

25 June 2010

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

By email: jscc@aph.gov.au

Dear Mr Brown

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE INQUIRY INTO CYBER-SAFETY

Optus appreciates the opportunity to provide our comments to the Joint Select Committee's Inquiry into Cyber-Safety.

As we understand it, the terms of reference of this Inquiry relate primarily to cyber-safety matters (bullying, protection of personal information, safe communications with others online) rather than cyber-security or e-security (which is more to do with technological threats such as spam, viruses, hacking). Therefore, our comments below have been primarily focused on cyber-safety and not cyber-security matters.

As an Internet Service Provider (ISP) whose role is to provide internet access rather than deal directly with some of the cyber-safety matters which are the subject of this Inquiry, we believe that there are organisations with more expertise to comment in detail on some of the Inquiry's terms of reference.

However, as a responsible ISP and a participant in the Internet Industry Association (IIA) Family Friendly ISP program, we believe that we do play an important role in assisting to educate our customers about cyber-safety and cyber-security issues. It is for this reason that we participate as corporate partners in many government and industry initiatives, such as the Australian Consumer Fraud Taskforce's annual Fraud Week and the recent National Cyber Security Awareness Week. Optus is also one of the corporate sponsors of the IIA's Security Portal and we were one of the participants in the development of the new IIA eSecurity Code (known as the iCode), as well as having been involved in developing other industry materials on cyber-safety issues. Indeed, we have information on our own website (at www.optuszoo.com.au/onlinesafety) about cyber-safety topics and provide links to other resources, such as the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) Cybersmart website.

The communications industry, our regulators and government agencies have all been involved in developing customer awareness and education materials to address cyber-safety issues, with a focus on training programs for school-aged children. Some examples of these are:

- the ACMA's Cybersmart Detectives / Cybersmart Hero program (see www.cybersmart.gov.au);
- the Federal Government's Buddie E-Security Education Package (see www.staysmartonline.gov.au);
- the IIA's Security Portal, which contains links to resources on cyber-bullying (see www.security.iaa.net.au/cyberbullying/); and
- the Australian Mobile Telecommunications Association (AMTA) has developed a range of tip sheets and other information materials on topics such as:
 - Bullying and mobile phones – tips for parents;
 - Bullying and mobile phones – tips for teens;
 - Acceptable use policy for mobiles in schools;
 - Camera phone safety and etiquette;

as well as website called Str8 Talk which provides information for young people on mobiles (www.str8tlk.amta.org.au). This website provides information on both bullying and safety matters.

There are many materials already available on cyber-safety matters, including many specifically developed for schools, young people and parents. To some extent, it raises the question as to whether there needs to be a more co-ordinated approach to cyber-safety issues – to ensure resources are pooled and used effectively, and to ensure there is consistent messaging being provided to children, their parents or carers and schools. This would signify that all young people are educated about cyber-safety matters and the appropriate uses of technology, how to protect themselves online and who to approach for help if they are being bullied or having a bad experience online.

Optus believes that, in this era of tech-savvy youth, it is vital that the government find ways to educate parents about online safety and online security issues. Parents are the only ones who can influence a child's access to the internet in the home – including how they behave online, so it is vital that parents are educated about online safety and security, and Optus would support government initiatives which address this need.

We thank the Committee for the opportunity to provide our comments on this important matter, and we look forward to hearing about the outcomes of the Inquiry.

Yours sincerely

Maha Krishnapillai
Director, Government and Corporate Affairs