Child and youth voices on bullying in Aotearoa

Engaging children and young people in matters that affect them

May 2017

Mai World Child and Youth Voices Report #maiworld #koreromai #beheard

Office of the Children's Commissioner

MAI

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VOICES

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A TĀTOU TAMARIKI

missioner



About the Office of the Children's Commissioner

The 1.1 million children and young people under 18 make up 23% of New Zealanders.

The Children's Commissioner Judge Andrew Becroft and his office advocate for their interests, ensure their rights are upheld, and help them have a say on matters that affect them.

This report shares expressions by children and young people on bullying. We recommend caution in how the report is used because the perspectives are uncensored and some could be considered as harmful perceptions of bullying.

Email: voices@occ.org.nz

Phone: 04 471 1410

PO Box 5610, Wellington 6145

Level 7, 110 Featherston St, Wellington.

Bullying in Aotearoa

"Sad and worried for the person being bullied, but also worried for the person who's bullying" -14 year old

Bullying in its various forms is deliberate, involves a power imbalance, is usually not a one-off and is harmful.

The Ministry of Education and groups such as the Bullying Prevention Advisory Group have been working on reducing instances of bullying in schools through promotion and awareness. Pink Shirt Day and Bully Free NZ Week are examples of this work.

To support the kaupapa, the Office of the Children's Commissioner engaged with children and young people on the topic of bullying and shared their insights with these groups, schools and on social media.

This report shares the insights gathered from children and young people on bullying. We have only removed identifiers and offensive words.

The Children's Commissioner, Judge Andrew Becroft, has set five key priorities to guide his work in 2017. One of his key priorities is to improve children's engagement in education. Understanding the impact of bullying on children and young people can help to inform this priority.



The Children's Commissioner seeks the voices of children and young people through Mai World: Child and Youth Voices

During 2017, we have sought the views of children and young people on bullying.

"Mai World" takes a childcentred approach to hearing children and young people in order to understand their world.



In order to learn about children and young people's views on bullying, we asked them

Children and young people are experts about their own experiences.

As the Office of the Children's Commissioner we have a responsibility to promote the participation of children and young people in decisions that affect them. This is a right that they have under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (The Children's Convention). The Children's Convention is an international human rights treaty that sets out the basic rights of children and the obligations of governments to fulfil them.

Through *Mai World: Child and Youth Voices* we endeavour to model best practice for engaging with children and young people. We have agreements with more than 54 schools around the country to undertake regular online surveys and focus groups to find out what their students think about issues of importance to them. As part of that project we also employ a dedicated community engagement specialist who engages with children and young people through focus groups in communities and at youth events. We use what we learn to inform our own work and that of other Government agencies.

WE ENGAGED WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

We designed a two-stage approach. The first stage of engagement was through a simple question sheet, designed to facilitate a conversation between parents and children during Bully Free NZ week.

We then partnered with a secondary school teacher who was using bullying as a topic for creative writing with year eleven students. The Children's Commissioner received detailed letters from students on their views of bullying.

The voices and letters from children and young people follow.



When I see other being bullied I feel...:



When I was bullied, I felt...



"Hurt but tried to ignore it. And I feel like I want to shout out stop!" -8 years old

"I wasn't properly bullied, but I'm short so my friends when I was younger used to make little jokes, which made me upset. But then I told them I didn't like it and it stopped. It took me 5 years to tell them because they were my friends, and the longer it goes the more normal it becomes. Now I don't mind those jokes"

-13 years old

"Lost, depressed, hurt, useless" -12 years old

"That just because one person bullied me that everyone else might as well"

-14 years old

"I have been extremely fortunate that I have not been badly bullied. I have however been mistreated by my friends that is borderline bullying. When that happened I felt very alone and unwanted. It is extremely difficult to comeback from it and to know what to do in that situation and not to react"

-16 years old

I think others bully because...





I am writing to express my opinion about bullying among New Zealand young people.

