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MEDIA RELEASE

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‘DOLLY’S LAW’: PUTTING CYBERBULLIES ON NOTICE

Perpetrators of online bullying could face up to five years’ prison time under tough new laws passed by NSW Parliament today.

Attorney General Mark Speakman thanked the parents of Amy ‘Dolly’ Everett for allowing the NSW Government to give their daughter’s name to the amendments to the *Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act*. Dolly took her own life following a campaign of abuse at school and online.

“No parent should have to go through this devastating experience. This is why we are committed to protecting everyone in our community from online abuse – whether that be school children, victims of domestic violence or anyone else whose safety is put at risk by cyberbullies and online trolls.”

“‘Dolly’s Law’ is now putting online abusers on notice that if their actions cause people to fear physical or mental harm, they face a maximum penalty of five years imprisonment,” Mr Speakman said.

Tick and Kate, who established ‘Dolly’s Dream’ to advocate for the safety and wellbeing of children, have welcomed the NSW Government’s steps to address cyberbullying.

“Following the death of Dolly earlier this year after sustained cyberbullying, we are pleased that NSW has strengthened the penalties associated with this behaviour,” Kate Everett said.

“‘Dolly’s Law’ is an important signal to everyone using technology. Dolly’s Dream aims to prevent cyberbullying and educate children and parents about the serious harm it can do. They need to know that there are penalties, as well as consequences, of cyberbullying,” Tick Everett said.

The laws cover sending abusive emails, posting threatening or hurtful messages, photos or videos online or repeatedly sending unwanted messages. It also provides a basis for victims of cyberbullying to seek apprehended violence orders.

Education Minister Rob Stokes said the new laws reinforce the Government’s zero tolerance approach to bullying, harassment or violence of any kind in schools.

“Every child has the right to grow up in a safe and secure environment. Our schools are places where communities come together. No child should ever feel isolated or harassed,” Mr Stokes said.

Last year the NSW Government committed \$6.1 million to create the nation's most comprehensive anti-bullying strategy, with online resources available to all Catholic, independent and public schools.

In June, Mr Stokes also commissioned world-renowned child psychologist Michael Carr-Gregg to launch Australia's first review into the use of mobile digital devices in schools. The findings of the review will be presented to the Federal, State and Territory Education Ministers in December.

Today's new cyber harassment laws, combined with a best in class anti-bullying strategy and mobile digital device review, illustrate the commitment of the NSW Liberals & Nationals to increase youth mental health awareness.

Since 2010 the NSW Government has invested more than \$200 million dollars in additional programs for student wellbeing. This includes a targeted approach to increase school counselling services with an additional 236 fulltime equivalent position (FTE) school counselling positions created over the past three years, bringing the current total to 1,044.

This year's State budget also provided an additional \$56.7 million in funding for the *Supported Students, Successful Students* program, allowing for a further \$6.2 million in funding to deliver an additional 55 fulltime equivalent counselling positions.

The measures taken by the NSW Liberals & Nationals Government are the first enhancement to school counselling positions since 1996.

If you or anyone you know needs help please call Lifeline on 13 11 14 or the Kids Helpline on 1800 551 800.

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