



Review into the non-educational use of mobile devices in NSW schools

A submission to the:
New South Wales Government

Prepared by:
yourtown, November 2018

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About yourtown

yourtown is a national organisation and registered charity that aims to tackle the issues affecting the lives of young people. Established in 1961, **yourtown's** mission is **to enable young people, especially those who are marginalised and without voice, to improve their quality of life.**

yourtown provides a range of face to face and virtual services to young people and families seeking support. These services include:

- Kids Helpline, a national 24/7 telephone and on-line counselling and support service for 5 to 25 year olds with special capacity for young people with mental health issues
- Accommodation responses to young parents with children who experience homelessness and women and children seeking refuge from domestic and family violence
- Young Parent Programs offering case work, individual and group work support and child development programs for young parents and their children
- Parentline, a telephone counselling service for parents and carers'
- Expressive Therapy interventions for young children and infants who have experienced trauma and abuse or been exposed to violence
- Employment programs and social enterprises, which support young people to re-engage with education and/or employment, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific services.

Kids Helpline

Kids Helpline (KHL) is Australia's only national 24/7, private support and counselling service specifically for children and young people aged 5 to 25 years. It offers counselling support via telephone, email and a real-time web platform. Kids Helpline is staffed by a paid professional workforce, with all counsellors holding a tertiary qualification.

Since March 1991, young Australians have been contacting Kids Helpline about a diverse group of issues ranging from everyday topics such as family, friends and school to more serious issues of child abuse, bullying, mental health issues, drug and alcohol use, self-injury and suicide.

In 2017, Kids Helpline counsellors responded to over 150,000 contacts from children and young people across the nation, with an additional 600,000 unique visitors accessing online support resources from the website.

Introduction

The non-educational use of mobile phones at school is an issue which divides many people. At **yourtown**, we are certainly aware of how beneficial mobile phones are to children and young people at school. They are critical to their social interactions with friends, an important safety and logistical communication tool with their parents and guardians and provide access to unlimited educational resources and information. Mobile phones are also a vital channel for children and young people seeking support from Kids Helpline (KHL), our 24/7 phone and online, counselling and support services. In 2017, 86% of all phone attempts to KHL were from mobile phones, with attempts made at all hours of the day and night.

However, we also know from children and young people who contact KHL, that mobile phones can have damaging effects on young lives, with their omnipresence and seeming omnipotence as a tool for cyberbullying being a case in point. We therefore commend the NSW Government's review into their non-educational use at school and consideration of a range of policy and intervention approaches to effectively manage potential harm.

As we explained in our submissions to the Queensland Anti-Cyberbullying Taskforce,¹ and to the Senate's inquiry into the adequacy of Federal legislation to capture cyberbullying,² we believe that there is an absence of accepted, community-wide codes of conduct and standards about the use of mobile phones (and computers and the internet more generally), which has allowed inappropriate and sometimes extremely dangerous behaviour to flourish. The result can be significant and long-lasting emotional and mental health impacts on both those who use them, for example, too much, or for example, on those who find themselves the targets of cyberbullies.

Indeed, mobile phones and the internet have meant for our youngest generation that bullying, for example, is no longer confined to school grounds, with cyberbullies able to reach their victims in the safety of their own homes and with arguably the potential, therefore, to do greater damage. Furthermore, it is clear that inappropriate mobile phone use is not the preserve of children and young people. For anyone using mobiles, social media and the internet; be they politicians, celebrities, business chiefs, online stars, teachers, parents and young or old – online bullying, aggression and access to harmful content has become a possible outcome of online activity.

Hence, we see a response from schools to this issue as an essential but nonetheless single part of a multidimensional response needed to address a community-wide, public health problem. For this reason, and as we explain in more detail in our submission below, we commend efforts to tackle the inappropriate use of mobile phones at school as part of a multifaceted solution, whilst emphasising that banning the use of mobile phones at school cannot resolve the issue alone. Problematic behaviour would continue outside the school gates and continue to impact negatively on the health, wellbeing and education of children and young people both during and outside school hours.

To help reduce instances of cyberbullying, image-based abuse and online harm, we therefore advocate a whole school approach where schools work with parents, families and the wider community and develop many different local strategies to help educate all parties concerned about the healthy and appropriate use of mobile phones. This was the position recommended by the recent Queensland Anti-Cyberbullying Taskforce, of which **yourtown** was a member.³ It is our hope that in doing so future generations of children and parents will be equipped with the skills to use mobile phones in an appropriate way, which elevates rather than jeopardises their wellbeing.

