

Submission to the Joint Select Committee's Inquiry into Cyber-Safety

**Prepared by Inspire International
Research Institute**

June 2010

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Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety
Department of House of Representatives
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

June 2010

To the Committee Secretary

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Joint Select Committee's Inquiry on Cyber-Safety. The Inspire International Research Institute welcomes this investigation, as we are also committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of young Australians. In responding to the call for submissions, we draw the committee's attention to the significant research and practice being undertaken with the not-for-profit, academic, corporate and government sectors to harness information communication technologies (ICT) to address challenges of poor youth mental health and promote wellbeing.

The Inspire International Research Institute builds on the existing work of Inspire Australia (www.inspire.org.au) which in the last decade has collaborated with over 40 academic, NGO and corporate partners. Inspire Foundation Australia has taken the lead in developing the Inspire International Research Institute (referred to as IIRI from here on) which includes a multidisciplinary team of academic partners including Orygen Youth Health Research Centre (Professor Pat McGorry and Professor Helen Herrman), Brain and Mind Research Institute (Professor Ian Hickie), Australian National University (Professor Helen Christensen) and Murdoch University (Dr Amanda Third). International partners include the Inspire USA Foundation (Dr Susan Keys) who currently work with Johns Hopkins University (Professor Phil Leaf).¹

The IIRI research program is underpinned by a belief in the strengths and capacity of young people. The program acknowledges the importance of conducting empirical research but also has a broader mandate to translate already existing knowledge and new research into easily accessible products, services and policy that will benefit young people. IIRI is driven by young people, academics, youth organisations and services, business and government who share the vision for a society that embraces the potential of technology to connect communities and enable all young Australians to grow up safe, happy, healthy and resilient². The research program develops an International framework that explores the potential of technologies, the role it plays in the lives of young people and how its potential can be harnessed to address many of the major social challenges facing young people.

¹ The Inspire International Research Institute is going to launch in June 2010, and the Institute will be seeking funding under the federal government's Cooperative Research Centre program, as a social good CRC in July 2010.

² Australian Federal Government (2010) National Youth Strategy. Canberra

IIRI is committed to ensuring that its research agenda is driven by young people. Young people play active roles at all stages and levels of the organisation as researchers, working with founders to secure in-kind and financial support and are represented within the Institute's Governance Structure – playing an active role in decision making alongside our academics, partners and general staff. Our connection with young people has enabled us to work together to prepare this submission – initiating and leading online consultations with other young people as well as providing content and comment for this paper.

This submission on the safety of children and young people on the internet addresses the Terms of Reference for the Committee from the diverse perspectives of young people, professionals and academic staff across the Institute. For the purposes of Inspire International Research Institute's work, and by extension this submission, we define young people as aged 12 to 25.

The Inspire International Research Institute would welcome the opportunity to work with the Australian Government to progress its agenda for digital citizenship. If you require more information, or would like to discuss this matter further, please contact me directly.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J Burns', is placed on a light blue rectangular background.

Dr Jane Burns

Executive Director

Inspire International Research Institute;

Senior Research Fellow VicHealth Orygen Youth Health Research Centre, Centre for Youth Mental Health, University of Melbourne; and Honorary Research Fellow at the Brain & Mind Research Institute, University of Sydney.

Executive summary

Inspire International Research Institute recommends:

