

Whole-of-school community

- 10.1 The promotion of cyber-safety is inescapably a broad community issue. The need for a whole-of-school approach is demonstrated by the assertion from Principals Australia that schools have only 30 percent influence over young people's education.¹
- 10.2 The Australian Council of Educational Research also supported the idea of a multi-layered approach, involving schools, parents/carers and the community, to manage online safety effectively. The central role of this approach is to improve the confidence of teachers to use the Internet; to model appropriate behaviour, and to require school policies in cyber-safety, and safety generally.²
- 10.3 Research from the American Online Safety and Technology Working Group reported that a multi-layered approach is required from schools, parents/carers and the community to establish accepted online behaviour, and that young people need to be taught digital literacy skills.³
- 10.4 An example of a whole-of-school approach is the NSW Government implementation of *MindMatters*: a whole-of-school approach to mental health promotion. It includes modules to foster the development of social and emotional skills, and encourages effective home, school and

1 Mr Jeremy Hurley, Manager, National Education Agenda, Principals Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 June 2010, p. CS9.

2 Australian Council of Educational Research: *Submission 20*, pp. 7-8; Dr Gerald White, Principal Research Fellow, *Transcript of Evidence*, 9 December 2010, pp. CS41, 46- 48, 50. See also Associate Professor Marilyn Campbell: School of Learning and Professional Studies, Queensland University of Technology, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 June 2010, p. CS32; Australian University Cyberbullying Research Alliance, *Transcript of Evidence*, 3 February 2011, p. CS9; Ms Kate Lyttle, Secretary, Australian Parents Council, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 June 2010, p. CS31.

3 Australian Council of Educational Research, *Submission 20*, pp. 6-7.

community partnerships. Since 2007, cyber-safety has been a focus of the bullying and harassment arm of the project.⁴

- 10.5 While it is not the only such program that has been introduced in Australia, the Australian Council for Educational Research was one of a number of organisations that endorsed the value of the *Cyber-safety and Well-Being Initiative* (*eSmart* Schools Framework, hereafter *eSmart*) undertaken by the Alannah and Madeline Foundation. This is an initiative for cultural change and community-based intervention, aimed at creating environments where it is easy and normal for individuals to make smart choices when using technology. *eSmart* focuses on a 'whole-school' approach to cyber-safety problems, and provides a suite of tools to assist schools; it is a culture and behaviour change model targeted at the whole school community and, as such, is not a one-off lesson, unit of work, program or policy that sits in isolation from the day-to-day business of schools.⁵
- 10.6 It was argued that, for it to be effective, a whole-of-school approach had to involve teachers, including those in the pre-service phase, support staff, administrators and parents/carers/carers. This meant professional development, time release and workload management for school staff, especially teachers.⁶

Parents/carers

- 10.7 A member of the ACT Safe Schools Taskforce was quoted as observing that parents/carers must be involved 'at all parts of the journey':

Cybersafety isn't like teaching your child to ride a bike. It's not a skill that you had when you were younger and that you can pass on to your child. It's an area where things are changing so much, so quickly, that as a parent you need constant reiteration and updating and strategies to protect our children.⁷

4 NSW Government, *Submission 94*, p. 23; Mr Jeremy Hurley, Manager, National Educational Agenda, Principals Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 June 2010, p. CS8.

5 Dr Judith Slocombe, Chief Executive Officer, Alannah and Madeline Foundation, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 June 2010, p. CS7.

6 Ms Catherine Davis, Federal Women's Officer, Australian Education Union, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 June 2010, p. 32.

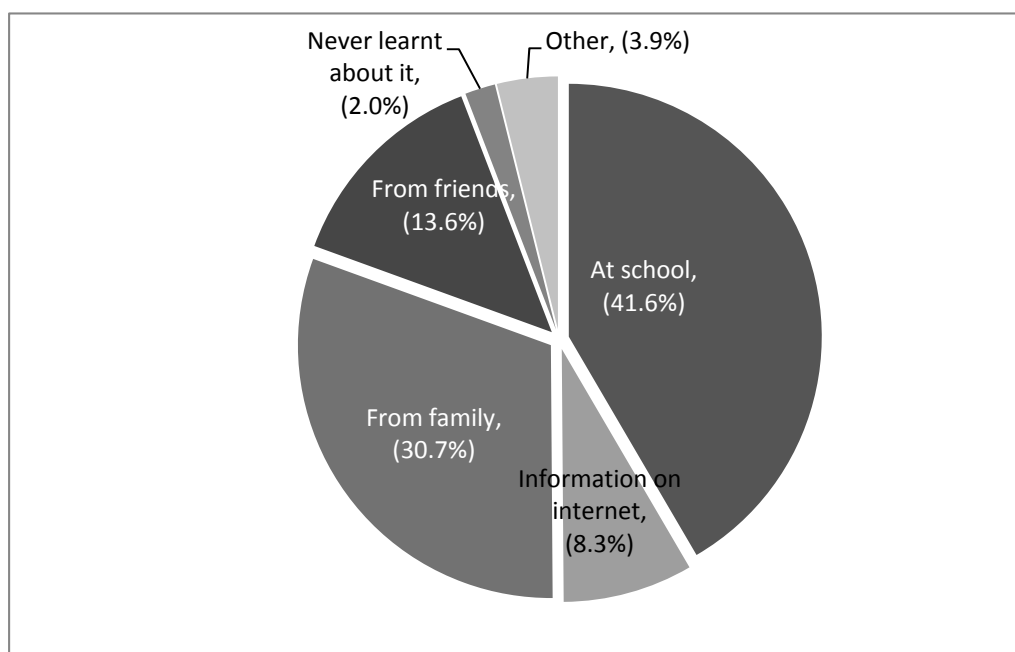
7 See Ms Kate Lyttle, Secretary, Australian Parents Council, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 June 2010, p. CS37.

- 10.8 The Australian Parents Council believed that the element missing from the efforts made to develop consistent 'whole school' approaches to cyber-safety appeared to be the systematic engagement of parents/carers. This was despite the fact that their engagement is essential to those efforts.⁸ Similarly, the Alannah and Madeline Foundation advised that:

Parents, and to a lesser extent teachers, feel overwhelmed and ignorant about what's going on in social networking sites, chat rooms, online gaming and other areas in cyberspace. Teachers believe parents should take a lot more responsibility for their children's behaviour (both online and offline). Parents (and teachers) would like to know more about the virtual spaces young people inhabit, but don't know where to start. Both groups believe their ignorance has led to an unhealthy power shift, so that young people are too easily able to operate 'under the radar', or outside the usual boundaries governing their behaviour.⁹

- 10.9 The role that parents play in the cyber-safety education of their children cannot be understated. Not only does the family unit play an important educative role, but also a key supportive role when young people face cyber-safety risks and dangers. Figures 10.1 to 10.3 present the results from the Committee's *Are you safe?* survey and provide details of this relationship.

