

**INFORMATION SHEET**

**What is a bystander?\***

CASSE's approach aims to reduce bullying by encouraging bystanders to become ‘upstanders'. That is, taking an active role in stopping bullying or assisting victims to exit bullying situations. CASSE's approach also recognises that the bystander is a part of the problem affecting the climate of a school. The message is not to punish the bystander, but to motivate and recognize when a student or staff member steps in and stops bullying at any level.

Many students come to school ready to learn, but are overwhelmed by the constant tension and disruption in their classrooms, on the bus, in the schoolyard, or at lunch. These students become the bystanders, lured into watching destructive power dynamics being acted out by other students and adults in their school, and often, in their homes. This is the largest group in any school. They come ready to learn, but get caught up in a whirl of distracting power struggles.

## Characteristics of a bystander:

## enjoys watching fights

## stands around and watches fights and does nothing to help

## encourages the bully to fight

## helps the bully by cheering for him/her and looking out for the teacher or parent

## may freeze with fear when they are watching a fight

**There are four types of bystanders:**

1. Bully Bystander - supports and encourages the bully
2. Avoidant Bystander- denies the problem
3. Victim Bystander - freezes in fear and cannot function
4. Ambivalent Bystander - not committed to any posture and thus can be recruited against power struggles

*\*These notes have been used with the generous permission of Professor Stuart Twemlow and Dr Frank Sacco. Professor Twemlow and Dr Sacco have been visionaries and leaders in working to find solutions to bullying in all areas of society.*

This resource and further information about Creating A Safe Supportive Environment is available to download at [**www.casse.org.au/resources**](http://www.casse.org.au/resources).