

SUBMISSION No. 77

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The Secretary
Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety
R1-109, Parliament House
PO Box 6021
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Inquiry into Cyber-Safety

Dear Committee Members,

On behalf of the Catholic Primary Principals' Association of WA (CPPAWA), I offer this submission to the Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety.

The CPPA (WA) is representative of almost 130 Catholic Primary Principals throughout Western Australia. Our membership takes in principals working in remote Aboriginal communities, small rural towns, as well as those in city and major regional centres. The population of the schools represented ranges from as low as 10 through to over 700. A broad range of cultural, economical, physical, and socially diverse school environments exists.

Members were surveyed using a five point scaling system with questions based on the majority of the terms of reference. Not all terms were included in the survey as they were deemed to be not applicable to the primary school setting. These are indicated later in the submission. A total of forty-six principals, or their school based representatives, contributed to the submission.

On behalf of the members of the Catholic Primary Principals' Association of WA, I wish to thank the Committee for allowing us the opportunity to make our thoughts known to this Inquiry, and to wish the Parliamentary Joint Select Committee every success in its work.

Yours sincerely

David Barns
CPPA President 2010



Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety

Submission by the Catholic Primary Principals' Association of WA

This submission is based on a survey of the initial inquiry terms of reference that have relevance for primary school age children, namely:

- The online environment in which Australian children currently engage, including key physical points of access (schools, libraries, internet cafes, homes, mobiles)
- Abuse of children online, particularly cyber-bullying
- Breaches of privacy
- Australian and international responses to these cyber-safety threats
- Ways to support schools to change their culture to reduce the incidence and harmful effects of cyber-bullying
- The role of parents, families, carers and the community.

We believe that the following terms of reference are of less significance in the Primary school:

- Inappropriate social and health behaviours in an online environment (e.g. technology addiction, online promotion of eating disorders, drug usage, underage drinking, smoking and gambling)
- Identity theft
- Opportunities for cooperation across Australian stakeholders and with international stakeholders in dealing with these cyber-safety issues.

Members were surveyed using a five-point scale; from 'strongly disagree' through to 'strongly agree'. Opportunity was also made to allow members to comment on some of the survey questions.

Due to the nature of our survey, a general summary of the survey follows. Several of the survey questions addressed different terms of reference. It is intended therefore that this means of presentation is able to attend to those terms in a more general nature.



Cyber-Safety (as an Issue)

Of the responses received, 98% of schools stated that cyber-safety was an important issue in their school community. The same percentage of respondents believed that schools should carry responsibility, in some form, for educating children on this issue and that the responsibility for educating children on cyber-safety should be shared with the providers of the relevant service (e.g. with Facebook).

Schools are of the view that cyber-bullying, inappropriate content, data persistence, and data portability are the issues of most relevance to primary school children. Furthermore, 78% of schools believe that mobile phones pose a significant risk of cyber-bullying.

In the past 12 months alone, 72% of schools have had occasion to intervene on cyber-bullying or cyber-safety issues. No information as to the nature or detail of these incidents was asked for.

Intervention

At present 76% of respondents indicated that in their school there has not been any cyber-safety programme presented by an outside provider. Cyber-safety programmes have been presented by various staff members such as the teacher-librarian and by ICT teachers. The majority of these programmes have been undertaken with children in upper primary years.

While intervention was seen as being across all year levels, the majority of respondents (71%) consider that cyber-safety and cyber-bullying to become a risk for children from Years 3 & 4 (aged 8 years and older).

When dealing with the ways or means of intervening, 98% of respondents believe that programmes designed to target bullying, self esteem and protective behaviours, which do increase resilience, will in turn help a child appropriately respond in situations involving cyber-safety issues.

Most schools already use more than one programme to build resiliency in children:

- 80% have used Friendly Schools and Families
- 61% have used Protective Behaviours.



It is important that teachers have the necessary skills to deal with cyber-safety issues; 77% believe that teachers currently do not have such skills, nor do they have the required understanding to be able to deliver an appropriate programme to primary school children.

Cyber-safety programmes should therefore be delivered initially by trained outside providers to support schools, with the aim to deliver these programmes in partnership with the teaching staff. Staff professional development is critical as a means of building confidence and competence to continue the ongoing implementation of cyber-safety programmes. Any such targeted programme in cyber-safety needs to start in the early years (before Year 2, aged 7) with age and year level appropriateness.

School principals believe that funded cyber-safety professional development would encourage them to operate a programme in the school.

The role of Parents, Families, Carers and the Community

Providing opportunities for parents to be more knowledgeable about the risks involved in online activities is important (76%). The vast majority of respondents (89%) believe that the home is the primary place of risk for both cyber-safety and cyber-bullying of primary school children.

Schools have conducted parent workshops in this area. However when it was offered, 59% recorded only minimal attendance by parents (minimal being less than 10%). No school reported that no more than 50% of their parent body attended any such workshop or programme offered. A significant percentage (76%) believe that parent attendance at cyber-safety workshops could be improved by providing incentives such as promotional material



Recommendations

The following recommendations, in point form, are offered for the committee's due consideration:

- Education of children on cyber-safety is very important. The responsibility to educate children in this matter lies with the school ultimately, but with strong initial support and delivery by trained external professionals
- The delivery of any programme should be age appropriate and across all year levels in primary schools
- Any programme requires the support of parents and the wider community. A multi pronged approach is called for. Parent education in particular should be considered with the development of any programme
- Schools are given financial support in the area of professional development of staff.

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