



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Official Committee Hansard

**HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES**

STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATIONS

Reference: Cybercrime

WEDNESDAY, 28 OCTOBER 2009

CANBERRA

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATIONS

Wednesday, 28 October 2009

Members: Ms Neal (*Chair*), Mrs Hull (*Deputy Chair*), Mr Billson, Mr Bradbury, Ms Collins, Mr Georganas, Mr Lindsay, Ms Marino, Ms Rea and Ms Rishworth

Members in attendance: Mr Billson, Mr Bradbury, Ms Collins, Mr Georganas, Mrs Hull, Mr Lindsay, Ms Marino, Ms Neal, Ms Rea and Ms Rishworth

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

To inquire into and report on:

The incidence of cyber-crime on consumers.

- a) Nature and prevalence of e-security risks including financial fraud and theft of personal information:
 - Including the impact of malicious software such as viruses and Trojans.
- b) The implications of these risks on the wider economy:
 - Including the growing economic and security impact of botnets.
- c) Level of understanding and awareness of e-security risks within the Australian community.
- d) Measures currently deployed to mitigate e-security risks faced by Australian consumers:
 - Education initiatives
 - Legislative and regulatory initiatives
 - Cross-portfolio and inter-jurisdictional coordination
 - International co-operation.
- e) Future initiatives that will further mitigate the e-security risks to Australian internet users.
- f) Emerging technologies to combat these risks.

WITNESSES

BOSLER, Mrs Nancy Deloi, President, Australian Seniors Computer Clubs Association..... 1

Committee met at 12.45 pm**BOSLER, Mrs Nancy Deloi, President, Australian Seniors Computer Clubs Association**

CHAIR (Ms Neal)—I want to welcome you, Mrs Bosler, and apologise for the last occasion when we had a bit of a false start. Some unexpected things came up. We really appreciate you making the effort to come down here and speak to us today. Would you like to begin by making an opening statement?

Mrs Bosler—I would like to. I welcome the opportunity to appear at this hearing. I do not mind that it is the second time around; it is well worth waiting for. Our submission was made on behalf of the Australian Seniors Computer Clubs Association, ASCCA, and their members. It is a very basic and low-key submission, but we consider that attention must be paid to the grassroots needs of older consumers. There are many seniors who are reluctant to use the internet. Some have even abandoned their internet connections. A section of older Australians are afraid because they do not understand how to protect themselves.

There are seniors who cannot or will not access the internet, and they are being disadvantaged. More and more government departments and agencies are using their websites as their primary means of disseminating information, so it is becoming very important that seniors embrace the use of technology in general, and the internet in particular, if they are to keep up with the modern communication formats of the 21st century that are being widely used by our consumer society. Seniors may be one of the fastest-growing age groups taking up the use of the internet, but the percentage of the community that they represent is still far too low. Many seniors are very worried by the rapid development of social networking. Their primary concern is for their grandchildren, with particular emphasis on cyberbullying and foolish entries made by younger family members on some of those social networking sites.

Identifying that older consumers need to be educated about cybercrime and the behaviour of internet users opens up a wide range of opportunities that will help overcome the challenges that a lack of awareness so often brings. Projected figures show a rapid increase in the number of older Australians, which establishes educational and skills training as essential if the increased use of websites as a primary source of information is going to actually work for seniors. We strongly agree that it is essential that school children should be educated in matters pertaining to cybercrime and to the safe use of the internet. The demography of our nation demands that the needs of older Australians for education must also be addressed.

I commend the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications for holding this inquiry and look forward to outcomes which will empower Australian consumers by making them aware, not only of the threats of cybercrime, but of ways that they can be helped to become safe and confident users of the internet.

CHAIR—Thank you very much for that opening address. Could you tell us a little bit about your understanding or experience, and about information you have received from seniors concerning the sorts of cybercrime problems that they are most commonly experiencing?

Mrs Bosler—They are very concerned for their privacy. They are very concerned that they are getting into a situation that they cannot manage. It is fairly easy for a senior to recognise

phishing when it is a bank that they do not bank with, but when the phishing episode started to feature the Commonwealth Bank it was rather frightening because so many older people still have Commonwealth Bank accounts. We tend to be loyal, or we do not quite know whether we can manage the change from one bank to another—I am not quite sure which. The Commonwealth Bank was one that they were very familiar with, and we were quite worried and actually sent out messages to our clubs reminding them about phishing. All of those things are very alarming.