¹<https://www.yourtown.com.au/sites/default/files/document/Prevention%20and%20reduction%20of%20cyberbullying%20of%20young%20people.pdf>

²<https://www.yourtown.com.au/sites/default/files/document/Adequacy%20Of%20Criminal%20Laws%20To%20Capture%20Cyberbullying.pdf>

³<https://campaigns.premiers.qld.gov.au/antibullying/taskforce/>

yourtown Submission

In view of the work and research we have undertaken in this area,⁴ our submission considers mobile phones and their role in facilitating cyberbullying and what can be done to address this harmful behaviour in particular. However, we also firmly believe that strategies that seek to reduce cyberbullying will help address other harmful behaviours that children and young people engage in at school, including accessing harmful online content and image-based abuse, as well as other repercussions from mobile phone use such as over-use.

Below, we set out the strategies we consider to be necessary if school responses are to effectively reduce harmful, non-educational use of mobile phones at school.

- **A multi-pronged, public health approach**

yourtown has been a strong advocate of a public health approach to reducing cyberbullying given the scale of the issue and that harmful online behaviour and activities have the potential to be carried out by and detrimentally affect each and everyone of us: adults, young people and children from all walks of life. Our relationship with mobile phones and our interactions online are learnt behaviours, with each and everyone of us influencing the behaviours of others through our inappropriate use of, for example, our phones at school, work or at the dinner table, or through entering into aggressive or derogatory discussions online with our friends or strangers. This fact is particularly important when considering children and young people's relationship with their phones and ways to stop them mimicking harmful behaviour. Hence, we strongly welcome the approach that the Queensland Anti-Cyberbullying Taskforce has recommended in its report 'Adjust our settings: A community approach to address cyberbullying among children and young people in Queensland'.⁵

The report presents a framework for a social and public health approach to address cyberbullying amongst children and young people, which covers strategies focusing on parents and carers, schools and students, young people post-school age, social media and legal approaches. As the Taskforce concludes, we believe that each of these strategies must be implemented if we are to make progress in reducing cyberbullying and, more widely, the harmful use of mobile phones. Indeed, we see that through a well-planned, long-term public health approach to addressing cyberbullying, a consistent set of codes or norms of healthy mobile phone use can be engendered over generations so that perhaps today's children will be better equipped to deal with harmful behaviour and, more of them, able to appropriately engage with mobile phones when they are parents.

⁴ In addition to our membership of the Queensland Anti-Cyberbullying Taskforce, we have undertaken:

- KHL data analyses. KHL counsellors record cyber safety concerns of contacts to KHL including disclosures of cyberbullying. In 2017, 5% of the 66,386 counselling contacts responded to by Kids Helpline counsellors involved a disclosure of cyber-safety concerns, 31% of those related to cyberbullying.
- A survey of children and young people (2018). This online survey of 1,264 young people aimed to examine the help-seeking behaviour of young people who have experienced cyberbullying and cyber aggression. The study provided insight into the nature of cyberbullying experiences including those of cyberbullying victims, bystanders and cyberbullies themselves, and allowed for estimates of the prevalence of help-seeking behaviour and for the identification of the most helpful sources of support. <https://www.yourtown.com.au/sites/default/files/document/Prevention%20and%20reduction%20of%20cyberbullying%20of%20young%20people%20Appendix%201.pdf>
- A survey of parents (2018). This study surveyed 510 Australian parents online about their experiences of and confidence in being able to identify, prevent, report, and stop cyberbullying among their children, including those who are victims of cyberbullying and/or cyberbullying perpetrators. <https://www.yourtown.com.au/sites/default/files/document/Prevention%20and%20reduction%20of%20cyberbullying%20of%20young%20people%20Appendix%202.pdf>
- A literature search (2018). This search explored contemporary literature and research into cyberbullying, including national and international research, and covering prevention and response approaches and interventions.

⁵ <https://campaigns.premiers.qld.gov.au/antibullying/taskforce/>

To date policy responses to cyber issues have not been coordinated or system-wide in scope and this means despite initiatives, such as the Student Wellbeing Hub, the eSafety Commissioner or Kids Helpline@School (of which the eSafety Commissioner is a partner), more investment in resources to better educate children, young people, adults and stakeholders is still required. Through our KHL contacts on cyber safety, we know that children and young people are unsure about what to do and who to turn to for support and action, and feel powerless and isolated. We also know that often they do not feel that their parents or teachers can be confided in or will help them. Hence, there is clearly a need to address these gaps.

A multi-sectoral and coordinated approach is required that seeks to prevent cyberbullying and online harm through society-wide and targeted education programs and support victims and perpetrators through adequate counselling, rehabilitation and other support services. It should also aim to appropriately use the law to deter and prosecute serious cyberbullying and image-based abuse offences as well as placing legal duties and social expectations on social media providers to remove offensive material in a timely manner and to develop supporting technologies to more effectively deal with harmful and unwanted online use. Without this multipronged approach and investment, the impact of any legal consequences or action will continue to remain minimal, whilst critically, our children and young people will not be equipped, know where to turn or find adequately resourced support services, to effectively deal with their cyberbullying experiences.