- 1) That **young people give policy makers insights** into effective online safety mechanisms because of their understanding of technology as informed users;
- 2) That cyber-safety strategies, policy and measures be **co-developed with children and young people**;
- 3) That **ICT be understood as an important setting** in which devices, activities and social arrangements are activated;
- 4) That cyber-safety strategies, policy and **measures consider the importance of technologies in young people's lives** and restrictive measures be avoided.
- 5) **Young people's views and ideas should be considered** when developing programs and policies on cyber-safety;
- 6) That **cyber-safety measures be multi-faceted, cross-sectoral and educative** to foster the potential of the internet and related technologies to positively impact the lives of young people;
- 7) **Cyber-safety risks be considered analogous to or rooted in existing offline risk dynamics** and strategies aiming to address these risks incorporate and evaluate existing prevention and intervention strategies that have proven successful in offline environments;
- 8) **Increasing knowledge about the online risks associated with cyber-bullying**, strategies for reducing such risks, safety and support resources available and skills necessary for responding to cyber-bullying should be the aim of programs, practices and policies aiming to address cyber-bullying;
- 9) **Investment in evidence-based research** to assess the applicability of International policy responses and programmatic solutions to the Australian context;
- 10) **That new and emerging technologies, including the internet and mobile phones, be seen as a tool and a setting** in which mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention can be effectively delivered;
- 11) That government invest in research and economic analysis to **measure and maximize the social impact of new and emerging technologies**;
- 12) **That new and emerging technologies, including the internet and mobile phones, be seen as enablers of young people's mental health and wellbeing**;
- 13) Strategies and programs to address online-safety should be age appropriate and **developed in direct consultation with key stakeholders, especially young people**.
- 14) That all graduate and in-service **teachers should be required to meet minimum standards** in relation to understanding how their teaching practices can influence the social and emotional development of their students, as well as **positive digital citizenship practices**.
- 15) **That the government support a collaborative research facility focused on understanding the impact of technology for children and young people and supporting the transition of evidence into policy, products and services that transform lives**.

1. The online environment

TOR 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, content service providers);*

The internet and associated technologies are a way of life for Australian young people. Indeed a 2008 national survey of internet use showed that almost all (95.1%) young Australians use the internet or a mobile phone to source information, communicate and interact.^{3,4} The digital divide has shifted. Our research with young people at greater risk of mental health difficulties found that nearly half of all young people (43.8%) access the internet from home, however, young people also access the internet from other physical locations such as libraries (32.2%), schools (17.7%) as well as internet cafes, work, youth centres and many more.⁵

In 2008 a survey by The Australian Communications and Media Authority illustrated the central role social networking sites play in young people's everyday lives with 90% of 12 to 17 year olds using social networking sites, a figure that increases to 97% for 16 to 17 year olds.⁶ With the ever increasing role of social networking sites, in addition to the various other interactive characteristics of the online environment, the internet and related technology has changed the way young people interact with one another, their families and other significant adults. The increase in accessibility of the internet through new platforms, such as mobile phones, facilitates the ever growing engagement of young people with the online world.

Furthermore, research shows that the character of young people's online and network engagements has undergone a significant shift since the early- to mid-1990s. As Valkenburg and Soeters (2001) note, in the 1990s, young people used the Internet primarily for entertainment purposes.⁷ However, since the advent of Web 2.0 platforms young people increasingly use the Internet for interpersonal communication⁸ and the production of user-generated content.⁹ The internet is more than just an information portal but rather it is a space in which relationships can be initiated and developed.^{10,11}

³ Ewing, S. Et al (2008) *The Internet in Australia*, ARC Centre of Excellence for Creative Industries Digital Futures Report, Melbourne.

⁴ Australian Interactive Media Industry Association Mobile Industry Group (2009) 'Special Topic: Mobile Commerce' *Australian Mobile Phone Lifestyle Index 5th Ed.*

⁵ Blanchard, M., Metcalf, A., Degney, J., Herrman, H. & Burns, J. (2008) *Rethinking the digitaldivide Findings from a study of marginalised young people's information communication technology (ICT) use.* In Youth Studies Australia VOLUME 27 NUMBER 4 2008.

⁶ ACMA (2009) *Click & Connect: Young Australians' Use of Online Social Media – Pt2 Quantitative Research Report*, prepared for the Australian Communications & Media Authority, Canberra.

⁷ Valkenburg, P. M., and Soeters, K. (2001) 'Children's positive and negative experiences with the Internet,'. *Communication Research*, 28 (5): 653-676.

⁸ Gross, 2004; Lenhart, Madden and Hitlin, 2005

⁹ Richardson, Third and MacColl, 2007

¹⁰ Boase, J., Horrigan, J.B., Wellman, B. & Raine L. (2006). *The Strength of Internet Ties: The Internet and email aid users in maintaining their social networks and provide pathways to help when people face big decisions.* Washington, DC.

Therefore IIRI sees this rapid developments in technologies over the last decade as having simultaneously resulted in a growing opportunity to harness technology to positively impact the wellbeing of children and young people.

