

Cyberbullying editorial

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The editorial “Seeking a revolution in relations” (*Herald*, 25 March, p. A12) is at least four-ways wrongheaded.

1) “No longer are reading, writing and arithmetic the most fundamental skills that need to be taught at school.” The title of Rachel Brighton’s column (same edition, p. A9) will explain what’s wrong with that view: “Need to teach three Rs in workplace spells trouble.”

2) The problem of cyberbullying isn’t one of “rights, responsibilities and relationships.” It’s about people being jerks and other people being vulnerable to the jerks. The only effective and non-coercive teaching to be done here is by the example of teachers remaining dispassionate in open discussion. Otherwise we’ll have teachers bullying students in service of their anti-bullying message.

3) When a school or the government takes up the responsibility of protecting the vulnerable, inevitably it’s at the expense of privacy, freedom of expression, and self-reliance. Inviting schools and governments to assume even more authority and control over people and their interactions is like inviting a bear to enjoy the honey.

4) Having the children relate to each other face to face is irrelevant to the matter of abusive on-line behaviour. Studies show that people who treat others well in person often will hurl abuse when they can do so through a medium.