- **A whole school approach**

As part of this public health approach, and noting the importance of schools in educating children and young people about online interactions as well as in effectively responding to harmful uses of smart phones, a whole school approach to addressing this issue is needed. Simply banning the use of or the non-educational use of mobile phones at school would not address cyberbullying, image-based abuse or the access to harmful content and their effects on young minds and, most importantly, would not equip children and young people with the skills they need to engage online throughout their childhood but also as an adult.

The report of the Queensland Ant-Cyberbullying Taskforce recommends a whole school approach that includes:

1) Involving parents and carers

We believe that this is a critical part of any effective school response to this issue given that parents are first educators and that their children will learn and adopt many of their views, principles and behaviours. However, many parents have not learnt the skills to appropriately navigate the online world and respond to the problems they encounter whilst accessing the digital world themselves.

Our survey with parents about their experiences of and confidence in being able to identify, prevent, report, and stop cyberbullying among their children revealed some important findings. For example, a significant proportion of parents did not feel that they have the knowledge and skills to be able to identify, manage and respond to their children's cyberbullying experiences. They also showed that parents who have current or past experience of their child/ren having been cyberbullied (22% of total respondents) were less confident than those who stated that their child/ren had not been the target of cyberbullying (75%), as shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure I: Parents who reported lack of knowledge and resources in relation to cyberbullying

Statement	% of parents who DISAGREED with each statement		
	Parents with children currently being cyberbullied	Parents with children cyberbullied in the past	Parents with children not ever cyberbullied
I know where to go to report cyberbullying	27%	49%	37%
I am confident that my child would tell me if they were being bullied online	20%	23%	12%
I have the resources I need to prevent my child being cyberbullied	26%	44%	37%
I have the resources I need to stop my child being cyberbullied if this were to happen	26%	41%	33%
I feel confident that I would respond effectively if my child told me they were being bullied online	33%	18%	13%

There were also a number of differences in confidence based on parental characteristics:

- fathers were significantly more confident than mothers that they have the resources to identify cyberbullying and to assist them in preventing and stopping their child from being bullied online.
- older parents (40s and 50s) were less confident than younger parents (20s and 30s) that they have the resources to prevent and stop their child from being bullied online.

Ensuring that parents are equipped to support our children in relation to cyberbullying is important. Our survey with children and young people showed that when children did disclose to their parents that they were being cyberbullied, they were the most helpful (compared to their friends, teachers, counsellors, online community, e-Safety Commissioner and the police). One respondent said: "My parents helped me so much. They went to the school and demanded that more be done to stop the bullying done by the school students and a lot was done by the school". Given the importance of parents as a source of support and assistance to their children, parents must be appropriately equipped to encourage and receive help-seeking (for more information on this and on wider help-seeking sources see recommendation 3).

Finally, given the high rates of witnessing and perpetrating of cyberbullying and cyber aggression it is important that parents are encouraged and supported to speak to their children not just about being a victim of cyberbullying but also their role as a possible aggressor and bystander.

2) Providing education at school

At **yourtown**, we highly value early education as a powerful tool to improve the lives and resilience of children and young people confronted with a range of complex and challenging issues. That is why we offer free intervention and prevention sessions to primary schools across Australia delivered by counsellors on issues such as peer relationships, bullying, cyber safety and help-seeking.⁶ However, from analysing the KHL

⁶ There are two streams offered by Kids Helpline at school: 1) The Optus Digital Thumbprint stream aims to promote digital respect, responsibility, resilience and empathy and online safety. 2) The Bupa Wellbeing stream covers topics such as developing resilience, bullying, peer and friendship related issues and transitioning to high school.

data and our survey datasets, it is clear that children and young people lack knowledge and skills about online safety, behaviour and relationships and do not know where to seek help when confronted by an issue.

We are aware that some schools in Australia have their own education programs that aim to prevent and reduce cyberbullying. However, we strongly believe that the development and implementation of a nation-wide framework specifically on cyberbullying incorporated into the national curriculum would be most effective to ensure that all children and young people receive adequate education in this area. A notable international example of an evidenced-based program designed to combat cyberbullying is Finland's KiVA (kindness in Finnish) program.⁷ The elements of the program include teaching communication and social skills, empathy and coping skills and digital citizenship through a range of face-to-face and online delivery strategies. Subject areas as outlined in the KiVa initiative need to be incorporated into the national curriculum. In addition, our literature search uncovered the following factors as important success factors in school-based, anti-cyberbullying programs:

- Whole-school approach to curriculum delivery
- Program endorsement and leadership by principal
- Teachers trained in program delivery
- Pastoral care staff trained in dealing with cyberbullying issues
- Clear school protocol for reporting and responding to cyberbullying
- High levels of confidence amongst teachers in dealing with cyberbullying issues
- High levels of confidence amongst teachers in their own digital literacy skills and understanding
- High levels of student confidence in program delivery
- Long-term program
- Involvement of parents

