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**AMTA Submission to the
Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety**

“Inquiry into Cyber-Safety”

July 2010

1 Executive summary

Keeping pace with evolving mobile technologies and services and the implications for safety in cyberspace is a significant policy challenge.

It is important that the role and nature of mobile telecommunications be put in context so cyber-safety can be considered from a broader perspective including insights into the social and economic impacts of the latest mobile technologies and services.

The mobile telecommunications industry recognises there are issues and concerns in relation to some aspects of how mobile technology, services and applications are used. While the industry strongly believes the positive aspects far outweigh the negative, industry organisations and members are committed to working together and with other stakeholders on strategies to enhance cyber-safety and security, especially in relation to children and young adults.

While AMTA recognizes the concerns around any anti-social, harmful or even criminal use of mobile telecommunications the industry holds strongly to the view that blaming and reacting against the technology is not a solution.

The 24/7 - "always on" - nature of mobile phone technology means that cyber-bullying can be particularly insidious and unrelenting especially for the young victims, who despite being in the safety of the classroom, home or workplace can still be subject to bullying via technology.

AMTA has developed a range of awareness and education materials to assist such as tips on preventing cyber-bullying for young people and companion advice for their parents and teachers; a Schools Policy Template to set practical rules for students, teachers and parents for the responsible use of mobile phones in school environments; and a website for children.

AMTA's material addresses key issues and stresses the importance of partnerships between children, parents and teachers to address the facts and offer advice on strategies for action as well as referrals to relevant resources to promote cyber-safety and responses when it is threatened.

2 Introduction

The Australian Mobile Telecommunications Association (AMTA) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the issues identified by the Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety as part of the Inquiry into Cyber-Safety.

AMTA is the Australian mobile industry's peak body. AMTA's members include mobile phone carriers, handset manufacturers, retail outlets, network equipment suppliers and other suppliers to the industry. AMTA's vision is to promote an environmentally, socially and economically responsible, successful and sustainable mobile telecommunications industry in Australia. For more details about AMTA, see <http://www.amta.org.au>.

The rapid advances in mobile technology supported by product and service innovation and, most recently, convergence with the other media, particularly the internet, have further confirmed mobile telecommunications as a central part of everyday life.

Keeping pace with evolving mobile technologies and services and the implications for safety in cyberspace is a significant policy challenge.

It is also important that the role and nature of mobile telecommunications be put in context so cyber-safety can be considered from a broader perspective including insights into the social and economic impacts of the latest mobile technologies and services.

This submission provides background to the recent growth, development and impacts of mobile telecommunications before making specific comments regarding cyber-safety, including mobile industry initiatives and perspectives.

3 Background

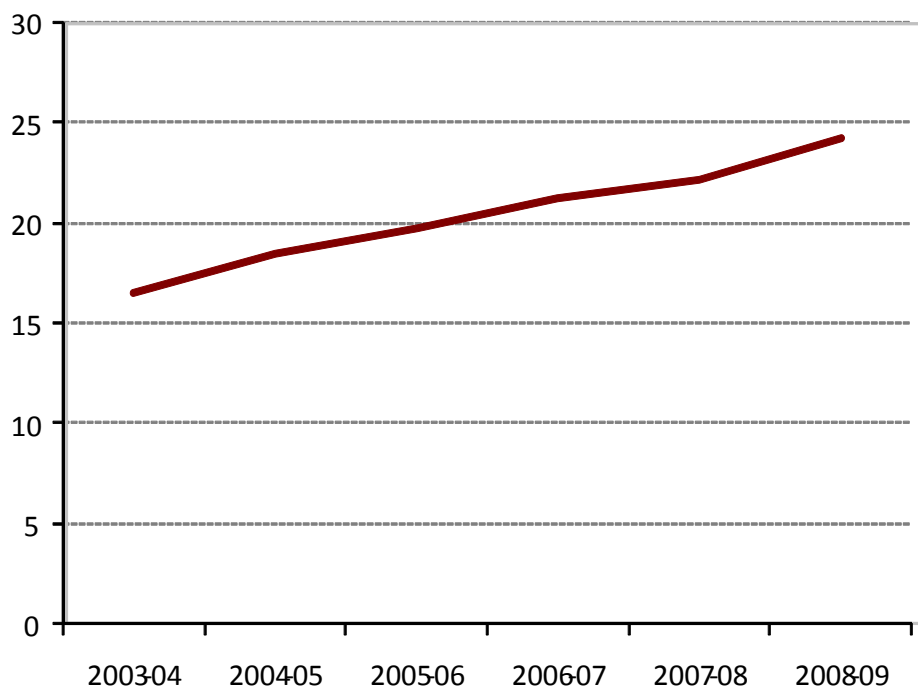
3.1 Mobile telecommunication services in Australia

