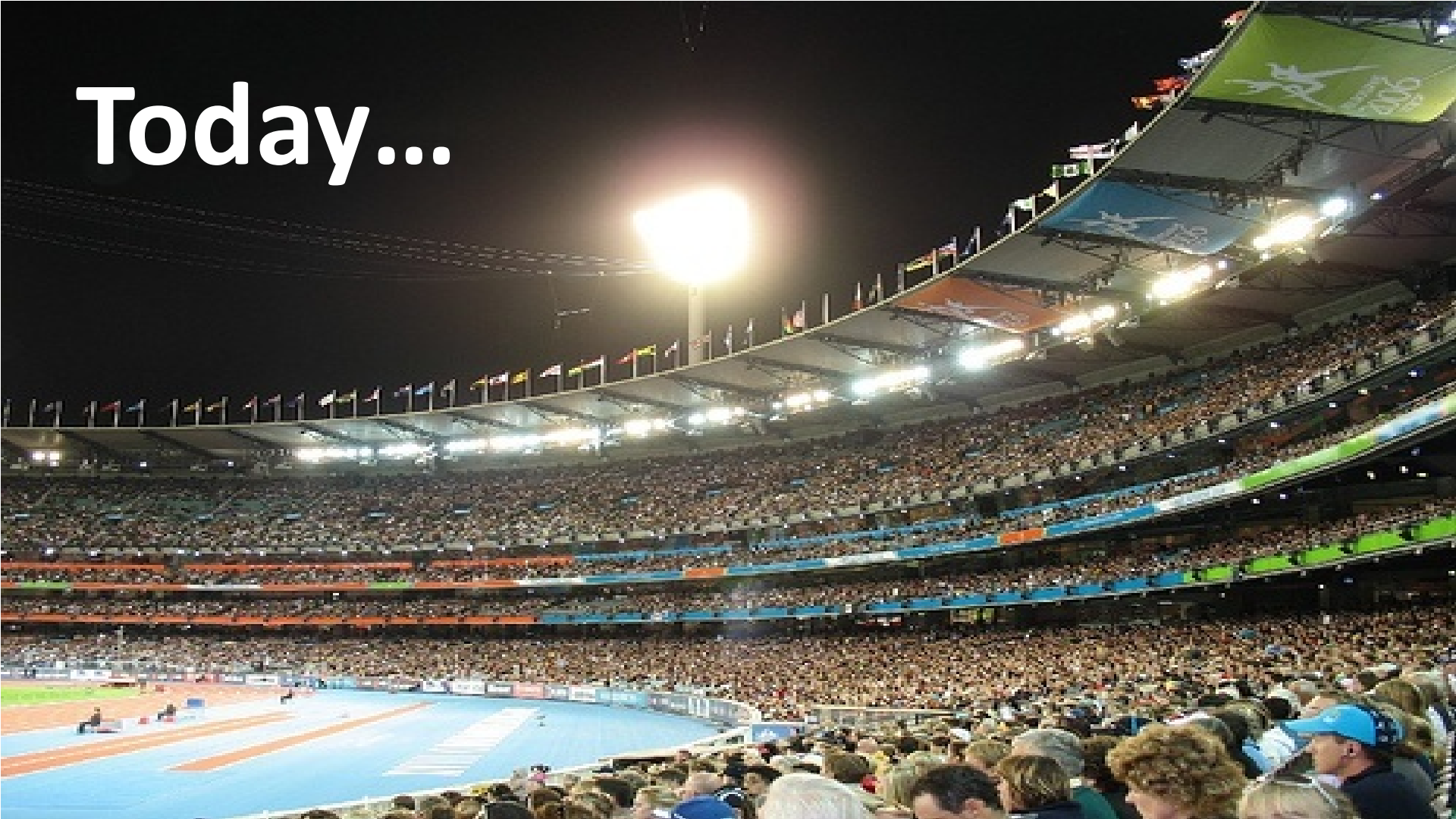
* **This group may have greatest risk of future psychiatric problems** (Kumpulainen & Rasanden, 2000)

Bullying is not a normative stage of development that all children pass through.