3) Providing education about relationships, respect and bullying

Relationships and respect

Our survey with children and young people about their cyberbullying experiences revealed that there are significant differences between diverse groups and the levels and types of cyberbullying that they experience. For example, respondents who reported being cyberbullied were significantly more likely to be female even when accounting for the higher respondent rate of females. In addition, more females reported receiving rude or upsetting images than males (34% and 24% respectively) and to have embarrassing images of them shared (36% and 28% respectively). The latter two findings are in keeping with research that has shown girls and women are more at risk of image-based abuse than boys and men.⁸

Respondents with a disability were also significantly more likely than respondents who did not have a disability to be cyberbully victims, with 34% of all those who had been cyberbullied reporting to have a disability. Like traditional forms of bullying, this finding seemingly shows that difference to established cultural 'norms' can be seen as a target of cyberbullies and that there is an issue around respecting diversity that needs to be addressed. Furthermore, the very nature of the internet and social media mean that their users may be more likely to engage in disrespectful behaviour given that they do not physically see the response of those who they upset and therefore have less empathy with them, and that they can attack others anonymously, freeing their inhibitions and allowing them to say whatever they like with little consequence.

⁷ <http://www.kivaprogram.net>

⁸ For example, see the Report 2/56 of the Committee on Children and Young People of the Parliament of New South Wales' (November, 2016) on the Sexualisation of children and young people.

To reduce such cyberbullying and ensure that children and young people value and embrace their own differences and the differences of others, age appropriate and developmentally appropriate education programs for children of all ages are required, tailored to their specific communication preferences. Such education will have obvious benefits for our communities and relationships more broadly and help to ensure greater understanding about people and their backgrounds and more positive interactions between people as a result.

Bullying

Children and young people are clearly widely affected by cyberbullying as a victim, bystander, cyberbully, as two of these or all three. We therefore believe that it is important that education seeks to assist all children and young people to effectively manage and support these situations. This will include:

- **How to effectively respond to aggressive or bullying behaviour online.** Findings from our survey with children and young people showed that a pervading culture of cyberbullying and/or cyber aggression seems to foster further acts of cyberbullying, and that some cyberbullies are motivated by having been a victim of cyberbullying or cyber aggression themselves. For example, 53% of respondents who had perpetrated cyberbullying had been cyberbullied themselves, with many reportedly engaging in cyberbullying purely as an act of retaliation or justice-seeking. Furthermore, almost 100% of perpetrators had witnessed cyberbullying. In short, it seems that aggressive online behaviours reproduce and can result in further aggression or a cyberbullying culture, highlighting the need for online users to be effectively equipped with the knowledge and skills in how to keep calm in the face of aggressive or bullying behaviour and take appropriate action, which will not cause further issues.
- **How to be an “upstander”.** As bystander intervention is an extremely effective strategy for dealing with bullies (now sometimes promoted as “upstander” intervention), we believe that significant attention must be given to educating bystanders. Again, in our survey of children and young people’s experiences of cyberbullying, some 96% of participants reported witnessing cyberbullying acts online, suggestive of how prevalent witnessing cyberbullying may be in young people’s lives and that it could be a significant resource to help reduce cyberbullying behaviour. Indeed, a large percentage of respondents had witnessed all forms of cyberbullying, including someone being called names (87%), having embarrassing photos shared (67%) and being physically threatened (57%). Hence, children and young people need to be encouraged and empowered to appropriately stand up - e.g. through not exacerbating the situation and minimising the risk that they too become a target - to a range of different forms of cyberbullying.
- **Understanding the seriousness of cyberbullying.** 62% of respondents to our survey of children and young people reported having carried out cyberbullying acts and many of them glossed over their behaviour as normal child behaviour and development. For example, one respondent said: “It’s simply child culture. If you’re not mean then you end up with no friends and that itself is pretty crushing”. We strongly believe that whilst conflict is a part of human interactions and children and young people should be equipped to effectively engage in and deal with conflict, (cyber)bullying should never be tolerated.

In addition, other perpetrators suggested that they cyberbullied as a result of their peers’ actions, as one respondent explained: “Other people starting doing it and I joined in”. Another significant group of perpetrators reported that they engaged in cyberbullying as a result of being cyberbullied themselves (53% of respondents who reported perpetrating a cyberbullying act had been cyberbullied themselves). One respondent stated: “[I had] trouble with expressing anger or sadness after being bullied before - [and it’s] easier to hide on social media. [I] would never do it again regardless”.

