

Media Release

Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

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Law Reform Institute paper seeks submissions on bullying Issues Paper

The Tasmania Law Reform Institute in the University of Tasmania's Faculty of Law is seeking submissions to its latest Issues Paper on Bullying.

The Issues Paper examines the current laws and legal frameworks in Tasmania that are potentially able to address bullying behaviours, including so-called cyberbullying. The effectiveness of Tasmania's laws when dealing with bullying has been the subject of significant community concern.

Recent instances of suicides attributed to bullying appear to have strengthened community desire to ensure that the law is able to deter and sanction bullying behaviour and to ensure that the law is responsive to bullying that occurs through new technologies.

Director of the Institute, Terese Henning, states that the question of the appropriate response to bullying behaviour is complicated by a number of factors, including definitional issues; the appropriateness of a legal response given the claimed high rates of bullying amongst young people; the different forms bullying can take and the great variation in the severity of harm that may be caused; the desirability in many cases of maintaining an ongoing relationship between bully and victim; and the difficulty of providing evidence to substantiate claims of bullying.

The Issues Paper examines:

- whether existing legal frameworks to address bullying are adequate
- whether the problem of cyberbullying calls for a separate and distinctive response
- whether a case can be made for the creation of a criminal offence of bullying
- whether other responses, such as an extension of the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner's functions, are more appropriate
- what responsibilities schools should have to respond to complaints of bullying and to prevent bullying behaviours in the longer term.

The TLRI asks for responses by 31 July 2015.

For a copy of the Issues Paper, please visit: <http://www.utas.edu.au/law-reform/publications/ongoing-law-reform-projects2>

Information released by:

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