Promoting a Safe and Supportive MLC

Introduction:
Our MLC Community is comprised of individuals, working together towards common goals. We are proud of our diversity and enjoy celebrating and learning about different people, different activities and different disciplines. At MLC we value everybody's right to be treated with respect, dignity and courtesy. It is every student's right to enter a learning environment that is free of harassment, discrimination and bullying. Bullying is a group process and it develops because a group allows it to do so. The whole school community needs to take responsibility to discourage and not contribute to bullying..

This is clearly stated in our Mission Statement:
"We encourage each member of our community to:
- sustain an individual point of view, while respecting the rights and beliefs of others;
- embrace diversity and live by a set of values consistent with the Christian faith"

The College values the contribution of staff and students in furthering these goals. A committee comprised of staff and student representatives from across the College works together to develop a safe, caring and nurturing environment that promotes personal growth and positive self-esteem for all students. It meets regularly to devise and then deliver Anti Bullying activities and messages to the wider College community.

Bullying is not acceptable in the MLC Community. The purpose of this policy is to provide all members of the College Community with clear guidelines in responding to incidents of student bullying and harassment, as well as outlining prevention strategies. Regular staff training and student activities and parent education sessions also occur to ensure that all are familiar with Anti-Bullying procedures at MLC.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the College Student Wellbeing Policy. This policy relates to student bullying and harassment issues and there is a separate policy, Celebrating Diversity and Valuing Difference in the Workplace, relating to discrimination, harassment and bullying issues for people working at MLC.

Definitions:

Harassment
Harassment can be defined as inappropriate behaviours that can be either deliberate or unintentional. Harassment can be an isolated incident, or a series of incidents. These behaviours can cause fear, distress or harm to others.

Bullying
Bullying behaviour most often constitutes deliberate action by a person or persons. It is intentional and designed to humiliate, hurt, intimidate or distress another person or group. Such behaviour is often repeated over a period of time. Bullying is commonly the exploitation of a power imbalance, where one individual or group abuses a position of power, such as social influence, where the person being victimised is unable to make it stop. However, bullying can also occur through inaction, such as an unwillingness to intervene in a situation (remaining a bystander). Bullying can also be the result of a person

taking advantage of anonymity and a lack of accountability, in which case the person being bullied is never aware of the source of the bullying.

Bullying can be:
- Verbal
- Visual
- Physical
- Written

Incidents of bullying may occur in person, online, via mobile phones as well as through other electronic devices.

Bullying and harassment can have many different forms. These include, but are not limited to:

Exclusion

This can include deliberately 'leaving people out' of activities or groups, or treating them as if they don't exist or deliberately making social invitations in front of others that exclude them. It can also include 'turning away' and changing seats and forming a group and excluding. Electronic examples of this include exclusion from social networking groups or ignoring friend requests with the aim to cause harm by deliberately excluding from a social group.

Extortion

This can include threats or subtle pressure to control someone else's behaviour. This may intimidate a student into giving someone a possession, buying them something, or doing work for them. It can also include a threat of retaliation if the demands are not met. It could also involve deliberately setting up ('framing') someone else so they get into trouble. Again, this may happen directly (in person), or online. For example: anonymous threats on social networking sites or via SMS.

Name-calling

This can include deliberately putting people down (both to their faces or behind their backs), verbal insults, and spreading false information with the aim of damaging someone's reputation.

Intimidation

This can include physical imposition, making intimidating noises, threats and ultimatums.

Discrimination

This can include behaviour that attacks a person's race, religion, sexual orientation, gender and/or personal beliefs.

Mockery

This can include unflattering impersonations and imitations, criticism of a person's abilities, appearance and/or attitudes.

Sexual

This can include touching or brushing against someone in a sexual manner, unwelcome jokes or writing/drawing about someone's body, unwanted invitations of a sexual nature, asking intrusive questions about another person's private life.

Bullying is NOT

Staff, students and parents need to be aware that there are many distressing behaviours that are NOT examples of bullying even though help may be required to resolve the issue. For example, three negative social situations that are often confused with bullying are:

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• Single-episode or random acts of meanness, intimidation or aggression
• Mutual conflict
• Simple social rejection or exclusive friendships (without the intent to hurt)

Different strategies are often required to address these issues.