Figure 10.1 Where did you learn about cyber-safety?



⁸ Australian Parents Council, *Submission 10*, p. 4.

⁹ Alannah and Madeline Foundation, *Submission 22*, p. 18

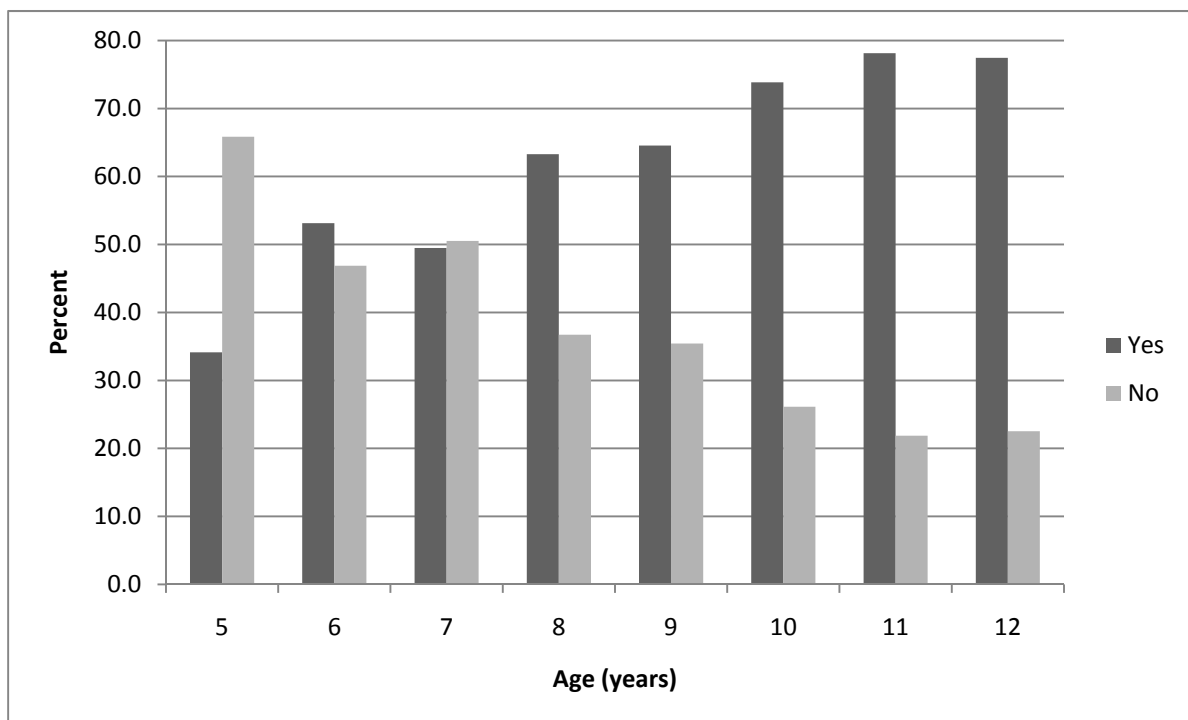
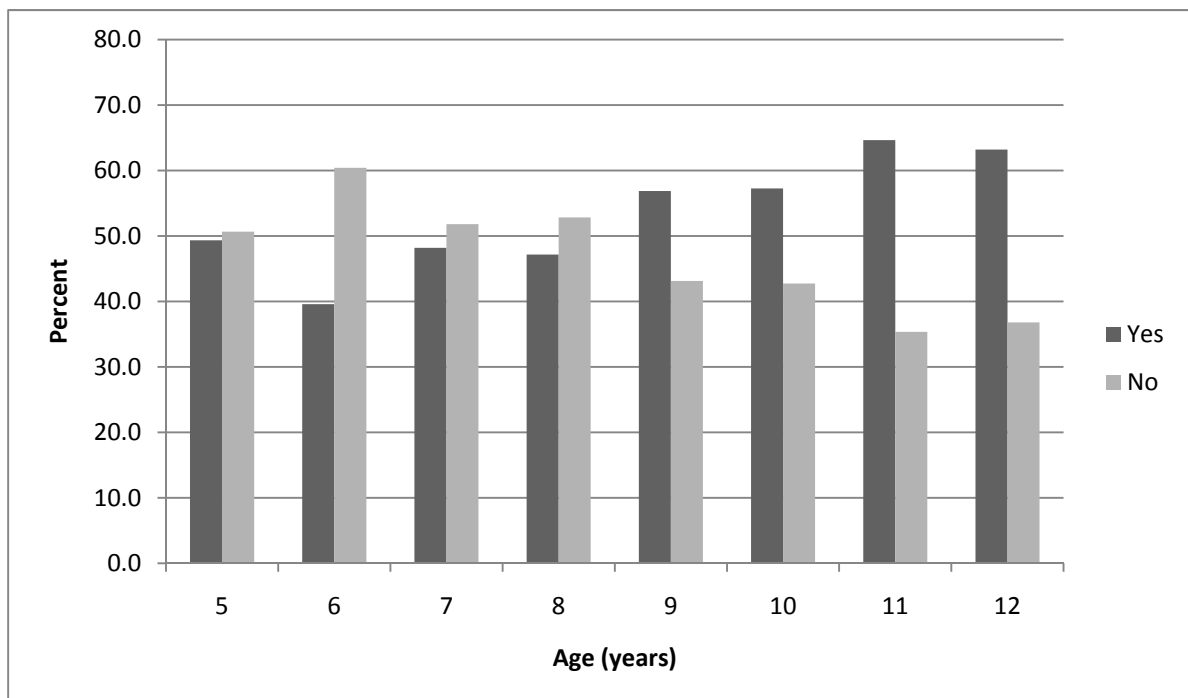
Figure 10.2a Do you talk about cyber-safety with your parents? (Female aged 12 years and younger)**Figure 10.2b Do you talk about cyber-safety with your parents? (Male aged 12 years and younger)**

Table 10.1 How frequently does your family talk about cyber-safety?

