

**UPDATE AND REPORT FOR PARTNERS OF
ARC LINKAGE CYBERBULLYING GRANT:
A legally-informed intervention for schools to prevent and
intervene in cases of cyberbullying**

Report details

Report date: May 10 2017

For the attention of Industry Partner Organisations:

- Queensland Guidance and Counselling Association (QGCA)
- Queensland Teachers' Union (QTU)
- Queensland Independent Education Union (QIEU)
- Tresscox Lawyers, formerly Macrossans Lawyers
- Australian and New Zealand Education Law Association Queensland Chapter (ANZELA)
- Emil Ford & Company.

Scope:

- This report provides an update of the Australian Research Council – Linkage (ARC-L) funded project, named above, for the review of industry partner organisations of the project.
- Included are links to publications resulting from this research to date.
- Future publications are described.
- Final ARC reporting obligations for industry partners are outlined in preparation of future request for assistance.

Brief project overview:

Education stakeholders, and staff and students of six secondary schools across three Australian states were participants of the project. The overarching aim of the research was to determine perceptions, views, current policies and needs regarding the incidence, prevention, and intervention of cyberbullying within school settings. A key focus of the project included views on the role of the law in preventing and intervening in cyberbullying.

Report prepared by:

Donna Pennell (Project Manager, QUT) and Professor Marilyn Campbell (Principal & Lead Investigator, QUT)

Project details

ARC-Linkage project details

Program	Linkage Project
Program ID	LP110200330
Administering organisation	Queensland University of Technology (QUT)
ARC-Linkage grant project title	A legally-informed intervention for schools to prevent and intervene in cases of cyberbullying
Working title	An investigation of cyberbullying and the law in Australian schools
First year funded	2011
ARC funds requested	\$218 226
ARC funds received	\$152 328
No of years funding received	4 years
ARC final report due date	June 30 2017

Named investigators

Professor Marilyn Campbell, Queensland University of Technology (QUT) – Principal Investigator

Professor Desmond Butler, QUT – Chief Investigator (CI)

Professor Donna Cross, Telethon Kids, formerly Edith Cowan University – CI

Dr Barbara Spears, University of South Australia - CI

Professor Sally Kift, James Cook University, formerly QUT - CI

Professor Phillip Slee, Flinders University - CI

Mr Andrew Knott, Tresscox Lawyers, formerly Macrossans Lawyers – Partner Investigator

Project partners

The project represented a partnership between four Australian universities: Edith Cowan University, University of South Australia, The Flinders University of South Australia, and lead administering university the Queensland University of Technology. Industry partners forming the linkage included Queensland Guidance and Counselling Association (QGCA), Queensland Independent Education

Union (QIEU), Queensland Teachers Union (QTU), Macrossans/Tresscox Lawyers, Australia and New Zealand Education Law Association (ANZELA) Queensland Chapter, and Emil Ford and Co Lawyers. Brisbane Girls Grammar School were named on the grant, but withdrew from the project prior to its commencement.

Project background/rationale

Cyberbullying (i.e., bullying through technology) is an emerging and serious problem amongst student populations and is also a growing issue in the workplace amongst teachers (Campbell, Spears, Slee, Butler, & Kift, 2010; Privitera & Campbell 2009). This form of bullying has been linked to anxiety and depression (Campbell et al., 2010) and is not only costly in economic terms but can also lead to suicide (Carbonell, 2010; Goldman, 2010; O'Rourke, 2006; Rook, 2008; Stafford, 2010). There are many calls in society for laws against cyberbullying (Carbonell, 2010) and schools are unclear of their rights and responsibilities under the existing law regarding these phenomena.

However, there is scant research on the law and face-to-face bullying (Chan, 2009; Slee & Ford, 1999) with even less on cyberbullying and the law (Campbell, Butler, & Kift, 2008). Prevention and intervention strategies for cyberbullying lack a solid evidence base and this is especially true of legal solutions. Schools are grappling with this issue as students (and perhaps staff) use modern technology in ways that the original designers did not envisage.

Overarching questions framing this research

- What criminal and civil laws currently apply to cyberbullying, and are those laws operating appropriately and effectively?
- What is the level of knowledge and understanding of the rights and obligations under current laws by students, parents, staff and schools?
- What steps should be taken to address any deficiencies in the knowledge and understanding of the rights and obligations under current laws by students, parents, staff and schools?
- Is there a need for reform of current laws, and if so what form should that reform take?

