Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety

Chair: Senator Dana Wortley
Deputy Chair: Alex Hawke MP

New Inquiry into Cyber-Safety

The Parliament's new Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety has today launched its inquiry into the safety of children and young people on the Internet.

Chair of the Committee, Senator Dana Wortley, welcomed the opportunity to investigate current progress in addressing the online risks and challenges faced by Australian children.

"The internet and other communication technologies open up a world of exciting possibilities and benefits to children and young people, while at the same time exposing them to dangers that did not previously exist," said Senator Wortley.

"Parents and teachers know that the Internet can play a significant role in the social lives and education of our children, and the way children interact and access information."

"Mobile phones and social networking sites permit social interactions from the schoolyard to carry over to the home environment. It is now commonplace for children and young people to post personal information and photos online, and communicate freely with new contacts from anywhere in the world. Internet access also exposes children to sites that promote potentially harmful social and health behaviours."

Senator Wortley said that "Cyber safety has emerged as an important issue for governments, parents and the wider community. In this rapidly changing field it is timely to review Australia's progress in keeping children safe online."

The Committee is interested in hearing the views of young people, parents, schools, industry representatives and experts in the field, as well as federal, state and territory governments. The Committee welcomes submissions on all the terms of reference. However, the initial focus of the inquiry will be on the following topics as they relate to children:

- 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;
- inappropriate social and health behaviours in an online environment (e.g. technology addiction, online promotion of eating disorders, drug usage, underage drinking, gambling and smoking);
- identity theft;
- breaches of privacy;
- Australian and international responses to these cyber-safety threats;
- opportunities for cooperation across Australian stakeholders and with international stakeholders in dealing with these cyber-safety issues;
- ways to support schools reduce the incidence and harmful effects of cyber-bullying; and
- the role of parents, families, carers and the community.

The Committee invites submissions by Friday, 25 June 2010. Further information on the inquiry, including the terms of reference and tips on preparing a submission is available from the Committee's web site **http://www.aph.gov.au/jscc** or from the Secretariat on (02) 6277 4202.

MEDIA CONTACTS:
Media comment: contact the Committee Chair Senator Dana Wortley on (08) 82696520 or mobile 0408832638.

Background: contact the Inquiry Secretary (02) 6277 2300