

‘Stand up and speak out against cyberbullying’

The importance of encouraging young people to speak up for their friends was a key theme of the 2011 National Day of Action against Bullying and Violence, held on 18 March.

Bullying at school affects over a quarter of students between grades four and nine, with the role of the bystander—the person who witnesses bullying behaviour—a major contributing factor.

‘Bullying is not just an individual issue—peers, parents and schools have a positive and practical role to play; indeed, a role to discharge, in ending bullying and finding solutions,’ said ACMA Chairman Chris Chapman.

The use of social networking, mobile phones and texting is making cyberbullying a growing problem among young people. In supporting ‘Bullying No Way!’ day, the ACMA promoted the following messages:

- > Don’t just stand by. Speak out!
- > Protect and support your friends.
- > Tell a trusted adult.

The ACMA provided a suite of lesson plans for teachers across Australia on how to prevent and manage cyberbullying, and also staged a National Cybersmart Hero event created to tackle this issue. More than 1,000 upper primary school students from 22 schools across Australia took part in the event.

Cybersmart Hero is a one-hour, in-school online activity for students in grades five and six that addresses the responsibilities of the people in the best position to influence cyberbullying—the bystanders. The lesson plans bring the discussion into the open and encourage children to tell their parents or teachers when they witness cyberbullying.

‘Confident bystanders are important because bullies like an audience—whether it’s online or in the school yard—but they are most likely to stop when peers show disapproval,’ said Mr Chapman. 🗨️

For more information about the ACMA’s Cybersafety programs, visit www.cybersmart.gov.au.

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The Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence Study conducted by Edith Cowan University found that taking a whole-of-school approach when dealing with incidents of bullying is most effective as it increases awareness among young people and develops peer-led support structures.

