

30 July 2018

No Labels bullying program addresses behaviour in ACT schools

[STARTS]

High school students across Canberra will benefit from a free new bullying prevention workshop aimed at reducing the stigma associated with labelling children as bullies, bystanders and victims.

The program has been developed by Canberra-based charity Mental Illness Education ACT (MIEACT), and is called No Labels. ACT Minister for Mental Health Shane Rattenbury will launch it on Wednesday. [1 August 2018]

MIEACT executive officer Heidi Prowse said by taking away the labels, Canberra's students, teachers and parents can focus on addressing the concerning behaviour and supporting change where needed.

"A lot of times we focus on labelling people. But when we use labels, it suggests a permanent personality trait, that the behaviour *is* the person, and they therefore can't change," she said.

"But this program looks at it from a behaviour perspective—and all behaviour can be changed."

No Labels is a practical and problem-solving workshop for year 7-12 students with a primary focus on life skills, positive mental health and behaviour promotion. It runs for an hour.

It has been funded by Hands Across Canberra, The Funding Network and the Commonwealth Bank.

The approach is three-pronged: for those **experiencing** bullying (what to do and where to go to get help); those **instigating** or engaging in bullying behaviour (understanding their actions and why these may be occurring, and how to get support to change their own behaviour); and **observers** of bullying (how to find your voice to speak up against bullying, how to provide support to targeted young people and where to go to get support).

Students learn to identify their own behaviour and are encouraged to seek help on behalf of their peers.

"Every year, one in seven young people instigate more than 45 million bullying incidents. Every year," Ms Prowse said.

"Those who bully are 3.5 times more likely to instigate family violence, and two in five victims become bullies themselves.

"Hurt people hurt people," she said.

So what behaviour is considered bullying? The Alannah and Madeline Foundation defines it as "an ongoing misuse of power in relationships through intentional and repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that causes physical and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power over one or more persons. Bullying can happen in person or online, and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert)".

This program addresses the four core types of bullying: physical, verbal, social and cyber bullying.

Students who participated in MIEACT's pilot program were positive about the workshop's outcomes.

"I kind of knew a lot of it already, but I liked the way this one was presented a lot more. Usually, they are boring and don't make much sense, but this was actually, like, somewhat more accurate than usual..." said one Year 9 participant.

“I probably should re-evaluate how I interact with people. And I should check in with people, just to see about the casual teasing and whether it’s ok for them or not...” said another student.

“Bullying should never be a first option, you should get to know them before you judge a book by its cover – like you should read a few pages before you throw them aside...” said another.

MIEACT will launch the program at the Canberra Museum and Art Gallery on Wednesday, August 1, from 4.30-6.30pm.

Schools and youth groups can book the program by visiting our website <https://mieact.org.au/nolabels/> or phoning (02) 6257 1195.

[ENDS]

For more information, please contact MIEACT communications manager Kathy Brine 6257 1195.

- Heidi Prowse, Mental Illness Education ACT executive officer will be available for interviews before the event 4.15pm-4.30pm and after 6.30pm.