Bullying that I have observed is physical bullying for example; shoving, pushing, tripping, hitting and any other types of force towards another. Another type of bullying I've observed could be, Verbal-bullying which occurs when someone forces hurtful comments towards another, teasing or name-calling. One more type that I have observed could be Cyber-bullying which happens over the internet on mobile phones, this could mean that someone is using hurtful words to someone over the internet which could affect someone quite badly.

My thoughts and feelings about bullying; I think that Bullying is when someone is specifically picked on for their appearance, their actions, their religion, their sexuality, or possibly no reason what so ever. My feelings towards this makes me upset and sorry for the person that's getting bullied. One reason for the bullies to do this could be because it'll make themselves feel better because of something happening at home but, really there may be no reason at all. We know what it feels like to be bullied with the help of people who have. Bullies can make you feel upset; make you think there's something wrong with you. Some children have skipped school because of it, this means that the bullies are delaying the victims education.

I think that the teachers need to force some sense into their students or take the bullies to a counselor to get the things they have going on sorted, like I said things happening at home could cause them to partake in these actions towards another person, the school can imply a new rule into the school? 'Antibullying policy or standard operating procedure (SOP)'

Regards, B

Dear Judge Becroft, Children commissioner

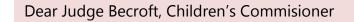
I am writing to express my opinion about bullying among New Zealand young people.

At schools the kind of bullying that I observe is verbal bullying mostly and a little bit of physical bullying. I think that bullying isn't right and just, but it will be very hard to get rid of, if not impossible. I believe that there will always be people that take advantage of each other and think that they are better than the other person and be very rude to other people. Bullying occurs over many ages (e.g. at a work environment as adults or at school as kids or teenager), therefore is very hard to get rid of and I believe it is part of human life and that it only occurs for a small portion of the person being bullied's life, therefore just comfort them in that time.

The only way I believe there is a chance to combat bullying among young people in NZ is to help those who are getting bullied and to apply a lot of disciplinary acts to those who bully, but like I said before I believe that it will be very very hard to get rid of it.

Sincerely,

Year 11 Secondary School Student.



I am writing to express my opinion about bullying among New Zealand young people,

[__school name removed__] I observe a lot of bullying, whether it is verbal or physical, sometimes even emotional. Some of this bullying can be knocking people around, pinning them against lockers, or just using racist and abusive language. Though most of these tend to just be banter and jokes some can take this too far. Growing up in this day and age we have been introduced to more foul language than older people used to know at our age 30-40 years ago. And because we have such a wide variety of words and vocabulary we tend to make a lot of this language normal and a part of everyday life. Though bullying might be considered a bad thing, it can also be a good thing up to a certain point. What I mean by this is that even though it's not a great thing to be bullied it can help make a person stronger in ways, by learning to deal with bad situations and sometimes being able to overcome obstacles like the bully. This also boosts confidence.

Bullying will always be a part of life, and sometime life just isn't fair. Even though bullying can be good for people, there is a point where it stops being good and people take it too far, resulting in depression and suicide. The one bullying I do not think should be allowed is cyber bullying, because it doesn't help anyone and it is a bit of a coward move by the bully considering that unlike physical and verbal abuse this is just on a screen and not face-to-face. Cyber bullying has never been known to help anyone and it has almost always led to depression and suicide. As well as this there is a certain point on verbal and physical bullying where it is taken too far, whether it is a crowd of people beating someone within an inch of their life or it is a class constantly picking on someone saying stuff about their family and friends and completely mocking them using comments like [___insults removed__]".

As of this moment I have no solutions on how to limit verbal and physical abuse, but with cyberbullying there is always a way whether it is blocking such people online or telling someone like parents, teachers, police or even someone from a company like helpline.

Nāku iti noa, nā

Κ

Bullying is a worrying and increasing problem in New Zealand. A lot of children do not understand these issues and some are brought up by the wrong people that encourage it. I see it happen day to day and I wish not to see it happen more.



I am writing to express my opinion about bullying among NZ young people.