Project overview

The research project's purpose was to obtain the perspectives of education department officials, parent representatives, secondary school staff and students about cyberbullying, and to understand existing school response strategies to incidences of cyberbullying. Data collection was to focus on what approaches and resources schools have used, what has worked well and what hasn't, and what information and resources schools think might still be needed, especially in relation to staff and student knowledge and training about the law and legal solutions, to effectively prevent and intervene in cyberbullying situations.

Project progress over duration of funding

Factors affecting the satisfactory or timely completion of the project

There have been several factors affecting the timely completion of this project. Arduous ethics approval processes and the development of new and participant-specific data collection instruments, such as interview, focus group and online survey protocols, significantly delayed the start of the project from the outset. In addition to the change of employment of some of the chief investigators during the three-year project, the sudden loss and replacement of the research project manager also affected the timely conduct of the project. A substantial 'Data Collection Manual' document, to serve the cross-State requirements of the project, delayed our ability to start school data collection until late 2013. Once begun, working within large secondary schools with busy scheduling, regular assessment/exam blocks, and extra-curricular pressures, proved difficult. This project required a large commitment of schools, their staff and students to gain the level of participation that was required to gather the substantial volume of data we were collecting. Data that was unable to be collected during Term 4 of the 2013 school year was sought again in early 2014 in three of the schools. There was generally a poor uptake of staff and students willing to participate in the online surveys, understandably so, as they were only offered in the final weeks of the school year. This led to a variation of the project so that we could recruit more secondary schools to take part, requiring again lengthy ethics permissions. Finally, investigator schedules, which often included overseas engagements, along with time differences between Australian states, made organising meetings difficult throughout the project. All these factors have, and to some extent, still are, negatively impacting the anticipated timeline of the project.

Project objectives, outcomes and impact to date

Project objectives:

- To obtain current information and views of education officials on their departments' policies on cyberbullying and their views of legal solutions.
- To obtain staff and student perspectives of cyberbullying and to gain an understanding of existing school response strategies to incidences of cyberbullying
- To ask participants what was working and what wasn't, and what was still needed to help them prevent and intervene in cyberbullying issues, so that results could inform the development of resources and intervention and prevention of cyberbullying in school settings
- To gain information regarding staff and student knowledge and training about the law and its role in effectively preventing and intervening in cyberbullying situations.

Recruitment

Eleven participants from Education departments across three states in Australia were recruited for in-depth interviews. All had educational or legal qualifications and experience. Nine were education

officials, two were lawyers and one participant was a cyber/e-crime specialist. Three of the participants were from Queensland, four from South Australia, and four from Western Australia.

Six independent secondary schools were also recruited for the project, two from each of three States (i.e., Western Australia, Queensland, South Australia), respectively. Each school had total student enrolments >1000 students. Four of the secondary schools were co-educational, one was a boys' school, the other a girls' school. Members of the school executive were recruited for interviews, along with key personnel, and a representative of each schools' respective parent body. Other participants drawn from each school respectively included teachers and Years 9 students.

Data collection: Method, instruments, participants

Data collection protocols (e.g., interview, focus group and photoStory questions, and online surveys, etc.) were developed and conducted with participants as follows:

1. Interviews with Education department personnel across three Australian states, to determine opinions about the role of the law in the prevention and intervention of cyberbullying in schools, as well as gathering information about the development of policies and recommendations provided to schools in their jurisdictions.

2. Interviews with school executive, in each of six secondary independent schools, across three Australian states:

- Principal or Head of Middle School
- Deputy Principal
- Key personnel (e.g., Guidance Counsellor or Chaplain, or Head of ICT)
- Head of Parents & Friends Association

[Questions included: describe instances of cyberbullying that have occurred in your school; what does your school do to prevent cyberbullying; what have you done that has not worked so well; do you think a law on cyberbullying would be useful, etc.]

3. School anti-bullying policy documents were collected from each of the six participating schools

4. One teacher focus group, for teachers of Year 9 students, was conducted at each participating school, with a membership of 6-8 per group

[Stimulus questions included: how do you deal with cyberbullying incidences in your classrooms; is workplace bullying included in your school's policy documents; what things have you or the school done well to prevent cyberbullying, etc.]

5. Two student focus groups, for students of Year 9, with a membership of 6-8 per group were conducted at each of the six schools

[Stimulus questions included: how does your school define bullying and cyberbullying and can you give me an example/scenario to describe this; what information and resources do you think students need/should have to help them understand, handle, and prevent, cyberbullying; if you agree a law on cyberbullying would be useful, what types of behaviour

should it address; can you describe any cyberbullying instances that you know of that have happened at the school, etc.]

5. A whole of staff survey: 'Survey of Student Bullying, and Workplace bullying' (two surveys combined into one online survey), was conducted across the six schools. Due to poor uptake, an additional six schools in Queensland took the survey to boost respondent numbers.