With the ever increasing role of social networking sites, in addition to the various other interactive characteristics of the online environment, IIRI proposes that the internet be seen as both a tool and a setting. The internet is used as tool by young people to find information or access services, but it is also a social setting within which young people establish and maintain relationships. The Internet is accessible, anonymous, engaging and informative, providing a space in which young people can feel empowered and confident to talk about sensitive issues. Our experience developing and delivering online youth services has reinforced that **the online environment is an important setting in which to engage young people and that the best cyber-safety measures will be the ones that are co-developed by children and young people.**

Recommendations:

- 1) That young people give policy makers insights into effective online safety mechanisms because of their understanding of technology as informed users;
- 2) That cyber-safety strategies, policy and measures be co-developed with children and young people;
- 3) That ICT be understood as an important setting in which devices, activities and social arrangements are activated;
- 4) That cyber-safety strategies, policy and measures consider the importance of technologies in young people's lives and restrictive

¹¹ Collin P. & Burns, J. (2009) The experience of youth in the digital age. In Furlong, A (ed) Handbook of Youth and Young Adulthood: New Perspectives. Routledge, Oxford.

2. Promoting positive digital citizenship

TOR ii. *the nature, prevalence, implications of and level of risk associated with cyber-safety threats, such as:*

- *abuse of children online (cyber-bullying, cyber-stalking and sexual grooming);*
- *exposure to illegal and inappropriate content;*
- *inappropriate social and health behaviours in an online environment (e.g. technology addiction, online promotion of anorexia, drug usage, underage drinking and smoking);*
- *identity theft; and*
- *Breaches of privacy.*

In the words of Senator Wortley “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”.¹² Both popular and academic discussions of young people’s online and networked communication have been dominated by the cyber-safety debate, which tends to focus on issues surrounding anonymous bullying and predation. However, IIRI believes that cyber-safety requires broader contextualisation as “digital citizenship”, encompassing the broad range of online interactions and more importantly acknowledging the relationship between online and offline risks.

We recognise cyber-bullying is a significant concern for young people and experienced by up to 19% of Australian 16 to 17 year olds¹³. However, as the Australian Communications and Media Authority, we also note that cyber-bullying is experienced by a minority of children and young people. Furthermore, we urge that cyber-bullying be seen in the context of the overall role technology and the internet plays in the social lives of young people. This reflects many other expert opinions in the area such as Li who suggests cyberspace be seen as another ‘playground’ for social interactions, both positive and negative. Indeed research suggests that online risks are not radically different in nature or scope than the risks minors have long faced offline, and minors who are most at risk in the offline world continue to be most at risk online.¹⁴

Our consultations with young people show they are acutely aware of the risks in an online environment, just as they are aware of the risks in other areas of their life and that, for young people, the lines between their online and offline lives are increasingly converging. Young people told us that cyber-

¹² Wortley, D (Senator for South Australia & Chair Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety) 2010, *New Inquiry into Cyber Safety*, media release 14 May, Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety, Canberra, viewed 2 June 2010, <<http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jssc/media/media01.pdf>>.

¹³ ACMA 2009:10

¹⁴ Palfrey, J., Sacco, D. boyd, d., DeBonis, L. *Enhancing Child Safety & Online Technologies: Final Report of the Internet Safety Technical Task Force*, Harvard University, Berkman.

safety is more than just keeping your information private and being safe from online predators. They offered a more nuanced and specific sense of cyber-safety as being free from online harassment and bullying – being free from emotional, as well as physical harm. This more nuanced sense of safety online indicates an important point of difference from existing approaches to cyber-safety, highlighting the need to re-contextualise cyber-safety issues within broader notions of wellbeing.¹⁵ Such an approach emphasises a holistic understanding of young people’s everyday lives and recognises the value of the internet and associated technologies as an important tool and setting to build resilience and promote wellbeing in young people.

Just as it takes sustained time and resources to create safe offline communities, promoting real cyber-safety is a complex long-term task requiring effective research and education programs to identify the risks associated with ICT and to develop strategies and technologies to manage them. It also requires an understanding of the potential of existing technology to promote safety, wellbeing and resilience. The National Strategy for Young Australians, launched by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, aims to enable all young people to grow up safe, healthy, happy and resilient. Australia needs to build on its understanding of cyber-safety to address safety, wellbeing and resilience among young people properly. This will have a profound impact on Australia in terms of lowering healthcare costs, encouraging productivity and promoting social inclusion.