Demand for mobile anywhere, anytime connectivity via both voice and data services has changed the way we work, communicate with family and friends and how we interact with the wider community in balancing work and personal commitments.

According to figures from the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) there were 24.22 million mobile services in operation in June 2009¹.

With the population at 21.8 million (as at June 2009) this equates to a mobile penetration rate of around 110%. The mobile penetration rate can be more than 100% because customers use more than one SIM card and/or mobile device. Australia's mobile penetration rate is 110% compared to Singapore's 180%, United States' 89% and China's 55%.

Mobile Services (millions) to 30 June 09²



Latest generation mobile devices and applications provide a wide range of integrated services. The increased functionality of devices now offers what has been termed the “triple play” of voice, data and video.

Consumers are increasingly taking up a range of non-voice functions. For example the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) estimates 88% of mobile phone users

¹ Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA), *Communications Report 2008-09* (2010)

² Access Economics, *Economic Contribution of Mobile Telecommunications in Australia* (2010)

use SMS, 65% take photos or videos 48% send and receive MMS, 40% use Bluetooth applications, 27% play games, 26% listen to music and 10% use GPS navigation services³.

ACMA, in its Communications Report 2008-09, says just over half, (55%) of users are estimated to have a mobile phone capable of accessing 3G services, such as the internet. ACMA says only a third of these people report using their mobiles to access non-voice content and services online⁴.

However forecasts are suggesting a very rapid rise in demand and use of online mobile data services, particularly mobile broadband.

Access Economics forecasts that the uptake of mobile broadband will substantially increase in Australia over the next five years suggesting that, across the industry, mobile broadband subscribers will grow significantly over the coming years, passing 50% in 2012, with overall growth in subscriptions of 282% over five years⁵.

For those currently using their mobiles to access the internet, general browsing (68%) was the most popular activity; other popular online services were: news and weather updates (50%), email services (44%), sport updates (32%), streamlining or downloading music (23%) and making VOIP calls (22%)⁶.

3.2 Young People's Use of mobiles

Young Australians are enthusiastic adopters of mobile telecommunication technologies and services. ACMA's 2007 study, *Media & Communications in Australian Families, Report of the Media Society Research Project*, found that 54% of Australian children aged 8-17 have their own mobile phones.

It also found that mobile phone usage increases with age: from 16% for eight-year-olds up to 90% for 17-year-olds. The study found a marked rise in usage among children at the age of 12, which may coincide with children reaching year six in primary school and being given more responsibilities.

The ACMA study found differences among girls' and boys' usage of mobile phones. Girls use mobiles more (63%) than boys (44%). Girls (45%) use text and picture messaging more than boys (26%). Girls' tendency to use mobiles more was also evident in making and receiving calls (43%) compared to 26% for boys and girls (30%) took more pictures with their mobiles than boys (15%)⁷.

Young people use mobile technology in a different manner to adults, who tend to use it for functional purposes such as conducting business and balancing their busy work and family situations. According to the ACMA's 2007 report young people see their mobiles in a more social context. Canadian anti-bullying educator, Bill Belsey, says mobiles represent status symbols for young people and are a part of their emerging image and identity among their peers⁸.

³ Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA), *Communications Report 2008-09* (2010) pg. 55

⁴ Ibid, 54

⁵ Access Economics, *Economic Contribution of Mobile Telecommunications in Australia* (2010)

⁶ Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA), *Communications Report 2008-09* (2010) pg. 55

⁷ Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA), *Media & Communications in Australian Families, Report of the Media & Society Research Project* (2007)

⁸ Belsey, B, 2008, 'Cyber-bullying: An Emerging Threat to the 'Always On' Generation, Canadian Teacher Magazine, 18-20

Director of the Nestlé Social Research Program, Professor Haste, said texting had transformed the social lives of young people with many preferring to chat, flirt, make dates- and even end relationships – by text rather than mobile talk, email or landline. *“How the mobile phone looks is a fashion statement and using a mobile phone, and being seen to do so, is part of being credible with their peers. For these young people it is prosthesis of the body, an extension of oneself,”* he said⁹.

Dr Sheri Bauman of the University of Arizona says that young people place high importance on technology, including mobiles, because their knowledge and ability is greater than adults, which has been described as the *“generation technology gap”*¹⁰.

The 2007 ACMA study found that although 97% of parents use the internet and are comfortable doing so they may not be using more complex features such as blogs, video sharing websites, social networking sites and chat rooms, which children use regularly.¹¹

Given widespread mobile use among younger age groups there are safety and security concerns associated with potential online interactions such as bullying, grooming, identity theft, and sexual predation. The characteristics of the online environment, particularly the opportunity for relative anonymity and separation between parties, combined with the personal nature of a mobile device are additional factors for consideration.

3.3 Social Impacts of Mobile telecommunications

The majority of Australians believe that mobile phones have helped to balance their family and working lives according to a 2008 study by leading social researchers from the Australian National University, the University of New England and the University of New South Wales.¹²

The Australian Research Council Linkage Grant study examined the social impact of mobile technologies at home and work, collecting nationally representative data from a sample of 1358 individuals from 845 on-line households.

The results of the three-year project found that the mobile phone is an indispensable part of the Australian life, with more than 90% of respondents reporting that their lives could not “proceed as normal” without their mobiles.

*“Very few respondents reported that the mobile phone has a negative impact on their work-life balance (3%),” said lead researcher Professor Judy Wajcman from the Australian National University. “A high proportion of respondents (43%) said that it has had no effect. Yet more than half (54%) of the respondents believed that the mobile helped them to balance their family and working lives.”*¹³

Other key findings of the research¹⁴:

- Mobiles predominantly used for contacting family and friends.
- Half of employed respondents thought that mobiles increase their workload. This is offset by productivity gains with over half (55%) of employed respondents indicating that job-related mobile calls increase their productivity.

⁹ Nestle Social Research Programme, Press Release, ‘TXT don’t talk’ say young people (2004)

¹⁰ DA Huffaker and S Calvert, “Gender, identity and language use in teenage blogs”, *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communications* 2009.

¹¹ Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA), *Media & Communications in Australian Families, Report of the Media & Society Research Project* (2007)

¹² Wajcman, J, Bittman, M, Jones, P, Johnstone, L, Brown, J, 2007, *The Impact of the Mobile Phone on Work/Life Balance*, Preliminary Report, Australian Research Council Linkage Project

¹³ AMTA/ANU Media Release, 16 July, 2007, *Australians say mobile phones help balance work and family*

¹⁴ Ibid

- Carrying a mobile phone makes most people (75%) feel more secure.
- Few respondents (4%) report that the mobile reduces the quality of their leisure time.

“Rather than fragmenting time, our study suggests that mobile phone practices are strengthening and deepening relationships and building durable social bonds,” Professor Wajcman said¹⁵.

More recently the role of social networking has risen to prominence as a major theme in mobile broadband usage.

