

Cartoon: Kaiden Unwin

# Fight back against cyberbullying

#### **EDITORIAL**

#### By JAZMIN BARNES

HOW would you feel if after a stressful day of being bullied at school you were to come home, login to Facebook and be greeted by abusive messages from that same group or person?

This is the reality faced by countless students every day. This generation is more connected than any in the world's history, a drastically larger amount of young adults go online more frequently.

Did you know that 43 per cent of kids have been bullied online? And one in four of this 43 per cent have had it happen more than once?

Cyberbullying has been identified as a very destructive and simple way to pick on someone. Cyberbullying is very damaging to adolescents and teens. Studies have shown it can lead to anxiety. depression, and even suicide. It damages its victims emotionally and physically. These effects are very serious but what is being done to stop this from happening?

The main problem facing authorities is difficulty in identifying bullies since the victim often won't speak up and tell anyone that the problem is occurring.

However help is at hand. People that are bullied must speak with a teacher, counsellor or a friend. There are also helplines available such as: Kids Helpline, CyberBully Helpline and Cybersmart.

A problem we are facing is the understanding that some posts don't fade away over time. They remain a permanent fixture in cyberspace only to resurface later or the post is shared among other people and goes viral.

It is important to educate this generation with the consequences of this behaviour, which can include: police intervention, suspension from school and even a criminal record. Especially if the cyberbully is engaged in sexting (sending sexually inappropriate messages); they could be registered as a sex offender, which can result in jail time and limited employment options.

Cyberbullying is a major challenge that our generation needs to overcome. This can be achieved through education, community awareness and people being more aware of the consequences of their action when online.

# How social media is making us antisocial

#### By JYE FITZGERALD

SOCIAL media is currently at its pinnacle with 2.078 billion active social media accounts. That's nearly 30 per cent of the world's population.

It is expected that by late 2016, half of the world will be connected to social media websites and applications. With thousands of social networking sites these numbers are expected to grow exponentially.

Despite these startling statistics, the question that some users are asking themselves is how "social" is social media?

The Pew Research Centre released a study in 2013 comparing how adults use social media in comparison to teenagers. Teenagers use social media 9 per cent more than adults with 18-29 year olds being the most frequent users of social networking websites.

Many people with social media accounts have little understanding of the potential consequences of what they say online. They use sites such as Facebook to gossip, cyberbully, promote unhealthy practices and share videos and photos that others may not want the world to see. Although it has been dubbed "social media", it can be quite the opposite for some.

After interviewing a number of families to understand how social media can change a person's life, a common thread came through: often people witness a family member so



Social media can do the opposite: make us isolated and alone. Picture: Phoebe Stevenson

immersed in the online world that they soon lose friends because of how unsocial they have been.

For some users, social media can prevent them from thinking rationally and living in reality

"Social media has given us this idea that we should all have a posse of friends when, in reality, if we have one or two good friends, we are lucky," said Brené Brown, an American scholar and public speaker.

### Car flattened by fallen tree in Cooks Hill

#### By **KATE GRANT**

MANY people in the Hunter have been affected by the recent storms. The initial storm was rated as a Category 2 Cyclone, which is the most disastrous weather Newcastle and surrounding suburbs have experienced since the Pasha Bulka storm in 2007.

Very few escaped the effects of the wild weather, with many residents having trees down in their vards, power outages, loss of phone reception and minor flooding.

A street in Cooks Hill had more than its fair share of devastation. A resident had their gold Subaru parked in Laman Street when the gale-force winds blew over a large tree, blocking the street.

Fortunately, no one was in the car when it was crushed by the enormous branches and the owner had to have council assistance to free the car.

Smaller branches were caught on the power lines causing a potential hazard. This heightened the danger, causing the



A gold Subaru crushed by the tree's enormous fallen branches. Picture: Kimberly Rigby

council to react as quickly as possible. Eventually, the tree was removed and

the powerlines fixed, allowing traffic to resume as normal

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