Cyber Bullying or Online Harassment?
A TAFE Perspective
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Youth Unit
The “always-on” generation

• Have never known life without the Internet
• Use profile pages such as Facebook and Myspace, instant messages (MSN), blogs and chat rooms to manage their social networks
• Play online games globally
Cyber bullying film

- Lauren’s Ordeal

www.wiseuptoit.com.au
NMIT Youth Unit Research

• Carried out in 2007
• Surveys
• Interviews
• Literature review
• Contacted the Dept of ECD, TAFEs and the Victoria Police Cyber Safety Project
Research Questions:

1. What is the incidence of cyber bullying in Youth Unit students?
2. What forms does cyber bullying take among YU students?
3. How does cyber bullying affect YU students?
4. What motivates cyber bullies?
5. What are secondary schools and other TAFEs doing and what constitutes best practice in responding to cyber bullying?
6. What are some strategies that the Youth Unit could implement to address this issue?
NMIT VCAL Students' Access to Technology

![Bar chart showing the percentage of students with various technologies.](chart.png)
Internet Use

Internet Use

![Bar chart showing the percentage of internet use for different items: Email Address, Profile Page, Chat Rooms, Blogs, Instant Messaging, Own Web Site.](chart.png)
Definition

“Cyber bullying is a form of bullying, which is carried out through an Internet service such as email, chat room, discussion group, instant messaging or web pages. It can also include bullying through mobile phone technologies such as SMS” (www.netalert.net.au).
Differences from face-to-face bullying:

- Cyber bullies can remain anonymous
- Disconnection from the consequences
- Young people may adopt “avatars” (individualised online personas)
- More pervasive because the victims cannot easily escape and it can happen anywhere and at anytime (24/7)
Differences from face-to-face bullying: (cont.)

- Potential for a much larger audience to witness the humiliation of the victim
- Can communicate hurtful messages at remarkable speed
- Potential for victims to read the words over and over again
- Use of other people’s identity to bully
- Commonly not reported to adults
Incidence

Studies conducted in the UK, Canada, the United States and Australia found:

- 9-42% of respondents identifying as targets of cyber bullying.
- 11-15% identifying as cyber bullies.
Incidence in Youth Unit students

Our survey of 91 VCAL students in 2007 found:

- 9% had been cyber bullied by other NMIT students
- 7% had been cyber bullied whilst on campus

When reporting on their past experiences:
- 58% had been targets of cyber bullying
- 63% admitted to engaging in cyber bullying
- 49% had been both targets and bullies
Modality

• Mobile phone
• Instant messaging
• Email
Impact of Cyber bullying

Consequences:
- low self-esteem,
- anger,
- depression,
- school absenteeism,
- poor grades,
- increased tendency to violate against others,
- suicide,
- preadolescents are more likely to be distressed than adolescents.
Our students said:

“I felt really belittled and horrible and it shrank my self-esteem even further”

“I felt completely mortified and totally disrespected”

“I once felt sick to the pit of my stomach”

“It gets into your brain.”

“Your home is your sanctuary if you are being bullied at school.”
Motivation:

- For retaliation (from bullying)
- For fun
- To exert power
- To defend a friend
- To teach others a lesson
Case Study

- Student expectations of NMIT
- Young people’s ideas about cyber bullying
Responses to the Case Study

- NMIT Student Support coordinator
- Victoria Police Cyber Safety Officer
Current NMIT Policy

- Equal Opportunity Policy
- Proper Use of the NMIT Network Policy
Strategies to address cyber bullying in educational contexts

- Update policies
- Raise awareness
- Supervision
- Education programs
Policy Interventions

• Acceptable online use policies
• Amend code of conduct or anti-bullying policies to include cyber bullying
• Include cyber bullying and TAFE discipline policy in student induction
• Establish standards of intervention for teaching staff
Raising Awareness

- How young people use digital technologies
- Prevention methods
- Impact of cyber bullying
- Digital footprints
- Cyber Crime
Cyber crime

• “The Commonwealth’s Criminal Code Act 1995, section 4.7.4.17 notes that it is an offence for a person to use ‘a carriage service to menace, harass or cause offence’.

• The Commonwealth’s Criminal Code Act 1995, section 4.7.4.15 notes that it is an offence for a person to use ‘a carriage service to make a threat’.

• The Commonwealth’s Crimes Act 1914, part VIIB, section 85ZE notes that it is an offence for ‘a person to knowingly or recklessly use a telecommunications service supplied by a carrier in such a way as would be regarded by reasonable persons being, in all the circumstances, offensive’.

• The Victorian Crimes Act 1958 was amended in 1995 to include the offence of stalking. This includes telephoning and sending electronic messages with the intention of causing physical or mental harm.

• The sending of images is also covered by various State and Commonwealth laws that prevent the publication of material that is objectionable, unclassified or unsuitable for minors.”
Supervision

- Be aware of what young people are doing online and discuss internet issues
- Protect private information
- Be vigilant in computer classes
- Be aware of behaviour changes in young people
Programs

- Social programs that promote empathy and a helping ethos e.g. peer support
- Curriculum programs teaching values, empathy and netiquette
- Cyber safety programs
How can TAFE staff respond to off campus incidents?

• Having conversations with students involved in cyber bullying
• Referring distressed students to support services
• Providing information on cyber safety
• Providing information on cyber crime
• Providing information on collecting evidence, reporting and blocking strategies
Tom Wood’s Tips to resolve cyber bullying

1. Don’t respond to the bully at all
2. Save the evidence
3. Block and delete the bully from the service
4. Report the abuse to the admin of the service
5. Tell people you can trust

(http://thewoodverdict.blogspot.com/2008/04/tom-woods-complete-guide-to-stopping.html)
Classroom Materials

• Match VCAL learning outcomes for reading, writing and oral communication modules

• Free resource: www.wiseuptoit.com.au
References: websites

- www.cyberbullying.ca
- www.cyberbullying.us
- www.netalert.gov.au
- www.netsafe.nz
- www.cybersafeworld.com
Cyber Bullying Researchers

- Brown, K., Jackson, M. & Cassidy, W. (Canada)
- Campbell, M. A. (Queensland, Australia)
- Hinduja, S and Patchin, J. W. (USA)
- Li, Q. (Canada)
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