A year long study from April 2009 of over 5 million users of 3G mobile services found:¹⁶

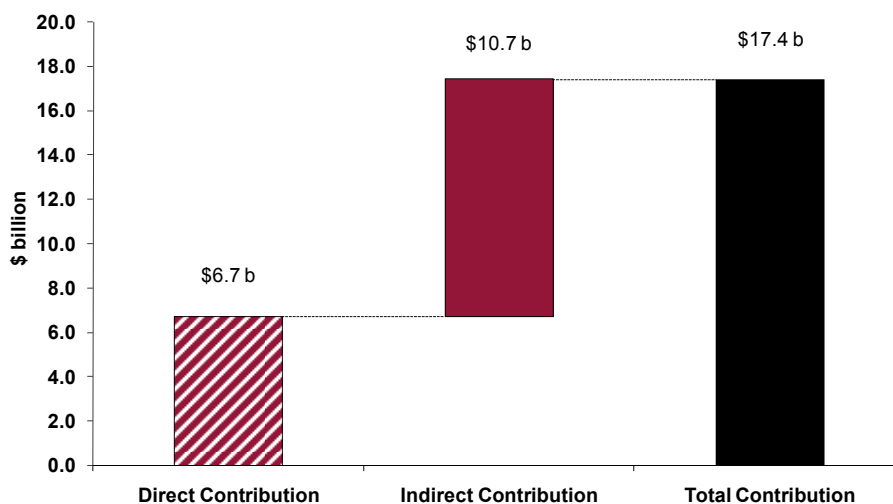
- The number of customers using Facebook on their mobiles has grown almost four-fold (by 390%) since April 2009
- The number of people accessing Twitter on their mobiles each month has grown by 450% compared with this time last year
- Visits to MySpace on mobiles more than doubled, up 230% over the past 12 months.

3.4 Economic Impacts of Mobile telecommunications

Mobile telecommunications have become central to Australia’s capacity to compete in the global marketplace via the capacity to drive productivity gains in the digital economy and the capacity to meet the connectivity needs of governments, services, businesses, communities, families and individuals.

The total economic contribution of the mobile telecommunications industry is shown in Chart i. Combining the direct and indirect contributions, Access Economics estimates the mobile telecommunications industry contributed \$17.4 billion to the Australian economy¹⁷.

Chart i: Total economic contribution of mobile telecommunications, 2008-09



Source: Access Economics

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Telstra 2010 “Aussies click with social networking as use on mobiles booms”. Telstra Media Centre July 8.

¹⁷ Access Economics, *Economic Contribution of Mobile Telecommunications in Australia* (2010)

The economic impact of the mobile telecommunications industry extends beyond direct benefits (\$6.7b), with flow-on or indirect effects generating an additional \$10.7 billion in economic contribution of the mobile telecommunications industry. Furthermore, the potential for productivity gains from use of mobile telecommunications and associated increased connectivity of employees has seen significant changes in business practices in almost every industry and sector of the Australian economy¹⁸.

This contribution and influence is set to increase further with the demand for mobile broadband and mobile data services forecast to grow strongly in the next decade.

3.5 Safety Impacts of Mobile Telecommunications

ACMA figures released in January 2010 said that 63% of the 10.25 million calls to Triple Zero's emergency call service in 2008-09 were from mobile phones compared to 3.4 million from fixed lines.

Research conducted in Great Britain has found that parents of children aged between eight and sixteen believed the overall advantages of children using mobiles phone outweighed the disadvantages. Parents saw the main benefits of children aged eight and up of owning mobile phones were making sure children are safe at any time and children being able to contact their family.

4 Specific Comments

4.1 Industry's Community Responsibility

The mobile telecommunications industry recognises there are issues and concerns in relation to some aspects of how mobile technology, services and applications are used. While the industry strongly believes the positive aspects far outweigh the negative, industry organisations and members are committed to working together and with other stakeholders on strategies to enhance cyber-safety and security, especially in relation to children and young adults.

For example, AMTA sits on the *Consultative Working Group on Cyber-Safety* (CWG), convened by the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy. The CWG is a key initiative of the Australian Government's cyber-safety plan. It has the important role of providing advice to the Australian Government on measures to protect Australian children from cyber-safety risks including cyber-bullying, exposure to illegal content and privacy breaches.

In addition to participation in the CWG, AMTA recognizes the need for industry to work with organizations directly involved with key target groups relevant to cyber-safety.