Bullying is learned and a clear marker of further violent behaviour and mental health problems.

Today…

Epi-genetics: Belonging

- Children have a fundamental need to belong, when this is interrupted, healthy functioning decreases (Alfred Alder)

'Lack of belonging' can get under your skin...

Severe social difficulties impact our stress response and **even alters gene expression** in some individuals' contributing to long term physical and mental health problems.

Inadequate and inappropriate social and emotional experiences in the early years…

can **compromise** brain development that allows us to **bond, imitate and respond in socially appropriate** ways
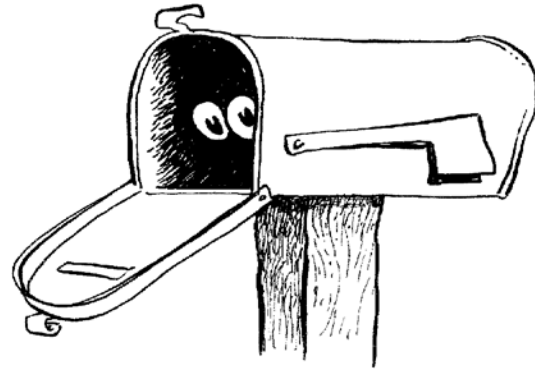
(Cyander et al 1999)

Poor socially skilled children tend to:

- Have major school adjustment problems

- Disturbed peer relations

- Lower levels of academic performance

Social architecture: Friendships

- Number of friends
- Diverse friendship groups
- At least one very good friend
- Reciprocal friendships
- Quality of friendships
- Friends in different social settings

Relationships cycle…

Cyclical relationships:

better social skills → better social interactions → increased opportunities to practise social skills

Not more work…

Connectedness to school, family and community have been identified as important factors contributing to **children's** resilience and social, emotional and physical health.

Good news – it begins with quality of relationships

Children read 'tasks' through relationship filters...

Teacher behaviours and 'YES' to learning

Most Likely

When my teacher:

- Smiles at me
- Says hello to me
- Talks to me
- Shows me he/she is proud of me
- Takes an interest in what I do

Also

When my teacher:

- Organises a fun activity
- Notices my effort
- Sets interesting work
- Encourages me to join in
- Helps me learn from my mistakes

Relationships = resilience

Relationships are key

- Relationships with parents and friends = important predictors of resilience

- Also relationships outside the home (teachers, mentors, coaches)

- Supportive relationships help young people develop a sense of personal agency

  - i.e. have some influence over the things that happen to us and how we can respond to them

(Jackson & Deye 2015)

Key notions...

(Rubin et al)

- "I have people around me who can help"

- "I am a person people can like or love"

- "I can find ways to solve the problems that I face"

What does positive parenting look like?

High level of positive expectations in a warm and supportive context…

- Encourage and enable clear positive expectations for behaviour

- Responsive to children's needs and rights (esp: pro-social opportunities)

"nurturing and demanding"

Important messages…

Possible Messages	How to Develop It
I am interested in you	Use of observation and narration
I can be a helper	Indicate verbally "I am here to help you with that if you need me"
I am consistent	Establish and maintain schedule and support
I will support you	Maintain contact and composure even when child is upset
I am safe	Create contexts where it is okay to make mistakes

Next steps…

- "What is it that you would like my help with?"
- Learning is about making mistakes
- Learning challenges with good scaffolding
- Problem solving versus emotional coping:
  - ability to plan
  - seek help from others
  - think critically and reflectively
- Create behavioural momentum – begin with success
- Help identify strengths
- Teach strategies for optimistic thinking and relaxation
- Encourage humour, fun and positive experiences

Our practice…

- **L**isten without interrupting
- Sit /walk shoulder to shoulder
- Take their concerns seriously
- **A**cknowledge that it hurts
- Encourage them to talk in detail
- Prompt with open ended questions
- **T**alk about options
- Show you believe them
- **E**nd with encouragement

www.youtube.com/watch?v=EA5C-1N_r1w

DVD Anti-bullying

Learning and Teaching Resource ALTER

"Fix It"

Catholic Diocese of Wollongong, 2012

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Eileen Kuruckchi

School Psychologists' Association of WA

How should schools proceed on a journey to reduce bullying and promote student wellbeing?

