



**FIRE +
RESCUE**

RESPECT, REFLECT, RESET

STOP BULLYING
ACTION PLAN
2018 - 2020



What's inside?

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?	4
FRNSW RISK FACTORS	7
THE STORY SO FAR	8
FRNSW BULLYING PREVENTION INITIATIVES	11
WHAT'S NEXT?	13
OUR FRNSW ACTION PLAN	15
RESPECT	17
REFLECT	19
RESET	21
ACTION PLAN OBJECTIVES	23
PROPOSED ACTIVITIES FOR 2019 - 2020	25

Fire & Rescue NSW (FRNSW) recognises that behaviour – the way we treat each other – is absolutely fundamental to our success. We are committed to actively fostering a modern and dynamic workplace – where everyone is valued and treated with respect – not because we have to but because it's the right thing to do. It's the right thing to do for our people and the right thing to do for the people we serve.

As part of this commitment, bullying will not be tolerated under any circumstances. Bullying has detrimental effects on those who experience and witness it, weakens workplace morale and undermines our ability to serve and protect the people of NSW.

We have been actively engaging our people – through workshops across all areas and levels of our organisation – to identify negative behaviours we need to stop and positive behaviours we need to start or continue. Now, we are identifying what we can collectively do to lock in the good behaviours that have made FRNSW so successful and eliminate or modify any negative behaviours that do not reflect the work we do.

As our organisation is beginning this new chapter, the Public Service Commission campaign - *Respect, Reflect, Reset* - is an important opportunity to make FRNSW an even better place to work. The campaign recognises that bullying is less likely to occur in organisations with positive and respectful workplace cultures, and is designed to reframe the way people think by reflecting on and taking ownership for the role they play. We recognise that no one campaign will solve an issue as complex as bullying, and this campaign is just one part of the *FRNSW Stop Bullying Action Plan 2018-2020* which will be reviewed regularly.

It's important to remember that we are all leaders when it comes to creating a positive and professional workplace and that the standard you walk past is the standard you accept. Every day we must all reflect on our behaviour and its possible impact on others. We all have a responsibility to stop and 'reset' inappropriate behaviour where we see it.

If any employee has engaged in behaviour that is not acceptable, now is the time to reset.

Paul Baxter
Commissioner

A NOTE FROM THE COMMISSIONER



WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

The impacts of bullying are serious. For the individual it can include loss of self-confidence, anxiety, stress and serious psychological injury. For the organisation it can include increased staff turnover, absenteeism, reduced productivity, damage to the organisation's reputation and inability to meet the needs of the community.

The official definition of bullying provided by Safe Work Australia, and reflected in our FRNSW *Preventing and Responding to Bullying and Harassment Policy and Procedure* is:

“repeated and unreasonable behaviour directed towards a worker or a group of workers that creates a risk to health and safety”.

While some staff may not be aware of the formal definition of bullying, recent research by BeyondBlue has found that half of all Australian employees will experience workplace bullying during their careers.

FEEDBACK FROM COMMISSIONER'S STRATEGY DAYS

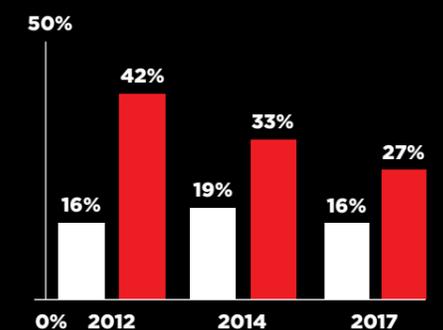
During July 2017, the Commissioner held a number of formal strategy planning sessions attended by almost 800 operational, trades and administrative staff. The purpose of the sessions was to engage with staff at all levels of FRNSW to reaffirm who we are, why we do what we do and what we consider to be important for our future. During the sessions the theme of bullying was consistently raised as a key behaviour in the organisation that must stop. To affirm his commitment to fostering positive and respectful workplaces that are free from bullying, the Commissioner endorsed the creation of this Stop Bullying Action Plan.

FEEDBACK FROM SURVEYS

First released in 2012, the NSW Public Service Commission's (PSC) People Matter Employee Survey provides NSW public sector employees with an opportunity to comment on their organisation and workplace, including engagement, leadership, values, diversity, misconduct and the presence of bullying behaviour.