We hold the view that promoting online safety requires involvement from all sectors of the Australian community. With the current mobilisation of internet access and the exponential evolution of the online environment, international evidence suggests the most effective influence that can be exerted on young people’s online engagement is through effective education, and increased emphasis on policing. This illustrates the need for safety measures to be cross-sector, multi-faceted and dynamic to reflect the environment itself, and to foster the potential technologies to positively impact the lives of young people.

Recommendations:

- 5) Young people’s views and ideas should be considered when developing programs and policies on cyber safety;
- 6) That cyber-safety measures be multi-faceted, cross-sectoral and educative to foster the potential of the internet and related technologies to positively impact the lives of young people;
- 7) Cyber-safety risks should be considered analogous to or rooted in existing offline risk dynamics and strategies aiming to address these risks incorporate and evaluate existing prevention and intervention strategies that have proven successful in offline environments;

¹⁵ Third, A. & Richardson, I (2009) *Livewire Research Project: Final Report – Online Research Phase – October 2009*. Centre for Everyday Life, Murdoch University, WA.

3. Australian and international responses to current cyber-safety threats

TOR iii. *Australian and international responses to current cyber-safety threats (education, filtering, regulation, enforcement) their effectiveness and costs to stakeholders, including business;*

Given the rapid evolution of the internet, much of the 'knowledge' about its impact focuses on dangers to the individual and is epitomised by concerns that it acts as a catalyst for negative interactions such as bullying, suicide, sexual predation and anti-social behaviours such as internet addiction.¹⁶ However, young people also report feeling empowered online, able to access immediate feedback and more confident in accessing and talking about sensitive topics¹⁷ such as depression;¹⁸ sexuality or sexually transmitted diseases¹⁹ and physical activity and nutrition.²⁰ The safety and wellbeing of young Australians is paramount and acknowledged in the National Strategy for Young Australians, which prioritises cyber-safety and digital citizenship as a key enabler to young people growing up safe, healthy, happy and resilient.²¹ **The challenge is harnessing technology to positively impact the wellbeing of children and young people while protecting them from harm.**

International evidence suggests that the most effective influence that can be exerted on young people's online engagement is through effective education, and an increased emphasis on policing of cyber-related crime, rather than restricting access to the internet. This approach has been demonstrated by the UK Government's response to the Byron Review – Children and New Technology, with its recommendations being accepted in full. As the UK Government explains 'In relation to the internet we need a shared culture of responsibility with families, industry, government and others in the public and third sectors all playing their part to reduce the availability of potentially harmful material, restrict access

¹⁶ Mitchell, K. J., Ybarra, M. and Finkelhor, D. (2007) 'The relative importance of online victimization in understanding depression, delinquency, and substance use', *Child Maltreatment*, 12: 314-324; Tam, J., Tang, W. S. and Fernando, D.J., (2007) 'The internet and suicide: A double-edged tool', *European Journal of International Medicine*, 18: 453-455; and Ha, J. H., Kim, S. Y. Bae S. C. et al., (2007) 'Depression and Internet addiction in adolescents', *Psychopathology*, 40: 424-430.

¹⁷ Gould, M. S., Munfakh, J. L. Lubell K. et al., (2002) 'Seeking help from the internet during adolescence', *Journal of American Academy of Child Adolescent Psychiatry*, 41: 1182-1189; and Nicholas, J., Oliver, K. and Lee, K. et al., (2004) 'Help-seeking behaviour on the Internet: An investigation among Australian adolescents', *Australian e-Journal for the Advancement of Mental Health*, 3: 1-8.

¹⁸ Burns, J., Morey, C., Lagelée A., Mackenzie, A. and Nicholas, J. (2007) 'Reach Out Innovation in service delivery', *Medical Journal of Australia*, S31 – S34: 187; and Leach, L. S., Christensen, H., Griffiths K.M. et al., (2007) 'Websites as a mode of delivering mental health information: perceptions from the Australian public', *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 42: 167-172

¹⁹ Suzuki, L. K. and Calzo, J.P. (2004) 'The search for peer advice in cyberspace: An examination of online teen bulletin boards about health and sexuality', *Applied Developmental Psychology*, 25: 685-698

²⁰ Spittaels, H and De Bourdeaudhuij, I (2006) 'Implementation of an online tailored physical activity intervention for adults in Belgium', *Health Promotion International*, 21: 311-318.

