

BANKSTOWN MP PRESENTS \$10,000 FUNDING BOOST TO THE BANKSTOWN MULTICULTURAL YOUTH SERVICE

State MP for Bankstown, Tony Stewart, will today present a cheque for \$10,000 of State funding to the Bankstown Multicultural Youth Service to assist with continuing its "Breaking the Cycle" program. Mr Stewart said that the \$10,000 funding, which has been provided after his representations to the Minister for Juvenile Justice, would be a great boost towards supporting a local youth program that is delivering tremendous results. "The Breaking the Cycle program works with young people in an effort to assist them from becoming repeat offenders and in this regard it has achieved amazing results through the great work of the Bankstown Multicultural Youth Service," Mr Stewart said.

"This program has a significant number of current juvenile justice clients and importantly is working closely with Department of juvenile justice workers in terms of case managing these young people. I am advised by the Manager of the Bankstown Multicultural Youth Service, Ms Mary Malak, that this work is now resulting in higher levels of compliance by the young people who are part of the Breaking the Cycle program." "This \$10,000 of State funding by the Keneally Government is well deserved by the Bankstown Multicultural Youth Service and will be put to great use in terms of continuing this service's innovative Breaking the Cycle program." Mr Stewart said.

Net trap for teens

Hurt on anti-social website



Bullied: Teagan Christodoulou was shocked by the abuse. Picture Adam Ward

A SOCIAL networking website popular among Sydney teens has become a dangerous haven for cyber bullies.

International site FormSpring.Me has recorded an incredible growth in popularity among Australian teenagers since launching in November.

The free site has user accounts which can be linked to Twitter or Facebook.

The site allows users to post questions and write responses anonymously.

It is that anonymity that is encouraging cyber bullies, experts said.

Australian cyber bullying expert, former police officer Susan McLean, said she was contacted at least once a day by parents and schools desperate for advice on how to help children driven to despair by abuse directed at them on FormSpring.Me.

"It's becoming problematic - more people are joining it and more people are abusing it," Ms McLean said.

"There is nothing positive with FormSpring.Me. You go on it to wreak havoc with someone else's life."

In the US the site has been

linked to at least one suicide, with 17-year-old Alexis Pilkington taking her own life after dozens of insulting comments about her were posted.

Abuse of the site is now so rampant that FormSpring.Me's own support section instructs users facing harassment to deny anonymous questions, block unwanted users or, in the case of a threat or crime, contact the police.

Ms McLean said there had been incidents of bullying in Australia, such as when a teenager on the NSW-Victoria border posted personal and often defamatory posts about others in the small rural community.

Sydney girl Teagan Christodoulou, 15, said she was invited to set up a FormSpring.Me account through social networking site Facebook.

"Five weeks later a girl started saying really nasty things about me," she said.

"Teagan is a backstabbing slut," read one of the anonymous posts.

"It was upsetting. I always thought I was pretty much friends with everyone," Teagan said.

Edith Bevin

Article from the Daily Telegraph

Government proposal to make year 10 studies more relevant and flexible

Students warm to exam plan

By Eva Tejszerski

A PROPOSAL to revamp the year 10 final exams and increase the school leaving age has been welcomed by students.

The NSW Government announced its plan to modernise the School Certificate, so it includes a wider range of achievements such as vocational training, and to encourage students to remain at school until they are at least 17.

The School Certificate was introduced 45 years ago and NSW is the only state in Australia that still has compulsory exams for year 10 students.

At present, those students must complete a school assessment and five mandatory tests in November every year.

Education Minister Verity Firth, who made the announcement this month, said a new scheme was necessary.

"Contemporary schooling is vastly different to what it once was", Ms Firth said.

"Students are engaged in community service language studies, on-site work experience, and part-time employment as part of their TAFE courses.

"We recognise those students deserve some kind of credential for completing the mandatory part of their education".

Ms Firth said the review would also aim to help s-



Supporters: Year 10 students (from left) Diana Anthis, Isabelle Martin and Tegan Tsoukalas say the School Certificate is important in developing life skills

tudents start their careers when they entered the workforce.

Principal at Penshurst Girls Campus-Georges River College, Anne Ross, said she supported the government's plan.

"As educators, we want the best for young people so they have options in the future", Mrs Ross said.

She said the school certificate was important because it "sets a benchmark" in helping students prepare for senior study.

"By acknowledging their achievements in things like work experience and community service, it would help them develop their life skills".

But Mrs Ross said some students were "playing catch-up" because they had disengaged from their s-

tudies.

"Year 10 is an awakening transition for students when they realise their choices around learning need to be more focused [especially if] they will have to stay at school until they are 17".

The school has introduced learning support and mentoring programs including Youth Connections designed to help year 10 students prepare for final exams.

Year 10 student Isabelle Martin said that the school certificate was a good stepping stone towards the HSC.

"It gets us used to a pressured exam environment and shows there is room for improvement".

Article from The Leader