		Never		Yes, when I ask		Yes, sometimes		Yes, frequently		Total
Sex		%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	#
13 Years	M	17.7	335	23.9	451	42.4	802	16.0	302	1890
	F	9.2	225	21.3	522	45.2	1111	24.3	598	2456
14 Years	M	23.9	286	22.0	355	40.3	649	13.8	222	1612
	F	10.6	210	19.7	390	48.6	964	21.1	418	1982
15 Years	M	28.3	337	20.0	238	38.9	463	12.8	153	1191
	F	14.3	196	20.2	278	45.3	623	20.2	277	1374
16 Years	M	35.1	283	16.9	136	37.9	306	10.2	82	807
	F	18.2	182	18.8	188	47.8	477	15.1	151	998
17 Years	M	40.5	160	14.2	56	34.4	136	10.9	43	395
	F	23.2	132	17.3	98	45.1	256	14.4	82	568
18 Years	M	39.7	124	15.7	49	29.5	92	15.1	47	312
	F	40.5	105	15.1	39	33.2	86	11.2	29	259

Figure 10.3a How frequently does your family talk about cyber-safety? (*Female aged 13 years and over*)

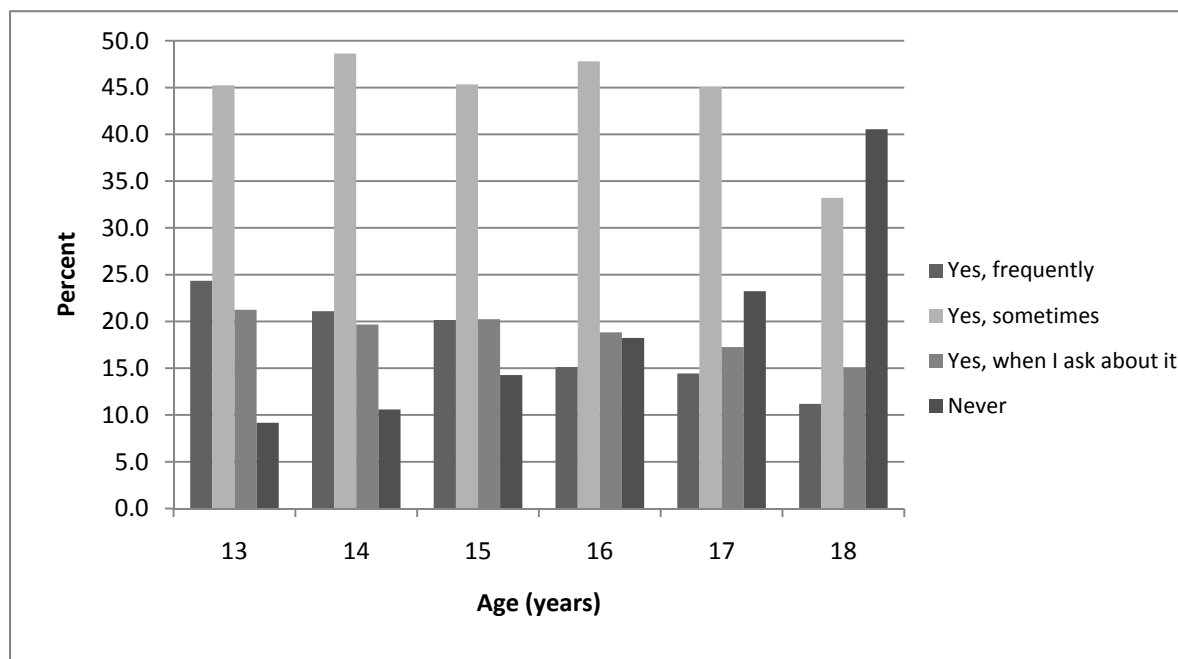
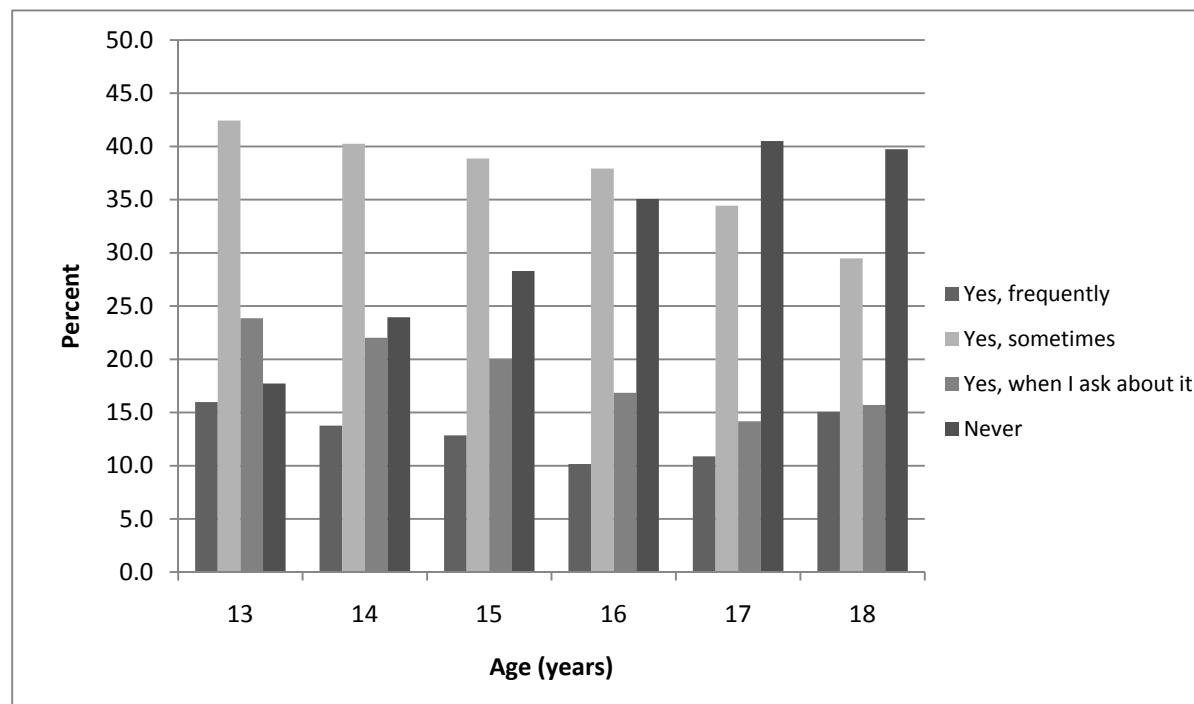


Figure 10.3b How frequently does your family talk about cyber-safety? (*Male aged 13 years and over*)



Information for parents/carers

- 10.10 The Family Online Safety Institute commented that:

There has never been a time when so many resources have been available for parents, grandparents, teachers, and care-givers to provide protection from online risks. All of the major operating systems and search engines provide family safety settings and mobile operators, social networks, and Internet Service Providers offer tools and settings to help protect families.¹⁰

- 10.11 The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) has released *the Cybersmart parents: connecting parents to cybersafety resources*. Dr Helen McGrath commented on the quality of its materials:

The ACMA materials are brilliant. I cannot recommend them highly enough. There are very few resources and presentations that you hear rave reviews about wherever you go. The ACMA materials are raved about. They are terrific to recommend to parents.¹¹

- 10.12 The ACT Council of P&C Associations believe that parents/carers know that information is available but not necessarily aware of where to go to find it and called for:

the government advertises the ACMA website better to parents/carers as well as other resources and their potential use. It is recommended that television and/or radio advertisement is used, as well as advertising through schools.¹²

- 10.13 The Victorian Office of the Child Safety Commissioner, however, expressed concern that many of the resources available for parents/carers,

require a high degree of literacy skills and an understanding of English. This inquiry provides an opportunity to explore which parents/carers and carers are not able to use these resources and to make recommendations about how to more effectively empower such parents/carers and carers to support their children.¹³

10 Family Online Safety Institute, *Submission 38*, p. 17.

11 Dr Helen McGrath, School of Education, Faculty of Arts and Education, Deakin University, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 June 2010, p. CS19.

