

**SUBMISSION No. 135**

**SUBMISSION FROM THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND  
WORKPLACE RELATIONS INTO THE INQUIRY INTO CYBER-SAFETY**

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## INTRODUCTION

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations is pleased to provide a submission to the Joint Select Committee on Cybersafety Inquiry (the Committee) into the safety of children and young people on the Internet.

Young people are increasingly using technology, with Australians known as early adopters and young people being labelled 'the digital generation'.

The issue of cybersafety is new and rapidly evolving. Leap-frogging developments in technology, particularly at the end-user level, have seen a rise in the risk of pervasive and anti-social behaviours reaching into our personal spaces, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to an extent never before experienced in our society.

Australian Government research<sup>1</sup> outlines the nature of this interaction:

- one in six students is bullied weekly
- one in four students between Year 4 and Year 9 has reported being bullied at least once, over a period of a few weeks
- one in five students has experienced some form of cyberbullying.

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, on behalf of the Australian Government, pursues activities based on the knowledge that the wellbeing and safety of school-aged children and young people is essential for their academic development, and for the nation's ongoing economic prosperity and social cohesion. All students should be able to learn and develop in safe and supportive environments including an environment free from the potential threats associated with technological-based networking capability. This submission outlines a number of activities undertaken by the Australian Government to support school communities in addressing cybersafety issues that impact on them.

The Inquiry is considered timely and the Department welcomes the opportunity it presents, through the submission process, to assist with effective policy formulation and implementation on the matter of cybersafety issues and their impact on Australia's young people.

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<sup>1</sup> *Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence Study*, Child Health Promotion Research Centre, Edith Cowan University March 2009

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

### Terms of Reference

- I. The online environment in which Australian children currently engage, including key physical points of access (schools, libraries, internet cafes, homes, mobiles) and stakeholders controlling or able to influence that engagement (governments, parents, teachers, traders, internet service providers);
- II. the nature, prevalence, implications of and level of risk associated with cybersafety threats, such as:
  - a. abuse of children online (cyberbullying, cyber-stalking and sexual grooming)
  - b. exposure to illegal and inappropriate content
  - c. inappropriate social and health behaviours in an online environment (e.g. technology addiction, online promotion of anorexia, drug usage, underage drinking and smoking)
  - d. identity theft
  - e. breaches of privacy.
- III. Australian and international responses to current cybersafety threats (education, filtering, regulation, enforcement) their effectiveness and costs to stakeholders, including business;
- IV. Opportunities for cooperation across Australian stakeholders and with international stakeholders in dealing with cybersafety issues;
- V. Examining the need to ensure that the opportunities presented by, and economic benefits of, new technologies are maximised;
- VI. Ways to support schools to change their culture to reduce the incidence and harmful effects of cyberbullying including by:
  - Increasing awareness of cybersafety good practice
  - Encouraging schools to work with the broader school community, especially parents, to develop consistent, whole school approaches; and
  - Analysing best practice approaches to training and professional development programs and resources that are available to enable school staff to effectively respond to cyberbullying;
- VII. Analysing information on achieving and continuing world's best practice safeguards;
- VIII. The merit of establishing an Online Ombudsman to investigate, advocate and act on cybersafety issues.

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations' role and responsibilities are now outlined according to each item of the Inquiry's Terms of Reference.

## Term of Reference I

**The online environment in which Australian children currently engage, including key physical points of access (schools, libraries, internet cafes, homes, mobiles) and stakeholders controlling or able to influence that engagement (governments, parents, teachers, traders, internet service providers).**

The Australian Government recognises the value of technology in schools and in the classroom. The Government is providing \$2.4 billion over seven years through the Digital Education Revolution initiative to contribute to teaching and learning in Australian schools that will prepare students for further education, training and to live and work in a digital world. Through the Digital Education Revolution, the Government has provided this funding to:

- provide for new information and communication technology (ICT) equipment for all secondary schools, with students in Years 9 to 12, through the National Secondary Schools Computer Fund
- support the deployment of high speed broadband connections to Australian schools
- collaborate with states and territories and Deans of Education to ensure new and continuing teachers have access to training in the use of ICT that enables them to enrich student learning
- provide for online curriculum tools and resources that support the national curriculum and specialist subjects such as languages
- enable parents to participate in their child's education through online learning
- support mechanisms to provide vital assistance for schools in the deployment of ICT.

