

Question on Notice
No. 1215
Asked on 15 September 2009

Ms Stone asked the Minister for Education and Training (Mr Wilson) —

QUESTION:

What is the State Government doing to reduce bullying and violence in Queensland schools?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for her question.

The Bligh Government is stepping up the fight against violence and bullying in our schools

Addressing bullying is a shared responsibility of students, their parents and school communities.

All state schools are currently reviewing their Responsible Behaviour Plans to ensure they have appropriate responses to bullying.

This includes updating their plans to specifically deal with the growing problem of cyber bullying via internet social networking sites and mobile phones.

Students and parents need to understand the potential consequences of misusing this technology and that it can lead to criminal prosecution in some cases.

We know most cyber bullying happens outside school hours and outside school grounds but principals will take action, where possible, and help parents support children who may be victims of cyber bullying.

The government is investing more than \$28 million in 2009-10 to strengthen school discipline and promote positive student behaviour.

We are expanding the evidence-based Schoolwide Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) program which successfully reduces inappropriate student behaviour, including bullying.

A key component of the Schoolwide PBS is that students are explicitly taught what behaviour is acceptable and what is not.

We have also engaged Dr Ken Rigby to help tackle bullying in Queensland schools.

Dr Rigby, from South Australia, will draw on his extensive experience in developing anti-bullying policies and procedures for schools in different countries and across Australia

He will spend the next few months visiting schools and working with parent organisations, conducting staff professional development and reviewing our online resources, identifying areas in which new resources should be developed.

No student should be in any doubt that bullying and violent behaviour are unacceptable in Queensland state schools. All allegations of bullying, including those involving cyber-bullying, are taken seriously by state schools and investigated as a matter of priority.

Principals have the power to take tough action against students who engage in serious bullying or violent behaviour. Disciplinary action may include suspension or exclusion.

When criminal actions are involved, schools report the matter to the Queensland Police Service.

A range of specialist support personnel, such as guidance officers, provide intensive behaviour support and regional behaviour teachers are available to support schools and provide professional development to promote positive behaviour.

The Department also provides a range of alternative programs for students with challenging behaviour. These include 15 Positive Learning Centres and another 93 Alternative Education Programs across the State to cater for students who require additional support to engage in learning.