When a senior first begins to use the internet and an email comes that seems to be a wonderful opportunity, they are caught in something before they realise just how naive they are being. So they tend to block out the internet. They tend to think: ‘What am I getting into? Who can I trust? Will I make a fool of myself if I do something silly?’ They are really concerned about their general wellbeing and it might be something quite simple. That is why we try to stress to our members that they can start by taking the very simple steps, like not only having antivirus programs on their computers but actually updating the things. Sometimes you will say to a senior, ‘You do have antivirus software on your computer, don’t you?’ and they will say, ‘Yes.’ When you then say, ‘When did you update it last?’ they will say: ‘I bought it about a year ago. Do I have to update it?’ Simple things like that are absolutely necessary to get through to seniors so that they can protect themselves and become safe and confident users.

CHAIR—Do you communicate regularly with your members and provide them with that sort of security information?

Mrs Bosler—We do. We have a website and it has a full manual on e-security that is available not only for our members but also for anybody who accesses our website. We have asked the Australian Federal Police to update that for us, to keep an eye on it and to make sure our information is not out of date and that there are not things that we need to add that have come into being since we last updated it. So that is really important. We have a monthly newsletter that goes out.

CHAIR—By email?

Mrs Bosler—Yes, by email. We post it to the few who cannot access email, but most of it goes out electronically. It is sent to each club and then those clubs disseminate it among their own members. There is very often a little item about something that is going to assist them to be safe online. If not, there might be something in the covering email. Whenever there is some breaking news, I send out newsbreaks. They can go out once a day if necessary, but people might not be too happy with me if I did one a day. Whenever something really important happens, we will send out a newsbreak, which goes to the clubs.

CHAIR—One of the things we have learnt is that sometimes it is very hard to tell if your computer is infected. Previously, a computer virus generally caused your computer to stop functioning, but now it can be part of a botnet and make very little or no difference to the computer user. If one of your members believes their computer might be infected, do you provide assistance in helping them diagnose it and fix it, or is it really up to them?

Mrs Bosler—We would certainly try. We have a network of clubs and every club has a number of members who are trainers. So the first port of call for any member who thought they

had a problem with their computer would be to ask their trainer. The trainers are normally peers. They are normally someone they know well and somebody they trust, so they can say: 'John, I am having so much trouble with my computer. It is going so slowly and I am a bit concerned there is something wrong. Will you have a look at it?' The trainer will have a look at it. If the trainer finds they cannot manage it, they will then come to us and I have a technical officer and a training officer. If they do not know, we will start calling in assistance from technical people who can help us. We will take it from that inquiry right through to trying to find a solution for that person.

CHAIR—That is very helpful.

Mrs HULL—It has been a concern of mine for some time that generally older people do not use internet banking as much as they use email. I have noticed in your graph of how seniors use the internet that email is first with 481. Then we come down to internet banking, which is only 253, and paying bills online is 219. Do you get concerns about pop-ups and phishing from the various banks from people who are not doing internet banking? They may not see the warnings about banks not contacting them by email and banks never asking for your password or your private information, because they are generally using their computer only for emailing. Do you get complaints from members who may have responded to those phishing emails simply because they are not doing internet banking, and therefore are not seeing those danger warnings, but who do email prolifically and are seeing these pop-ups all the time? Do they respond in your experience?

Mrs Bosler—Very few of those who belong to the clubs respond because it is something they talk about all the time. But it is a very valid point that you are bringing up: people who are not using internet banking do not see those warnings. Therefore, it is up to us to try to make sure they are aware of those warnings.

Mrs HULL—But they use email all the time.

Mrs Bosler—Yes.

Mrs HULL—I think in the past there was a view by banks that if they are using email then they are probably internet banking, but they are likely never to use internet banking; they use email as a form of communication.

Mrs Bosler—That is right, and a lot of them would tend to use telephone banking.

Mrs HULL—Yes, rather than the internet. Exactly.

Mrs Bosler—They feel a lot happier with telephone banking than internet banking.