The Digital Education Revolution offers a significant opportunity to create a platform for ICT in education and training that facilitates collaboration, resource sharing and transitions across traditional education sectoral boundaries and into the community.

School education in Australia, however, is primarily the constitutional responsibility of the state and territory government and non-government education authorities.

Consequently, education authorities have responsibility for determining the curriculum resources and programs used in schools and in many instances these decisions are made at the local school level.

There are a range of student wellbeing, welfare, occupational health and safety regulations and cybersafety policies in the government, Catholic and Independent systems across all states and territories. There are also statements about cybersafety in a number of jurisdictions.

Some policies and guidelines outline a jurisdiction's responsibility for, or a commitment to protecting the safety and wellbeing of students, and supporting the work of employees in education settings across Australia.

This significant investment in ICT recognises the importance of assisting schools to participate online, confidently and safely. The following initiatives, strategies and projects have been implemented to assist with this.

### ***The National Safe Schools Framework***

The National Safe Schools Framework, was originally endorsed by all Ministers for Education in 2003, and included an agreed set of national principles to promote safe and supportive school environments and appropriate responses schools can adopt to address the issues of bullying, harassment, violence, child abuse and neglect.

Stakeholder consultations indicated that the National Safe Schools Framework has been an effective vehicle for raising community awareness of the importance of safe school environments. It has promulgated a greater understanding and appreciation of the relationship between safe school environments, student wellbeing and improved learning outcomes.

The Framework is highly regarded by Australian and international researchers and practitioners and is the only national framework of its kind in the world. Cross-sectoral collaboration and effective working relationships across Commonwealth, state and territory officials and other key stakeholder groups underpin the success of the National Safe Schools Framework.

In June 2009 the Government undertook a review of the National Safe Schools Framework following recommendations from two research reports commissioned by the Australian Government into the prevalence and human dimension of covert bullying, including cyberbullying.

The Australian Government and state and territory education authorities guided the review of the National Safe Schools Framework through a project reference group. The reference group included members from state and territory education sectors, independent and catholic education sectors, Australian Government departments and private organisations (see Attachment A for full list).

The review examined new legislation which has been developed in relation to cybercrimes and how this relates to children who cyberbully through online technologies and mobile phones. It explored potential linkages with other wellbeing areas such as social and emotional learning, values education and substance abuse and relational violence.

Examining the role of parents and carers in creating a safe and supportive school environment was also addressed by the review. It involved consultations with all interested and appropriate stakeholders, including government and non-government education authorities, schools, school leaders, teachers and parents.

The revised Framework<sup>2</sup> was endorsed by the Ministerial Council of Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA), in December 2010 and all ministers undertook to implement the Framework in their jurisdictions and use it to inform the development of safe and supportive schools policies.

The National Safe Schools Framework is supported by a comprehensive and practical online resource manual. This includes a school audit tool that assists schools to make informed judgements about what they are doing well and identify any gaps in existing safe and supportive school policies and procedures.

The Framework was officially launched on 18 March 2011 by the Hon Peter Garrett AM MP, Minister for School Education, to coincide with the National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence and will be distributed to all Australian primary and secondary schools.

All schools in Australia are encouraged to use the National Safe Schools Framework as a basis for developing approaches to address bullying in their individual settings. It recognises that sustainable approaches are required to effectively reduce bullying in the long-term.

### ***National Strategy for Young Australians***

On 14 April 2010, the former Minister for Youth, the Hon Kate Ellis MP, released the *National Strategy for Young Australians*<sup>3</sup>. Articulating the Australian Government's aspiration for all young people to grow up safe, healthy, happy and resilient, the strategy aims to guide future government policy making to ensure that this aspiration can become a reality for all young Australians.

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<sup>2</sup> *The National Safe Schools Framework*, (MCEECDYA Secretariat, revised 2010).

<sup>3</sup> *National Strategy for Young Australians*, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations April 2010



This strategy identifies eight immediate priorities for action that support young people to succeed and build lives of their own choosing. One of these is enabling young Australians to participate confidently and safely online.

