

13 November 2009

## Report highlights need for bullying blueprint

**Kids Helpline today applauded the New South Wales Legislative Council for the release of their report into the bullying of children and young people.**

BoysTown's national telephone and online counselling service supports the report's finding but cautions that bullying is not just a problem in New South Wales but across Australia.

BoysTown and Kids Helpline Chief Executive Officer Tracy Adams said research indicates that at least 10 per cent of children and young people in schools nationally are being bullied at any given time.

"We were very pleased to see the report recognise the importance of Kids Helpline in supporting children and lessening the impact of bullying on their lives," she said.

"However, to stop bullying, we need a coordinated approach that does not focus on a single agency being responsible.

"It is important for schools, government and the general community to work together to develop local and community-wide responses to address this problem."

Kids Helpline believes responses need to include legislative and policy development targeting bullying, counselling services (face-to-face, telephone and online), and increasing anti-bullying programs.

"Most importantly, we need to change community attitudes towards bullying," Ms Adams said. "It is not a right of passage. It is an act of violence and violence against children is not acceptable in any form."

"Young people need to be protected, and this is just as important when they are in an educational setting as it is when they are in their homes."

"Bullying has become even more pervasive with the advent of cyber bullying. This extends bullying out of the schoolyard and into the virtual world of mobile phones and the internet, where there are often no checks and balances to protect children.

"The bullies cannot see the impact they are having on their victim and so the behaviour tends to escalate more quickly than in a face-to-face situation."

Bullying can have devastating long-term effects on children and young people; it can be a contributing factor towards behaviour and learning difficulties, suicidal thoughts, mental illness and self-injury.

"We speak with at least six children every day about bullying and see only too clearly the long-term affects it has on their lives," Ms Adams said.

"Almost half of these children are experiencing continued or ongoing bullying and harassment.

"Kids Helpline would welcome the chance to work with the New South Wales Government to be part of an integrated response to developing holistic strategies to combat bullying. "

Kids Helpline is Australia's only free 24 hour, seven day a week counselling service for young people aged 5 to 25 years of age.

### Ends

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