



Media Release

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CALL FOR SCHOOL 'SELF-RESPECT' POLICY AGAINST BULLYING

School students had the right to expect strong support from their school if they were bullied, or mistreated by fellow students, one of the nation's leading experts on bullying, Dr. Helen McGrath, said today.

"Schools should strongly endorse the right of all students to be treated with respect and not be mistreated," said Dr. McGrath, of Deakin University and a Board member of the National Centre Against Bullying. The Centre is a peak body working to advise and inform the Australian community on childhood bullying and cybersafety, and the creation of safe schools and communities.

Dr. McGrath said schools should back this up by supporting the students if they were mistreated.

"Schools should be promoting respectful relationships between students. They should reinforce to students that if they have *self-respect*, they can *self-protect* by not taking risks that might damage their reputation or make it easier for others to mistreat them."

Dr. McGrath said the growing prevalence of cyberbullying had highlighted the need for students to understand what they can do to ensure their 'cybersafety'.

Covert and cyber bullying in schools - together with cybersafety - will be the focus of the 4th Biennial National Centre Against Bullying conference in Melbourne from April 8-10.

The three-day conference will seek to develop a national, uniform approach to cybersafety in schools and student wellbeing across Australia. The theme of the conference is ***Navigating the Maze: cybersafety and wellbeing for schools.***



NATIONAL CENTRE AGAINST BULLYING CONFERENCE 2010

April 9-10, Melbourne



Dr. McGrath said students could help protect themselves from cyberbullying by not giving out personal details, passwords, addresses, or contact details, to people they do not know, or do not know well enough to trust, and by ensuring that others cannot access their mobile phone and use it to cyberbully other students while pretending to be the owner of the phone.

In addition, students should avoid texting or posting explicit images of themselves and be aware of the longevity of texts and images posted on the internet.

Schools needed to focus not only on direct messages to students about being cybersafe and not bullying/cyberbullying fellow students, but also on promoting respectful relationships characterised by:

- Courteous language and the avoidance of offensive language and racist, sexist and homophobic insults.
- Empathy with fellow students and recognition of how spiteful and mean behavior affects others.
- Accepting differences in other students.
- Being friendly and including fellow students in activities.

Dr. McGrath said that research has shown that students who mistreat other students, or behave disrespectfully toward them, are more likely to become involved, when older, in anti-social behavior, such as domestic violence and workplace bullying.

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