At school there is a lot of bullying happening at any given time. Ask anyone and they will tell you about their own or others experience with bullying. I see it everywhere everyday, even if it is not serious or bad I still see it. I would imagine that most students at [___school name removed___] have been bullied at one point.

I feel like bullying is a serious issue in New Zealand especially and obviously it's not good if you're being bullied. People give shit to you whatever you do, you do one thing wrong and everyone knows about it the next day. You can't escape bullying at our school, it's relentless. I see how kids struggle and I know how they feel. It's hard to tell someone because if the bullies find out you tried to get help, It will get even worse.

There are many ways to stop bullying that most victims are afraid to do. Every victim should feel safe enough to tell a teacher or parent but that's not the case. There should be an anonymous message thing so that kids can message a teacher without the teacher knowing who it is so the student can feel comfortable.

Sincerely, Year 11 student.

Dear Judge Becroft, children's commissioner

I am writing to express my opinion about bullying among New Zealand young people. I have witnessed bullying many times from the people in high schools in wellington. With the bullying i have experienced pretty much all of it is online. This ranges from people swearing at one guy for not swapping in a football team to embarrassing pictures shown around. I think people use social media to do this because they are too scared to say it to their faces. With the football incident the boy who was bullied was never approached in person because the bulliers couldn't face him.

I think bullying is quite sad, I totally understand that sometimes you just don't like someone but that doesn't mean they deserve you being mean to them. Social media has really helped my generation in bullying because it ables them to hide behind a screen. The bullying that i have seen i believe that the people who did the bullying don't think they are actually bullying the person but more telling them their opinion.

I think it is important to teach kids how to express their feelings online and how to read other peers feelings online because the world of social media is a lot different to actually talking to someone face to face. We need to teach kids that swearing online is a no and what should be on your mind before you send something 'what would your grandma think'

I hope you're having a great day and this letter has helped you out to help other out

Cheers J



I am writing to express my opinion about bullying among New Zealand young people.

Of course, like most people, I have witnessed bullying, and unlike others, I have been victim to it myself. Therefore, I would like to talk about my opinion of bullying, where I have seen it, and in what shape/form it has occurred in. I have observed that bullying, although frequent in younger years in the points between the last few years of primary and the start of intermediate, (Yrs 5-8) that it is simply that of name calling, but as you get into the college years, more and more people become Cyber Bullies and Physical Bullies, beating those they deem to be "queer" or just have an issue with them. Cyber Bullying, of course, takes the form of people sharing hurtful comments or embarrassing facts about them over the internet, this, although harmless in real life, can scar them emotionally as once something is put on the internet, it can ALWAYS be found! Physical abuse is unfortunately a rather common occurrence around colleges and other schools nowadays, now I'm not talking about breaking arms or anything, but general punching and kicking others for pathetic reasons is a common thing nowadays.

If you haven't caught on, I think bullying should be oppressed and eradicated, most people choose this side of an argument because they have been taught that it is wrong, I on the hand, I choose to be on the side against bullying because I was a victim of it in my younger years up until last year.

I believe, that although bullying is horrendous it can be influenced by past experiences such as abuse from parents. This is why I believe that instead of just judging them and condemning them to unfair judgements, instead, try and find a reason behind their actions, and see if they have had past experiences that can scar them.

I hope you will take this letter into consideration.

Thank you for your time.

Bye!

1. Bullying I have observed: verbal and physical violence

2. Bullying is bad, but the way the media and other people portray it as if it was one of the worst things ever. Me myself having been bullied can definitely say it isn't.

3. Teach kids to be more thick skinned, or to actually play along with the bully, doing so you can beat the bully at his own game

Anon



I am writing to express my opinion about bullying among New Zealand young people.

