

Tuesday, 16 October 2018

Premier's 'No quick fix' response to cyberbullying a winner for the community

yourtown welcomes the Queensland Premier's endorsement of the Anti-Cyberbullying Taskforce recommendations released yesterday, which propose a long-term, multi-faceted, all of community approach to tackling cyberbullying.

yourtown's Head of Strategy and Research John Dalgleish says Kids Helpline gives voice to the many thousands of children and young people who contact the national Kids Helpline 24/7 help service each year.

"In 2017, 3,523 counselling contacts to Kids Helpline were about bullying with 83% of these related to bullying at school. Twenty-seven (27%) of young people bullied told us online or texting elements were part of the bullying," Mr Dalgleish said.

"The absence of accepted behaviours for social media has added another dimension to bullying behaviours with sometimes tragic results.

"We know there's 'no quick fix' to bullying and as the Premier points out we need a 'do everything' approach to create effective solutions.

"We as a community – including young people, schools and parents – have a shared responsibility to develop strategies now and for the long-term if we are to effectively address this issue and create lasting solutions."

A 2018 Kids Helpline survey done to inform the work of the taskforce of 1,264 children and young people in Australia found 716 had been cyberbullied. Over half (53%) who said they had cyberbullied another person had themselves been cyberbullied while almost all (99.6%) had witnessed cyberbullying.

"We need to educate and empower young people by building resilience but also by encouraging empathy and up-stander behaviour helping children and young people resolve conflicts, recognise and manage feelings associated with being confronted and learn how to embrace differences," Mr Dalgleish said.

"Remembering we as adults must model the behaviours we expect any member of our society to demonstrate is hugely important as is teaching children at a young age that getting help is not a sign of weakness but a sign of strength.

"Less than half (41%) of young people we surveyed who had experienced cyberbullying said they had told their parents. Let your children know you are there for them and where to get help.

"Education programs like the Optus Digital Thumbprint with Kids Helpline available to all primary schools nationally are also crucial. Professional counsellors talk with students and their teachers in classes about issues such as respect, online safety and cyberbullying, and most importantly, to reach out for help when needed.

"Equally important are programs that teach parents and other adults about cyberbullying, including how to put safety measures in place in the home and what to do to report and put a stop to the behaviour."

Mr Dalgleish said a recent Kids Helpline survey of more than 500 parents' about cyberbullying revealed only 18% felt confident they would respond effectively if their child told them they were being bullied online. Around half (49%) said they did not know where to go to report cyberbullying and less than half (44%) said they had the resources needed to prevent their child being cyberbullied.

"We need to ensure measures to counteract bullying behaviours are easily understood by everyone making fast and decisive responses possible including making it easy to block and report negative and risky behaviour online," Mr Dalgleish said.

“It’s time we put the energy into delving into the many reasons young people bully and how we as a community can work together to guide positive relationships and behaviours, not just in Queensland but across Australia.”

Part of Kids Helpline’s response to cyberbullying and cybersafety included a targeted social media marketing campaign specifically for young people using social media early this year.

New tips and information pages were developed for kids, teens, young adults and parents offering practical advice about dealing with cyberbullying and bullying and encouraging help seeking.

There was an 200% increase in page views of Kids Helpline’s new targeted self-help information about managing cyberbullying and bullying from known Queensland locations (i.e. 4,030 between 19 Feb – 30 Sep 2017 compared to 12,091 between 19 Feb – 30 Sep 2018) and an increase of 354% was recorded for all traffic to these self-help pages nationally (21,643 between 19 Feb – 30 Sep 2017 compared to 98,316 between 19 Feb – 30 Sep 2018).

“The response to this campaign is very encouraging and demonstrates that if we create resources for children and young people that offer practical advice and solutions they will use them,” Mr Dalgleish said.

“We need to let our children know that getting help means bullying can and will be stopped and to never stop reaching out.”

Kids Helpline is Australia’s only free, private and confidential 24/7 phone and online counselling service specifically for children and young people aged 5 to 25 years. FREE call 1800 55 1800 or www.kidshelpline.com.au Tips for children, young people and parents and carers about bullying can be accessed on our website.

Kids Helpline works closely with the Office of the eSafety Commissioner to support children and young people who are experiencing online safety issues. Young people can report cyberbullying at www.esafety.gov.au

To access **yourtown**’s submission to the Anti-Cyberbullying Task Force including the two survey reports referenced in this release go to <https://www.yourtown.com.au/insights/advocacy>

Reminder: please include Kids Helpline’s contact details at the end of broadcast coverage and articles where children and young people may need support.

-ENDS-

INTERVIEW/PHOTO OPPORTUNITIES

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