In late 2009, the former Prime Minister of Australia, the Hon Kevin Rudd MP, launched a nation-wide discussion with young people through a National Conversation, to guide the development of the strategy. The strategy outlines the following outcomes of the National Conversation:

*“Significant numbers of young people talked about not feeling safe online, but stressed that online safety is only one aspect of young people’s personal safety. Several participants had experienced or seen cyber bullying in practice, not just via the use of the internet but also mobile phones. Yet young people overwhelmingly saw the internet as a positive part of their lives and said its ability to connect them with others was very important.*

*Some young people also reported feeling anxious that they didn’t know enough about how to be safe online and stressed the role of parents and teachers in addressing this.”<sup>4</sup>*

The National Strategy for Young Australians is available at <http://www.youth.gov.au/media/Pages/NationalYouthStrategy.aspx>.

### **Other Relevant Initiatives**

There are also a number of Australian Government initiatives currently being funded to promote a positive whole-of-school culture that focuses on the academic needs of students, as well as their social and emotional learning. Funding and other support is provided for a range of programs and initiatives, including:

- The seven general capabilities to be addressed in the Australian curriculum: literacy, numeracy, information and communication (ICT) competence, critical and creative thinking, ethical behaviour, personal and social competence, and intercultural understanding.
- Student participation in Australia’s democracy through Civics and Citizenship Education.
- Support for schools and students through the National School Chaplaincy program.

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<sup>4</sup> *National Strategy for Young Australians*, p25, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations April 2010

- Interfaith and intercultural understanding through the Together for Humanity program.
- Physical activity, nutrition and obesity through supportive programs such as the:
  - *Building a Healthy, Active Australia package*
  - *Walk Safely to School Day*
  - *Wakakirri National Story Festival*
  - *Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Project.*
- Student mental health through health initiatives such as:
  - *MindMatters the Healthy Kids Check*
  - *KidsMatter*
  - *Healthy Habits for Life* guide for parents
  - *Respectful Relationships.*
- The 2009 national implementation of the Australian Early Development Index.
- Parental engagement through the Family School Partnerships Framework.

## Term of Reference II

**The nature, prevalence, implications of and level of risk associated with cybersafety threats, such as:**

- a. abuse of children online (cyberbullying, cyberstalking and sexual grooming);**
- b. exposure to illegal and inappropriate content;**
- c. inappropriate social and health behaviours in an online environment (e.g. technology addiction, online promotion of anorexia, drug usage, underage drinking and smoking);**
- d. identity theft; and**
- e. breaches of privacy.**

The Australian Government takes the instances of young people in a position of risk online very seriously. That is why \$125.8 million was allocated for a comprehensive Cybersafety Plan which includes:

- \$49.0 million over four years to the Australian Federal Police Child Protection Operations Team for detection and investigation of online child sex exploitation
- \$42.4 million over four years for ISP level filtering—to develop and implement ISP filtering; including undertaking the live ‘real world’ pilot in 2008-09
- \$11.9 million over four years to the Australian Communications and Media Authority to implement a comprehensive range of education and outreach activities
- \$4.3 million over four years to the Australian Communications and Media Authority to develop a new cybersafety website with comprehensive up-to-date and age appropriate cybersafety educational material, and improve the online helpline to provide a quick and easy way for children to report online incidents that cause them concern.

The Cybersafety Plan also recognises the value of young Australians providing advice to the Government on cybersafety issues by providing \$3.7 million over four years for a Youth Advisory Group and online forum to provide advice on cybersafety issues from a young person’s perspective.

More than 300 secondary school students nationally participate in the Youth Advisory Group through a secure website and once or twice a year, through face-to-face forums.

As part of the work of the Youth Advisory Group on Cyber Safety, a cybersafety help button was designed to provide internet users, particularly children and young people, with easy online access to cybersafety information and assistance available in Australia.

The help button is a free application that is downloaded onto personal, school and library computers. It provides help and advice on a range of online risks including cyberbullying, unwanted contact, scams and fraud, and offensive or inappropriate material.

Under the Cybersafety Plan a school based a cybersecurity education package Budd:e has been developed. Budd:e comprises of two modules for students in primary and secondary schools that aim to help students adopt secure online practices and behaviours.

The Australian Communications and Media Authority Cybersmart program is also a key part of the Australian Government's cybersafety initiative. The Cybersmart program includes comprehensive range of information and resources designed to meet the needs of children, parents, teachers, and library staff.

The Australian Communications and Media Authority also funds Kids Helpline an online helpline service to young people who have experienced issues online.