12 ACT Council of P&C Associations, *Submission 41*, p. 8.

13 Victorian Office of the Child Safety Commissioner, *Submission 30*, p. 5.

- 10.14 The Australian Parents Council emphasised that there is a plethora of information available:

if you were to google 'cybersafety', you would be daunted by the range of information. Parents do not know how to be discretionary about what is worthwhile, what is serious and what is not.¹⁴

- 10.15 The Queensland Secondary Principals Association has found that as 'more and more students are certainly online, more and more parents are certainly online'.¹⁵ Parents/carers, however, use these technologies in vastly different ways from their children, and these differences can cause concern and divisions among families:

Young people used technologies much more holistically; to communicate, learn, socialise, play, research, do homework, and in fact, their on-line life blended seamlessly with their offline life. Parents felt a lack of control because they did not fully understand how their children used technologies and cited threat from predators as their greatest fear ... Children and young people on the other hand were dismissive of their parents' and teachers' fears and cited their biggest issues as slow internet and viruses.¹⁶

- 10.16 Brisbane Catholic Education requires that parents attend cyber-safety information sessions before laptops are distributed under the Digital Education Revolution.¹⁷ These strategies can be effective, as children often want to engage with their parents:

One of the things we know from research in Europe is that children and young people actually want to discuss this issue with their parents but they are put off from doing that because their parents do not have the technological savviness to have that discussion.¹⁸

- 10.17 The NSW Parent's Council added that:

Even though there are numerous websites full of advice to assist parents in ensuring safety along with the obvious benefits of ICT,

14 Ms Kate Lyttle, Secretary, Australian Parents Council, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 June 2010, p. CS6.

15 Mr Norm Fuller, President, Queensland Secondary Principals Association, *Transcript of Evidence*, 17 March 2011, p. CS75.

16 Alannah and Madeline Foundation, *Submission 22*, p. 8.

17 Ms Anita Smith, Senior Education Officer, Brisbane Catholic Education, *Transcript of Evidence*, 17 March 2011, p. CS24.

18 Mr John Dalglish, Manager, Strategy and Research, BoysTown, *Transcript of Evidence*, 17 March 2011, p. CS15.

this advice is often difficult to put into place and to continue to monitor.¹⁹

10.18 The Alannah and Madeline Foundation is of the view that:

Children and young people on the other hand were dismissive of their parents' and teachers' fears and cited their biggest issues as slow internet and viruses. However, further probing revealed that nearly all young people interviewed had experienced or witnessed cyberbullying and considered it common and extremely unpleasant.²⁰

10.19 The Alannah and Madeline Foundation also believed that:

Young people are less apt to share or disclose with parents who don't appear to understand or care what their children are doing online. Young people can, however, have a key role in educating parents about their lived online experience – one that, it appears, they are keen to assume.²¹

10.20 Parents/carers should also be made aware of the range of available resources that can assist them to manage their children's internet use.²² The Foundation considers that programs should encourage the need to have clear understandings and agreements within the family about acceptable internet and mobile phone usage and to maintain open communication with their children about issues arising.²³

Many children and young people are reluctant to tell their parents about cyberbullying and other forms of online abuse fearing that access to their social networks will be removed. Parents need to be supported to communicate effectively with their children on mobile phone and internet use (gaming, chat rooms, messages, keeping personal details private, voice masking, responding to unwelcome attention, combating addiction).²⁴

10.21 While schools have a role in educating students about cyber-safety, this must be balanced against the main purposes of schooling, the role of

19 NSW Parent's Council, *Submission 43*, p. 3.

20 Alannah and Madeline Foundation, *Submission 22*, p. 8.

21 Alannah and Madeline Foundation, *Submission 22*, p. 10.

22 Alannah and Madeline Foundation, *Submission 22*, p. 11.

23 Alannah and Madeline Foundation, *Submission 22*, p. 11.

24 Alannah and Madeline Foundation, *Submission 22*, p. 11.

parents/carers and the responsibility of the community.²⁵ Parents/carers are the primary educators of children, and they:²⁶

need to educate themselves on how to protect their children, and to have greater access to resources and experts to assist with this education. Many school libraries are already working within their schools to offer sessions to parents, and public libraries are reaching out not only to parents but also to the whole community.²⁷

- 10.22 Childnet has developed the *Know IT All for Parents* resource which is interactive and provided available in different formats and languages which has been provided to two million parents in the United Kingdom as of June 2010.²⁸ Similarly, ACMA has now launched the new parent interactive resources in the top five non-English languages: Chinese, Greek, Italian, Vietnamese and Arabic.²⁹

Cyber safety education and training needs to start with parents of preschool aged children ... It needs to be undertaken at a time when parents still might know more about the online world than their child does ... It needs to be part of the requirement of educating children in Australia and be attended by at least one parent of all pre-school aged and school aged children.³⁰

- 10.23 The Australian Parents Council explained that, if material is not in a format appropriate for parents, these resources may not be read:

all too often with initiatives such as this national initiative organisations and government try to do things to and for parents instead of taking an approach of doing it with them. There are often attempts made to communicate with parents which, with all the best intent, try to get a message across but all too often it is not in language that is accessible to parents. Whilst you do not need to talk down to parents, it is a very difficult art to frame stuff up in a language that is accessible to parents across the board without

25 Australian Secondary Principals' Association, *Submission 33*, p. 2.

26 Australian Parents Council, *Submission 10*, p. 1.

27 Australian Library and Information Association, *Submission 16*, p. 12.

28 Childnet International, *Submission 18*, p. 7.

29 Ms Andree Wright, Acting General Manager, Consumer, Content and Citizen Division, Australian Communications and Media Authority, *Transcript of Evidence*, 3 March 2011, p. CS4.

30 Name withheld, *Submission 140*, p. 2.

being either patronising or talking at such a simple level that you offend people.³¹

- 10.24 Evidence provided to the Inquiry by ACMA drew attention to the range of its resources that could assist parents/carers to manage their children's internet use.

At the present time we have parents who themselves have had an unhappy or unsatisfactory education, who are fearful of being engaged or unable to engage, who feel disempowered or not valued ... In many ways schools operate very comfortably in middle-class communities and do not serve the needs and interests of those who have not had positive education experiences.³²

- 10.25 The Victorian Office of the Child Safety Commissioner would also like to see work done in relation to collaboration between those with expertise in information and communications technology (ICT) and those caring for vulnerable children to develop strategies to meet the needs of those children.³³

for some parents and caregivers it may be an issue of ignorance and naivety about their child's safety on the internet; however that for most parents and caregivers it was purely a matter of not knowing how to approach the topic ... parents and caregivers need to be educated about the importance of, and "how to", have conversations with their kids about cyber safety.³⁴

- 10.26 The following comments were made by respondents to the Committee's *Are you safe?* survey in response to the ways to improve the cyber-safety of their parents/carers:

parents react very differently to the way teachers would, often dismissing the idea that the bullying is a real issue but a threatening email is immensely scary especially when the person involved had never really felt that anything had come between them face to face. Also it takes a while for young people to realise what a true friend is and build up the courage to cut their losses and join a new friend group where they are accepted (Female aged 17).