Mr GEORGANAS—Thanks for briefing us here today; it is important for us to hear how older Australians are dealing with computers and the internet et cetera. We are finding more and more that things like government documents are online and businesses like Telstra, for example, want us to pay using the internet. Are you finding that the opportunities that exist for many seniors are being reduced because they fear the internet or have not got access to the internet? I am finding in my community in Adelaide, in the western suburbs, that many senior groups and

social clubs that are applying for grants et cetera cannot apply because many of them are through the internet only and many of them do not have access to the internet or do not know how to use it, and we are constantly doing it on their behalf. I feel like there is a group of people out there who have been disadvantaged because of this reason. How do we help those people?

Mrs Bosler—It is a big problem, you are quite right. When you consider that there are only about 20 per cent of seniors who are using the internet, there are so many organisations particularly looking for those grants, desperately needing those grants, but they cannot access them because they are internet only. We just have to educate; we have to find ways of making sure seniors are given the opportunity to learn how to use a computer and the internet—for life skills as well as for things like grants and banking and all the rest of it. Seniors are being disadvantaged.

Mr GEORGANAS—Is there any particular group within seniors that is more disadvantaged? I am thinking of the non-English-speaking seniors in my electorate who I find have absolutely no connection to the internet. They would not even have a clue how to go about using it, and yet it would be a great eye-opener for them because they can read their newspapers in their languages, they can look at sites in their languages if they did access it.

Mrs Bosler—It opens up the world for them. There is no doubt about that. I did some workshops at Redfern Community Centre particularly for the Indigenous community, but some Chinese residents joined in. When we showed them how to access websites in their own language and from their own villages and towns, they were amazed. They did not think it was possible. Back to the old days, NESB, but those were from CALD communities. They do need to be helped. We do have some clubs that are specifically for CALD communities. It has been their choice to open a group just for their members. Wherever possible, we would like to see people from non-English-speaking backgrounds involved in their community because their community is the whole of the community, not just their national background. But, yes, there is a need for that too. There is also a need for information to be available in community languages. It is no good having a wonderful plain English brochure that is going to encourage seniors to use the internet if it is only in English. It needs to also be in community languages.

Ms MARINO—I would be very interested to hear from you what ‘how to’ processes you think can encourage the 80 percent of seniors who are not using internet to use the internet and become engaged. Based on your experience, how do you think they could best be informed about how to protect themselves?

Mrs Bosler—The first thing we have to do is try to find the vehicle which can be used as a conduit to get to those people. Some of the seniors’ newspapers—the *Senior* that operates in every state of Australia is a fantastic vehicle to get information through to the general senior because they all read it avidly. They are anxious to see the next issue come out because it is all about people their own age; it is all about things that may be of use and interest to them. So that sort of vehicle is excellent.

I also think we need to be looking at the seniors organisations—COTA, National Seniors Australia and all of those organisations—and going through their newsletters and websites. In other words, the organisations that are already offering that sort of skill and education need to be networking as strongly as they possibly can with all the other groups. I have just done a trip

down to Tasmania to visit seniors computer clubs down there. While I was there I had an opportunity to speak to many of the other seniors groups and add them one by one to our network, which is going to receive our newsletter and newsbreaks and things like that. We just have to network. We have to stop being isolated. We must spread the knowledge and skills we have to help other seniors embrace what we know they need to know.

Ms MARINO—On the actual security side of things, what would you perceive to be a simple product that seniors could access to protect themselves in a way that gave them confidence?

Mrs Bosler—I would say that every computer that is sold needs to have antivirus software and a firewall installed as a normal thing. There needs to be a very good plain-English brochure that goes with that computer and spells it out simply. Give them the information, but do not scare them witless.

Ms MARINO—Yes, a balance.

Mrs Bosler—There is a balanced way to do it. When I was drawing up the training manuals for the Broadband for Seniors kiosks that are going across Australia in a government initiative, I asked the Australian Federal Police to actually design—

CHAIR—We did not know about that. You should tell us a bit more about it.

Mrs Bosler—There is a three-year program to spread 2,000 kiosks across Australia. It is a federal government initiative.

Mrs HULL—Thank you for telling us about that!

Mrs Bosler—A series of preferred postcodes have been drawn up and they will be given priority in the establishment of kiosks. Those kiosks provide some training to help seniors learn how to use the internet. It is free to seniors. ASCCA is part of the consortium that won that tender—a very small part of it. NEC is the lead agency and we were just responsible for drawing up the face-to-face training material. As part of that I got the Australian Federal Police to design a two-page flyer for me to include in that training manual.