With nearly all respondents (99.6%) who had committed cyberbullying acts having witnessed cyberbullying themselves, it may be that they feel such behaviour is commonplace and therefore not a serious issue, and instead simply 'normal' behaviour. All children and young people need to understand the serious impact that cyberbullying can have on the long-term wellbeing of their peers and other people.

4) Developing school policy in consultation with the community

Given the level of division in opinion that exists in relation to whether smart phones should be banned at school, the Queensland Anti-Cyberbullying Taskforce recommended that every school should be responsible for developing school policy about mobile phone use. However, it stressed that these policies should be drafted in consultation with the whole school community so that protocols encompass and accommodate local community and student experiences, views and needs.

As the Queensland Taskforce concluded, however, we agree that banning mobile phones at school will not prevent the inappropriate and harmful use of phones and its effects will continue to be felt by students at school and by the school, even if cyberbullying, for example, occurred after school hours. Indeed, studies have shown that where mobile phones have been banned at school, no noticeable difference in cyberbullying has resulted.⁹ Furthermore, we believe that a ban of smart phones or of their non-educational use at school would inhibit children and young people from seeking help when they have been the victim of online harm for fear there will be repercussions should the event have occurred during school hours.

We strongly believe that a far more effective solution to banning smart phones at school is educating students so they have the skills to appropriately interact with their phones as well as respond to online harm when it arises. That is not to say that we consider that there are no benefits from restricting the use of mobile phones whilst at school, or indeed outside school. Some studies have shown that limiting the use of phones at school results in better educational outcomes,¹⁰ whilst ensuring that students and the whole community understands that mobile phones have their place and should not dominate lives will undoubtedly have positive impacts on relationships and health and wellbeing. However, we support the development of local school policy on the best way to restrict use so that protocols meet the community's needs and accommodate existing, practical realities and resources.

In addition to these four key elements presented by the Taskforce to a whole-school approach, we would add three further elements that schools should:

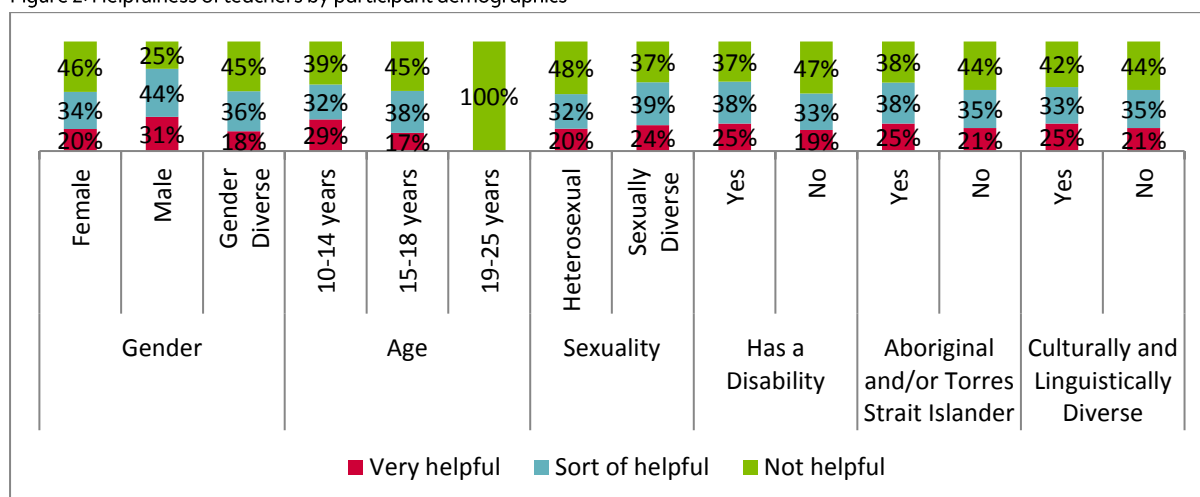
5) Educate teachers about online and smart phone harm

It is apparent from our survey with children and young people that some teachers lack the knowledge and skills required to resolve cyberbullying issues, with our young survey respondents rating them as unhelpful, with as much as 48% of one group of respondents (heterosexual group) rating them as unhelpful (males) - see the Figure 2 below. The 19-25 year old group would obviously not have had a teacher, explaining their rating.

⁹ <https://campaigns.premiers.qld.gov.au/antibullying/taskforce/>

¹⁰ <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/may/16/schools-mobile-phones-academic-results>

Figure 2: Helpfulness of teachers by participant demographics



With most cyberbullied participants knowing who their bully was (81%) - often a friend or a school peer - and also being bullied in person (61%), we believe that teachers are likely to see or be aware of this bullying and be able to intervene. In addition, we know that the success of programs such as KiVA has depended in part on teachers' involvement and commitment to stamping out cyberbullying in their school and we therefore believe that teachers have an important role to play in reducing cyberbullying.