I find that bullying is a major problem in our society and especially now in the 21st century society. I have never experienced bullying myself as a person but I have seen it happen through social media and through school. Social media is a big way of bullying as it's easy to bully on social media because you can hide behind your screen and be a coward. I have friends who have been bullied before and have found it hard and hurtful as most people do but me as a friend I am there for them and for whatever my 2 cents is worth I help them through it giving them support and company. I find that in our New Zealand bullying it is mostly done around school and is mainly at girls school, now don't quote me on this as this is what I have observed over the years at college and a little at primary.

I believe bullying is for the weak and for those who enjoy to feed off others suffering as it fills them with great joy to see them in pain even though what they are doing is just wrong. Bullies usually keep themselves anonymous and threaten the people they are bullying by telling them they will hurt them even more if they tell anyone and so what does this lead to? Depression and the feeling that they can't even tell their best friend what's wrong so they just try to keep it to themselves and keep it hidden away and not tell anyone. This is the wrong way to take bullying. It would make things a lot easier to tell someone so they can help but still people don't. All together people who bully are weak and are dirt and must make others feel the same pain as they do because bullies will get nowhere in life and they deserve this.

It is hard to stop this bullying problem as how can you stop it. This question has been asked for centuries now and no one has found a solution because you can't actually stop bullying, it is like a virus it just spreads from person to person and doesn't stop. I believe the only real solution is by standing up for your friends and do what's right as you can't do much else as like I said it is like a virus and is growing worse each day.

Altogether bullying is a major problem in New Zealand and mainly NZ secondary schools. We can only real help our mates and look after them and give them our time to help because we are the only thing they have to help them. I have a strong view on bullying and I believe anyone who bullies someone is weak and is a waste in our society because they will get nowhere in life so they must make others feel like this. Mainly all someone needs to do is stay strong and not listen to what those people say as it will get to the point where they will become bored and will leave you and go on to someone else to full their happiness by making others feel bad. We must stick up for our friends and family and help them when they are in need.

Your sincerely,

J

Dear judge Becroft, Children's Commissioner

I have seen bullying a few times at school. Things talk the person or pushing them against the locker.

My thoughts and feelings about bullying is bad and it should be stop. A lot of boys have banter with each other but some people take it too far. from H



I am writing to you to express my opinion about bullying among NZ youth

Bullying I have observed. I've seen quite low-key bullying, usually when banter turns to more than banter quickly before others realise.

I have some female friends who experience bullying more than us male counterparts. A female friend of mine shared something with one of her close friend and once people found out about that there was no direct taunting just indirect pressure and prejudice towards this person. People had very solid mindsets.

Personally, I hate bullying. I feel like I am a resilient person and can take a lot of rubbish that comes my way but when it comes to someone else, I get really frustrated and upset on their behalf about how small and powerless it makes them feel.

I think to stop bullying the bullies should be talked to not as attackers but as victims themselves. They must have been through some stuff to make them act out how they acted whether it is bad home life, bad day, entitlement etc; and they wouldn't be like that without being in a culture where that is ok.

Thank you

Dear Mr Andrew Becroft,

Bullying is something that will always be there, in a perfect world we would obviously not have something so negative like this. I feel that bullying is deeply connected to social media as a lot of jokes towards the person being bullied can start through this. I also feel that bullying is based on people's physical appearance and whether or not they are socially ordinary. I have seen bullying at *[school name removed_]* through physical and verbal abuse, I feel that verbal abuse is a much larger problem. This is because it is easier to get away with hurting someone with your words than your fists, and it is easier to get away with doing it which is why it is a lot more common than physical bullying.

As much as we want to help bullying and put it to rest we can't because even by reaching out to a lot of teenagers they will not want to reach back because most of us aren't as open as we should be and sharing our thoughts seems weak and may cause more bullying if others find out. Bullying is something that we need to stop but I feel that a new method of reaching out to teenagers is needed all across New Zealand.

Cheers J



To Andrew Becroft

Throughout my time at school, I have not seen much of bullying happening. There would be those one-off times but everyone gets over it. It's not a big deal. Sometime I see some people tease other people but it's none of my business. But sometimes when I see it, I usually deal with it. Those small boys think I'm big and scary, that's why they always drop their sacks when I butt my head into their business. Stopping them makes me feel kinda good.