²¹ Australian Government (2010) National Youth Strategy, retrieved 11.06.10 <http://www.youth.gov.au/Documents/NatStrat.pdf>

to it by children and to increase children's resilience²² Furthermore the dynamic nature of the internet itself and the ways in which young people use it means that available technologies are quickly evolving. The Internet Safety Technical Task Force for the Multi-State Working Group on Social Networking of State Attorneys General of the United States, therefore, cautions against the endorsement of any one technological approach as it could limit future progress in the area of cyber-safety.²³

Recommendations:

8) Increasing knowledge about the online risks associated with cyber-bullying, strategies for reducing such risks, safety and support resources available and skills necessary for responding to cyber-bullying should be the aim of programs, practices and policies aiming to address cyber-bullying;

9) Investment in evidence-based research to assess the applicability of International policy responses and programmatic solutions to the Australian context;

22 Byron, T (2008) the Byron Review – Children and New Technology. Retrieved 11.06.10 <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/ukccis/userfiles/file/FinalReportBookmarked.pdf>

23 Palfrey, J., Sacco, D. boyd, d., DeBonis, L. 2008, Enhancing Child Safety & Online Technologies: Final Report of the Internet Safety Technical Task Force, Harvard University, Berkman.

4. Harnessing and maximizing technology for wellbeing

TOR v. examining the need to ensure that the opportunities presented by, and economic benefits of, new technologies are maximised;

Technology has the power to transform the health and human services industry and address critical social challenges facing Australian society. Indeed - we remain concerned that while one in four young people aged 16 to 24 experiences a mental disorder, between 60 to 70% are not receiving care at present, and that specialist services to young men, rural and remote regions represents a particular challenge. Existing approaches to delivery of psychological intervention could not satisfactorily address these issues without imposing a very substantial cost burden on the community. We propose that a new model of service delivery is required, which supplements standard face-to-face services with ones that offer high fidelity at a low cost per person, and can cope with both high volumes and geographical dispersion. We propose that online interventions offer these features, and could form a first-line treatment or service for many Australians who currently miss out on effective care.

Australia is an international leader in developing and testing these interventions. However, it is currently difficult for young people to know which programs to trust, or to know which are appropriate for their needs. Online interventions are not well integrated into other services, and there is no strategy to market these Australian advances in mental health treatment and services to the community as a whole.

Consumers benefit from confidential, non-stigmatising, flexible, low-cost treatment and services provided either directly or as an adjunct to care. The National Broadband Network will extend these benefits to people and communities who are currently chronically underserved.

The Health System benefits through better access, integration and coordination, including facilitated pathways, continuity of care and follow-up, and practitioner training and support. The cost of e-mental health delivery is up to 50 times more cost effective for Governments than traditional mental health services^{24, 25, 26, 27}

²⁴ McCrone, P., M. Knapp, et al. (2004). "Cost-effectiveness of computerised cognitive-behavioural therapy for anxiety and depression in primary care: results from a randomised controlled trial." *Br J Psychiatry* **185**: 55-62.

²⁵ Mihalopoulos, C., L. Kiropoulos, et al. (2005). "Exploratory economic analyses of two primary care mental health projects: implications for sustainability." *Med J Aust* **183**(10): s73-6

²⁶ Shandley, K., Austin, D., Klein, B., & Kyrios, M. (under review). An evaluation of 'Reach Out Central': an online therapeutic gaming program for supporting the mental health of young people. Health Education Research.

²⁷ Christensen, H. and K. Griffiths (2007). Reaching standards for dissemination: a case study. MEDINFO 2007, IOS Press.

Australia as a whole benefits as E-mental health has a significant contribution to make in reducing the far-reaching financial, productivity, and social costs of the growing mental health burden in Australia.