However, we also recognise that there is currently a high expectation on teachers and schools - arguably particularly by parents - that they are responsible for resolving many social issues. Whilst teachers and schools clearly have an important role in this sphere, their success will be limited if other key influencers in children and young people's lives, such as parents and the media, are not also appropriately educated and mirroring and promoting the same messages. Teachers and schools also require more resources to help them manage and respond to contemporary issues, like cyberbullying, which have no physical boundaries and can therefore play out at school or at home.

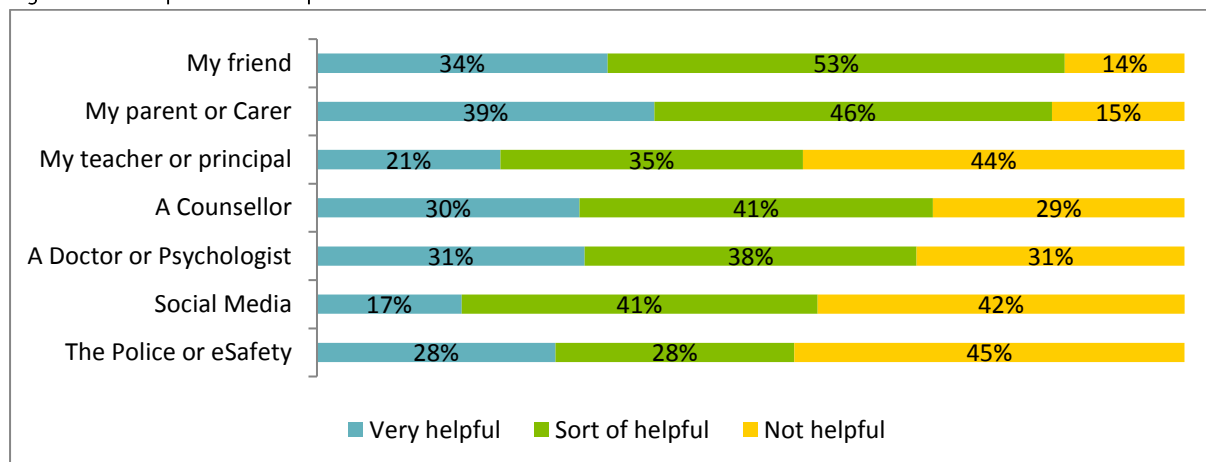
6) Encourage help-seeking

As an organisation that provides support to many children and young people confronted by a range of challenging issues, we know the value of help-seeking and the impact that seeking advice and support, or even of just having someone to listen following disclosure of an issue, has on the wellbeing of children and young people and their ability to effectively deal with these issues. In addition, much cyberbullying and online harm will take place out of the view of adults and detection will be unlikely; we need young people to turn to trusted adults to seek support. In our survey with children and young people about cyberbullying, respondents told us about the different sources of support they seek and which are the most helpful as well as the barriers and facilitators to accessing these supports.

The survey found that 78% of cyberbullied participants had told someone about their experience, most frequently a friend (59%). Parents and carers were the adults most frequently disclosed to with 41% of cyberbullied participants telling a parent or carer. Of potential concern, although it may be because they felt able to deal with the cyberbullying alone, 22% of participants had not told anyone, and that nearly half (45%) had not told any adult about being cyberbullied.

Figure 3 below presents who, amongst the sources of support about which we asked, they found to be most helpful, with parents being the most effective (39% found them to be very helpful) and teachers being found to be much less helpful (21% found them to be helpful).

Figure 3: How helpful was the response to the disclosure



There were some differences in the ways in which different groups of children and young people (by gender, age, cultural background and disability), sought help and whether they disclosed the issue itself to someone else:

- Young women were significantly more likely to disclose cyberbullying than young men or those who identify as gender diverse, perhaps indicative of cultural norms around females being more easily able to share their emotions than males who feel that to do so is weak.
- Gender diverse respondents were significantly more likely to rate their parents as not helpful, which may reflect their issues with their parents understanding and acceptance of their gender differences to the cultural “norm”.
- Young people who identified as having a disability were significantly more likely to disclose their cyberbullying to a counsellor and a health professional than those who did not. These findings may be indicative of the serious nature of the cyberbullying that this group encounters, that this group has fewer closer support networks in which they feel they can confide or that they are more likely to have a counsellor or see a health professional.

Our report on these survey findings provides much greater detail on the actions and preferences of each group and we advise careful consideration of these findings to ensure that interventions are designed to meet the experiences, views and preferences of each group. Furthermore, some differences around the nature of help-seeking were also observed in relation to the type of cyberbullying the respondent was experiencing. For example, participants who had embarrassing images of themselves spread were significantly more likely to discuss experiencing cyberbullying with friends than those who had not, and much less likely to disclose this with their parents. This may be given the nature of the images, which if sexual may prevent children and young people from feeling like they can confide in their parents, as one respondent said: “The topic was rather sexual and shameful. I was afraid they would judge me as well”.