Mrs HULL—That is a good idea.

CHAIR—On cybersecurity?

Mrs Bosler—Yes, on cybersecurity. It spelled out the problems and what they can do to take care of them.

CHAIR—We would be very interested in seeing a copy of that.

Mrs Bosler—I will forward a copy to you.

Mrs HULL—That would be great. How long have you been doing that?

Mrs Bosler—The first kiosks were actually launched only a month or so ago, so it is fairly new.

Mrs HULL—How long did it take you to write the program?

Mrs Bosler—We worked from material that we already had and adapted it. It did not take us too long.

Mrs HULL—When did you get funding for that?

Mrs Bosler—The funding would have come out in the first quarter of this year. It went to NEC. I think last financial year we got a small payment towards the cost of us preparing that material.

Mrs HULL—When you provide the committee with a copy of your training program, could you also give us the postcodes where you are rolling out these kiosks?

Mrs Bosler—Certainly.

CHAIR—We will get some more information directly from the department as well.

Ms COLLINS—I just want to ask you a couple of questions, Mrs Bosler. You are talking about information being provided with computers when people buy them. Let us assume that we have done some sort of public education campaign or something similar. If we reduce the fear, do you think that it would encourage more seniors to actually use the internet?

Mrs Bosler—I think so, because most people, particularly seniors, are a little afraid of anything new.

Mrs HULL—They do not have to be seniors. People who are nearly seniors get a bit afraid as well.

Mrs Bosler—When you get your first microwave, you read the instructions so carefully before you use it because you are unsure of exactly what to do. It is not automatic. You need to be sure.

Ms COLLINS—The other part my question was: if we do go along the lines of providing information with computers, do you also think a broader public education campaign is worth while, in terms of a 'safe at home with your computer' type public message?

Mrs Bosler—I think it could be, and I think another excellent way to get news through to seniors is local government.

Ms COLLINS—Right. Okay.

Mrs Bosler—Particularly your community services section. I have a background in local government as well.

Ms COLLINS—And libraries.

Mrs Bosler—And libraries—absolutely. Public access points like libraries and your community services section, particularly the person who is responsible for age and disability—they are the ones. You need to get to every community somehow or other and it needs to be in a non-threatening, friendly sort of way. It is a big ask.

Ms COLLINS—Okay. Thank you.

Ms REA—Getting back to the issue of cybercrime—which is what we are dealing with—the evidence is that there are different forms of cybercrime. So, as part of trying to address the fears of your members and your potential members, what are the major reasons your members use the internet or email? In some ways that could assist us to look at what forms of cybercrime we should address more specifically to allay the fears of your members. For example, would they be more prone to spam than they are to phishing? I assume that they would not be sucked in by the Nigerian emails, but they might believe a fake bank website—but they might not do internet banking. Do you know what I mean?

Mrs Bosler—Yes.

Ms REA—So what would be your members' most common reason for using the internet and, hence, is there a particular cybercrime we can address more specifically to allay people's fears?

Mrs Bosler—It is an excellent question. It takes a lot of thinking to come up with a good answer for you.

Ms REA—You can google it if you like!

Mrs Bosler—I suppose you have to consider each senior as an individual. They are going to have different reasons for wanting to use the internet. It may be that they want to spread photos of their new grandchild. It could be that they are researching family history. But what a shame these days when they get an e-card, a greeting card. If they have got any sense, they are afraid to open it.

Mr BILLSON—I do not open it.

Mrs Bosler—No. I do not either, and sometimes people say, 'Did you get the thankyou I sent?' But you just cannot run the risk. So it is right across the board. It is a very difficult question to answer, I am sorry.

Ms REA—No, that is okay. That is useful to know. It means whatever we do to address broad based cybercrime will affect your members as much as it does other people in the community.

Mrs Bosler—Always. But privacy is a big issue for older people. Somehow I have got to get through to people that they should not send emails with 15 email addresses on display.

Ms REA—Yes.

Mrs Bosler—And if they are into those wretched chain emails, like chain letters, they are sending off those 15 addresses time after time after time. That is awful.

Ms REA—What about passwords? Would they use passwords?

