Blogging about how they beat their bullies

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DURING secondary school Rebecca Birch was the butt of degrading taunts, ruthless harassment and cold exclusion.

It was the courage to be different and to stick up for what she believed in that made her an easy target for bullies at the Jewish school she attended – an experience that has spurred her into action just three years out of school.

Birch has teamed up with 20-year-old student of journalism at Monash University Rachel Tigel – who was also a target of bullying at a Jewish school – to create a blog called How I Beat My Bully, which includes detailed accounts of the girls’ harrowing school experiences and their inspiring road to recovery.

The authors write about being teased for their looks, the pain of being the subject of cruel rumours, physical assaults and cyber bullying.

"I was placed in a situation with a whole bunch of people telling me that I was disgusting, a slut, that my hair looked funny, my skin was orange... I didn’t see why it was necessary to point out these things," Birch told The AJN.

The girls have announced they are on a mission to spark legislative change in Victoria, such that would deem school bullying an offence under the Crimes Act.

They are currently awaiting written responses to their letters to Prime Minister Julia Gillard, Opposition Leader Tony Abbott and a list of other federal and state politicians about their campaign. Moreover, they are hosting an event next month to raise funds for anti-bullying body, The Alannah and Madeline Foundation, as well as for their own initiative, as they attempt to be registered as a non-profit organisation.

"I believe school bullying should be against the law," said Birch, who is in her third year of a bachelor of arts and law degree at Deakin University.

"Victims of bullying feel that talking about their experience is taboo and so they live with it everyday. I want the blame to be shifted off them and onto the bullies."

Birch said the stigma associated with people who get bullied is particularly problematic in the Jewish community.

"It seems that we all want the best for our kids in this community and getting bullied could make you look weak," Birch said.

"This sort of things hasn’t been spoken about in the Jewish community and it opens up a Pandora’s box."

Both Birch and Tigel said bullying was more prevalent at the bigger Jewish schools and gave a glowing account of their experiences at The King David School (KDS) – which they both attended in their final years of school.

"There was just a different mentality instilled in the kids by the parents and teachers," Tigel said of KDS.

The blog has struck a chord with former students of Jewish schools and its creators have been flooded with calls and text messages of support – a salve for painful wounds.

"It was completely overwhelming, we got 100 or so messages each. It was nice to hear the encouragement to keep going with our mission," Birch said.

Read the blog on: http://howibeatmybully.blogspot.com.au/

For details about the fundraiser, visit the How I Beat My Bully Facebook page.