Respondents also identified a number of different enablers and barriers to help-seeking, which are listed and explained in Table I below, many of which young people often tell us are enablers and barriers to help-seeking regarding other issues:

Table 1: Description of barriers and enablers to help-seeking

Relationship strength and trust (Barrier and Enabler)
When participants felt close to or trusted the object of disclosure it was easier for them to disclose; likewise, if they did not know the person well or did not feel they could trust them to keep them safe or protect their privacy they found it difficult to disclose. This applied in respect to their friends, parents and teachers. For example, referring to their parents, one respondent said: "I trust them with everything. I have a really open relationship and talking to them always helps me".
Reaction and response (Barrier and Enabler)
Often an object of disclosure was chosen for the intervention the participant wanted them to make in the cyberbullying situation. However, if the participant felt they could not control the intervention or that an unwanted intervention would be put in place they were hesitant to disclose. In relation to disclosing to their parents specifically, many respondents suggested that barriers to telling them included parents over-reacting and taking a course of action that they did not want, and not fully listening and supporting their wishes. For example, respondents said: "I was worried about [the] actions [my mother] would take. I didn't want anyone to get in trouble because I was worried it would make everything worse", and "[I would tell them] if they would simply listen instead of jumping into action to try and fix the situation".
Embarrassment and judgement (Barrier)
Separate from their trust in the individual, participants feared they would be judged by the person they disclosed to, or be embarrassed by the details of their experience. When participants identified that they did not fear judgement or embarrassment they were more motivated to disclose. One respondent in relation to their teachers said that they would not confide in them from: "fear I would be judged for trying to get help and dobbing the bullies in."
Belief and being taken seriously (Barrier)
Participants reported that if they felt they would not be believed or if they felt people would not take their issue seriously then they were unlikely to disclose that they are being cyberbullied. One respondent, referring to their teachers, stated: "They said I was being dramatic and need to get over myself and that because it was online the school couldn't do anything even though I had proof of the events".
Supportiveness (Barrier and Enabler)
Desiring emotional support and feeling that the object of disclosure would provide that support was a motivating factor in disclosure for some participants. Likewise, if the object of disclosure was considered unlikely to provide support this discouraged help seeking. For instance, one respondent stated: "[My mother] is quite a 'tough love' person, and I'm scared she wouldn't be comforting".
Understanding of the situation (Barrier and Enabler)
When the object of disclosure had a good understanding of social media and/or cyberbullying or if the respondent felt that they understood their perspective, respondents were more comfortable disclosing to that person. Where this understanding was lacking, participants cited that as a barrier to disclosing to that person. For example, respondents told us that they would confide in their friends as: "It's someone my age and has experienced bullying who is close to me" and "Being the same age with the same problems happening a lot in the grade". Other respondents had told counsellors as: "I knew they would of [sic] had similar experiences" and '[the counsellor] understood the situation and listened."
Confidence, anxiety or distress (Barrier)
Distress around the cyberbullying was a barrier to help-seeking in that some respondents cited that it was too upsetting to talk about being cyberbullied or that they lacked the confidence to express themselves. Others mentioned that dealing with anxiety or depression made it difficult to seek support. For example, one respondent said: "I would break down every time I tried talking about it".
Stoicism (Barrier)

Functioning only as a barrier to disclosure, some young people felt the need to protect those around them from the details of their experience or felt that it was their responsibility to face it alone, or that others would be disappointed in them for being cyberbullied or not handling it themselves. With regards to their parents and why they had not disclosed to them, one respondent stated: "I didn't want them to think I was anything less than perfect I guess."

Lack of awareness about some support services (Barrier)

Some respondents said they had not contacted the police as they did not feel that they responded to such issues and that their problems were mostly emotional so they would not be able to help". One respondent said: "I feel as though bullying, especially cyber-bullying, will be treated as something trivial by everyone, so going to the police would be viewed like going to the hospital for a paper-cut". Very few respondents identified the e-Safety Commissioner and some said this was because they were not aware that they existed.

Cost of accessing support (Barrier)

A key issue with disclosing to a counsellor, doctor or psychologist was being able to access and afford them.