In 2009 the Australian Government provided \$3 million to the Alannah and Madeline Foundation to conduct a national pilot of an approach to cybersafety for Australian Schools. The national pilot added to the body of information available to Government and the education community about the content and support that is required to meet schools' needs in implementing cybersafety and wellbeing. An aim of the initiative is to educate schools and parents about the risks of using modern technologies and how they can be avoided or managed. It is also about finding positive ways to use technology in school environments and to identify areas where schools can be supported to promote the smart and safe use of technology. Further information on the national pilot is included in **Term of Reference VI**.

### **Term of Reference III**

#### **Australian and international responses to current cybersafety threats (education, filtering, regulation, enforcement) their effectiveness and costs to stakeholders, including business.**

State and territory education authorities have primary responsibility for decisions about design, purchase, distribution and the use of educational hardware and software to meet the specific needs of their schools. With regard to this responsibility, education authorities may have in place specific ICT security protocols regarding the downloading and installation of applications and equipment to school-based computer systems.

The Chief Information Officers in the state and territory education sectors and other relevant non-government schools authority officials are responsible for assessing the implications of new ICT initiatives for school systems and to enable them to make informed decisions in relation to implementation of any future initiatives.

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations works with other government agencies and jurisdictions to provide advice and assistance on cybersafety issues from an education perspective.

#### ***The Consultative Working Group on Cyber-Safety***

The membership and terms of reference of the Consultative Working Group were announced on 15 May 2008 by the Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, Senator the Hon Stephen Conroy (a full membership list is at Attachment B). The Group, of which the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations is a member, is a key component of the Government's Cybersafety Plan. It performs the important role of providing advice to the Government on measures to protect Australian children from risks they could encounter online, including cyberbullying and viewing illegal content.

The Consultative Working Group meets four times a year and has members drawn from community groups, industry and government. The Consultative Working Group secretariat is managed through the Department of Broadband, Communication the Digital Economy.

### ***Safe and Supportive School Communities project management group***

The Australian Government and state and territory education authorities are represented on the Safe and Supportive Schools Communities project management group. Jointly funded by the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, the Safe and Supportive Schools Communities project management group is a cross jurisdictional forum which enables identification of national emerging priorities, sharing of knowledge and exchange of effective, evidence-based practice.

The Safe and Supportive School Communities project developed the *Bullying. No way!* website ([www.bullyingnoway.com.au](http://www.bullyingnoway.com.au)) which provides useful information to students and parents to address bullying and conflict, and offers a range of resources that can be accessed by schools communities from every sector and jurisdiction.

In August 2007 the Australian Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Senior Officials Committee approved the continuation of the Safe and Supportive Schools Communities project for four years from 2008-12. Currently the Safe and Supportive School Communities committee has proposed to examine effective practice in addressing bullying and violence in schools and suggest national actions including those below.

### ***The National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence***

The Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs agreed in April 2010 that all states, territories and the Commonwealth endorse an annual National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence. The inaugural National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence was held on 18 March 2011.

### ***A National Symposium: Strategic Action Against School Bullying***

A symposium was held on 17 and 18 March 2011 in Brisbane Queensland. The symposium examined effective safe school practice. Recommendations for national action to address bullying, including cyberbullying, will be submitted to AEEYSOC.

### ***An agreed definition of bullying***

The Safe and Supportive Schools Communities committee collaborated in developing a nationally agreed definition of bullying and this has been incorporated into the revised National Safe Schools Framework. It is intended that the definition will be used by education authorities in relevant policies and guidelines.

## **Term of Reference IV**

### **Opportunities for cooperation across Australian stakeholders and with international stakeholders in dealing with cybersafety issues.**

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations recognises the importance of the Australian Government and jurisdictions working closely together to ensure cybersafety initiatives provide a consistent message that reduces potential risk to internet users. The growing number of cybersafety initiatives being independently developed in Australia and overseas increases the risk that key safety messages may be diluted, become outdated or that delivering those key messages effectively may be hampered by multiple and/or confusing messaging to the public.

In recognising the importance of clear messaging, the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations has sought consistency of aims and messages in its leadership role, the delivery of programs and the management of strategic projects, in collaboration with states and territories, other Australian Government agencies and private organisations. This has been demonstrated through its membership of the Consultative Working Group on Cyber-Safety and the Safe and Supportive School Communities working group.

