

## **STATEMENT BY BRENT WALTERS**

### **HEAD OF DEPARTMENT**

### **WESTERN CAPE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT**

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### **MEDIA RELEASE: Stop the share: support victims of bullying by not sharing videos of assaults**

This past week, the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) received various videos of learners allegedly attacking one another both in and out of school.

Many of the images are deeply disturbing. The WCED is engaging with each of the schools that can be identified. All of whom have confirmed that the necessary disciplinary processes are being followed in each case, and that counselling support has been provided.

These videos portray a deep lack of humanity and compassion for fellow learners. In addition, the filming, distribution and sharing of these incidents is also deeply shameful. It is difficult to comprehend what motivates one to actively promote a fellow human being, particularly a child being humiliated or abused?

Any learner, parent or caregiver of a learner, who has gone through such abuse knows the deep pain and trauma it can cause. The distribution of the victim's experience on social media further heightens these risks.

Sadly, the distribution of these videos on social media has become a common occurrence. So much so, that it has been reported to the WCED that a Whatsapp channel that actively posts incidents involving learners being abused has been created.

Firstly, this can cause irreparable harm to the alleged victims who face further abuse on these platforms.

Secondly, the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA) sets specific conditions for processing children's personal information. We have a particular duty of care when we are dealing with minors and protecting their rights. POPIA requires that any recording of a child

includes obtaining valid consent from a competent person (usually a parent or legal guardian). This platform is operating without the necessary POPIA requirements.

Thirdly, the filming and distribution of these videos further by both children and adults is contributing towards the bullying and abuse of the children concerned.

While the actions of the bully or abuser are clearly unacceptable, the actions of the hundreds or thousands of people who share, like, or comment on the content, are similarly shameful.

The responsible thing to do when seeing or receiving such a harmful post is to stop it from being shared elsewhere, either by deleting the post or to “Stop the Share” completely by reporting harmful content.

It is time for all of us – whether we are 10, 20, or 50 years old – to **#StopTheShare**, and report harmful content, in support of the victim, and stop the abuse they continue to suffer.

We also call on any person who comes across a channel promoting such content to report it to the relevant social media service provider.

The WCED has created a set of online videos to show learners and the general public, exactly how to **#StopTheShare** for this type of harmful content.

The videos can be viewed at: <https://wcedonline.westerncape.gov.za/anti-bullying>

The WCED has also written to the Information Regulator and has lodged a complaint against the Whatsapp channel that is sharing such disturbing imagery. We will also engage with the South African Police Services (SAPS) on this matter.

These incidents are a reminder to parents and caregivers that having conversations with their children about bullying, abuse and social media abuse is vital. While there are numerous interventions at schools promoting positive behaviours and values, discipline ultimately starts at home and we need both parents and communities to encourage respect, humility, empathy and care for one another, both at school and in our communities.

Schools, parents, and/or learners may call the **WCED SAFE SCHOOLS** Call Centre **[0800 45 46 47]** toll free for assistance in locating immediate support.

In addition, the South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG) offers a **24-HOUR HELPLINE [0800 12 13 14]** as well as a **SUICIDE EMERGENCY NUMBER [0800 567 567]**. Learners and/or parents can use these numbers if they feel that the child needs immediate assistance (often after school hours).

# STOP THE SHARE

REPORT HARMFUL CONTENT



Are you sharing?

Are you shaming?

# STOP THE SHARE

REPORT HARMFUL CONTENT

Are your hearts...  



promoting hurt?  



**STOP**  
**THE**  
**SHARE**  
REPORT HARMFUL CONTENT

The last like...  


that led to  
real harm  


**STOP**  
**THE**  
**SHARE**  
REPORT HARMFUL CONTENT

Just commenting?  


Or conspiring?  


**STOP**  
**THE**  
**SHARE**  
REPORT HARMFUL CONTENT