Mrs Bosler—No, they are afraid of passwords—not afraid of them but afraid they are going to forget them.

Ms REA—They are afraid they are going to forget them.

Mrs Bosler—Yes, or they use one for everything.

Ms REA—Yes. So in that sense password protection does not always solve the problem.

Mrs Bosler—It does not always work. Somehow we are trying to encourage people, if they are using passwords, to change them frequently and to change them to strong passwords, not just your birthday and your dog's name and stuff like that.

Ms REA—But that means you have got to write it down somewhere to remember it!

CHAIR—I have heard this terrible statistic that 65 per cent of people use either their mother's maiden name or their pet's name, which means it is very easy for people to guess them.

Mrs Bosler—Absolutely. It is not so bad if you use the name of the pet three or four pets back, though, is it!

CHAIR—Yes, that is true.

Mrs Bosler—Yes, we use things that we do not think we will forget. So there is a worry.

CHAIR—Mr Billson, did you have some questions?

Mr BILLSON—Thank you for your presentation. I am curious about the tension between fear and alerting people to the need to take action. We have been told that many younger, computer savvy people know of the risks but are fairly blase about them unless something big happens. If their banking is compromised, there is a limit on how much they will lose and it is a bit of a nuisance. We were told we needed something almost like a grim reaper campaign to shock them into taking action. It would seem that would be probably the last thing that would be helpful for mature computer users.

Mrs Bosler—I would not think it would help, no.

Mr BILLSON—So a separate narrowcast message on the need to update your firewalls, spam filters and change your passwords?

Mrs Bosler—It would be more like calling on their sense of responsibility to do something like that rather than saying, ‘Do it or this will happen.’ It is more to play on their experience and their understanding of things and the wisdom of older people, who are not always clever.

Mr BILLSON—Have many amongst your membership suffered significantly from an act of cybercrime?

Mrs Bosler—Very few that I have heard of. That is not to say that they have not suffered problems, but most of them are fairly aware and most of them, if they have a doubt, will speak to someone in their club who has more knowledge. There is this buddy system. They can rely on someone who knows more about the internet and technology to give them a truthful answer or to help them if they get into trouble.

Mr BILLSON—With the club formation process where you provide support and some resources, I assume those tools are self-help tools—

Mrs Bosler—Yes, they are.

Mr BILLSON—Do clubs looking to join your organisation need to account for whether they have shared this information. Do they open each meeting by asking people to put up their hands and make a gold coin donation for someone who has not updated their password?

Mrs Bosler—I do not think so, but that might be a neat idea—smiley stamps every time they do the right thing. Our clubs are all set up as autonomous organisations for the very reason that we want to put the power with the club itself. Each club has to be there to recognise and assist with the needs and interests of their members. Therefore, they need that autonomy.

You may have a club set up in South Australia that is in a retirement village that is just for German people and they all have to be over the age of 80 to get into the retirement village. We have another club that may just be open to anybody who is interested in learning about a computer. There are all sorts of reasons why people form clubs, and very often they have a common interest. The common interest may be that they are in a country town and they have lost their banks, Centrelink and everything so the only way they can access this sort of information is by having a club or public access point at the library, if there happens to be a library. They need that support system.

Mr BILLSON—It is not just about them using their own computers. You were talking more about public access places as well and good practice on those access points being as important as how they manage their own computer.

Mrs Bosler—Definitely. You may have someone who is keen to learn how to use a computer but cannot afford to buy one yet or has not really decided whether they are into computers and do not want to outlay any cash. They can learn how to use the computers in the club or practice at the library. Once they can use a computer and want to use a computer we will then help them access a computer from someone like WorkVentures. They can get a recycled computer for \$250 if they have a Centrelink entitlement. That is a realistic amount of money for an older person to outlay. If they really get into it and want something with bells and whistles then that would be up to them later on.

Mr BILLSON—I have one last question. You talked about having firewalls and antivirus software loaded at the point of purchase. Does your organisation have any relationship with some of the technology vendors to provide support for your membership, such as McAfee or someone? I was interested to learn from Microsoft that they have their own security update system, which I was not aware of until we heard of it at a hearing.