From these findings, we have developed a set of strategies that we believe would encourage children and young people to disclose and to help-seeking when they have been cyberbullied. These are set out in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Strategies to increase disclosure of and help-seeking for cyberbullying

Strategies to increase disclosure of and help-seeking for cyberbullying	
Parents & Carers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve understanding of social media technologies and of the management of the risks of cyberbullying and its nature amongst parents and carers. • Educate parents and carers on the importance of listening to, believing, and supporting young people as victims • Educate parents and carers on the importance of giving young people a degree of control over the actions that follow a disclosure of cyberbullying. • Improve awareness of how and where to access support and resources for effectively managing and responding to cyberbullying including as a victim, bystander and perpetrator.
Teachers & Principals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate teachers and schools about effective responses to cyberbullying including for victims, bystanders and perpetrators. • Ensure that all students have trusted adults in the school community to whom they can disclose, especially students who may feel stigmatised within the school community. • Ensure every school has a policy on bullying that adequately addresses cyberbullying (and bullying within the school community off school grounds), and that meets nationally agreed criteria. • Consistently apply school policies within the school community to ensure all students feel they can access natural justice. • Foster norms of behaviour within the school community that encourage supportiveness and help-seeking, ideally through student-led processes.
Counsellors and Health Professionals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase understanding amongst children and young people about the roles of counsellors, general practitioners, and psychologists in the mental health system and how these professionals can help them. • Improve access to subsidised and free appointments with counsellors, GPs and psychologists. • Improve physical access to counsellors, GPs and psychologists. • Promote telehealth and eMental health services to young people.
Office of the eSafety Commissioner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase awareness of the role of the Office of the eSafety Commissioner. • Increase awareness of the resources offered by the Office of the eSafety Commissioner.
Police	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase awareness of the role of the police in cyberbullying and cyber-crime. • Develop a reporting process for young people that is supportive and not intimidating.

7) Include the views, experiences and knowledge of young people

As KHL data and our research about cyberbullying shows, children and young people have a wealth of different experiences relating to cyberbullying, which can be drawn upon to inform policy and intervention design. For example, of the 1,264 young children and young people who responded to our survey on their experiences of cyberbullying:

- 1,092 (96%) respondents reported witnessing cyberbullying acts online
- 708 (62%) of participants reported perpetrating an act online that may be considered as an act of cyber aggression
- 266 (53%) of participants who reported perpetrating a cyberbullying act had been cyberbullied themselves and 705 (99.6%) of them had witnessed cyberbullying

As shown by KHL data in our submission to the Senate on the adequacy of criminal laws to capture cyberbullying, children and young people who participated in the survey also shared their wide experiences of a range of different types of cyberbullying behaviours including name-calling and receiving abusive messages, being ignored or excluded, threatened with physical violence and having personal images shared with others.¹¹ Indeed, it is important to remember that children are more likely to be the experts of social media, its functions and how they can be used to and are used to engage with others, be that positively or negatively.

In addition, survey findings also showed that whilst a broad range of individuals reported being cyberbullied, or that anyone can become a target of cyberbullying, not everyone's experience of cyberbullying was found to be the same. Significant differences between the experiences of different genders, ages, cultural background and those with a disability and those without a disability exist in terms of the levels and types of cyberbullying they experience as well as their help-seeking behaviours.

Furthermore, children and young people clearly have a number of considered ideas about how best to prevent and reduce cyberbullying that they are keen to share, as provided in response to open questions in the survey. These included the following broad themes (the quotations are the direct responses of respondents):

Better reporting, filtering, and monitoring
<i>'Cyberbullying is always going to be there as long as you give people the opportunity. So the most you can do is maybe set up key words or phrases that alert attention. That way text can be monitored online. But that would cause a multitude of problems as well.'</i>
<i>'Educate kids that it is okay to block people. Make the 'block' button more readily viewable and available on the page in which someone can receive messages.'</i>
Increase community education and awareness
<i>'Education about the issue, encourage people to stop being bystanders and actually do something if they witness it in action or suspect it.'</i>

¹¹<https://www.yourtown.com.au/sites/default/files/document/Adequacy%20Of%20Criminal%20Laws%20To%20Capture%20Cyberbullying.pdf>

Create deterrents
<p><i>'Stricter internet supervision and more internet police'</i></p> <p><i>'Once someone is reported online...the person should be immediately prohibited. Online complaints section should be provided and answered immediately.'</i></p>
Reduce social media usage
<p><i>'Don't have [a] phone when you [are] like 16. Have them when you [are] like 25; when you are older and mature'</i></p> <p><i>'Go outdoors more often, stay off the phone and have a digital detox, have positive minds'</i></p>
Educate and support cyberbullies
<p><i>'Not just trying to help the victims but focusing more on the bullies and why they are doing such things to try and break the circle of bullying.'</i></p> <p><i>'Maybe just talk to the person, ask why they're doing what they're doing'</i></p>
Educate parents
<p><i>'Parents should be aware of their kids online activity'</i></p> <p><i>'Parents need to feel empowered to talk to their children about bullying and what their child should do if it's happening to them, they witness it or are part of it.'</i></p>
Engender more supportive communities
<p><i>'More people standing up for each other and themselves'</i></p> <p><i>'Friends of the person being bullied to pay more attention to them and not let people harass others'</i></p>