In 2009 mental illness cost Australia \$10.6 billion in lost productivity, underemployment, absenteeism, welfare payments, health care expenditure and carer costs. The estimated cost of suicide and attempts is \$17.5 billion annually, with 28 family, friends and community members affected by one suicide. Internet-based resources are acknowledged for their ability to engage and empower marginalised and traditionally 'hard to reach' groups via the transgression of geographical, logistical and even psychosocial barriers that may otherwise inhibit such groups from accessing offline health promotion programs or health care providers.²⁸ Technologies therefore offer significant potential as a tool and setting for mental health promotion and suicide prevention for all young people, but particularly, young men and social and geographically isolated individuals. When combined with face-to-face interventions, technology-based services can be a powerful compliment to an individual's health care plan. We propose that **the Inspire International Research Institute will transform the role of technologies in children and young people's lives through innovative research, driven by end-user needs, to address critical social challenges facing Australian society.**

Recommendations:

10) New and emerging technologies, including the internet and mobile phones, be seen as a tool *and* a setting in which mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention can be effectively delivered;

11) That government invest in research and economic analysis to measure and maximize the social impact of new and emerging technologies;

12) That new and emerging technologies, including the internet and mobile phones, be seen as enablers of young people's mental health and wellbeing;

²⁸ Alexander, J. (2002). Queer Webs: Representations of LGBT People and Communities on the World Wide Web. *International Journal of Sexuality and Gender Studies*, 7(2-3), 77-84; Burns, J., Morey, C., Lagelee, A., Mackenzie, A., & Nicholas, J. (2007). Reach Out Innovation in service delivery. *Medical Journal of Australia*, 187(7), S31-S34; Cline, R. J. W., & Haynes, K. M. (2001). Consumer health information seeking on the Internet: the state of the art. *Health Education Research*, 16(6), 671-692; Drabble, L., Keatley, J., & Marcelle, G. (2003). Progress and opportunities in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Health Communications. *Clinical Research and Regulatory Affairs*, 20(2), 205-227.

5. Promoting digital citizenship in the community

TOR vi. ways to support schools to change their culture to reduce the incidence and harmful effects of cyber-bullying including by:

- increasing awareness of cyber-safety 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 cyber-bullying;

IRRI holds the view that in order to address cyber-safety effectively there must be involvement from all sectors of the Australian community and that no single agency can address the complexities of different population groups. Whole of government responses are particularly suitable for complex and longstanding policy issues as they focus on coordination and integration across different sectors. The following case study illustrates this collaborative approach well:

Case Study – ReachOut Teachers’ Network

The Reach Out Teachers’ Network provides a community and network that links teachers to other professionals, resources and support to equip them to promote and manage mental health issues in the school setting. The Reach Out Teachers’ Network showcases ReachOut.com and related programs (e.g., Reach Out Central) and provides high quality curriculum resources with detailed lesson activities to address mental health issues and promote the development of help-seeking and coping skills in the classroom. The Reach Out Teachers’ Network also facilitates professional development programs, both face-to-face and online, that build the capacity of teachers to address mental health issues in schools.

The RO Teachers Network program works to develop the skills and competencies teachers require in order to equip students with important lifeskills needed to succeed within and beyond the classroom. A vital life skill for the 21 Century is positive digital citizenship and teachers can be powerful role models demonstrating positive digital citizenship.

IRRI recognises the vital role teachers play in the social and emotional development of the children and young people they work with and the importance of sustained effort to promote more effective and lasting changes in attitude and behaviours. It therefore advocates that the promotion of positive digital citizenship within school settings and the effective use of online technologies to engage young people in

their learning be seen as essential elements in delivering quality educational outcomes for all young Australians.

In 2007 Inspire conducted research on online safety in relation to young people by looking at current literature on young people's internet use and risk behaviours, reviewing existing internet safety resources and conducting consultative focus groups with young people and youth workers in South Australia. From this research we found the following in relation to approaches to addressing cyber-bullying:

- Cyber-bullying/harassment is a key online risk area for young people;
- Many existing online safety programs emphasise a 'restrictive' approach to promoting online safety in which access to technologies is limited to minimise risk exposure;
- Few online safety resources adequately addressed cyber bullying;
- A large proportion of young people who participated in focus group discussions demonstrated relatively high awareness of online safety risks, and similarly, many reported already employing risk reduction strategies to stay safe online;
- Young people in the focus groups were dissatisfied with safety initiatives that restrict or limit Internet access;
- Approaches based on restriction to technology or the internet are considered by young people in the focus groups to be easily circumvented;
- Restrictive approaches may discourage young people from discussing online safety issues openly and/or reporting problems;
- A large number of young people reported experiencing cyber-bullying, as either 'victims' or 'perpetrators', but also acknowledged that such behaviours are not exclusively products of the technology, but rather existing social norms and attitudes. This was reflected in the literature;
- There was a prevailing attitude amongst young people that teachers, parents and youth workers didn't really understand technology or how young people use the internet and therefore weren't in a position to credibly advocate safe Internet practices.