What about the things that happen out of school you may ask? That's a whole new story. Child abuse is a big thing and that it ties in with bullying. I've seen my cousins and distant family get beaten real bad. Even myself. The reason why I don't care about this that much is because it helps me. Some people may think that it is wrong and should never happen but I personally think it's a way of getting the message into our thick skulls. From my personal experience, I've gotten beaten really bad for not knowing my 2 times tables. Those beating made me want to do them even more. Sort of like a motivation. See me now, top in all my class and getting Excellence like it's nothing.

Back to bullying in school, I've just finished reading my friend's letter and I agree that there is no solution to solve this issue. We teenagers are too simple and scared to open up when it comes to these types of issues. Faafetai lava

Sincerely Concerned student.

Dear judge Becroft, Children's commissioner

I am willing to express my opinion about bullying among NZ young people. I have seen bullying a few times and it is mostly just verbal or racial types of bullying. I rarely see cyber bullying.

My thoughts on bullying is the racial bullying I see is mostly directed at certain races Indian/Arab/Asian and less racial bullying towards Caucasian and pacific islanders. Bullying is not nice because it may leave the person thinking about what the bully has said for them days after. Also some types of bullying may just be counted as 'banter' or just roasting your friends when the person on the receiving end may not think that.

People also bully others to look cool or funny in front of others, or may want to make themselves feel better by making someone else feel worse about themselves. My ideas and solutions on how to reduce bullying is hard because it may just be light bullying which still has an affect on the person but not enough to create a lot of drama about, also the person may not want to be called a snitch or nark by their peers.

One way I think would help if teaches saw bullying in class they could maybe take action instead of ignoring it as most bullying would happen in the classroom or at lunch. If the bullying is really bad I think most people would tell someone like a teacher or parent.

Sincerely,



I am writing to express my opinion about bullying among New Zealand young people. The kinds of bullying that I have observed are shocking and unacceptable. I have seen bullying all around my town, and some other places. Some people pick fights with people, some puts pressure on other people. As you know, rates of bullying in New Zealand are very high compared to other countries so that is definitely a thing that needs to be changed. I feel like bullying is really a serious thing, and it either gives kids suicidal thoughts, or even committing suicide.

I have a few ideas for solutions on how to reduce bullying among New Zealand. One is that to really encourage teachers to help students who has some sort of signs of getting bullied. Like maybe talking to them in private. Ask the teachers to encourage the students to help the bullied ones, like comfort them, or just be a friend and protect them. To give people a clear definition of bullying, maybe get the police to have an assembly in their school and talk about bullying and the consequences. Getting the police involved with the school should put some mind into the kids in the school to not bully, and help those who are getting bullied. Maybe assign like 1-2 police to go to a school every month or 2, or even a year. Asking the school for putting up a bullying reporting system can also help reduce bullying in schools.

Thank you

Dear Judge Becroft, Children's Commissioner

I am writing to express my opinion about bullying among New Zealand young people. First and foremost I have noticed very little bullying through my eyes. But it's hard to say because someone could be very sensitive at the time and takes things on board. Mostly it's hard to notice the bullying or the impact it's having on someone unless you are in their shoes.

Bullying is obviously wrong and it is a heartless thing to do but it is more complex than just being a dick. First of all the victim can be anyone because we are all vulnerable. Some victims can be weaker than others and can be destroyed inside from a few comments. But what I believe is also important is the bully. Why do they bully people because often I believe they are the ones who truly need help because without the bully they cannot harm others.

I believe the solution should be to help the bully. Find out why he does what he does and in serious cases get him help because there could be something seriously wrong happening in their lives. But also the victim. I've noticed that sometimes people are of just a negative nature and this therefore attracts negative attention. The law of attraction is playing a part with the victim. The victim shuts people off, the people will shut off the victim. I believe both the bully and victim play a crucial part in bullying amongst young New Zealand people, but it's neither of their faults the way they act and treat others or how they treat themselves. Ultimately I believe is there's always a reason people do what they do, and we need to get to the bottom of it.

