

League stars tackle bullying in the schoolyard

By Bruce McDougall

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RUGBY league is sending top players into schools to help bullied students as the code battles to turn around its bad-boy image.

Wests Tigers stars Benji Marshall and Robbie Farah are spearheading the push in public schools aimed at stamping out bullying and aggressive behaviour.

Sickening incidents such as the Mona Vale girl fight and the savage assault on a teenage boy in a locked school bathroom have inspired rugby league's finest to intervene with good deeds that will also help to repair the sport's badly damaged profile.

Senior Wests Tigers players Todd Payten and Chris Heighington, emerging star Blake Lazarus and Australian coach Tim Sheens are also part of the unique anti-bullying program already covering 20 schools.

The players have started visiting government schools with specially recorded messages for students on the theme It's Not Cool To Be Cruel.

They have joined forces with bullying victim Nathan Cassar, 16, and the anti-violence movement Enough is Enough in a campaign that will expand across the state.

Yesterday Wests Tigers launched the program, written by Nathan after his own bullying experiences, to 100 primary students at Campbelltown East Public School in Sydney's southwest.

Relieving principal Megan Predl said the players delivered a powerful message which would have a "great impact" on young people.



Enough is enough ... bullying is an epidemic in schools.