

 **MEDIA RELEASE**
**Embargoed until Tuesday 26 August 2025**

**Mum shares plea as new data reveals parent crisis in confidence to tackle bullying alone**

Amy Churchward’s son was just nine years old when bullying at school left him withdrawn, anxious and questioning his self-worth.

“I was scared of him doing something and not valuing his life,” Amy said. “He wouldn’t open up to me at first, and I could feel his heartbreak. He’s a good student and yet he didn’t even want to go to school anymore. He shut right down. No kid deserves that.”

Carter’s experience is heartbreakingly common. New research from Life Ed Queensland, based on a survey of 500 parents, reveals that almost half of parents feel unequipped to spot the signs of bullying, and nearly 1 in 3 don’t know where to report it – exposing a critical gap in support for families.

Now in Year 6 and thriving as a sports captain, Carter’s turnaround began after joining Life Ed Queensland’s *Stand Up for Respect* program – a whole-of-school initiative that builds empathy, resilience and leadership.

“He realised people cared about him,” Amy said. “He found his voice and confidence. He stands up for others now and has this real leadership aura. He’s not the same kid.”

To spotlight the issue, Life Ed Qld will host ***Upstanders on the* *Green*** – on **Tuesday 26 August** on the Queensland Parliament Speaker’s Green featuring:

* A **giant Queensland map installation** representing the 1 in 3 children affected by bullying weekly, and filled with 1,000 student pledges to end bullying
* Personal pledges from **Queensland MPs** to take action in their electorates
* Insights from **Dr Justin Coulson**, parenting expert and co-host of *Parental Guidance*

Life Ed Queensland CEO Taryn Black welcomed recent government measures which include Rapid Report Squads, more chaplains in schools and a 24/7 crisis line for parents, but said preventative upstream education was vital to tackle the bullying issue.

“It’s vital to have these supports when things go wrong,” Ms Black said. “But we’re proud to complement these efforts with a prevention-first approach – one that tackles bullying from the grassroots up.

“It takes the whole community to foster a culture of respect so that we can give our young people the best chance to thrive.

“Bullying is often a silent struggle. Our survey shows parents understand the damage – but many feel lost when it comes to recognising or responding to it.”

Key findings from the survey conducted during Term 3:

* **Almost half of parents (49%)** aren’t confident they could spot bullying signs
* **2 in 5 parents (40.8%)** don’t know what steps to take if their child reports bullying
* **Over 1 in 5 parents (21%)** don’t feel confident even talking to their child about bullying
* **Nearly 1 in 3 parents (31%)** don’t know where to report bullying at their child’s school
* **1 in 4 parents (25%)** say they are not confident identifying when a behaviour is repeated and intentional (the definition of bullying)
* **1 in 4 parents (25%)** also don’t feel confident approaching their child’s school about a bullying concern
* **More than 1 in 4 parents 27%** don’t feel confident supporting their child if they witness bullying

The *Stand Up for Respect* program is currently in Phase 2 trials across five South East Queensland schools, offering student workshops, teacher training, peer group playground clubs and parent webinars.

Dr Coulson praised the initiative, describing it as a model for meaningful change:

“This is exactly what we need – a proactive, inclusive approach that brings parents, teachers and students together.”

Carter’s mum Amy echoed his sentiments, emphasising the critical role parents play in supporting young people’s mental health and preventing long-term harm.

“As parents, we often sense when something’s not right, but bullying can be hard to be spot. Kids are incredibly good at shutting down and hiding what they’re going through,” she said.

“Carter is off to high school year next year, and the difference in him is remarkable. He has so much confidence because of the support he has around him now and the strategies he has to deal with any peer issues. Knowing what to do and where to turn makes all the difference.”

**ENDS**

<https://www.lifeedqld.org.au/>

Life Ed Queensland is the largest non-government provider of preventative health education to school children.

With the help of iconic mascot Healthy Harold, the giraffe, and a team of specialist educators, Life Ed has been empowering children and young people to make safer and healthier choices for 45 years (nationally), and 38 years in Queensland.

We work with around 1000 schools and preschools across Queensland. On average, 180,000 school children participate in our program each year.

Life Ed’s core program covers nutrition and exercise, drugs, smoking, vaping and alcohol, bullying, respectful relationships and positive mental health.

Life Ed Queensland also delivers the largest puberty, relationships and sexual health education program in Queensland primary schools, Talk About It, which reached 50,975 Queensland students last year alone.

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