31 Mr Ian Dalton, Executive Director, Australian Parents Council, *Transcript of Evidence*, 20 April 2011, p. CS33.

32 Ms Dianne Butland, Executive Member, State Council, Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations of New South Wales, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 June 2010, pp. CS 17-18.

33 Victorian Office of the Child Safety Commissioner, *Submission 30*, p. 5.

34 Centre for Children and Young People, *Submission 31*, p. 2.

Children are heavily influenced by their parents. Educate the parents first and most of all make sure they are being good role models for their kids (Female aged 15).

I would feel safer if I knew my parents could see more that goes on. I tell them but sometimes people put real bad stuff (Female aged 15).

parent education that is detailed enough to include the benefits of social networking to encourage them to get involved as well (Female aged 17).

Parents being more responsible with chn and ICT (Female aged 17).

Parents checking up on what their children are saying online (Female aged 13).

Parents monitoring their children more online and giving them good Internet habits and understanding from a young age (Female aged 16).

parents need to be aware that some of their children are the bully/a nasty child and these children can manipulate them (Female aged 16).

Available technologies

- 10.27 The NSW Secondary Principals Council would like parents/carers to be provided with the tools to manage the online environment at home:

where less rigid filters and controls are often in place.

www.cybersmart.gov.au is a good start but needs wider

advertising to parents and further development and expansion³⁵

- 10.28 There are many free filtering options. Between 40 and 50 percent of parents/carers already use some type of filtering, indicating a level of awareness and adoption.³⁶

- 10.29 The Australian Psychological Society would like to see the establishment of an information and/or referral service to provide advice on best practice technology such as internet filtering systems.³⁷ Similarly, ninemsn commented:

Parents need to be adequately informed as to what products are available and how best to configure and use them in a way most appropriate for their family. ninemsn believes this presents a

35 NSW Secondary Principals Council, *Submission 32*, p. 1.

36 Mr Abul Rizvi, Deputy Secretary, Digital Economy and Services Group, Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, *Transcript of Evidence*, 3 March 2011, p. CS8.

37 Australian Psychological Society, *Submission 90*, p. 25.

valuable opportunity for industry and government to work collaboratively on promoting the availability of these tools. There are some helpful examples of best practice of this cooperative approach emerging from the US and UK.³⁸

- 10.30 Dr Gerald White commented that it is 'not hard to engage parents in relation to technological devices' and, if you require parents to sign a user access policy, they will be engaged.³⁹ The use of user access agreements provides an opportunity to encourage parents to attend cyber-safety information session.

- 10.31 Netbox Blue advised that:

Most of these tools are relatively simple to deploy. The question is: which are the right tools that parents/carers should be using? The idea of accrediting tools through things like the IIA and the family friendly filter accreditation I think is really key, so that parents/carers know which tools are going to meet their needs and which tools are not. Getting that message across is perhaps the most important thing. You can do it via expensive advertising on TV or whatever or it could be as simple as sticking leaflets in schoolkids' bags for them to take home.⁴⁰

- 10.32 Some parents/carers may not worry in the belief that schools will arrange cyber-safety for their young people and are therefore not engaged. They may have an antipathy towards the school, or they do not see that they have a role:

Once you can start to talk to parents/carers and tell them that they have a role and the way that they can fulfil that role – some simple things that they can do to actively engage – the results are quite astounding.⁴¹

- 10.33 Some parents/carers trust their children and do not see a need for this approach.⁴²

38 ninemsn, *Submission 91*, p. 5.

39 Dr Gerald White, Principal Research Fellow, Australian Council of Educational Research, *Transcript of Evidence*, 9 December 2010, p. CS48.

40 Mr John Pitcher, Netbox Blue, *Transcript of Evidence*, 8 July 2010, pp. CS34.

41 Mr Ian Dalton, Executive Director, Australian Parents Council, *Transcript of Evidence*, 20 April 2011, pp. CS34-35.

42 Mr Abul Rizvi, Deputy Secretary, Digital Economy and Services Group, Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, *Transcript of Evidence*, 3 March 2011, p. CS8.

Parents tend to assume that their children know what they are doing and to think that they are monitoring their children if they have the computer in the same room as they are currently in, but they do not realise that children can downsize the screen if they are doing something wrong and that they might panic and not bring to their parents' attention that something has gone wrong.⁴³

10.34 However, BraveHearts made the point that:

...while it is notionally true that parents and carers must take ultimate responsibility for educating and protecting their children, it is also true that the internet and new communication technologies are becoming increasingly foreign to many parents thus reducing their ability to protect their children. The reality is that more often than not, children know more about the internet and mobile phone technologies than adults do. Continuing calls for parents to educate themselves are falling on the predominately 'out of their depth', baffled and frightened ears of parents and carers.⁴⁴

10.35 The Association of Children's Welfare Agencies stated that parents and carers need access to information to enable them to make informed decisions about cyber-safety issues and this could entail:

- Awareness raising strategies;
- Resources and information on prevalent and emerging cyber-safety issues;
- Resources on how to approach and discuss these issues with children and young people; and
- Information on interventions and supports.⁴⁵

10.36 The desirable outcomes are empowered parents/carers and families that:

- Are able to understand cyber-safety issues and the impact that it has on their child or young person;
- Feel comfortable enough to discuss cyber-safety issues with their child or young person; and

43 Ms Lesley-Anne Ey, Executive Committee Member, Australian Council on Children and the Media, *Transcript of Evidence*, 3 February 2011, p. CS50.

44 BraveHearts, *Submission 34*, p. 4.

45 Association of Children's Welfare Agencies, *Submission 35*, p. 3.

- Know what actions to take or where to go to for more information or support.⁴⁶

10.37 The Family Online Safety Institute emphasised that:

Parents must learn about the risks themselves and then help their children learn how to cope with them ... There is no silver bullet to protect children from the risks of digital media, only a combination of education, awareness, tools, and rules will help guard children from harmful content and empower them to act responsibly online.⁴⁷

10.38 Ongoing education for parents/carers is important to keep them up to date:

The other comment that I have that I think is important is that one-offs do not work, so the learning for parents and the opportunities have to be regular, they have got to be spaced and they have got to be purposeful. The parents are more likely to engage with their school or their child's teacher and indeed the child's learning if they can see a role for themselves. It is really important that the approach is one of partnering, not one of being the expert.⁴⁸

10.39 The ACT Council of P&C Associations suggested further measures to assist parents in keeping up with technology and current trends.⁴⁹ They may not be aware of the resources available and an advertising campaign may increase the level of awareness.⁵⁰

ABS statistics found that most parents/carers were taking steps to protect their child/ren online. 88 percent of ACT families educated their child/ren about safe and appropriate use of the internet, 58 percent of parents/carers had installed content filters while 93 percent said they supervised and monitored their child/ren's use of the internet.⁵¹

46 Association of Children's Welfare Agencies, *Submission 35*, p. 3.

47 Family Online Safety Institute, *Submission 38*, p. 15.

48 Ms Liz Banks, Acting Deputy Secretary, Department of Education, Tasmania, *Transcript of Evidence*, 20 April 2011, p. CS3.