To the right is a graph that illustrates the rates of FRNSW respondents witnessing and experiencing bullying from 2012, 2014 and 2017.

WORKPLACE BULLYING



■ % of Respondents who had personally experienced bullying in the workplace in the previous 12 months.
 ■ % of Respondents who had witnessed bullying in the workplace in the previous 12 months.

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

BULLYING:

“repeated and unreasonable behaviour directed towards a worker or a group of workers that creates a risk to health and safety”.

FEEDBACK FROM SURVEYS (CONT.)

While the overall People Matter Employee Survey results show a trend of lower rates of FRNSW respondents experiencing or witnessing bullying in the last 12 months, and FRNSW bullying rates are lower than those reported for the Justice Cluster, the numbers remain unacceptably high.

FEEDBACK FROM FORMAL COMPLAINTS

In the 2016/17 financial year, the Professional Standards Branch received 57 bullying complaints and finalised 42 matters where bullying was identified as an issue. Of the nine formal investigations that took place, there were three that resulted in disciplinary action and one that resulted in another outcome.

The majority of complaints received by Professional Standards involve workplace conflict or other inappropriate behaviours, but do not necessarily meet a threshold of bullying. Even if a matter is not assessed as bullying, steps are still taken to address and resolve the issues identified. Most complaints were managed by direct remedial action, with monitoring and recording of the incident conducted by Professional Standards. This is an important step that allows FRNSW to take stronger action if a pattern of unreasonable behaviour emerges.

FRNSW RISK FACTORS



ORGANISATIONAL FACTORS

It is critical we understand the factors that can contribute to an environment where bullying can flourish. According to the *Guide for Preventing and Responding to Workplace Bullying* published by Safe Work Australia, certain jobs (including firefighting positions) may be subject to several factors which further exacerbate the level and consequences of bullying and undermine efforts intended to address bullying.

These include:

- Work activities which expose workers to higher levels of trauma
- High level of job demand and workload
- Limited job control
- Imminent, widespread organisational change
- Strict, directive forms of decision making inherent in hierarchical organisations
- Shift work, and work schedule interference with work-life balance
- Complications managing injured workers
- A negative imbalance of work demands and work resources

LEADERSHIP

Leadership styles may also lead to claims of bullying, for example:

- autocratic behaviour which is strict and directive and does not allow workers to be involved in decision making
- behaviour where a manager is too relaxed and consequently little or no supervision or guidance is provided to workers or responsibilities are inappropriately delegated to junior staff
- abusive and demeaning behaviour which may include inappropriate or derogatory language, standing over an employee or excluding them

Bullying can sometimes be the result of the mismanagement of workplace conflict. While it is a normal occurrence for employees to disagree and have arguments, poor conflict management skills by parties or managers may escalate existing problems and can manifest in bullying behaviours in the workplace.

EMPLOYEE GROUPS

Groups of workers that may be more at risk of being exposed to workplace bullying include:

- Young workers
- Apprentices/trainees
- Workers in a minority group because of ethnicity, religion, disability, gender or sexual preference
- New workers
- Injured workers and workers on return to work plan

Comprehensive information regarding bullying is available in the *FRNSW Preventing and Responding to Bullying and Harassment Policy and Procedure*



HISTORICAL CONTEXT

THE STORY SO FAR...



A significant milestone event for FRNSW to review and improve its approach to managing bullying was the 2010 KPMG report titled *Review of Workplace Conduct Governance, Processes and Culture in FRNSW*.

The report made several recommendations for FRNSW regarding transparency, empowering staff and improving trust across the organisation with respect to managing bullying and other inappropriate behaviour.

Since the release of this report, a range of policies, procedures, resources and support structures have been established, including (but not limited to):

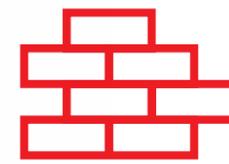
- Establishment of the Professional Standards Branch (formerly Workplace Standards)
- Establishment of a Statement of Values for FRNSW
- Strengthening internal policies and procedures for the management of bullying and harassment and other complaints
- Respectful Workplace Training, and implementation of alternative dispute resolution practices, such as conferencing and mediation
- Establishment of the Diversity and Inclusion Unit
- Reviewing and streamlining the disciplinary provisions and enhancement of the Professional Standards Branch to more effectively support employees and manage workplace issues

