

Tassie's shame in cyber bullying

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TASMANIA has the highest rate of school cyber bullying in the country, a national study by Edith Cowan University has found.

It found 15.6 per cent of grade 4 to year 9 students in Tasmania were being cyber bullied.

That figure was more than double the prevalence rate for almost every other state and territory.

Nationally, only 6.6 per cent of students suffered cyber bullying.

The university surveyed more than 7000 Australian students including 772 from nine Tasmanian state and non-government schools.

The study found that 8.7 per cent of the Tasmanian survey respondents bullied others, compared with the national figure of 3.5 per cent.

However, the report authors warned there was a need to be cautious when looking at the seemingly extraordinary results for Tasmania.

"There is a relatively high uncertainty in the estimates of prevalence for [Tasmania and the Northern Territory] due to the smaller sample sizes," the report said. The State Opposi-

tion said the Government needed to treat bullying more seriously.

"Every school should at the very least establish a mechanism for confidential reporting by students of bullying incidents, to enable them to be dealt with," Liberal education spokeswoman Sue Napier said yesterday.

Education Department statewide student manager Jenny Breen said all state schools had their own bullying policies and Tasmania was also part of the national Safe School plan.

"The benefit we get from that is all states share their best practice and resources," Ms Breen said. She urged all parents and teachers to look closely at the latest research to better understand the complex nature of bullying.

"I think it can make a contribution to raising everybody's awareness. If everyone takes a stand and makes a commitment to build safe and supportive environments around young people, that can make an enormous difference," she said.

The Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence Study report is at www.deewr.gov.au