49 ACT Council of P&C Associations, *Submission 41*, p. 3.

50 ACT Council of P&C Associations, *Submission 41*, p. 3.

51 ACT Council of P&C Associations, *Submission 41*, p. 6, citing Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010, Feature Article 2: 'Children and Cyber-safety' In *fACT: Statistical information on the ACT and region*, No 1308.8, Canberra, ACT.

- 10.40 The Council also suggested annual information sessions for parents to keep up to date.⁵²

... many concerns were raised about the potential threat of cyber-bullying, identity theft, downloading a virus and the risks involved with accessing SNS or chat forums and the potential for their child to talk to someone who is different to who they say they are. Parents seemed to be less concerned about the potential for their child to access sites that encouraged illegal or harmful behaviour or accessing inappropriate material. Interestingly, the most common issue reported by children who used the internet was accessing inappropriate material.⁵³

- 10.41 At the beginning of National Cybersecurity Awareness Week, in June 2011, the Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, Senator the Hon Stephen Conroy, noted that members of the newly formed Teachers' and Parents' Advisory Group on Cybersafety are involved in consultations on how to keep young Australians safe online.⁵⁴

Household media rules

- 10.42 The Alannah and Madeline Foundation is of the view that programs should encourage the need to have clear understandings and agreements within the family about acceptable internet and mobile phone usage and to maintain open communication with their children about issues arising.⁵⁵

Parents need support in engaging with online media such as Facebook, Skype and Twitter right throughout the school years not just voluntary sessions provided by the local council and youth service.⁵⁶

- 10.43 The Communications Law Centre called for:

52 ACT Council of P&C Associations, *Submission 41*, p. 7.

53 ACT Council of P&C Associations, *Submission 41*, p. 7, citing Australian Bureau of Statistics (2010) Feature Article 2: 'Children and Cyber-safety' In *fACT: Statistical information on the ACT and region*, No 1308.8, Canberra, ACT.

54 See www.minister.dbcde.gov.au/media/media_releases/2011/191 of 2 June 2011.

55 Alannah and Madeline Foundation, *Submission 22*, p. 11.

56 Name withheld, *Submission 140*, p. 2.

Educational campaigns specifically in respect of social networking and communications tools available over the internet should be offered to parents and carers of children.⁵⁷

10.44 The Australian Council on Children and the Media commented that:

parents just don't know where to draw the line'. It is not that you do not care or that you do not know what is going on, but you can feel that tug in two directions. You want your child to be modern, to have access to all the best modern technology and to be up with all the information like all their friends are, but you do not want them to be harmed, and finding that balance is something that is really quite difficult. Parents need the best support we can give them, and that really needs to come through information but also through that regulatory back stop – that idea of, 'No, there are some areas that we just do not go in as a society, because we think that children are just far too important and it is not fair or realistic to put all of the burden on parents.'⁵⁸

10.45 The Family Online Safety Institute believed that parents/carers should encourage household media rules which set limits on the time spent online and allowable content.⁵⁹

Parents should understand what they are giving permission to when allowing children to access internet sites from Club Penguin to Facebook and everything in between.⁶⁰

10.46 The Communications Law Centre called for additional services :

educating parents on the methods in which children interact, socialise and network over the internet and mobile phones to assist them more effectively to discuss cyber-bullying issues with their children.⁶¹

10.47 A Microsoft Australia survey found that:

Alarmingly, one fifth of all Australian parents surveyed had caught their children looking at inappropriate material online, almost one third had found their children chatting to strangers, 36 percent had caught their kids downloading software without

57 Communications Law Centre, *Submission 63*, p. 4.

58 Ms Lesley-Anne Ey, Executive Committee Member, Australian Council on Children and the Media, *Transcript of Evidence*, 3 February 2011, p. CS49.

59 Family Online Safety Institute, *Submission 38*, p. 15.

60 Name withheld, *Submission 140*, p. 2.

61 Communications Law Centre, *Submission 63*, p. 1.

permission and another 12 percent had found their children handing over personal details.⁶²

- 10.48 In setting the media rules, this will open discussions on what young people are doing online.⁶³ The NSW Primary Principal's Association noted:

The home environment is often a cause for concern. Parents may not be aware of safeguards that can be put in place. These include computers being placed in areas where parents can provide direct supervision, filters such as Net Nanny being installed on home computers, time limits being set related to computer/ internet use, regular open communication between children and parents regarding inappropriate use of the internet and specific issues related to social networking sites.⁶⁴

- 10.49 Parents/carers indicated to the ACT Council of P&C Associations that they 'feel they lack the ability to successfully control their child's online behaviour and activity and believe that their efforts are mostly ineffective.'⁶⁵ The Council suggested that:

parents/carers be provided with easy to understand user guides on sites that are popular among children. For example, parents/carers should be provided access to a user guide on how to change your child's privacy settings on Facebook, how to make a complaint about inappropriate or offensive material on sites such as Facebook or suggestions of appropriate sites that are safe for children to stream video content, as well as other important tips and advice about safe sites and use of a variety of internet sites that are popular among children.⁶⁶

- 10.50 Some information is already available. For example, the Australian Direct Marketing Association provides the following tips for parents:

- Know what your children are doing online – make sure they know how to stay safe and encourage them to tell you if they come across anything suspicious or if anybody says or does something that makes them feel uncomfortable or threatened;
- Get to know the technologies your children are using;

62 Microsoft Australia, *Submission 87*, p. 7.

63 Family Online Safety Institute, *Submission 38*, p. 16.

64 NSW Primary Principal's Association Inc, *Submission 69*, p. 2

65 ACT Council of P&C Associations, *Submission 41*, p. 6.

66 ACT Council of P&C Associations, *Submission 41*, p. 7.

- Discuss the risks with your children and agree on some rules for internet use;
 - Tell your children if they are uncomfortable talking to you they can contact the *Cybersmart Online Helpline* (Kids Helpline) www.cybersmart.gov.au;
 - Place the computer in a family area of the home;
 - Install an internet content filter;
 - Make sure your children know not to share personal information or photos;
 - Report inappropriate, harmful or criminal activities that occur online or via a mobile device to www.thinkuknow.org.au; and
 - Report offensive content to ACMA.⁶⁷
- 10.51 Vodafone also have a digital parenting guides which include how to set up your Facebook privacy settings in four easy steps along with tips on what to do which is a model which could be adapted here.⁶⁸

