

Cyberbullying in the context of sport and recreation.

The bullying of young people using email, texting, chat rooms, mobile phones, cameras and web sites has become a global phenomenon. Despite this, the problem has yet to receive the attention it deserves. (Campbell, 2005)

Cyber bullying can be described as covert, psychological bullying, conveyed through the electronic mediums such as email, mobile-phones, social networking sites, instant messaging programs, chat rooms and web-sites. It most often occurs between people known to each other and can be particularly hurtful. Cyber bullying by its very nature is pervasive, and for the first time, the victim is accessible by the bully 24/7. Where historically the bully was left at the 'school gate', by virtue of technology, the bully has access to the victim's home and more often than not the one place they should be safe, their bedroom.

The recent 6th Annual Harassment-Free Sport Government Partners Meeting in Adelaide addressed the issue of cyber bullying and online harassment in a sport and recreational context as their key focus. Sporting organisations, as reflections of society, will see evidence of cyber bullying, harassment and unsafe online practices within their clubs. It is incumbent on each organisation and/or governing body to be aware of the issues surrounding the misuse of technology and ensure that by their codes of conduct, they send a very clear message to their communities that such behaviour will not be tolerated.

Clear and concise guidelines must be provided, detailing acceptable communication between players, coaches, parents and officials and breaches must be dealt with in a timely and considered manner. Clubs should also be aware that misuse of technology in many circumstances is a crime and that club members may find themselves before a court of law should such behaviours continue.

Embrace technology for the valuable tool that it is, but be acutely aware of the problem that it may become.

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Keynote Presenter

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