Mrs Bosler—That comes automatically with the operating systems, yes. We would give members the option. We would tell them about the best free ones that we know of that they can download. If they are only using dial-up, we will download it for them and give them a disk. We will tell them about the commercial ones that are available and are good to use. Of course, when we are talking about free ones, we will tell them about the ones that are available through the Microsoft operating systems. It may well already be on those computers that are being sold now, but very often people do not know about them and have not actually started using them.

Mr BILLSON—And you can get confused. I am using both McAfee and the Microsoft stuff, and I think each thinks the other is a virus, so I keep getting all these things saying, ‘We’ve noticed a change; you should update your McAfee,’ and I update that and then the computer says, ‘We’ve noticed a change.’ So I have not quite worked that out yet.

Mrs Bosler—It might be best just to use one.

Mr BILLSON—I think you are probably right there.

Mrs Bosler—We did have a relationship with Vet Antivirus for quite some years. We provided that free to clubs, but that has dropped by the wayside now. Last year McAfee gave us a lot of older disks which enabled us to pass it around, so we had that available.

Mr BILLSON—Good.

Mrs Bosler—I am still working on this year.

Mr BILLSON—Good luck.

CHAIR—You have 142 clubs that are members of your association. Roughly how many seniors would that represent?

Mrs Bosler—It depends. A club may be as small as 20 in a retirement village. It could be almost 1,000. There is one club, the Melbourne PC Users Group, which has something like 8,000 members. That is mixed ages, but I would say we probably have 30,000 seniors and 41,000 members in total in our member clubs.

CHAIR—Where are your member clubs most concentrated? It seems to be Victoria, from what you said.

Mrs Bosler—No, New South Wales, because we started in Sydney. We would go out and speak at public meetings when a group thought they might like a computer club in their area. Of course, we went as far as our seniors cards used to take us in those days, so we gradually spread in New South Wales. Our second largest number would be Western Australia, particularly where

we are linked with a lot of the telecentres. Our next would be Queensland. Victoria has been one of the slower states to join ASCCA clubs. Of course, the membership is very high because of Melbourne PC Users, but it has been a little bit more difficult to encourage clubs to join us in Victoria. South Australia only has a couple of clubs; we need to work harder on that.

Mr GEORGANAS—I can help you out on that one.

Mrs Bosler—Yes, please. In Tasmania there are two major clubs. One provides face-to-face training at Launceston and the other, which is based in Hobart, does seminars in all different parts of Tasmania, so it is fairly well linked. But, when I was down there this month, I was very keen to try and encourage some more face-to-face training opportunities. There is still the wonderful option that seniors can come and learn, sitting beside someone else, how to use a computer or go to a seminar and hear about the various things that they can do with the computer. It is a bit of balance.

Mrs HULL—Your statistics in your submission say that you did research in 2006 on the interests and concerns of members.

Mrs Bosler—Yes.

Mrs HULL—The survey was sent out to the members, with more than 500 responses. You say that 67 per cent of those that came back were metropolitan, 29 per cent were regional and four per cent were rural.

Mrs Bosler—Yes.

Mrs HULL—Then on the following page—I think it is page 11—of your submission you say:

38% of respondents had a dial-up connection and many expressed a strong desire for broadband. However, they were not able to access either ADSL, cable or wireless ...

Did you have an idea of where those 38 per cent were? Were they regionally based?

Mrs Bosler—Mostly regionally, but there were some even as close as Newcastle who still had to use dial-up.

Mrs HULL—With the four per cent who were rural, why do you think it is so low? Do you have a break-up of how many of your members are rural? Only four per cent of your responses are rural, but what would be your percentage of rural users?

Mrs Bosler—I do not know. I would have to take that on notice and check.

Mrs HULL—That would be great—rural as opposed to regional, because you have identified them as metropolitan, regional and rural. Could you give as an idea of what percentage of rural members you have? It just gives me an idea of how a campaign may have to be targeted when looking at a user kind of program put in place. That would be very helpful.

Mr GEORGANAS—It obviously has a big effect in a rural area, especially in areas where there is no network, and areas where there is no broadband.

Mrs Bosler—Yes, I will just have to check and see the number of types in those areas and work out a clear definition of what you consider regional and what you consider rural.

Mrs HULL—Yes, that would be very handy.

Mr BILLSON—How many of your members are going cyberfunky and getting into Blackberries and iPhones and that kind of mobile technology?

CHAIR—And using them under the desks!