FRNSW also recognises promoting good mental health and wellbeing is key to an engaged and respectful workforce, which can help to reduce bullying rates. In recent years significant improvements have been made to supports available to all employees, including:

- Boosting peer support, Chaplaincy and Employee Assistance programs
- Appointment of an Occupational Psychologist
- Establishment of the WellCheck program providing psychological assessments in high-risk areas, particularly where workplace stressors or exposure to trauma are deemed to be elevated.
- Implementation of the RESPECT program and SANE Mindful Employer online program offered to all FRNSW supervisors
- Establishing a dedicated return-to-work team to proactively manage staff with workplace injuries

There has also been significant reform to FRNSW's recruitment and promotional processes, including the introduction of an Employment Screening Policy.

FRNSW BULLYING PREVENTION INITIATIVES

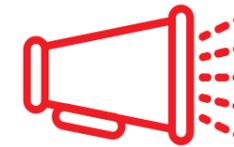


BUILDING A BETTER BRIGADE

The 'Building a Better Brigade' program was initiated by FRNSW following the release of the 2010 KPMG Report, commencing the process of organisational reform across FRNSW.

Within this period a revised set of core values were published, which prescribed the standards of behaviour expected of employees at all levels of the organisation. A 'Respectful Workplace Training Package' was delivered through the organisation which focused on appropriate workplace behaviour and how to resolve instances of conflict effectively at the local level.

This training incorporated the Straight Talk methodology, a tool that assists employees to communicate clearly when preparing for, and conducting, difficult conversations.



BE HEARD STRATEGY

Released in 2014, the Be Heard Strategy, was a three-year program designed to create and embed respectful behaviour in workplaces across FRNSW.

The program aims were to:

- Encourage employees to voice their concerns about bullying, harassment or other inappropriate behaviour and to Be Heard without fear of negative consequences
- Embed ethical behaviours and a healthy workplace culture at all levels of FRNSW
- Encourage early 'See Act Say' intervention to address and resolve inappropriate behaviour, eg: if an employee sees inappropriate behaviour they must act upon it and say something



GOVERNMENT SECTOR REFORM

Over the last few years there has been widespread reform across the NSW government sector, most notably with the introduction of the Government Sector Employment Act 2013 (GSE Act). The GSE Act replaced the Public Sector Employment and Management Act 2002. The GSE Act was part of the strategy to modernise the NSW Government Sector and provide a simplified statutory framework for employment and workforce management.

Part 2 of the GSE Act established the Ethical Framework for the Government Sector. Under the Act, each agency and all employees are required to conduct themselves in ways that are consistent with The Code of Ethics and Conduct for NSW government sector employees under the Public Service Commissioner's Direction No 1 of 2015. The Code sets out the standards of good conduct required of all employees, and the roles of managers, executives and agency heads in developing and maintaining an ethical workplace culture.

The FRNSW Code of Conduct and Ethics was amended to reflect these changes, and tailored to suit the organisational context of FRNSW. It was released in July 2017.

SO... WHAT'S NEXT?

The best approach to workplace bullying is to prevent it from occurring and a respectful and professional workforce is the key safeguard.

The *Respect, Reflect, Reset* campaign is designed to encourage employees to reflect on, and take ownership in creating and sustaining a positive and respectful workplace environment.

RESPECT

Respect is one of our key organisational values. Respect for each other, our role and our values and Code of Conduct and Ethics must underpin everything we do.



RESPECT IS...

- Treating others with courtesy, politeness
- Listening to others
- Acting in an inclusive manner
- Valuing oneself and others
- Valuing others ideas and contributions
- Collaborating with others



RESPECT IS NOT...

- Insulting people, putting people or their ideas down
- Marginalising, excluding or ignoring others
- Gossiping about others or treating them unfairly.

REFLECT

We must all reflect on how our behaviour contributes to an inclusive, positive and productive workplace.



REFLECTING IS...

- Evaluating yourself and how your behaviour or actions may have contributed to a situation
- Consider behaviour rationally and appreciate that most situations of conflict are caused by a number of factors
- The ability to analyse situations to see if things didn't go well how you could learn from that.



REFLECTING IS NOT...

- Blaming others and being hostile and defensive when challenged
- Not being willing to examine the role your behaviour may have played and refusing to learn from situations.

RESET

We all need to reset our mindset and step into a positive frame. We all have a responsibility to stop and reset inappropriate behaviour where we see it.