Source:
McGrath, H and Noble, T. (Eds) (2006) Bullying Solutions. Evidence-based approaches to bullying in Australian schools. Pearson Education

The effects of bullying:
The effects of bullying and harassment can have long-term consequences and may continue to do so into adult life. These effects can have an impact on the student being bullied, the bystanders and the person bullying.

The student/s being subjected to bullying/harassment:
A number of physical and mental health factors areassociated with being the target of bullying. These may include:
- Feeling frightened
- Feeling unsafe
-Feeling alone
- Feeling embarrassed
- Lowered self-esteem/ confidence
- Withdrawn behaviour
- Sleep disturbance
- Reduced ability to concentrate
- Declining work standards
- Negative impact on relationships with family/friends
- Increased levels of anxiety
- Physical complaints including headaches and nausea
- Unwillingness to attend school
- Higher levels of depression/other mental health issues

Students involved in bullying or harassing others are also at risk.
Bullying behaviours are associated with:
- Lowered self-esteem
-Depression
- Negative relationships with peers
- Seeking of attention from others in negative ways
- Declining work standards
- Disrespectful attitudes to authority figures
- An increase in anti-social behaviour (possibly into adulthood)

How will the MLC community respond to a student bullying incident?
MLC adopts a consistent and appropriate response when dealing with student bullying and harassment issues. MLC recognises that there are a number of ways to respond to an

incident and the best method in dealing with the situation is dependent upon a number of factors.

A three step procedure will be followed:
- An incident of bullying or harassment is identified by a student, parent or staff member**.**
- **Immediate and appropriate** intervention is taken to diffuse the situation. Supporting the student who is bullied is paramount. **All incidents of bullying must then be registered with the Student/House Co-ordinator.**
- The Student/House Co-ordinator assesses the information and determines further action. The issue will be dealt with by the student coordinator or other key wellbeing staff. These staff might include the Classroom Teacher, Home Group Teacher, Tutor or Student/House Co-ordinator, Deputy Head or Head of School.

This procedure will be known as the 'See, Support, Report' procedure.

After referral of an incident to the Student/House Co-ordinator one or both approaches might be used: punitive and non-punitive
(a) non-punitive approach:
A non-punitive approach is based on using the power of the peer group to help resolve the situation in a pro-active and positive way. A non-punitive approach involves a teacher working closely with the students involved to develop empathy for the student being bullied, and take action to help the person bullying to stop.
(b) punitive approach:
A punitive approach involves the establishment of clear rules and expectations about appropriate behaviours and graduated consequences for bullying behaviour.

Students who **experience** bullying or harassment are encouraged to respond in the following ways:
- Be aware of their right to a safe and caring environment at school.
- Calmly tell the person that their behaviour is offensive. They might not realise this.
- If possible, try to ignore the bully and calmly remove oneself from the situation.
- Talk to someone with whom they feel comfortable, such as a parent, teacher, Counsellor or Chaplain.

Students who **witness** incidents of bullying or harassment are encouraged to respond in the following ways:
- Treat everyone involved in the incident with courtesy and respect.
- Avoid becoming involved in or supporting behaviours which may hurt or harm others in any way.
- Provide comfort and support and protection to the person who has been bullied.
- Where appropriate, indicate to those who bully that their behaviour is unacceptable.
- Encourage the person who is being bullied or harassed to seek adult assistance. Accompany them if necessary.
- Report the incident themselves. It is every student's responsibility as a member of the MLC Community to report bullying and/or harassment.

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In addition to the three step response procedure outlined above MLC teaching staff are expected to:

- Create learning environments and form positive relationships that are safe, caring and nurturing.
- Encourage positive social interactions at the individual, group and classroom level.
- Provide curriculum material and discussion that focuses on developing positive relationships, appropriate social skills, values and behaviours.
- Educate students about the differences between conflict, harassment and bullying.
- Act as role models, in both word and action.

What are parents expected to do?

