

February 21 2020

This week we have seen through social media and the press, how a lack of public awareness and schoolyard bullying can have a huge and damaging impact on children all around the country including the short statured community. Sadly, bullying is an issue that touches every part of society and something that we all need to solve together.

The Short Statured People of Australia (SSPA) would like to express our support for all members of the short statured community and their families who have had to deal with the effects of bullying. Bullying is never okay. Regardless of race, cultural background, sexuality, gender, disability or physical difference. Dwarfism, like other physical differences, is often the target for bullying. Society has a responsibility to understand and respect physical difference, remembering that respect is a human right, something that everyone deserves. We extend our support to anyone else who may be struggling with bullying daily and or have been triggered by this incident. The SSPA's founding principle is *'Equality of Opportunity'* and this includes the opportunity for everyone to attend school, the workplace and to, indeed, participate anywhere in the community without harassment, ridicule or bullying.

This week's events are very unfortunate and painful, at the same time what they do provide is an opportunity for education and awareness.

We would like to take this opportunity to encourage people to have open conversations about dwarfism, all disabilities and physical differences with their friends, colleagues, classmates, families and children. There is no need for embarrassment or reason to stop a child's curiosity, we need to embrace that curiosity and use it as an opportunity to educate, to talk to people in the community and to give everyone a chance to learn how similar we all are - rather than focusing on our differences from afar.

The SSPA encourage and welcome any person with dwarfism, including their family, who may be struggling and is wanting someone to talk to, to reach out to us. The SSPA have supportive resources available including a Professional Advisory Board with a psychologist. Please contact the SSPA if you would like support.

There are also organisations such as Headspace which has a range of resources on dealing with bullying, Kids Helpline who are available 'Anytime. Any reason' and Lifeline who provides support to people thinking about suicide or experiencing a personal crisis. The important thing is that there is help available. No one needs to face their problems alone.

**Headspace:** <https://headspace.org.au/>

**Kids Helpline:** 1800 55 1800 or <https://kidshelpline.com.au>

**Lifeline:** 13 11 14 or <https://www.lifeline.org.au/>

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Milliard', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Sam Milliard  
National President - Short Statured People of Australia

**On behalf of SSPA National Council**