Involving parents/carers

- 10.52 The ACT Council of P&C Associations called for greater collaboration between schools and parents better to educate parents on how to protect their children online.⁶⁹
- 10.53 ACMA's *Click and Connect* report found that,
- Parents/carers tend to re-enforce the basic internet safety messages with a stronger focus on the issue of predators rather than the broader range of safety issues. Both schools and parents/carers currently appear to work in isolation in informing children about cybersafety, although parents/carers did show interest in a more collaborative approach with schools.⁷⁰
- 10.54 The Tasmanian Department of Education advised:

67 Australian Direct Marketing Association, *Submission 36*, p. 8.

68 Ms Andree Wright, Acting General Manager, Consumer, Content and Citizen Division, Australian Communications Management Authority, *Transcript of Evidence*, 3 March 2011, p. CS15.

69 ACT Council of P&C Associations, *Submission 41*, p. 8.

70 Australian Communications and Media Authority, 2009, *Click and Connect: Young Australians' Use of Online Social Media*, Part 1, p. 10.

... if the child wants the parent to be there they are more likely to come along and in that way you can reach out to some of those parents who would be most at risk in terms of not being able to support their child through acceptable use of technologies. That is the same pattern across a range of issues within education ... which is that being inclusive and supportive to help parents rather than just a big stick or mandating approach is the way to go.⁷¹

- 10.55 The capacity of the school to involve parents/carers may reflect the inherent capabilities of the principals and teachers, rather than on training and support policies.⁷² Some parents/carers would also like to have a greater input:

I recently received a letter requesting my children to fill in an online questionnaire regarding cyber bullying. As parents, we are generally the ones that are required to make the rules and enforce them with relation to our children's online internet usage. I would therefore think that the necessity of having a questionnaire seeking parents/carers views and concerns on this matter would be of equal importance to that of our children's, as we are ultimately the people charged with looking after our children's wellbeing in this respect.⁷³

- 10.56 The Australian Parents Council has found that cyber-safety nights for parents/carers are often very popular, indicating that this is a significant area of concern for them.⁷⁴

Parents are key to preventing cyber-bullying and to addressing it when their children are victims or perpetrators. Many parents/carers miscalculate the amount of time their child spends on the Internet, or are simply unaware of their child's computer usage.⁷⁵

- 10.57 Some schools in America use parent-teacher interviews to set goals and agree on the role of the parent in achieving these goals.

71 Ms Liz Banks, Acting Deputy Secretary, Department of Education, Tasmania, *Transcript of Evidence*, 20 April 2011, p. CS3.

72 Mr Ian Dalton, Executive Director, Australian Parents Council, *Transcript of Evidence*, 20 April 2011, p. CS39.

73 Ms Annette Atkins, *Submission 134*, p. 1.

74 Mr Ian Dalton, Executive Director, Australian Parents Council, *Transcript of Evidence*, 20 April 2011, p. CS37.

75 Simon Fraser University, *Submission 55*, p. 4.

... they are actually engaging with their children's education and establishing an environment of support for their children's learning. They are more than willing to be a part of that and love being a part of it.⁷⁶

- 10.58 Too often, it believed, governments tried to do things to and for parents/carers, instead of doing these things *with* them. While it is difficult to frame communications at appropriate levels, often material is presented in language that is not accessible.⁷⁷
- 10.59 The Australian Parents Council made the point that parental engagement: is not about parents being at the school. You can express that engagement in so many other ways: simply by being interested, by reading the newsletter and by communicating in other ways. We need to bear that in mind when we are looking at an approach. It does not mean being on the premises.⁷⁸
- 10.60 There are some parents/carers who will not come to schools, especially to be informed about technological matters or cyber-safety. This can be because they do not have time, or because they lack knowledge or confidence about the online environment.
- 10.61 Parents/carers can be involved in other ways:
- The New South Wales education department sends around cybertips for parents for the holidays, which I think is a terrific direction as well. There are a few things they can watch and keep an eye on in a positive light.
- SuperClubs Australia also does an interesting thing. That is a private organisation. It is something the Victorian education department adopts. They get the students to interview their parents to find out how much the parents know about cybersafety. This is a primary aged direction to tap into what their parents know and educate their parents as they go. I think that is another clever way of doing it. Again it is going to be the sum of many small moves with parents.⁷⁹

76 Mr Ian Dalton, Executive Director, Australian Parents Council, *Transcript of Evidence*, 20 April 2011, p. CS35.

77 Mr Ian Dalton, Executive Director, Australian Parents Council, *Transcript of Evidence*, 20 April 2011, p. CS33.

78 Ms Kate Lyttle, Secretary, Australian Parents Council, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 June 2010, p. CS18.

79 Dr Helen McGrath, School of Education, Faculty of Arts and Education, Deakin University, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 June 2010, p. CS19.

10.62 The Australian Parents Council suggested that national groups of parents/carers are in a position to tap the significant potential for greater engagement in cyber-safety issues, through:

- conducting a national survey to assist in understanding levels of awareness about cyber-safety risks;
- discovering cyber-safety strategies they are adopting in their homes;
- development of a leaflet for parents/carers incorporating principles of digital citizenship and best practice; and
- a national meeting of parents'/carers' groups to design and distribute a charter as a guide to use of the Internet and digital platforms.⁸⁰

10.63 The Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy referred to a study that found that about 70 percent of parents/carers are very concerned or fairly concerned about cybersafety.⁸¹ Simon Fraser University reported no correlation between the extent of supervision and the parents' degree of technological knowledge and level of parental concern about cyber-bullying.⁸² Further, a survey by Microsoft Australia found that:

two thirds of Australian parents/carers were concerned about the safety of their kids online, and more than 60 percent of parents/carers allowed their children to surf the net unsupervised and unrestricted at home.⁸³

10.64 It also found that:

- More than two thirds of Australian parents/carers admitted they knew only a few of their children's online friends;
 - Another 11 percent admitted they were totally in the dark, knowing none of their children's online friends;
 - Only half of all parents/carers (58 percent) housed the computer in a public area of the home;
 - 20 percent of parents/carers had not discussed online safety with their children;
 - More than 60 percent of parents/carers were aware their computer had parental control software available – yet less than
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80 Australian Parents Council, *Submission 10*, p. 5.

81 Mr Simon Cordina, Assistant Secretary, Cyber-safety and Trade Branch, Digital Economy Strategy Division, Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy *Transcript of Evidence*, 3 March 2011, p. CS18.