From S



I am writing to express my opinion about bullying among New Zealand people. From the things I have observed, I believed that there are bullying going on especially in schools and in the internet. From my observation, I think that bullying is generally targeted towards other groups that is different from theirs (race, culture, etc.) and also social media site groups and profiles. My thoughts and feelings towards bullying is that I think it's not nice to actually bully anyone in any kind of form of bullying, especially since social media is growing, more and more cyber-bullies are popping up and since those cyber-bullies aren't actually face to face to those that they are targeting, they have more freedom to what they have to say towards those who are being targeted.

My ideas to reducing bullying is that I think everyone should just get along, and if you really can't get along with that particular person, then just ignore them completely as if they weren't even there in the first place. But if things does go far as to physical beatings, I think you should go seek for help from your friends, teachers, parents, etc. To avoid cyber-bullying, I think people shouldn't involve themselves in to "sketchy" sites or profile and also avoid profiles that you know you won't get along with.

I also think that parents/guardians should time to time monitor what their child is doing because I know that a lot of people's parents don't actually monitor what their child is doing in social media sites and in the internet. Parents should ask what their son/daughter how their day has been and if anything seems wrong to them, have a discussion about it because if they actually are being bullied, it can actually cool down their minds of all the things that has been going on in their heads which can release stress and anxiety. If you see someone being bullied help them out, because maybe you can stop the bullying if you can just step up. Thank you, Judge Becroft, for listening about my thoughts on bullying in New Zealand.

Sincerely, Anonymous

Dear Mr Andrew Becroft,

A lot of people bully around this country. Even when you think it's not bullying, it is. Bullying can be done in the smallest form like words or online. At least everyone gets bullied in their lifetime. Me personally I hate bullies and I just want to knock them out. Bullying is a big issue because it can lead to serious and dangerous matters like suicide. Personally, I think there is no solutions to help this problem because kids and teenagers don't want to tell anyone about their problems unless they're very open. As much as I would like to help kids with bullying issues, they would not tell you about what's going because they are either afraid to tell you or the bully would never stop bullying that kid. The dark side of this is that this will never end until that bully stops or until the kid does something about it like either tell an adult (which will not likely happen) or put matters into his/her own hands and deals with it.

Cheers, from F.



I am writing to express my opinion about bullying among New Zealand young people in this day and age.

Bullying is very common in this generation and I have seen this and been a victim of it countless times in many places including previous schools and in other areas such as on the trains and buses.

I can tell you it is a horrible thing to go through, not just for the victim, but for some of the people in the immediate area surrounding.

There are some possible solutions in my eyes to combat this. One could be to enforce stricter punishment or re-introduce the cane. Another could be to try to understand why the bully is doing it and provide the necessary help to both the victim and the bully.

I know this is a difficult problem and I hope these opinions and views help you combat this.

Yours sincerely,

Anonymous Year 11 Student.

Dear Judge Andrew Becroft, Children's Commissioner

I am writing to express my opinion about bullying among New Zealand young people.

I have observed bullying many occasions [___name of school___], both because the bully thinks he has more power over the victim for some reason. I believe this is because of the person's childhood and their family members influencing them or his friends that treat him badly so he feels he can do the same with others.

Bullying is a big problem here in NZ and I believe that we can get kids to stop bullying others.

A possible solution for this that you can do is run a course for teachers and other adults telling them what they should and what they should not do if they see someone getting bullied. This could help everyone know what to do to stop that bully and make sure that they don't do it again

Sincerely

Year 11 student

Mai World: Child and Youth Voices

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By working with schools and community groups, we provide a way for children and young people to contribute their views so they can be heard by a range of audiences, and their voices can influence government and community decisions that they care about and that may affect them.

Register your school or community group at <u>www.surveymonkey.com/r/voicesreq</u>

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