For example, AMTA has formed partnerships with the Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO), the peak council of government school parents and citizens and school community governing bodies, the Alannah and Madeline Foundation, a national charity keeping children safe from violence and the Internet Industries Association (IIA) representing Internet Service Providers.

Given the importance that young people attach to their mobile phones and the fact that ownership and use of a mobile phone is often one of the first responsibilities that young people have – well before they are old enough to drive or have a credit card, the industry believes information should be provided in plain English that promotes use of mobile devices and services in a safe, responsible and affordable manner, and in ways that meet accepted social

¹⁸ Ibid, iii

practices. To this end much of AMTA's focus is on provision of targeted information to enhance awareness and education on key issues including cyber-safety.

For example, in 2006 AMTA launched an online initiative to provide young people with key information in a format and using language that they can relate to and feel comfortable with. The website, called "Straight Talk", www.str8tlk.amta.org.au, contains information for 10-18 year olds, covering subjects such as bullying, money, safety, recycling, technology and etiquette.

4.2 Content Regulation

The Telecommunications Act (1997) provides for regulation via enforceable industry codes of practice under the auspices of the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA). This co-regulatory approach is in use for content regarded as mobile premium services (MPS). The MPS Code originally prepared by AMTA is an industry code with accompanying guidelines that is managed by Communications Alliance and registered by the ACMA. Importantly the MPS Code is partnered by the Content Services Code developed under the Broadcasting Service Act (2006) by the Internet Industries Association (IIA).

The two codes provide regulatory safeguards in relation to children's access to locally based online and mobile premium services content in line with existing content classifications, as well as defining advertising controls, double opt-in procedures and complaint handling processes.

At the core of this co-regulatory process is the safe and responsible provision and use of content with specific reference to children.

4.3 Cyber – Bullying

New technologies have many benefits for children and many parents want their children to have mobile phones for safety reasons. However, mobiles have created another avenue for bullying or cyber-bullying, which Dr Marilyn Campbell from the Queensland University of Technology has called the "*dark side of technology*"¹⁹.

While AMTA recognises the concerns around any anti-social, harmful or even criminal use of mobile telecommunications the industry holds strongly to the view that blaming and reacting against the technology is not a solution.

Canadian teacher, Bill Belsey, a keynote speaker at the National Centre Against Bullying's Conference 2010, said cyber-bullying is about people not technology. "*Technology should not be banned or blocked in an effort to prevent cyberbullying,*" said the creator of the award-winning website www.bullying.org²⁰

Cyber-bullying has been variously described by researchers as an important new form of bullying behavior with some new characteristics to make it different from traditional forms while others see it as just an extension of bullying – albeit with some different features.

The 24/7 - "always on" - nature of mobile phone technology means that cyber-bullying can be particularly insidious and unrelenting especially for the young victims, who despite being in the safety of the classroom, home or workplace can still be subject to bullying via technology.

Also, people who have never bullied anyone face-to-face may be tempted to engage in cyber-bullying on the internet or their mobile because they believe they are anonymous. People can

¹⁹ Campbell, MA, 2005, '*Cyber-bullying: An old problem in a new guise?*' Australian Journal of Guidance and Counselling, 15

²⁰ Belsey, B, NCAB Media Release, *Cyberbullying is about people not technology*, April 5, 2010

also become part of cyber-bullying when they unthinkingly forward email or text messages to others that involve bullying without thinking of the consequences.

Regardless of definitional issues, the mobile telecommunications industry is certain that bullying via mobile phones can be very upsetting and distressing for victims – especially children because of the speed, scale and 24/7 nature of “anywhere anytime” connectivity.

Bullies use new technologies to make threats, intimidate, harass, defame and exclude people and to potentially steal their identities.

