



The Hon Julie Bishop MP
Minister for Education, Science and Training
Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women's Issues

This Conference brings together leading researchers and practitioners as well as teachers, parents and other members of the community who share a passion for the safety and wellbeing of our children.

I apologise that I am unable to attend your 2007 National Coalition Against Bullying Conference, as this is rather a busy time for Federal Members of Parliament.

It is vital that we work together to combat the problem of bullying, violence and abuse that can take place in schools and elsewhere. Bullying is not a problem confined to schools and it is a societal problem that needs a broader response. Schools do have an important role to play through their duty of care to students.

Our children have a right to the best possible start in life. This includes the right to grow up and develop in safe and supportive environments, free from bullying, harassment, violence, abuse and neglect. Research shows that children learn best when they feel safe and secure. Schools help ensure that all Australian children, wherever they live, and whatever school they attend, are educated in such an environment.

Bullying at school requires a whole school community response - students, staff, parents and carers, and other community members.

This approach acknowledges that learning is not only about what is taught in Maths and English, but about the whole schooling experience, which extends beyond the schoolyard.

Every member of every school community should be encouraged to value diversity, contribute positively to the safety and wellbeing of all, and to the implementation of appropriate strategies that create safe and supportive learning environments.

The Australian Government is committed to creating safe and secure learning environments for our children. We recognise the importance of drawing national attention to the issue of bullying and promoting positive relationships for safer school communities.

I am pleased that the Australian Government has been able to provide \$50,000 towards this exciting and valuable Conference, drawing together leading experts in the field of bullying from Australia and beyond.

I congratulate the National Coalition Against Bullying for organising this event, and for its tireless commitment to improving the wellbeing of Australian children.

I wish you well with your conference and I urge all school communities throughout Australia to learn from it.

JULIE BISHOP