

Supplementary Submission No. 95.1

Dear Ms Scarlett,

Please accept our thanks once again for the opportunity to speak to the Joint Select Committee of Cyber Safety on Thursday morning (9th December). As we noted at the time, it is not often that Berry Street is called upon to comment on issues related to technology, however it is an area of growing concern and active interest to the Out of Home Care and Alternative Education sectors where we work with some of the most vulnerable children and young people.

I am writing to reiterate key points that came out of the discussions from our perspective, to provide additional information that we were unable to share during the discussions due to time restrictions and to draw your attention to some recent developments that you may or may not be aware of.

Key Points:

The discussions were far-reaching and provided a great overview of the challenges facing the community when it comes to cyber-safety and protecting children and young people. The key points that arose for us were:

1. The importance of promoting **engagement with technology first and foremost as an enabler** – a positive tool for learning, connecting with community and family, and accessing opportunities.
2. The need for **a suite of responses** that recognise the vast range of ability, understanding, capacity, knowledge and experience among children and young people. This should take into account cultural diversity as well as the challenges that are specific to extreme vulnerability.
3. The need for a **whole of community response** to the challenges raised by engagement with technology – while the Government should lead; industry, communities, families, schools and Community Service Organisations have vital roles to play in the delivery of consistent messages and responses to issues of cyber-safety.
4. A **regard for those who are most vulnerable** is key to successful approaches to cyber-safety. We are already aware that children and young people affected by trauma and abuse are more vulnerable to risk and danger on and offline – protecting them, and enabling them to protect themselves, should remain a priority.
5. In keeping with the above, the need to **educate and build capacity among ‘digital immigrants’** – parents, carers and staff in community service organisations who have a duty of care for vulnerable children and young people and are currently at a loss for how to support them to stay safe online.
6. **Cyber-safety will be an ongoing journey.** What works and is relevant today will be obsolete tomorrow. Approaches and strategies that we develop must be part of a long-term commitment to adapt and change with the changing technological environment.

Additional Information

Further to our input on Thursday December 9th I wish to add the following:

- In the discussion about **digital footprints** we focussed primarily on the potential negative impact of the information children and young people might ‘leave in their trail’. For many children and young people in care, there is a flip side to this issue. Traditionally the out of home care system has been inconsistent at best at ensuring that the records of children and young people in care are truly representative of their lives. While a great deal of statutory information is recorded, there is currently no

standardised system for collecting the pictures, stories and achievements from a child's life that make them who they are. As a result many young people who return to review their records find no information confirming their identity or filling in the gaps in their memories of what their childhood was like. The internet, however, is becoming a place for children and young people to build a lasting life story that they can access forever and from wherever they may be. It does not require an aunt or a grandmother to have kept vital information, or an agency to have filed drawings and photos – it is at their fingertips, confirming their life story, whenever they need it.

- I have attached a document that better outlines the **Protect, Empower, Educate** model that we referenced during the discussion which we are using in our approach to cyber-safety as part of our BeNetWise project.
- Having thought more about the discussion about how to make the messages of cyber safety available to the widest audience, we would suggest that the currently developing **National Curriculum** may be a vehicle through which principles and models of cyber-safe education could be standardised and promoted across Australia. Whilst this would still leave educationally disengaged and vulnerable children and young people out, it may be a strategy which reaches the absolute majority of children, young people and their families if it embedded into curriculum/educational expectations.

Recent Developments

I have also attached the press release from Inspire Foundation that was issued on the day of our discussion with the Committee. The press release announces the investment of \$27 million by the Federal Government for the Cooperative Research Centre for Young People, Technology and Wellbeing. The CRC, from many different angles, will be researching, documenting & practically addressing, many of the issues being looked at by the Committee and we would recommend if time permitted, that the Committee discuss the CRC plans with the Inspire Foundation (contact: Michelle Blanchard).

As we mentioned in the discussions, Berry Street is a partner in this CRC.

Thank you again for your time and the opportunity to speak at the Select Committee hearing.

We look forward to hearing the outcome of this process and would be happy to provide any further information you require.

Yours sincerely,

Lauren

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