

RELEASED: Sunday 28 February, 2016

Ian Thorpe takes on bullying for ABC

New 3x60 documentary series *The Bully Project* in production

Olympian and former Young Australian of the Year Ian Thorpe OAM will host a confronting new series aimed at tackling the issue of bullying by taking audiences to the frontline.

The Bully Project will form the central plank of a season of programming running across the ABC. The aim of the season, which will be supported by partner ReachOut Australia, is to examine the causes, context and consequences of bullying in Australia today. As the country's leading online mental health service for young people, ReachOut's 18 years of experience will be invaluable in helping the ABC develop audience pathways to further help, advice and support for anyone affected by what is a complex issue.

Ian is encouraging members of the public aged 14 – 18-years-of-age who have been bullied to get in touch to take part in **The Bully Project**: "More than a quarter of school children in Australia claim to have been bullied on a regular basis, which is unacceptable. I'm passionate about shining a light on this issue. If you live in Queensland, and you or your child is being bullied or know someone who is, we want to hear from you. Go to stopbullying.tv to find out more."

Speaking about his involvement, Ian said: "I have some personal experience around the issue of bullying so I want to share my insights to help Australian kids."

ABC TV has teamed up with KEO Australia and Lune Media to tackle a significant problem for our young people. Based on a tested and successful Dutch format by SkyHigh TV, now in its second season, the series adopts the controversial but eye-opening approach of arming those being bullied with hidden cameras to capture their experience firsthand, which has resulted in positive outcomes for participants. The production will film in Queensland this year, where surveillance device legislation permits a format of this nature. Detailed protocols outlining the high level duty of care and involvement of skilled practitioners have been agreed by the ABC and KEO ahead of undertaking the project to ensure the welfare of all participants.

ABC Director of Television Richard Finlayson said: "The statistics are shocking. The ABC is committed to being the home of important national conversations and I expect **The Bully Project** and the ABC's season of programming will act as a catalyst for this issue. We are working closely with our production partners to ensure the highest duty of care to all participants, while lifting the lid on what's actually taking place among young people today."

Lune Media Managing Director Leonie Lowe said: "We believe that **The Bully Project** will generate comment, debate and ultimately help effect a change in public attitude. It will bring to light an issue that is widely known about but rarely understood, while at all times protecting the rights and welfare of all those involved."

ReachOut Chief Executive Officer Jonathan Nicholas said: “ReachOut provides practical support on a range of issues that matter to young people. Information on bullying is accessed thousands of times each week, making it some of the most accessed content on [ReachOut.com](https://reachout.com). Bullying can affect people in different ways and have serious impacts on mental health and wellbeing. As a key partner of this important season of programming, our role is to work with the ABC and other services to help connect people affected by bullying to information and support that’s right for them.”

For further information and interview requests contact:

Rachel Fergus, ABC TV Publicity

02 8333 5085 | 0416 263 194 | fergus.rachel@abc.net.au

Need to talk to someone right now?

Young people can turn to [ReachOut.com](https://reachout.com) from anywhere and at any time for free self-help tools, information, and a peer support forum.

National 24/7 crisis phone support is available from Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800