82 Simon Fraser University, *Submission 55*, p. 11.

83 Microsoft Australia, *Submission 87*, p. 7.

a third of all parents/carers monitored their children's activity online.⁸⁴

10.65 The Australian Psychological Society suggested that:

... parents/carers are educated and supported to use an internet filter (without relying solely on this strategy), to discuss and use the internet with children and encourage them to evaluate critically information accessed online, to monitor and supervise their child's internet/phone use, and to involve young people in deciding appropriate limits and agreeing on age appropriate consequences.⁸⁵

Conditions of use agreements

10.66 The Australian Parents Council expressed concerns about the level of awareness of the 95 percent of Tasmanian parents signing 'conditions of use' forms for their young people, and what that might mean for their responsibilities as parents. Research was needed about whether they understand what they signed, and why the other 5 percent do not sign these forms.⁸⁶

10.67 The Alannah and Madeline Foundation believed that:

Australian schools also have much ground to make up in producing robust acceptable use policies that reach beyond the school gate to include parents and the wider community.⁸⁷

10.68 Netbox Blue recommend promoting and enforcing 'Acceptable Use' policies:

- The creation of an acceptable policy framework and its communication to all stakeholders - students, teachers, parents and carers;
- Education for all stakeholders on minimising known risks, or dealing with them if presented with a situation that places them at risk, focusing on working with students, teachers, parents and carers;

84 Microsoft Australia, *Submission 87*, p. 7.

85 Australian Psychological Society, *Submission 90*, p. 4.

86 Mr Ian Dalton, Executive Director, Australian Parents Council, *Transcript of Evidence*, 20 April 2011, p. CS38.

87 Alannah and Madeline Foundation, *Submission 22*, p. 8.

- Technology enforcement – in and outside the school network on all school owned equipment; and
- Regular reviews of attempts to breach such policy frameworks to improve education and to manage individual behavioural issues.⁸⁸

Parent advisory body

10.69 In Queensland, there is a parent advisory body:

for the Catholic sector, the independent sector and the government sector come together regularly to meet and talk with the Queensland department around issues of concern. My understanding is that they have developed some quite good resources in recent times around cybersafety, so I think they would be worthwhile.⁸⁹

10.70 As has already been noted, the Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy has established a Teachers' and Parents' Advisory Group on Cybersafety.⁹⁰

10.71 The Alannah and Madeline Foundation would like to see the introduction of a user-friendly toolkit in text and online versions be made available to all schools to assist with the measurement and the effectiveness of cyber-safety policies and the whole of community approach.⁹¹

88 Netbox Blue, *Submission 17*, p. 4.

89 Mr Ian Dalton, Executive Director, Australian Parents Council, *Transcript of Evidence*, 20 April 2011, p. CS36.

90 See paragraph 10.41.

91 Alannah and Madeline Foundation, *Submission 22*, p. 12.

Recommendation 20

That the Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth invite the Ministerial Council of Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs to formulate a cooperative national approach to the development of a whole-of-school community approach to cyber-safety, and to provide all schools with the necessary information and strategies to measure the effectiveness of their cyber-safety policies.

Peers

- 10.72 While schools can support young people through the provision of information, the encouragement of peer-to-peer education programs can be effective if they hear the facts and evidence from other students.⁹² The Australian Psychological Society believes that:

Teaching positive relationship strategies, empathy skills, the importance of bystander intervention and conflict resolution skills (anger management, problem solving, decision making) in schools is part of a whole school approach to effectively addressing cyber-safety.⁹³

- 10.73 Students at the Committee's High School Forum discussed the important on the role of bystanders in supporting their peers:

Dylan-It depends on what sort of bullying it is. If it is calling a few names and whatnot it is not that bad. It depends on the sort of personality it is. If it gets into violence, depending on how big the person is, some people would fight them.

Senator BARNEIT-Are you saying physically?

Dylan-Yes. It depends how bad it gets. Usually I would fight before I went to the teachers because I do not personally like teachers. That is just my opinion.

Madeline-At our school we are focusing on the bystander at the moment. We are making sure that everybody realises that it is not okay to stand by and just watch. If you see something on Facebook, you should tell a teacher. You do not have to talk to the

92 Parents Victoria Inc, *Submission 143*, p. 3.

93 Australian Psychological Society, *Submission 90*, p. 18.

person who has done the bullying; you can just say 'Hello' or smile at the person who is being bullied. We have a new initiative called One Goal, One Community.

Senator BARNETT-I was going to ask you about that. Can you explain this new initiative?

Madeline-It was brought to us by an old girl from our school who is at Bond University. It is happening in six countries around the world. Everyone gets a sheet and you go round and talk to your family and your family's friends and get them to sign a statement, 'I won't be a bystander and I won't accept bullying.' When you bring back the sheet you get a blue wristband for One Goal, One Community and it shows people that you do not accept bullying. So the people who are doing the bullying will realise, when they see all these people wearing wristbands, that it is not acceptable. The people who are being bullied realise there are people there to stand up for them and support them.

Senator BARNETT-That sounds cool. Do you think the program is working?

Imogen-Yes, it is definitely working. I think we have a strong year 12 community and we look out for the younger grades and ourselves. We are all quite close with our year group coordinator who is also the head of the senior school. He is very involved. If we see anything on Facebook, anything happening in town or anything happening in the playground we go and talk to him and he will have a word. We have also done an online survey, I think it was just in the senior school, that we were all strongly recommended to do. We could do it anonymously and say whether we had experienced any of these kinds of bullying. We could name people if we were not comfortable with going and talking to a teacher face to face.⁹⁴

Concluding comments

- 10.74 The Australian Psychological Society stressed the importance of the whole-school approach:

It is recommended that schools are encouraged and supported to adopt a whole-school approach to cyber-safety that balances the

94 Imogen, *Transcript of Evidence*, 20 April 2011, pp 18-19.

use of online technologies for creativity and learning in a safe way. Such a policy should be developed in collaboration with students, parents/carers and teachers, have the commitment of the principal (leadership of the school) and be agreed upon by every single member of the school community ...Working in collaboration with parents/carers and students to develop such a policy, making cyber-safety an integral part of student wellbeing practices in schools, and including cyber-safety as part of the curriculum will better ensure the policy's relevance.⁹⁵

10.75 The Australian Psychological Society referred to research by Dr Donna Cross:

... the most promising interventions appear to be those that take a whole-school approach which includes the development of programs aimed at:

- enhancing a positive school climate and ethos which promotes pro-social behaviours
- providing pre-service and in-service training of all school staff to assist them to recognise and respond appropriately to signs of covert bullying
- creating physical environments that limit the invisibility of covert bullying
- increasing the awareness among young people of how group mechanisms work and strengthening their skills in conflict resolution; and
- developing anonymous, peer-led support structures for students to access when they feel uncomfortable.⁹⁶

95 Australian Psychological Society, *Submission 90*, pp. 17, 24.

96 Australian Psychological Society, *Submission 90*, p. 19 citing Cross *et al*, 2009, the *Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence Study*, Child Health Promotion Research Centre, Edith Cowan University.

