17 May 2012


Ms Kathryn Ollif
Acting Inquiry Secretary
Parliamentary Joint Select Committee
    for Cyber Safety for Seniors
Department of the House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra 2600


Dear Kathryn

Please find attached my submission  for the House of Representatives Joint
Select Committee on Cyber Safety for Senior Australians 2012 together with
Appendix A to this submission detailing the courses being held by the University
of the Third Age, Toowoomba.

Look forward to hearing whether it is accepted or not.

Regards


Joyce M Sheasby

SUBMISSION
FOR THE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE
ON CYBER SAFETY
FOR SENIOR AUSTRALIANS
2012

**Terms of Reference:**

1. The nature, prevalence and level of cyber safety risks and threats experienced by senior Australians.
2. The impact and implications of those risks and threats on access and use of information and communication technologies by senior Australians.
3. The adequacy and effectiveness of current government and industry initiatives.
4. Best practice safeguards, and any possible changes to Australian law, policy or practice that will strengthen the cyber safety of senior Australians.

**Terms of Reference 1.**

The nature, prevalence and level of cyber safety risks and threats experienced by senior Australians is not any different from that of other members of the Community. However, senior Australians are generally only just coming to terms with the new technology of today.

As a computer tutor with the University of the Third Age, Toowoomba, I am teaching Australian seniors an eight week course for Introduction to Computers. Other tutors with the same organisation are teaching Introduction to Linux, Picasa, Power Point, Word Processing 1 for Beginners, Word Processing 2 for Intermediate, Emailing, Keyboard Skills, Myob-Basics for Beginners, Learning about AppleMac and a Computer Workshop. U3A Toowoomba has reached its full capacity for providing accommodation and equipment for computer training.

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Updating equipment and providing ongoing software is a costly expenditure for such organisations as U3A Toowoomba. Finding accommodation at a reasonable rental is out of the question in today's market. The only constant income U3A, Toowoomba, has is the annual subscription which stands at $50.00 per annum per Member at this time plus a small fee of $14.00 per course for each eight week course. This year U3A Toowomba will be meeting an annual rental of in excess of thirty thousand dollars and still some classes are held outside of our location. Finding funds to purchase our own property is out of the question under these circumstances.

If Membership continues to grow so will the costs surrounding the running of the courses. U3A Toowoomba has over one thousand Members this year, which is continually rising. The number of courses being run by Volunteers now stands at ninety-five per semester.

Seniors are showing interest in learning about computers, mobile phones and other electronic equipment that are available but both the Federal and State Governments have been very slow to react to this need.

Education as to the consequences of using the the Internet have been sadly neglected by both Federal and State Governments.

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Waiting lists to attend classes in Computing often extend from late January to the final semester before all Members are accepted in the computer course of their choice.

Certainly the risks and threats of working on the Internet are mentioned in passing by tutors of computer courses.

Education would seem to be the key to resolving some of these issues if not all. The use of the Internet for banking safety; the danger of disclosing personal details; chat shows, dating organisations, scams and social net work, etc. Those of us who are familiar with the electronic world are aware of the dangers, senior Australians for the most part are not.

Education directed at such a large number of Australians requires money, whether it be direct from Government or through voluntary groups. If Government considers providing funds to allow the Voluntary Groups to expand, they are generally only looking at Capital Expenditure for the Group as all Tutors and Committee Members are Volunteers. Additionally, the Government funds could be used to develop courses in cyber safety and related topics for Australian seniors. Organisations such as U3A are generally, very well involved in their communities with access to other similar Voluntary Groups.

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However, as a consequence of being invited to put in this submission before the Joint Select Committee on cyber safety for seniors, discussions have taken place with the President of U3A Toowoomba, Mrs Rhonda Weston, and plans will be put in place to provide a course in the use of the Internet and cyber safety for 2013. Any help that is forthcoming from State or Federal levels of Government would be gratefully accepted.

Terms of Reference 2

The impact and implications of those risks and threats on access and
use of information and communication technologies by senior Australians.

There can be no way of assessing the impact and implications of the risks and threats to which senior Australians are exposed other than by Education filtering through to the general level of understanding. Experience has shown that although willing to learn emailing, electronic letter writing and how to use the Internet, senior Australians often feel that they are unable to learn a new skill at their age.

U3A Toowoomba hold annual open days where all Tutors are required to attend to talk directly to the seniors, to reach out and encourage them to come along.

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Not only are seniors learning a new discipline with other seniors but they are being tutored by a person in their age group so age does not become a factor.

Once again I reiterate that education is the key to reaching Australian seniors.

**Terms of Reference 3**

The adequacy and effectiveness of current government and
industry initiatives to respond to those threats, including
education initiatives aimed at senior Australians.

Generally speaking, little has been done to attack the problem of educating seniors on how to respond to cyberspace threats.

Perhaps in major cities this has occurred but in Regional Centres most of the education has been taken on by such organisations as U3A.

**Terms of Reference 4**

Possible changes to Australian law that could strengthen the
cyber safety of senior Australians.

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**I cannot comment on this matter as I am not aware of laws in place at the moment and will leave this matter to the lawmakers.**

*Submitted: 15th May 2012*

*Joyce M Sheasby*