[Contained items relating to student bullying, response strategies, knowledge of laws relating to student and workplace bullying, workplace bullying, and training relating to bullying]

6. 'Student Survey of Cyber- and Face-to-Face Bullying', for all Year 9 students at each of the respective schools. Due to poor uptake, additional surveys were also conducted one term later in eight additional schools in Queensland, when students were in early Year 10, to boost respondent numbers

[Contained items relating to incidence and perceptions of bullying, school response strategies and education relating to bullying, knowledge of laws relating to bullying].

7. PhotoStory, (a participatory research method using captioned photography to convey the perspectives of students about the issue of cyberbullying), for 10-15 Year 9 students in each of the six secondary schools

[Students were asked to imagine they were Principal for the day and using their photographs and stories tell us what they would do to stop cyberbullying. Students were also free to just tell us an opinion they had about bullying or cyberbullying or to tell us about something that they had witnessed or experienced. If they decided to focus on a bullying incident, they were requested to tell us how it made them feel and about what they or others did or should have done, about it.]

Data in hand, outcomes, or expected outcomes

1. Interviews with education department stakeholders

Data in hand: 11 interviews, transcribed, analysed.

Outcome: Two published journal articles

Young, H., Campbell, M., Spears, B., Butler, D., Cross, D., & Slee, P. (2016). Cyberbullying and the role of the law in Australian schools: Views of senior officials. *Australian Journal of Education*, 60(1), 86-101. doi:10.1177/0004944115627557 Link:

<http://journals.sagepub.com.ezp01.library.qut.edu.au/doi/pdf/10.1177/0004944115627557>

Chalmers, C., Campbell, M. A., Spears, B. A., Butler, D., Cross, D., Slee, P., & Kift, S. (2016). School policies on bullying and cyberbullying: Perspectives across three Australian states. *Educational Research*, 58(1), 91-109. doi:10.1080/00131881.2015.11291141 Link:

<http://www.tandfonline-com.ezp01.library.qut.edu.au/doi/pdf/10.1080/00131881.2015.1129114?needAccess=true>

2. Interviews with school executive

Data in hand: 23 interviews

Data outcome/progress: Interviews transcribed, distributed to project investigator taking lead on analysis, currently still under review, with potential publication pending.

3. School anti-bullying policy documents

Data in hand: Six school policy documents have been provided for review.

Data outcome/progress: Distributed to project investigator taking lead on analysis, currently still under review, with potential publication pending.

4. Year 9 teacher focus group from each of six participating schools

Data in hand: 5 x Year 9 teacher focus groups were conducted with group memberships ranging from 4 – 14 teachers per group

Data outcome/progress: Transcribed, distributed to project investigator taking lead on analysis, currently at review stage, with potential publication pending.

5. Year 9 student focus groups from each of the six participating school

Data in hand: 10 student focus groups were conducted with memberships between 1- 8 students per group. One school in WA had only one student per scheduled focus group turn up. The other WA school did only one focus group with 2 participants.

Data outcome/progress: Transcribed, distributed to project investigator taking lead on analysis, still requiring review, and publication development.

6. Staff online survey

Data in hand from six case study schools and additional recruitment: 251 teacher surveys in total. Uptake rates ranged from 6.21% - 63.33%

Data outcome/progress: Results from sections of the survey relating to law under review by investigator taking the lead for a potential publication. Statistical analysis pending on other sections of the survey. Publications pending.

7. Year 9 online student survey

Data in hand from six case study schools and additional recruitment: 541 student surveys in total. Uptake rates ranged from 6.02% - 86.05%.

Data outcome/progress: Results from sections of the survey relating to law questions under review by investigator taking the lead for a potential publication. Statistical analysis pending on other sections of the survey. Publications pending.

8. PhotoStory

Data in hand: 14 student PhotoStory creations. Two Western Australian schools did not participate in PhotoStory due to ethical difficulties and time constraints. Groups of 3 – 9 students per school participated, far less than our anticipated 10 – 15 per school.

Data outcome/progress: Distributed to project investigator taking lead on analysis, requires review, with potential publication development.

Identifiable impact in the research field

There has been no evidence that the overall project has had an impact in the research field yet. As more papers, such as those recently released, become available, we do anticipate this, given the unclear knowledge of schools regarding their rights and responsibilities under law about cyberbullying and the calls in society for laws to address this phenomenon (Carbonell, 2010)

Impact on industry needs and expectations

The schools involved in data collection made it clear to us anecdotally that there was a lot of misunderstanding about the law and cyberbullying both by students, teachers and parents. This is also reflected in our preliminary view of the data.