#### ***Consultative Working Group on Cybersafety***

The Consultative Working Group on Cybersafety, of which the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations is a member, is a key component of the Government's Cybersafety Plan. More information on the working group is outlined in **Terms of Reference III**.

#### ***Safe and Supportive School Communities project management group***

The Australian Government and state and territory jurisdictions are also represented on the Safe and Supportive School Communities project and collaborative support is provided for the activities of the management group as outlined in **Terms of Reference III**.

Further significant opportunities for cooperation will arise through the broad take up of revised National Safe Schools Framework. Information about the National Safe Framework is outlined in **Term of Reference I**.

### ***Promoting international expertise***

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations provided funding for the 2010 *National Coalition Against Bullying Conference – 8-10 April 2010*. The Hon Julia Gillard MP, the then Minister for Education, provided the opening address for the Conference. The 2010 conference topic, “Navigating the Maze: cybersafety, bullying and wellbeing solutions for schools”, explored the issue of wellbeing, bullying and cyberbullying. The Conference presenters included both national and international speakers and delegates, to share information on practical tools for action, which were based on recent research. Conference delegates took the opportunity to share and exchange their views, experiences and ideas concerned with developing effective solutions for cybersafety, bullying and wellbeing.

### ***Raising the profile of the problem***

The Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs agreed in April 2010 that all states, territories and the Australian Government endorse a National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence, held on 18 March 2011.

### ***Promoting Initiatives that support student wellbeing***

Schools play a key role in guiding children in their intellectual and social development. The Australian Government is working with states and territories to address the range of issues that affect the wellbeing of students.

State and territory government and non-government education authorities have prime responsibility for student wellbeing and use different approaches through their programs, policies and procedures. Schools jurisdictions have individual policies and procedures for discipline, drug education, nutrition, physical activity and parental engagement.

The Australian Government is committed to working with states and territories to discuss the range of issues that affect the wellbeing of students in the school environment. A number of Australian Government initiatives are currently being funded to promote a positive whole-school culture that focuses on the academic needs of students, as well as their social and emotional learning. Support is provided for a range of programs and initiatives. These are outlined in **Term of Reference I**.



## **Term of Reference V**

### **Examining the need to ensure that the opportunities presented by, and economic benefits of, new technologies are maximised.**

Through the Digital Education Revolution, a major part of the Australian Government Education Revolution, the Australian Government recognises that Australian students need greater access to, and more sophisticated use of, information and communication technology (ICT). Schools need the best hardware, high-speed broadband connections, quality digital content and well-trained teachers to integrate technology into teaching and learning.

The total Australian Government funding commitment for the Digital Education Revolution is \$2.4 billion over seven years. Of this, \$2.3 billion will be invested through the National Secondary School Computer Fund (the Fund). The overall aim of the Fund is to achieve a computer to student ratio of 1:1 for students in Years 9 to 12 and it is expected approximately 788,000 computers will be installed in Australian secondary schools by 31 December 2011.

All state and territory governments and non-government education authorities have agreed to a national, coordinated and collaborative partnership approach to develop and implement the Digital Education Revolution through the National Partnership and Funding Agreements. Through this joint approach, all secondary schools have access to funding for ICT equipment to achieve high quality learning outcomes as part of the Government's education reform agenda. To date, over 345,000 computers have been installed since the commencement of the Fund.

The first round of the Fund concluded on 30 June 2010. This round targeted schools most in need of investment in ICT which has computer to student ratios of 1:8 or worse. Round One schools were granted funding for 116,743 computers. Some schools took advantage of bulk purchasing arrangements and thus the installation figure for Round One is 116,812 computers (as of 8 October 2010), increasing access to ICT for students in Years 9 to 12.

The Australian Government continues to provide funding to schools to achieve a 1:1 ratio by the end of 2011. This support for technology enriched learning environments will assist students to achieve high quality learning outcomes in the classroom and productively contribute to Australian society and economy.

## Term of Reference VI

**Ways to support schools to change their culture to reduce the incidence and harmful effects of cyberbullying including by:**

- **Increasing awareness of cybersafety good practice**
- **Encouraging schools to work with the broader school community, especially parents, to develop consistent, whole school approaches; and**
- **Analysing best practice approaches to training and professional development programs and resources that are available to enable school staff to effectively respond to cyberbullying;**
- **Analysing information on achieving and continuing world's best practice safeguards.**

To be effective over time, schools' initiatives to increase cybersafety and reduce cyberbullying must be aligned with evidence-informed efforts to increase the overall wellbeing of all members of the school community.