- Actively promote a positive and caring environment by helping their child develop an empathic and tolerant attitude towards others and by modelling appropriate behaviour at home and in all interactions with the College.
- Be aware of changes in mood or behaviour that may indicate t their child is experiencing bullying or harassment.
- Always be willing listen and support their child if they want to talk about bullying or harassment.
- Affirm the positive ways in which children can respond to bullying and/or harassment.
- Encourage their child to report any incidents of bullying to relevant staff within the College.
- Report incidents to the appropriate Student/House Co-ordinator.

Counselling:

At any time, counselling is available to any party involved in incidents of bullying or harassment. This is a confidential service offered through the MLC Student Counsellors and can occur via student self-referral or staff or parent referral. MLC Counsellors will also be used in a consultative capacity in bullying or harassment situations.

Please refer to:

The Celebrating Diversity and Valuing Difference in the Workplace Policy for any discrimination, harassment or bullying issues for people working at MLC.

Colleen Clift – Chair, Jeremy Blackman, Jane Boyle, Simon Clough, Tom Curtis, Sandra Griffin, Kevin McKee, Graham Ruffles, Jo Thornburn,
Thanks to Professor Donna Cross for her feedback on this policy

Guidelines for Staff

| **See** | Bullying incident identified by Student, Staff or Parent |

| **Support** | Appropriate supportive intervention by staff member, student or parent at the time of the incident | Supportive intervention must occur to ensure the bullying ceases at that time. Should students feel uncomfortable about intervening they are to immediately report the incident to a staff member who will take action on their behalf. |

| **Report** | **Compulsory** reporting of incident to Student/House Co-ordinator. Incident recorded on SW database. | Communication of incidents is essential. The Student Co-ordinators of all parties should be informed. SW Database records will ensure that any patterns are identified. |

| | Student/House Co-ordinator assesses appropriate level of response. Referral of incident as needed. | Follow-up response to report of incident might be undertaken by Student/House Co-ordinator, HGT, Deputy Head or Head of School. Details of follow-up response will be recorded on the SW database. |

Guidelines for Student/House Co-ordinators in assessing student bullying incidents and the required response.

Bullying incidents will be dealt with on a case by case basis but can be broadly categorised at one of four levels defined below. At each level, the situation will be monitored by the staff member managing the incident in order to determine if the matter has been resolved or requires further action. Also, at each level the incident and the process used must be documented and recorded on the Student Wellbeing site by the Student/House Co-ordinator, Deputy Head, Director of Banksia/ Marshmead/ Boarding House, or Head of School.

LEVEL ONE:
Level One is considered to be an informal process and some issues will be dealt with only at this level. The student who feels as though they may be the target of bullying or harassment is offered support and guidance, through a meeting. The purpose of this meeting is for the student to let someone know what is troubling them and to obtain support and strategies for dealing with the issue. At this level, the issue might be dealt with by Classroom Teacher, Home Group Teacher, Tutor or Student/House Co-ordinator.

LEVEL TWO:
The aim of Level Two is to resolve the issue using a non-punitive approach – such as the method of shared concern. The Student/House Co-ordinator and/or Deputy Head will interview parties both directly and indirectly involved in the incident with the aim of seeking a positive resolution. At a residential campus this would be managed by Co-ordinator, Deputy Director or Director. Parents may be informed, however, will not necessarily be involved in the process. MLC counsellors will be consulted at this stage.

LEVEL THREE:
Level Three involves issues not resolved at either Levels One or Two, or issues deemed by the Student/House Co-ordinator to be more serious. Issues at Level Three will be managed with by Deputy Head in consultation with Student/House Co-ordinator. At a residential campus they will be managed by the Director of MLC Banksia, MLC Marshmead or Boarding House in consultation with the appropriate Deputy Head. Key parties will be involved in discussions, interviews or negotiations and suitable consequences will be implemented. MLC counsellors are to be consulted and may be directly involved. Parents will be informed and may be involved in the resolution process.

LEVEL FOUR:
Incidents deemed as very serious offences, or incidents not resolved at Level Three will be dealt with by the Head of School in consultation with the Deputy Head (and Director Banksia/Marshmead/ Boarding House where appropriate.) At this level, the Principal will be informed. There will be a meeting with parents/guardians of all parties, as well as the students involved, to determine the most appropriate consequences and course of action. Consequences at this level may include suspension or meeting with the Principal to discuss an individual students future at the College.