Academic outputs to date

Ways the project has been promoted

Media, and public lectures and forums

Publications/outputs

Two journal articles have been published (linked/attached), based on data from the earlier phase of this grant, which focussed on key education stakeholders and their directives to schools in their jurisdictions regarding anti-bullying policy and guidelines.

Young, H., Campbell, M., Spears, B., Butler, D., Cross, D., & Slee, P. (2016). Cyberbullying and the role of the law in Australian schools: Views of senior officials. *Australian Journal of Education*, 60(1), 86-101. doi:10.1177/0004944115627557 Link:

<http://journals.sagepub.com.ezp01.library.qut.edu.au/doi/pdf/10.1177/0004944115627557>

Chalmers, C., Campbell, M. A., Spears, B. A., Butler, D., Cross, D., Slee, P., & Kift, S. (2016). School policies on bullying and cyberbullying: Perspectives across three Australian states. *Educational Research*, 58(1), 91-109. doi:10.1080/00131881.2015.11291141 Link:

<http://www.tandfonline-com.ezp01.library.qut.edu.au/doi/pdf/10.1080/00131881.2015.1129114?needAccess=true>

Future outputs

This project has produced a wealth of data, much of which is still currently under analysis and review, pending time availability of investigators. Future publications are intended, which may cover topics such as:

- Views of secondary school principals and deputies / key school personnel / parents / teachers / students on the role the law should play in the prevention and intervention of cyberbullying.
- Cyberbullying prevention in schools: What works and what doesn't? Perspectives of secondary students / school principals and deputies / key school personnel / parents / teachers.
- Existing school response strategies to incidences of cyberbullying in six independent secondary schools.
- What do schools / teachers / students know about the law and cyberbullying?

Partner funding contribution update

Cash and in-kind commitment of industry partner organisations of this research project

Organization name	Cash commitment	In-kind contribution amount	In-kind contribution description
Queensland Guidance and Counselling Association (QGCA)	20000	64974	Time of the executive and members of the QGCA to promote member involvement in the research project, attend project meetings, assist in the development of the resources and the distribution of information.
Queensland Teachers' Union of Employees(QTU)	15000	17088	10 hours of time commitment per year for the Deputy General Secretary and 15 hours for the Assistant Secretary to attend meetings of the research project management group.
Queensland Independent Education Union	3000	3000	Time of the General Secretary, Research Officer, Clerical Officers, Treasurer and

(QIEU)			Executive Members to attend meetings of the research project management group.
Macrossans / Tresscox Lawyers (represented by Mr Andrew Knott)	2000/1000	19200	5% of the notional salary of Mr Andrew Knott over the course of the project.
Australian and New Zealand Education Law Association Queensland Chapter (ANZELA)	3000	18432	Time of the President, Deputy, Treasurer and Executive members to attend meetings of the research project management group.
Emil Ford & Company	1500	23040	15 hours of time to attend project meetings, to collaborate in all aspects of the project and to attend meetings of the research project management group over the time of the project.

Statement of support in line with commitment

The level and type of support (cash and in-kind) provided by Partner Organisations for this project was gratefully received in line with commitments given at the time of entering an agreement with the administering organization Queensland University of Technology (QUT).

Looking forward to 2017

Statement of intent by the research team

There is a sizeable and ongoing task of analysing the large volumes of data generated by this project. It is anticipated there will be several future publications resulting from the project outlined in this report. Outputs will focus on evidence which may better inform prevention and intervention policy and practice regarding cyberbullying in schools, to make them safe places for staff to work and students to learn. Opinions about -, knowledge of -, and training about laws on cyberbullying and what legal solutions may offer schools, will offer new insights and will also be a focus of future publications resulting from this project's data. There is a great need to expedite the production of publications so that final ARC reporting can occur. Please be assured that all future publications will be made available to Partner Organisations to promote within their memberships.

Partner requirements for final ARC Linkage report

Final reports must be lodged by June 30, 2017 for this research. Partner organisations are required to contribute to the ARC final report by providing a response to the following questions:

- How beneficial has this collaborative research project been from your organisations viewpoint?
- Summarise the major outcomes of the project from your perspective with particular comment on the benefits to your organisation?
- Provide comment on your intended or actual use of the research outcomes.
- Would your organisation be open to participating in a collaborative arrangement under this program in the future? Briefly outline your reasons for your response.

Prior to submission of our report on June 30, we will contact you again to gain your responses to the above questions. Should you require specific input of any kind in order to complete this Industry Partner section of the report, please feel free to make your requests known to the Principal Investigator Professor Marilyn Campbell, who can be contacted by telephone 0409486570, or via email ma.campbell@qut.edu.au.

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