

## Cyberbullying a growing public health and safety issue for Australian families

Young people bullied online are turning to their parents to help them cope, with some so seriously impacted they are seeking medical and mental health support, with flow on costs to Australian families and the health system.

New research by frontline youth service [ReachOut](#) shows that up 380,000 young people were cyberbullied in Australia last year. Up to 162,000 young people turned to their parents for help; up to 64,000 sought help from a mental health professional; and up to 49,000 turned to their GP.

The survey results also indicated that young people experience cyberbullying as part of their daily life, including at home, at after school activities, at school, and travelling to and from school.

The findings are based on a nationally representative survey of 1000 Australian young people aged between 14 and 25.

ReachOut CEO Ashley de Silva said this was more evidence that cyberbullying was not just about online safety, it's a public health concern.

Mr de Silva also announced that ReachOut's free parent coaching service had been geared up to help families deal with the demand for support from cyberbullying.

"Up to 380,000 young people were cyberbullied in Australia last year and our research is showing many cases were so serious they sought medical and mental health support," Mr de Silva said.

"Australian parents told us earlier this year they were more worried about their kids using social media and technology than drugs, alcohol and smoking."

"The difficulty with cyberbullying is often there's no escape for young people, with the bullies effectively having a key to every area of their life, including the home."

Mr de Silva said ReachOut looked forward to the Federal Government's release of its promised whole-of-government response to cyberbullying.

"With so many young people deeply impacted by cyberbullying, it's never been more important for more action to be taken," Mr de Silva said.

In September, ReachOut called for national industry safety standards (including safety by design) for technology, similar to cars, to be introduced for social media and video games like Fortnite to help protect users and inform them about the relative safety of different products.

ReachOut Parents provides evidence-based self-help tools and parenting peer support that parents can access around the clock. ReachOut Parents Coaching, delivered in partnership with The Benevolent Society, is an Australian-first that provides parents of teenagers with free, confidential one-on-one parenting help. Delivered using a mix of online and pre-booked phone sessions, it gives parents the flexibility to easily access support from anywhere in the country.

For more information, visit: [ReachOut.com/Parents](https://ReachOut.com/Parents).

**ENDS**

### Cyberbullying tips for Parents from ReachOut's Parents Coaches

1. **Stay calm and positive.** Your attitude will influence your teen - focus on identifying solutions with them rather than dwelling on what has happened.

2. **Open the lines of communication.** Make time and space to talk. Let them know you're interested and ready to listen when they are ready to talk.
3. **Listen and connect.** Be present. Rather than listening to fix their problem, listen to understand what the problem is.
4. **Help them build their self-esteem.** Support and encourage your teen to find something they can do that gives them a sense of pride and accomplishment.
5. **Help your teen disconnect.** Your teenager is less likely to let you know about bullying if they're afraid they'll have their devices taken away. Instead support them to find ways to manage their devices, such as limiting their use when at home.
6. **Find support.** Don't forget about yourself! Consider what additional support you and your child might need during this time including accessing ReachOut's resources.

### Media contacts

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### About the research

- Nationally representative survey of 1000 Australian young people aged between 14 and 25.
- Of those who were bullied online 43% sought help from a parent, 17% sought help from a mental health professional, and 13% sought help from a GP.

### About ReachOut Australia

ReachOut has been changing the way people access help since launching as the world's first online mental health service nearly 20 years ago. Everything they create is based on the latest evidence and designed with experts, and young people or their parents. This is why ReachOut's digital self-help tools are trusted, relevant and easy to use.

Available for free anytime and pretty much anywhere, ReachOut is accessed by 132,000 people in Australia every month. That's more than 1.58 million each year.

### About The Benevolent Society

The Benevolent Society is Australia's first charity, working as a catalyst for social justice and change for over 200 years. Founded in 1813, The Benevolent Society recognises that we all have moments in life when we could use a helping hand and advocates for a better life for all Australians. We offer a range of programs and services across New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia to children and families, including family support and early intervention programs, as well as in-home services for older Australians, and people with disability.

ReachOut Parent coaches can help parents and carers identify what's going on; set goals to deal with the issue; identify how best to support their young person, including support networks such as the school, their peers or mental health support; and if required assist to initiate take-down action through the Office of the eSafety Commissioner.