Some cyber-bullying methods are:

- Text bullying – children receiving nasty or threatening text messages;
- Nuisance/prank calls – someone calling a child persistently on their mobile and saying nasty or threatening things;
- Publishing and sharing images without your child’s permission – photos, videos or webcam footage of your child could be circulated via email or text, posted online or tagged with name on a public website;
- “Happy slapping” – bullies using their mobiles to take photos or videos of a child while they verbally or physically abuse them;
- Email and Instant Messaging (IM) – a child might receive nasty or threatening emails or IMs from someone they know or a stranger;
- Chat room bullying – a chat room user says rude things to or about a child;
- Bullying via social networks – someone posts nasty messages about a child on a site such as Bebo, Facebook or MySpace or sets up a fake profile about them
- Bullying during interactive gaming – a child playing a multi-player game might have another gamer trying to block them or ignore them. Research shows that this kind of online behavior can have an impact on self-esteem.

According to leading researchers, about one in four students is affected by bullying in Australian schools. However, Professor Donna Cross of Edith Cowan University said in her 2009 study: *“The vast majority of Year 4 through Year 9 students had not experienced cyber-bullying, with only 7-10% of students reporting they were bullied by means of technology over the school term”*²¹.

4.4 AMTA Advice and Materials

The mobile phone industry takes a very strong view that any form of bullying or cyber-bullying is unacceptable and is committed to do what it can to reduce the incidence of this unacceptable practice.

²¹ Cross, D, Shaw, T, Hearn, L, Epstein, M, Monks, H, Lester, L, and Thomas, L, 2009, ‘*Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence Study (ACBS)*’, Child Health Promotion Research Centre, Edith Cowan University, Perth), xxiii

AMTA believes that tackling the problem of cyber-bullying needs the co-operation of children, teachers and parents and agrees that “*solutions need to go beyond the school gate, given that bullying in schools is often a reflection on community behaviours and attitudes to violence*”²².

AMTA has developed a range of materials to assist such as:

- tips on preventing cyber-bullying for young people and companion advice for their parents and teachers.
- a Schools Policy Template to set practical rules for students, teachers and parents for the responsible use of mobile phones in school environments.
- a website, called “Straight Talk”, www.str8tlk.amta.org.au, contains information for 10-18 year olds, covering subjects such as bullying, money, safety, recycling, technology and etiquette.

The AMTA advice for students is called: “*Mobile phones and bullying: what you need to know to get the bullies off your back.*” (See Appendix 1) It is accompanied by advice for parents and teachers to assist the victims. The advice is based on three guiding principles.

If you are the victim of bullying:

- it is not your fault;
- bullying is not harmless and in some cases it can constitute criminal behaviour; and
- you are not alone; there is something you can do about it.

Researchers say that many victims will not report incidences of bullying because they are embarrassed, humiliated, fear their plight will be trivialised and they will be made to feel guilty by adults²³.

Dr Ken Rigby of the University of South Australia found in that less than a quarter of students who have suffered cyber-bullying report it to their teacher. Students don't believe that adults have any understanding of their attachment to technology and they fear that they will have their mobile phones confiscated.

There may be an asymmetry in knowledge about mobile phone technology but adults have experience and maturity to assist young people with these issues, regardless of the technologies involved.

AMTA's material addresses key issues and stresses the importance of parents and teachers encouraging students to discuss bullying – the facts and the fiction. For example, people who use mobile phones to bully often believe their actions will be anonymous. They are wrong. In fact it is a criminal offence to use a mobile phone to menace, harass or offend another person under the Commonwealth Crimes Act, and almost all malicious calls can be traced.

The AMTA advice also encourages parents to talk to their child's school or other parents about incidences of bullying. Parents should also check to see if their schools have rules covering the use of mobile phones in their grounds and, if they do, whether the relevant sanction has or can

²² National Coalition Against Bullying Biennial Conference 2010, *Navigating the Maze: cybersafety and wellbeing solutions for schools, Outcomes of Conference*, 6

²³ Campbell, MA, 2005

be applied in their child's case. If there are no rules in place, perhaps the school would be interested in considering the AMTA policy template on the acceptable use of mobiles in schools.

In addition mobile service providers may also be able to help and can be contacted about options on customer care numbers which are listed in AMTA's materials.