Manage change

1. **Understand** that bullying is a serious issue.
2. **Recognise** need - check your data.
3. **Ask** *"What is our vision? What do we want for our school? "*
4. **Commit** to reduce bullying.
5. **Prioritise** promoting positive peer culture and reducing bullying.
6. **Select** evidence based strategies.
7. **Communicate** for buy in.

A whole-school approach

Evidence shows **multi component whole school initiatives** are more likely to **reduce bullying behavior** than single component programs, such as classroom curriculum only.

It is the sum of many small steps that brings about change.

Results in **behaviour change** that sticks**.**

Friendly schools plus – 6 Key Areas

Building Capacity	• Leadership commitment to a safe school
Supportive school culture	• A supportive and connected school culture • A focus on student wellbeing/ownership
Proactive policies and practices	• Policies and procedures • Positive behaviour management • Early intervention and targeted support
Key understanding and competencies	
Protective physical environment	• Professional learning • Engagement, skills development and safe school curriculum
School – family – community partnerships	• Partnerships with family and community

National Safe Schools Framework – 9 elements

Five Social and Emotional Learning Areas (SEL)

(adapted from CASEL Social and Emotional learning)

Self Awareness
Recognising and understanding our feelings, while valuing our strengths and abilities

Self-management
Controlling and directing our emotions in appropriate ways

Social Awareness
Being aware and respectful of the feelings and perspectives of others

Social and emotional learning skills

Relationship Skills
Dealing positively with relationship problems and social conflicts

Social Decision-Making
Considering consequences and making thoughtful, sensible decisions

Stage 1. Getting Ready

Fuel Up! Training Opportunity

GIVE WAY

1 Establish a coordinating team

2 Learn more about the Friendly Schools Plus initiative

3 Assess readiness of your school

4 Raise whole-school staff understandings

5 Align your whole-school vision with the evidence

6 Build team capacity for implementation

Tool Kit Map-the-Gap!

Stage 2. Exploring needs, policies and practices

7 Survey students and staff

8 Assess whole-school policies and practices

Tool Kit Survey!

10 Build staff capability to implement strategies for good practice

9 Plan priorities using data

Stage 3. Preparing for improvement

11 Build teacher capability to implement teaching and learning activities

Fuel Up! Training Opportunity

Stage 4. Implementing our plan

12 Implement the strategies for good practice

13 Implement teaching and learning activities

Stage 5. Reviewing and sustaining our actions and outcomes

14 Review Changes in Practices, Processes and Student Outcomes

Building Friendly Schools

Stage 1: Getting ready

1. **Establish a coordinating team**

2. **Learn more about the FSP initiative** – personal development, reading

3. **Assess the readiness of your school** – school leadership commitment, fit with priorities, staff buy in, parent priorities

4. **Raise whole school staff understandings** – personal development, reading, discussion

5. **Align your whole school vision with the evidence**

6. **Build team capacity for implementation** – reading, discussion, reflection

What can School Psychologists do?

Before bullying occurs:

As part of the coordinating team, support the school to

- **Raise** whole school /staff understandings
- **Assess** policies and practices
- **Implement** evidence based whole school programme

During bullying incidents:

- **Train** staff in responding to bullying behaviours

After bullying occurs:

- **Support** students to cope with upsetting events
- Help **motivate** students who repeatedly bully their peers towards more socially acceptable behaviour.

How can parents help?

- Teach kindness and the importance of not harming others
- Teach your child to be a caring bystander

What you can do if you think your child is being bullied

- Talk with your child

- Avoid taking direct action

- Work with the school

What to do if your child is taking part in bullying another child

- Find out what is going on
- Calmly talk with your child

www.safeschoolshub.edu.au

Sam and Niamh

Cyber Savvy Ambassadors

Audience Q&A

Thank you for attending.

Keep in touch with the Commissioner:

@CCYPWA

Web www.ccyp.wa.gov.au