

# 44th APS Annual Conference DARWIN



## MEDIA RELEASE

30 September – 4 October 2009

Darwin Convention Centre, Northern Territory

1 October 2009

### **Bullying causes anxiety in children, study finds**

Children who are bullied often experience anxiety and view the world as a more threatening place, a psychological study of 298 children has found.

“As a result of taunting, teasing, threats and social exclusion, children who are bullied often show signs of anxiety, including refusing to go to school, avoiding their peers and physical symptoms, such as trembling or shaking,” said Associate Professor Caroline Hunt, study author from the University of Sydney.

Dr Hunt will present her findings at the Australian Psychological Society’s 44<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference in Darwin this week.

“We know that many adults with anxiety or depression report a history of being bullied as a child or teenager,” said Dr Hunt. “Our study found that children who are being bullied become anxious regardless of whether they are shy or outgoing, which indicates adult anxiety might actually be linked to childhood bullying.”

Dr Hunt said despite increased focus on anti-bullying programs in schools, there has been no significant change in bullying figures.

“Thirty per cent of Australian children have experienced significant bullying, whether it’s indirect, emotional or physical,” said Dr Hunt.

“Bullying is a perennial problem in Australian schools, which can have serious mental health implications for children developing into adolescents.

“We need to teach our children the skills to deal with bullying in the playground. Try to encourage your child to talk about their experiences at school and remind them it’s important they tell you if they feel threatened or annoyed by somebody at school,” Dr Hunt said.

The psychological study examined 298 children, aged 10 to 14, from three different schools.

For more information on the 44<sup>th</sup> APS Annual Conference visit:

[www.apsconference.com.au](http://www.apsconference.com.au)

#### **According to Dr Hunt, signs your child might be being bullied include:**

- Appears sad or moody when he or she comes home from school.
- Suddenly begins to perform poorly at school.
- Refuses to go school.
- Appears anxious or suffers low-self esteem.
- Avoids spending time with his or her friends.

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#### **MEDIA CONTACTS:**

Please direct all media queries to:

Elaine Grant  
+61 412 683 068

Ellise McLoughlan  
+61 428 445 097



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**To coordinate an interview with Dr Caroline Hunt, please contact: Elaine Grant on 0412 683 068 or Ellise McLoughlan on 0428 445 097.**

**About the 44<sup>th</sup> APS Annual Conference:**

This year's Conference will be held at the Darwin Convention Centre from 30 September to 4 October 2009. The Conference will bring together prominent psychologists, practitioners and researchers to explore topical issues including: psychological responses to disaster, emotional intelligence, Indigenous mental health and wellbeing, women in management, body image and youth substance abuse issues.

**About Australian Psychological Society:**

The Australian Psychological Society (APS) is the peak professional body for Australian psychologists. With more than 17,500 members and 40 branches across the country, the APS is the largest of all non-medical health professionals' associations in Australia.

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