RESETTING IS...

- Displaying and promoting positivity in the workplace
- Being proactive not reactive
- Willingness to move forward and 'draw a line in the sand' following conflict.



RESETTING IS NOT...

- Refusing to move forward and remaining 'stuck in the past'
- Expecting everyone else to change but you
- Continuing to blame others.



FRNSW's Preventing and Responding to Bullying and Harassment Policy and Procedure provides the policy framework for defining, preventing and managing bullying behaviour.

This *Stop Bullying Plan 2018-2020* outlines specific actions and timeframes designed to further embed a positive and respectful workplace culture across FRNSW.

The Action Plan will be reviewed in December 2018, 2019 and 2020 and these reviews will be published for all employees to review.

Under the banner of the Public Service Commission's *Respect, Reflect, Reset* campaign, this Action Plan aims to encourage employees to reflect on, and take ownership in, creating and sustaining a positive and respectful workplace environment.

OUR FRNSW ACTION PLAN

3 STEPS

01. **RESPECT**
Prevention



02. **REFLECT**
Awareness and early intervention



03. **RESET**
FRNSW Response





01. RESPECT

THE IMPORTANCE OF PREVENTION

Our daily interaction with others in the workplace is critical and every employee has a responsibility to create and maintain a positive and respectful workplace.

It is important to address the underlying cause and context for bullying – the culture in which it flourishes.

The cornerstones of prevention are:

Ensuring a culture of respect

Values based behaviour

Strong and ethical leadership

Bullying behaviour does not occur in isolation - it is part of a workplace culture that tolerates its existence. Culture - “the way we work around here” - encompasses a number of different and often intangible, aspects of an organisation and its environment.

A respectful, ethical and professional workforce is the best safeguard against bullying and other inappropriate behaviour. That is why FRNSW is focused on promoting positive interpersonal relationships and workplace cultures. At FRNSW there should be a norm of ‘respect’ that makes bullying unacceptable, unusual and effectively eclipsed by a normative set of positive relationships.

Values

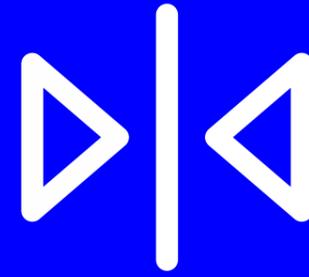
Values define what is most important to an organisation and act as a compass to guide employees in everything that they do. In the NSW government sector and in FRNSW, values underpin how we interact with our colleagues, the government, stakeholders and members of the community.

FRNSW has four core values that are essential to our success - Respect, Integrity, Service and Courage. These values need to be lived and breathed throughout the organisation.

Strong and ethical leadership

Leadership is inextricably linked with culture. The respectful and ethical tone of a workplace must start at the top. Positive respectful leaders reinforce a respectful culture and demonstrate the organisation’s commitment to respectful workplaces.

At FRNSW, all leaders have a responsibility to lead and promote an organisational culture that values high ethical standards and behaviour and must themselves lead by example. All staff can be leaders when it comes to values and culture and we all have a critical role in demonstrating strong and courageous leadership to ensure workplaces are healthy and respectful. The ‘reflect’ component of this strategy requires that we all reflect on the role we play in our workplaces and how we can contribute to positive, healthy environments.



02. REFLECT

AWARENESS + EARLY INTERVENTION

It is incumbent on each and every one of us to reflect on how our behaviour contributes to a positive workplace.

Where a situation of conflict has occurred, staff members are expected to reflect on the situation and on the impact their own behaviour may have had.

Adopting a reflective and balanced opinion (as opposed to blaming others) is integral to building a respectful workplace culture.

Prevention of workplace bullying requires employees to be aware of relevant standards of behaviour, what constitutes workplace bullying, and what the procedure is for dealing with workplace bullying.

When staff report a matter as bullying and are then told it won't be managed as bullying, it is natural that some will feel disgruntled and unsupported. Additionally, where bullying is occurring and managers/colleagues don't recognise and report it, bullying can flourish. For those reasons, it's important we increase the awareness of factors contributing to bullying; what bullying is, what it is not, and options for resolution.