4.5 Ways to Support Schools

AMTA has developed an acceptable use policy for mobiles in schools. It is in the form of a template which can be used as a starting point to assist the development of a school-based mobile phone use policy, which sets out the expectations and responsibilities of students, parents and teachers. It's adaptable to allow schools to add, delete or modify items to reflect the specific needs and standards of individual schools. A copy of the template is attached. (Appendix 3)

Dr Helen McGrath of Deakin University in *Making Australian Schools Safer* identified school leadership in co-operatively developing a whole-school approach and developing a safe school policy with students, teachers and parents were key to developing a safe and supportive school environment.

The AMTA template sets out the responsibilities of students who bring mobile phones to school and it provides teachers, students and parents with guidelines and instructions for the appropriate use of mobile phones during school hours.

AMTA has spoken to teachers and parents at school forums about cyber-bullying and has widely distributed its schools template and tips to schools, education departments and parent bodies throughout Australia in a partnership with ACSSO.

4.6 Role of Parents

In a whole-of-community approach parents play a vital role in tackling cyber-bullying. AMTA believes it's important that parents have an understanding of mobile technology so they can assist their children to use mobile technology in a safe and responsible way, particularly because most cyber-bullying happens outside the school environment²⁴.

One of the problems for parents is the asymmetric relationship between parents and children regarding technology. This has been referred to as the "generation technology gap"²⁵.

Parents should try to bridge this gap or at least be aware of potential risks in relation to cyber-safety. The National Coalition Against Bullying 4th Biennial Conference, 2010, *Navigating the Maze: cyber-safety and wellbeing solutions for schools*, said technology was part of the solution to reducing cyber-bullying.

"Adults, including parents and teachers, need to break down the digital divide by becoming savvy about technology. We must recognise the creative use of technology as a powerful teaching and socialising tool. The focus needs to be on behaviours and positive relationships; and it is counterproductive to ban access to technology," it says.

The AMTA parents' tips: *"Bullying with mobile phones. Is your child a victim? What you can do to help"* are attached to this submission. (Appendix 2)

²⁴ Belsey, B., NCAB Media Release, *Cyberbullying is about people not technology*, April 5, 2010

²⁵ Huffaker, DA and Calvert, SL, 2005, 'Gender, identity, and language in teenage blogs,' *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 10 (2), article 1

4.7 Technology Addiction

The need for, and high use of, connectivity provided by a mobile phone does not necessarily mean the user is “addicted” or has a psychological dependence on mobiles. Given that mobile connectivity offers security, safety and vital contacts for family and/or business, it is understandable that people rely on certain features and feel “lost” or “uncomfortable” if they do not have their mobile phone with them.

Industry can understand the potential for a psychological dependence on mobile phones, which could lead to misuse and abuse. AMTA relies on the opinions of medically-qualified experts in the field.

However, it is also important to place this issue into context as the vast majority of people use their mobile phones responsibly and appropriately.

A study undertaken by the Queensland University of Technology in 2009 found that 2500 mobile phone users, who completed an online survey, focused on the social, psychological and financial impacts of mobile phone use made an average of made 3.5 voice calls and sent nine text messages each day, spending a total of an hour a day.

Given the important and prominent role played by mobile phones in helping people to stay in contact with their families, friends and workplaces, this would seem to suggest moderate and responsible use of mobile phones by the majority of Australians.

5 Conclusion

AMTA remains open to working with members and relevant stakeholders to enhance cyber-safety.

The mobile telecommunications industry recognises the challenges of influencing peoples’ behaviours in cyber-space in an increasingly convergent telecommunications and media environment.

AMTA believes whole-of-community approaches to cyber-safety will best be developed and implemented via partnerships between industry, governments and consumers.

For its part AMTA will continue to focus on policy and regulatory settings as well as public awareness and education initiatives designed to inform and empower target groups of mobile service users to understand cyber-safety, the relevant resources available to promote it, and the best responses to invoke if and when it is threatened.

As cyber-space becomes more and more central to how society operates so cyber-safety must be explored, understood and integrated with community behavioural expectations and standards.