Cyberbullying is an extension of bullying and these behaviours are complex to manage.<sup>5</sup>

Some of the complicating factors are:

- often the one accused of bullying is themselves a target of harassment and aggression
- much of the worst social and emotional abuse is conducted covertly, or out of view of teachers
- bystander involvement, or the passing on of humiliating or threatening messages
- the perception of students that reporting will only make things worse
- that young people are often unaware of the impact of their behaviour on the target.

### ***Increasing awareness of cybersafety good practice***

Consultations carried out in preparation for the review of the National Safe Schools Framework<sup>6</sup> show that teachers held the strong view that professional development sessions alone would not be the most valuable tool for assisting them and that consideration should be given to selecting sample case studies of good practice that provide practical strategies to assist teachers and school leaders.

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<sup>5</sup> *Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence Study*, Child Health Promotion Research Centre, Edith Cowan University, March 2009 and *Behind the Scenes: Insights into the Human Dimension of Covert Bullying*, University of South Australia, March 2009.

<sup>6</sup> *Review of the National Safe Schools Framework*, DRAFT, not for citation, Erebus, 2010.

***Encouraging schools to work with the broader school community, especially parents, to develop consistent, whole school approaches***

The National Safe Schools Framework review examined the role of parents and carers in creating a safe and supportive school environment and involved consultations with all interested and appropriate stakeholders, including government and non-government education authorities, schools, school leaders, teachers and parents. Input into the review suggested that structured opportunities provided by local schools for parents and relevant local community members to act as genuine partners with their local school can have a positive impact in promoting the important principles that ensure the ongoing safety of their own children.

The “Parents Survey on Cybersafety and Security” was one of two repeatable surveys commissioned as part of the Consultative Working Group’s recommended research program on cybersafety. Findings of the new research will complement and inform the work of the Consultative Working Group and Youth Advisory group on cybersafety and will assist the Australian Government’s cybersafety initiatives. The ongoing repeatable surveys will also track awareness of cybersafety and cybersecurity issues and help government develop and target responses.

***Analysing best practice approaches to training and professional development programs and resources that are available to enable school staff to effectively respond to cyberbullying***

21st century teachers and school leaders will need to have an increased understanding and proficiency in the use of ICT in the teaching and learning process. As part of the Digital Education Revolution, the Australian Government will invest in a national approach to increase the level of ICT proficiency for all teachers and school leaders across Australia.

Through the Digital Strategy for Teachers and School Leaders, \$40 million has been committed over the next two years to further support the implementation of the Digital Education Revolution and help meet the Government’s commitment to support national initiatives that contribute to meaningful change in teaching and learning.

The Digital Strategy Teachers and School Leaders has two elements: improving the ICT proficiency of teachers and school leaders; and the establishment of an ICT Innovation Fund.

***Improving the ICT proficiency of teachers***

Improving the ICT proficiency of teachers and school leaders will be advanced through a project focusing on providing access to a nationally consistent means of assessing ICT proficiency and pathways to ICT professional development for teachers and school leaders. The first phase of the project is a thorough scoping study, the purpose of which will be to compare the self assessment tools currently in use in the different jurisdictions, including commonalities and best practice.

### ***The ICT Innovation Fund***

The ICT Innovation fund offers organisations, including universities, higher education providers and businesses an opportunity to bid for funding to undertake activities that will promote three key result areas:

- i. teachers achieve competence in the effective inclusion of technologies in teaching and learning
- ii. teachers develop the pedagogical understanding, confidence and tools to design and deliver programs that effectively enhance student learning outcomes
- iii. leaders lead and inspire staff and students to share a strong vision for the integration of ICT in the school community.

### ***Cybersafety Outreach Professional Development for Educators***

In January 2010 the Australian Communications and Media Authority expanded its Cybersafety Outreach Professional Development for Educators program with the introduction of a new program that will equip trainee teachers with the skills they will need to manage cybersafety education and awareness issues.

### ***The Cybersafety and Wellbeing Initiative/eSmart Schools Framework***

In 2009 the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations provided \$3 million to the Alannah and Madeline Foundation to fund the National Pilot of The Cybersafety and Wellbeing Initiative and its eSmart Schools Framework, involving over 150 schools across Australia. The pilot, which concluded in June 2010, was independently evaluated by Child Health Promotion Research Centre at Edith Cowan University.