Emerging evidence suggests that online safety promotion messages that contradict or fail to recognise widely accepted online behaviours may lack credibility with young people.²⁹ Thus peer education models should be considered an effective tool in ensuring the recognition of the value young people place on technology and the internet are translated into program delivery and the measures appear credible to the young people whom the program targets.

Based on evidence and experience of such restrictive approaches being ineffective such strategies therefore do not outweigh the negative impacts it has on technology and the internet's enabling characteristics for young people. IRRI therefore advocates for a multi-faceted educative approach to online safety as opposed to an approach that restricts young people's access and use of technology and

²⁹ Ybarra, Y, Mitchell, KJ, Finkelhor, D, & Wolak, J 2007, 'Internet Prevention Messages – targeting the right online behaviours', *Archives of Pediatric Medicine*, vol. 167, pp. 139-145.

then internet. Furthermore, we consider the best-practice approach to address cyber-bullying to be a peer-to-peer model of support for young people along with training and development for professionals on the role of technology in young people's lives and digital literacy training so that professionals feel comfortable using technology to engage young people.

Recommendations:

13) Strategies and programs to address online-safety should be age appropriate and developed in direct consultation with key stakeholders, especially young people.

14) That all graduate and in-service teachers should be required to meet minimum standards in relation to understanding how their teaching practices can influence the social and emotional development of their students, as well as positive digital citizenship practices.

6. Opportunities for international collaboration – Translating the evidence-base

TOR vii. analysing information on achieving and continuing world's best practice safeguards.

TOR iv. opportunities for cooperation across Australian stakeholders and with international stakeholders in dealing with cyber-safety issues;

In Australia there is a paucity of national data that explores young people's use of different technologies, its impact on health, safety and wellbeing and the relationships between technology and family, work, social and cultural factors. Existing data sets are difficult to compare and fail to comprehensively examine the relationship between young people's use of technology and key dimensions of their lived experience. With the rapid development and uptake of technology this means that policy and service models are increasingly out of touch with current user trends and unresponsive to changing needs and opportunities.

The Inspire International Research Institute will bring together Australian young people, practitioners, corporate, policy makers and academics to undertake research, harvest and analyse data and develop products and services that promote youth wellbeing and reduce the development of mental health problems. Our conviction is that technology can be a positive contributor to the lives of young people, but this potential is under-developed. ICT can bridge social and economic divides and engage young people most at risk. The IIRI will directly support the government's National Strategy for Young Australians, which aims to enable all young people to grow up safe, healthy, happy and resilient.³⁰ **It will also support the Australian Government's cyber-safety agenda, leveraging the first nationally coordinated data on young people and technology to identify and evaluate the risks and opportunities for children and young people using the internet.**

There is very strong support for the IIRI from Australian and international multidisciplinary academics, youth organisations and services, business and government with over 50 partners in total. We prioritise the involvement of young people in our research and development of products, activities and services and focus on translating research into practice for immediate impact. Our research framework is designed to improve the lives of young people by: (1) increasing knowledge about the use of technologies and therefore shifting policy responses to better respond to the needs of young people; (2)

³⁰ COAG, 2010 *National Youth Strategy*, COAG Australia.

trialing products and approaches that use technology to better understand how we can prevent social challenges and mental health difficulties experienced by young people; (3) disseminating knowledge using technologies that resonate with young people to ensure uptake is immediate and reach is maximized, and; (4) translating knowledge into practice via education and training and professional development.

IIRI partners have proven experience in national and international collaboration and many are regarded as world experts in their fields. **We have the opportunity to increase our leadership in this area and, most importantly, create a safe and supported digitally enabled future for all young Australians.**

Recommendations:

15) That the government support a collaborative research facility focused on understanding the impact of technology for children and young people and supporting the transition of evidence into policy, products and services that transform lives.

Inspire publications

2010

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