

Good afternoon Headmaster, Deputy Headmasters, Staff and Boys of Brisbane Grammar.

This Friday the 15<sup>th</sup> of March marks Australia's National Day of Action against Bullying and Violence. This day is an opportunity for students, teachers, parents and the community as a whole to take a stand together against bullying.

Our school's own bullying policy, which every one of us has access to, quite simply defines bullying as a systematic abuse of power. But more specifically, bullying "typically involves repeated acts of aggression that aim to cause hurt, fear or embarrassment in another person". Whilst it is often deliberate and planned, bullying can also result from pure thoughtlessness. Physical, verbal, exclusion, extortion and more recently, cyber bullying, are just some of the forms that these actions can take yet the line which separates these from a harmless joke remains vague and ill-defined. But seated before me are boys with social intelligence and maturity beyond their years so I truly believe that you could all identify what bullying actually is. And with that ability, I implore you to advocate a positive message about this issue. Without doubt, the privilege we are given at this school leads to a well-established ethos about bullying. But this does not mean that it doesn't happen. Bullying is such a delicate issue that can be helped only with the continued development of positive values and respectful attitudes within our community.

While the first step is often the identification of the problem, it will continue to be an issue unless a solution is employed. Luckily, there are a number of ways which provide avenues for continued support in order to help those who feel that they are being unfairly treated as a result of bullying. If it is not possible to approach the bully and inform them you feel that you are being mistreated, there are a range of higher authorities that can help. You can talk to a trusted adult be it either your parents or teachers and I can assure you that every possible means will be undertaken to improve the situation. This school's student welfare programme takes great pride ensuring that the experiences which we all share throughout our school lives are to be beneficial and constructive. And this means that there is not one individual authority that would not do whatever possible to make sure that every student is granted this opportunity.

But like I touched on earlier, if we don't actively seek to fix something, we often become part of the issue itself. And this idea is essentially at the core of the bystander's role. A bystander is a witness to an act of bullying who is not directly involved in the action but has the ability to intervene. Undoubtedly, being a bystander is extremely tough because often the desire is there to stop the bullying but they also do not want to present themselves as a target, which is fundamental human nature. But let me assure you that you can take immense pride in standing up to a bully and there are few more significant displays of courage. Bullying is often simply an act which attempts to bring others down to heighten the status of the bully or simply to just get a few laughs. But there is nothing humorous about degrading someone's self-esteem and this is where the power of the bystander must be employed.

So on this national day of action against bullying and violence I ask that we create a supportive and positive environment within our school to eradicate the notion of the bully and the victim. And if you do feel as though you are a target of repeated personal attacks, there is a bullying register on MyGrammar which is an open resource to us all. I urge us to use this national day of action against bullying and violence to say no to bullying once and for all.