The eSmart Schools Framework is supported by an interactive website that acts as a portal to the best-available curriculum, case-studies, and other resources in cybersafety and wellbeing for schools. In addition, the website has an online system for schools to record and track their progress against specified actions against the Framework.

Schools are also supported by: face-to-face training in use of the eSmart Schools Framework and website; regular newsletters and tip sheets; online training forums; and a dedicated Help Desk.

The Pilot's aim was to:

- Integrate cybersafety with schools' current knowledge and practices about wellbeing (including policies such as the National Safe Schools Framework).
- Assist schools to develop more effective curriculum around cybersafety and wellbeing and the smart use of technologies.
- Help to up-skill teachers in smart, safe and responsible use of technologies.

- Assist school communities in developing safe and supportive schools where bullying and violence are minimised and the values of: responsibility, resourcefulness, relationships and respect are fostered in cyberspace.
- Assist schools in becoming cybersafe.

The eSmart Schools Framework was designed to:

- Help schools develop policies and practices (that are developed with input from students and parents) encouraging students to use technology responsibly and respectfully.
- Point schools to teaching resources on cybersafety and those which help create a safe, respectful and caring environment.
- Encourage schools to embrace the positives of internet and communications technology within their teaching practice to enhance learning.
- Establish a system for schools to provide evidence that they are actively implementing these policies and practices.
- Help reduce the digital divide between adults and young people, so adults can become a credible source of advice on avoiding the risks of cyberspace.

Schools completed activities in six domains to demonstrate that they achieved eSmart status:

1. Effective School Organisation
2. eSmart School Policy and Procedures
3. Respectful and Caring School Community
4. Effective Teacher Practices
5. An eSmart Curriculum
6. Partnerships with Parents and Local Community.

The eSmart program is being considered for roll-out by the Victorian and Queensland governments.

## Term of Reference VII

### **Analysing information on achieving and continuing world's best practice safeguards.**

#### ***Significant Research***

The emergence of new technologies has led to covert and cyber bullying becoming an issue for many schools. The Australian Government commissioned two research projects to better understand these issues and the impact on Australian schools.

The first study, the *Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence Study* was conducted by Edith Cowan University in 2007 and investigates the prevalence and impact of covert bullying in Australian school communities. The report provides information at a national level about what constitutes covert bullying, the prevalence of bullying and its impact on victims and perpetrators. The report recommends actions for the Australian Government, state and territory education authorities and schools, to address covert and cyber bullying in Australian schools.

The second study, *Behind the Scenes: Insights into the Human Dimension of Covert Bullying* was conducted by the University of South Australia in 2007 in conjunction with Flinders University. This project explored real life experiences of individuals exposed to covert bullying, including the victim, perpetrator, bystander, teacher, and parent. A copy of the final reports can be sourced at <http://www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/NationalSafeSchools/Pages/research.aspx>.

The *Review of Existing Australian and International Cybersafety Research 2009*:

- was commissioned by Department of Broadband, Communication and the Digital Economy and conducted by Edith Cowan University
- was commissioned as part of the Government's \$125.8 million cybersafety plan and complements the important work of the Consultative Working Group and Youth Advisory Group
- provides comprehensive analysis of current research that will assist the cybersafety initiatives of the Australian Communications and Media Authority and the Australian Federal Police.

A copy of the report can be sourced at:

[http://www.dbcde.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/119416/ECU\\_Review\\_of\\_existing\\_Australian\\_and\\_international\\_cyber-safety\\_research.pdf](http://www.dbcde.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/119416/ECU_Review_of_existing_Australian_and_international_cyber-safety_research.pdf).

## **Term of Reference VIII**

### **The merit of establishing an Online Ombudsman to investigate, advocate and act on cybersafety issues.**

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations is aware that the Joint Select Committee on Cybersafety has agreed to extend its Terms of Reference to include the establishment of an Online Ombudsman to examine, promote and enforce cybersafety issues. It is the view of the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations that this is not a practical option as an Ombudsman would not have jurisdiction or authority over websites hosted internationally. In addition, the Department considers that the role of an Ombudsman would duplicate existing mechanisms for dealing with complaints. For example, the Australian Federal Police, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, the Privacy Commissioner, and the Australian Communications and Media Authority already have grievance resolution measures in place.

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