Frontline managers and frontline staff with leadership roles are in direct contact with employees and are most likely to witness the occurrence of inappropriate behaviour which may lead to workplace bullying. If poor behaviour is tolerated by managers, employees assume it is acceptable and over time it may become entrenched behaviour, allowing an environment where bullying can flourish.

FRNSW encourages direct management action as soon as unreasonable behaviour occurs and before it becomes an entrenched pattern. Manager vigilance will enable early intervention in workplace conflict before it potentially escalates into bullying.

FRNSW aims to supports managers to:

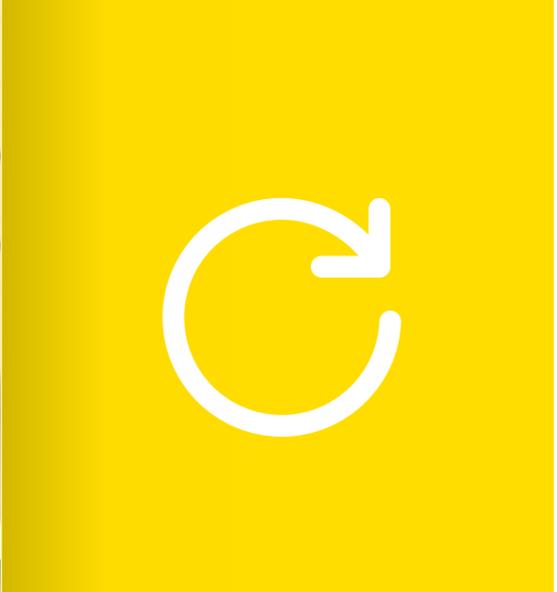
- Identify risks to the occurrence of workplace bullying
- Resolve issues in their infancy
- Ensure they can intervene in conflict without exacerbating the situation

Supporting employees and managers

Bullying can severely undermine an individual's confidence and self-esteem, making it difficult to speak up, especially if bullying is perceived to be part of the workplace culture.

Employees are less likely to report bullying if they:

- Don't recognise it
- Lack knowledge about bullying behaviours and its effects
- Are unsure about policy/procedure
- Don't know where to seek support
- Fear retribution from the bully or bullies, including losing employment
- Feel intimidated or embarrassed
- Believe bullying is part of the workplace culture and nothing will change
- Believe that opportunities for promotion in the organisation will be affected



03. RESET

FRNSW RESPONSE

We all have a responsibility to stop and 'reset' inappropriate behaviour where we see it.

If any employee has engaged in behaviour that is not acceptable, now is the time to reset.

FRNSW takes reports of bullying seriously. The response to workplace bullying is established by the *Preventing and Responding to Workplace Bullying and Harassment Policy and Procedure*.

All complaints are required to be reported to the Professional Standards Branch for central assessment and recording. When Professional Standards is notified of a matter, a formal triage process is instigated which assesses the nature of the matter, the circumstances involved and the most appropriate method of managing it.

Professional Standards recognises employees have a right to expect any complaint lodged in relation to an allegation of bullying will be dealt with fairly and confidentially and managed in a timely, and appropriate manner.

FRNSW is currently working with other emergency service agencies to identify a range of response mechanisms to effectively deal with bullying, in addition to misconduct investigations.

Additionally, Professional Standards is also reviewing its processes for managing complaints of bullying in a more efficient, transparent and holistic manner, including improved communication with all parties involved in the complaint process.

Evaluation and response

FRNSW will continually review our approach to managing workplace bullying by evaluating and analysing the occurrence of bullying in FRNSW on a regular basis.

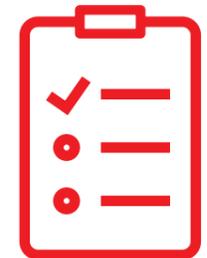
In addition, this plan will be reviewed, revised and updates published each December until 2020.

