



Submission to Senate Environment and
Communications Legislation Committee

**Inquiry into Enhancing Online Safety for
Children 2014 and the Enhancing Online
Safety for Children (Consequential
Amendments) Bill 2014**

December 2014

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Section 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Optus welcomes the opportunity to provide comments to the Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications Legislation Committee on matters relevant to its Inquiry into the Enhancing Online Safety for Children Bill 2014 and related Bill (the Inquiry).
- 1.2 Optus recognises the Inquiry has a primary focus on the contents of the Enhancing Online Safety for Children Bill 2014 (the Bill) and as a member of Communications Alliance, Optus supports the Communications Alliance submission which provides commentary to the particulars of the Bill.
- 1.3 We recognise there are organisations with more expertise to comment in detail on the broad range of policy options and measures available to enhance online safety. Optus' perspective is that of a provider of mobile telecommunications and as an internet service provider. The on-line safety of our children is a matter to which all members of the community should seek opportunities to contribute.
- 1.4 Optus has proactively undertaken activities to assist in educating youth on the dangers and risks associated with their online activities, including sexting, and to familiarise them with the 'fourth emergency service' Kids Helpline, who we believe are best equipped to help youth tackle these issues before they occur.
- 1.5 Optus participates in a number of cyber safety programs that address issues including cyber-bullying, sexting, and providing students with tools for a positive online presence.
- 1.6 In Section 2 of this submission Optus will highlight a number of these programs.

Section 2. Optus Participation in Cyber Safety Programs

Erasing Cyberbullying

- 2.1 In 2011, Optus and Kids Helpline realised there was a need for high quality and credible resources to help address issues such as cyber safety, cyber bullying and sexting from the misuse of technology or devices. As a result, Optus collaborated to develop an education pack called “Erasing Cyberbullying” which was sent out to every school in Australia, providing a potential reach of approximately 3.5 million children.
- 2.2 This pack was designed for teachers to educate students on the aforementioned key issues and contained detailed lesson plans and video resources. It was deliberately designed to deliver key messages on these topics in a positive way.
- 2.3 The resources referred to in the pack are available on the Kids Helpline and Optus websites: <http://www.kidshelp.com.au/grownups/getting-help/cyberspace/sexting.php>. Copies of the pack are available to Committee members should they wish to view it.

Kids Helpline @ School

- 2.4 Optus and Kids Helpline have also launched Kids Helpline @ School in 2013. This national primary school program is delivered via Skype. It’s an early intervention approach as it gives students the opportunity to talk with a counselor in a group discussion about topics influencing their lives. This could include any topics such as sexting, relationships or bullying.
- 2.5 Teachers work with a Kids Helpline counsellor to deliver the classroom session and are provided with activities and resources to help prepare for the video or phone link up. The classroom sessions aim to increase each participant's knowledge about the topic and enhance their capacity to deal with the issue at school and in their lives. Sessions are designed with the general capabilities of the Australian curriculum in mind.
- 2.6 Since the launch of the program, over 13,000 primary aged students have been reached in 63 schools nationally

Digital Thumbprint

- 2.7 In August 2013, Optus launched a new program called “Digital Thumbprint”. This aims to develop well-informed, responsible and proactive members of Australia’s online community now and in the future.
- 2.8 The program was created in close consultation with leading education experts and has to date been delivered to over 40,000 students in 131 secondary schools in metropolitan NSW and VIC by a team of excellent facilitators. The program contains three face-to-face, curriculum-aligned workshops tailored to the needs of specific year groups that empower and inform Australia’s young digital natives.
- 2.9 The workshop is designed for year nine and year ten students. It covers intention versus impact of online behavior with a segment specifically devoted to sexting. The content of this section discusses the real life example of youths arrested in a Melbourne school for sexting. (See: <http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/law-order/four-teens-arrested-over-sexting-scandal-at-school-in-melbourne8217s-west/story-fni0fee2-1226673599544>.) It also covers the following important key points on sexting:

- The legalities applicable to all those involved in sexting including, and importantly not often understood, that a person under age who takes a “selfy” (self-portrait) and distributes it can be charged;
- That although sites such as Snapchat have a self-destruct image for photos, those photos can be copied and distributed by various methods before they self-destruct; and
- Once anything is put online you can never get it back.

2.10 By making digital education fun and interactive, Digital Thumbprint teaches students the advantages of a positive online presence whilst arming them with the facts they need to stay safe online in a way students can understand, use and enjoy.

Additional partnerships

2.11 In addition to our work with Kids Helpline, as a responsible telecommunications company and a participant in the Communications Alliance Family Friendly ISP program, we believe that we do play a role in assisting to educate society as well as our customers about sexting. It is for this reason that Optus participates as a corporate partner in many government and industry initiatives, such as the Australian Consumer Fraud Taskforce’s annual Fraud Week and the recent National Cyber Security Awareness Week. We also provided input into the ACMA’s recently launched Digital Citizenship Guide.

2.12 We have information on our own website (at www.optuszoo.com.au/onlinesafety) on a range of cyber safety topics and provide links to other resources, such as the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) Cybersmart website.

2.13 The communications industry, our regulators and government agencies have all been involved in developing customer awareness and education materials to address cyber safety issues, with a focus on training programs for school-aged children. Some examples of these are:

- the ACMA’s Cybersmart Detectives / Cybersmart Hero program (see www.cybersmart.gov.au);
- the Federal Government’s Budd:e E-Security Education Package (see www.staysmartonline.gov.au);
- the Communications Alliance’s Security Portal, which contains links to resources on (for example) cyberbullying; and
- the Australian Mobile Telecommunications Association (AMTA) has developed a range of tip sheets and other information materials on topics such as:
 - o Bullying and mobile phones – tips for parents;
 - o Bullying and mobile phones – tips for teens;
 - o Acceptable use policy for mobiles in schools;
 - o Camera phone safety and etiquette;
- And a website called Str8 Talk that provides information for young people on mobiles (www.str8tlk.amta.org.au). This website provides information on both bullying and safety matters.

2.14 We thank the Committee for the opportunity to provide our comments and share information about our programs that address this important matter.