Mr BILLSON—And using them under the desk as we do; very discreetly, I hope, but apparently not from that interjection from the chair!

Mrs Bosler—I would say a great number of seniors are too afraid of the bills they may run up.

Mrs HULL—Okay.

Mr BILLSON—Very wise—there is that wisdom you were talking about again.

CHAIR—Common sense, I think it is called.

Mr BILLSON—That is right. Some of the plans are incredibly complicated, and that is a—

Mrs Bosler—Got to fix that.

Mr BILLSON—I know that in my own electorate I had a family come and see me with a four-digit bill for a quarter—that is over \$1,000—because the kids had just ticked over the limit that they had purchased and the cost of extra downloads above that was astronomical. Do you think that the cost of operating those devices is a real worry?

Mrs Bosler—It is a great worry, because there are all these wonderful opportunities—‘Oh, you just hit that and you get this’—but everything is costing money. Even if you ask, ‘How much is it going to cost me?’ they will give you a very tiny figure, but you just do not realise that when you multiply it by the number of times you use it, it becomes a very big figure.

Mr BILLSON—I read in the paper that some work Bronwyn Bishop did listing the location of all the public amenities was now on the iPhone, but the worry is, I suspect, that you would need more than a penny to spend a penny.

Mrs Bosler—I reckon.

Mrs HULL—Following on from that: as a user group, would your people generally use a laptop or a desktop? Would they prefer to use laptops because they are portable, and if they go

on holidays they can still connect with family members et cetera? Or are they more comfortable with a desktop?

Mrs Bosler—If you had asked me this a couple of years ago, I would have said they are more comfortable with a desktop.

Mrs HULL—Right.

Mrs Bosler—A great number still have desktops, but those clubs that we have set up in retirement villages, or those people who are just using computers in a retirement village, tend to need the laptop to save space. Even though I have not worked out how to do it, they tell me most seniors go on holidays a lot and they love to take their laptops.

Mrs HULL—Yes.

Mrs Bosler—Particularly the grey nomads.

Mr BILLSON—Wireless.

Mrs Bosler—And they are very keen to find out, ‘How do I keep in touch when I am on the road?’ That is the emerging technology; it may not be new, but that is the emerging technology that seniors want to know about.

Mrs HULL—When they look at plans, do they look more at a fixed line plan, or at a wireless technology—a Telstra 3G card, or an Optus card, or something like that?

Mrs Bosler—Older seniors like a landline. It is what they are used to and familiar with. But the baby boomers, who are racing to join the ranks of the seniors, are into mobile phones. They are not so keen on a landline—‘Why have a landline when I am hardly ever home?’

Mrs HULL—Yes.

Mr BILLSON—With the kiosks that you are helping to nurture, are they WiFi spots, or are they largely where the whole desktop unit is available, like a public access model, rather than someone bringing their own technology in?

Mrs Bosler—Part of the deal with the kiosks is that they provided with two desks, two computers, three ergonomic chairs—two for the students and one for the tutor—and an internet connection. The sort of internet connection supplied depends on the location.

Mr BILLSON—Are they targeted more at novice users?

Mrs Bosler—Absolutely. They are for people who do not know how to use a computer. We start off by saying ‘You turn it on.’ We do not tell them it is harder to turn it off than it is to turn it on.

CHAIR—What are the issues with the use of wireless technology? As you said it is becoming more commonly used by all ages, seniors as well. Are there particular security problems with them?

Mrs Bosler—Big problems.

CHAIR—There is a tendency for people not to think about changing their password which means that virtually anyone within the radius can access their wireless. This is a security problem and also a cost problem.

Mrs Bosler—This is a big problem.

CHAIR—Is it something that has come to your attention to date?

Mrs Bosler—It has come to our attention. We have not done a great deal about it. We have given vague advice, but we have it on our future plan as something we need to do something about. Wireless, with its convenience, brings a lot of dangers.

CHAIR—Absolutely. Thank you very much for appearing. We appreciate it very much and we hope you have a safe trip home. Please check with Hansard to see if there is anything they need to verify.

Mrs Bosler—Of course. Thank you for the opportunity.

Resolved (on motion by **Ms Collins**):

That this committee authorises publication of the transcript of the evidence given before it at public hearing this day.

Committee adjourned at 1.26 pm