



13 May 2011

## **PORT STEPHENS STUDENTS INVESTIGATE CYBER BULLYING**

Cyber bullying can be a crime and Port Stephens primary school students are set to learn about the trauma it causes victims and the consequences for perpetrators in an innovative Law Week program.

Students from five primary schools have been given the challenge of investigating a fictitious case involving a 13-year-old girl who is bombarded with hateful messages on her mobile phone and via Facebook after she is selected for a netball team.

“The years 5 and 6 students will play detectives and are being given police fact sheets, witness statements and other evidence to help them identify the culprit,” said Raymond Terrace Court Deputy Registrar Debra Holbert.

“There are four suspects and - as is often the case with cyber bullying - jealousy appears to be a motivation for the taunts which are being sent anonymously.”

Once they feel they have cracked the case, the pint-sized police will provide written submissions to Magistrate Michael Allan, who will judge their findings. The students will also take part in mock trials before Magistrate Richard Wakely at Raymond Terrace Courthouse on May 19 and 20.

“Local prosecutors and solicitors will guide the students through the court process and help them to bring to justice the alleged cyber bully,” said Ms Holbert.

The winning school will be awarded book vouchers and a trophy.

“The exercises will encourage team work, inform young people about the law and demonstrate that cyber bullying is never a joke.”

A recent survey showed one in 10 Australian teenagers has experienced cyber bullying<sup>1</sup>

“Cyber bullying can cause victims to feel depressed, disconnected from school and to suffer from low self esteem,’ said Ms Holbert.

“It is hoped this Law Week program will make local school children more sensitive to the feelings of their classmates so that they think twice before engaging in cyber bullying.”

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<sup>1</sup> research by the Child Health Promotion Research Centre at Edith Cowan University in Western Australia (2010)

The schools involved in the Law Week competition are Irrawang Public School, Grahamstown Public School, Salt Ash Public School, Wirreandra Public School and Soldiers Point Public School.

National Law Week 2011 will be held from May 16 – 22. The theme of Law Week is Law and Justice In Your Community.

Other events in New South Wales during Law Week include open days at courthouses and seminars on drink driving, family law, domestic violence, mental illness and how the law affects senior citizens.

The incoming Attorney General, Greg Smith said he was looking forward to taking part in Law Week activities.

“Law week promotes the rule of law and what lawyers do to serve the needs of the community,” Mr Smith said.

**For further information about Law Week and what is happening in your area, visit: [www.lawweek.com.au](http://www.lawweek.com.au).**