ACTION PLAN OBJECTIVES

ACTIVITY FOR 2018	TIMEFRAME
Regular values and bullying prevention training held at Induction and all formal promotional programs	BY JUNE 2018
Recording of video message from the Commissioner providing a strong message about the importance of values and leadership across FRNSW - and that there must be a commitment at all levels of FRNSW to bullying free workplaces	BY JUNE 2018
Promote EAP services, internal and external support available for all employees	BY JUNE 2018
Develop a comprehensive <i>Respect, Reflect, Reset</i> training program to be delivered across all areas of FRNSW	BY JULY 2018
Publish a <i>Statement of Business Ethics</i> to outline the standard of behaviour expected from third parties.	BY AUG 2018
Develop plan for delivery of <i>Respect, Reflect, Reset</i> training throughout FRNSW.	BY SEPT 2018
Identify suitable employees within FRNSW to deliver <i>Respect, Reflect, Reset</i> training	BY SEPT 2018
Develop a stand-alone flowchart to assist managers to resolve workplace conflict and inappropriate behaviour including bullying	BY SEPT 2018
Promote responsibility of managers to identify and respond to workplace conflict and inappropriate behaviour at the earliest reasonable opportunity	BY SEPT 2018
Promote clear avenues for people experiencing bullying to seek help	BY SEPT 2018
Provide guidance material for employees to clarify definition of bullying to support and encourage reporting	BY SEPT 2018
Display the FRNSW values in every FRNSW workplace/station	BY DEC 2018

This is a dynamic plan, feedback will be sought and integrated throughout the duration of this Plan, 2018-2020.

This will be published each year with outcomes expected and the next phase of the plan included.



ACTIVITY FOR 2018	TIMEFRAME
Revise the <i>Preventing and Responding to Workplace Bullying and Harassment Policy</i> and provide to FBEU and PSA for consultation	BY DEC 2018
Share stories of FRNSW Values in action via Commissioner's Corner and Professional Standards newsletter	BY DEC 2018
Develop a <i>Healthy Station Audit</i> to assist workplaces to recognise areas of risk and develop positive strategies to promote a healthy workplace	BY DEC 2018
Review of <i>Local Management Toolkit</i> and redevelopment of Professional Standards intranet page including new Anti-Bullying webpage, with links to internal and external resources	BY DEC 2018
Develop material to better support employees involved in bullying matters	BY DEC 2018
Increased reporting to all staff on bullying matters and outcomes	BY DEC 2018
Development of fact sheets to assist parties to investigation understand the process	BY DEC 2018
Establish a procedure for examining each case of substantiated bullying and look at the factors involved.	BY DEC 2018
<p>For example;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What type of bullying occurred? - What were the consequences? - What factors contributed to the workplace bullying? - How could it have been prevented? - What action was taken and why? - What could be done to prevent and manage bullying? 	

PROPOSED ACTIVITIES: 2019 – 2020

Yearly ongoing reviews of this Action Plan will provide new actions for inclusion, however at this stage it is anticipated that activities will include:

- Potential creation of Commissioner Values Awards Program recognising employees with traits and actions aligned with FRNSW and NSW government values (subject to consultation with the Commissioner)
- Preparation and roll out of face-to-face and online modules to provide necessary bullying and harassment and related training to employees
- Promote EAP services including Manager Assist and external support organisations
- Develop guidance material including self-assessment of management style, for employees to recognise if they may be exhibiting bullying behaviours
- Establishment of workplace 'Confidants' to provide additional advice and support across all FRNSW workplaces
- Organisation of further Conferencing Facilitator Training in FRNSW
- Development of a "rapid response team" model to conduct early, thorough intervention where high-risk workplace is identified
- Highlight the importance of the Bystander in speaking up against inappropriate behaviour in the workplace
- Establishment of workplace 'Confidants' to provide advice and support across all FRNSW workplaces
- Preparation and roll out of face-to-face and online modules to provide necessary bullying and harassment training to all employees
- Development of new "investigation plan" and "risk assessment" template for all bullying investigations
- Revision of Procedural Guidelines for Management of Conduct
- Monitoring and review of workforce practice indicators such as turnover, absenteeism, exit survey information, and workers compensation data on psychological injury
- Review of investigation KPIs for bullying investigation timeframes, and frequency of contact with complainant and respondent
- Liaise with Justice and other emergency service organisations to develop sector-wide strategy for seeking better staff feedback on the prevalence of bullying, potential roadblocks to reporting and strategies for prevention.





**FURTHER
INFORMATION:**
Please contact
Professional
Standards on
9265 2826.



COVER OPTIONS



OPTION 1



OPTION 2



OPTION 3

INSIDE COVER OPTIONS



OPTION 1



OPTION 2

ACTION PLAN OPTIONS

ACTION PLAN OBJECTIVES

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STOP BULLYING ACTION PLAN - 23

OPTION 1



OPTION 2

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STOP BULLYING ACTION PLAN - 23