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Schools

8.1   Young people engage the online environment to the extent that their online lives blend seamlessly with their lives offline. [1] An equally seamless approach should be taken to cyber-safety, including education, law enforcement, international cooperation, appropriate products and parental/carer supervision.[2]

8.2   In that context, this chapter examines ways of supporting schools to improve cyber-safety for students and to reduce abuses in the online environment.

Early cyber-safety education

8.3   Many participants in this Inquiry stressed the need for cyber-safety education to begin early in life, particularly as the age at which many children now enter the online environment is decreasing.

8.4   Educational research shows that early childhood is the key time to develop qualities such as respect, peer support, leadership models and building a sense of community.[3] Cyber-safe practices should be developed at home and started with the very young.[4] The time to reach parents about

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1   Alannah and Madeline Foundation, *Submission 22*, p. 8.

2   Mr Darren Kane, Director, Corporate Security and Investigations and Officer of Internet Trust and Safety, Telstra Corporation, *Transcript of Evidence*, 8 July 2010, p. CS3.

3   Ms Catherine Davis, Federal Women's Officer, Australian Education Union, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 June 2010, p. CS15.

4   Dr Barbara Spears, Australian University Cyberbullying Research Alliance, *Transcript of Evidence*, 3 February 2011, p. CS17; Mr Robert Knight, Executive Officer, Education, Queensland Catholic Education Commission, *Transcript of Evidence*, 17 March 2011, p. CS24; NSW Secondary Principals' Council, *Submission 32*, p. 4.

this approach is when children are between one and five years old, when they want to do their best for their children. They are receptive and eager to learn about what is going to be best for their children's development.[5]

8.5   Most Australian children are not receiving cyber-safety messages from school until Year 2 (seven or eight years old) when they may have already been online for three years. The recreational use that begins at home, or elsewhere with peer or friendship groups or older siblings, is not necessarily accompanied by the kind of safety messages children need. In particular, it is important that messages are delivered early about the 'permanence, multiplication and circulation' of material put online.[6]

8.6   It was suggested that use of the Internet should be in curriculums from the first year of school, so that it is something that children grow up with and is as common-place as other initiatives such as 'Stranger-Danger'. It was also important that this education happens before children had negative experiences online.[7]

8.7   By the time children are four years old, and certainly by the age of five, teachers can have an indication of those who are engaging in anti-social behaviour. At this age teachers can also identify those whose social difficulties are such that they may not understand the impact of what they might do online. For children judged to be at risk, there is more likelihood of success if targeting their behaviours and attitudes begins early. On the basis that early intervention and prevention is the key to this success, initiatives are being targeted towards pre-school children.[8]

8.8   Further, there has to be a clear understanding in school policy of online ethics and the consequences of breaches.[9] This can only be achieved if students are introduced to these concepts, and later reminded of them, as part of a program. It was stated by many participants in this Inquiry that

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5   Ms Barbara Biggins, Honorary Chief Executive Officer, Australian Council on Children and the Media, *Transcript of Evidence*, 3 February 2011, p. CS49.

6   Associate Professor Karen Vered, Department of Screen and Media, Flinders University, *Transcript of Evidence*, 3 February 2011, pp. CS36, 40.

7   ACT Council of Parents' and Citizens' Associations, *Submission 41*, p. 3; Mr Craig Scroggie, Vice President and Managing Director, Pacific Region, Symantec Corporation, *Transcript of Evidence*, 8 July 2010, p. CS8.

8   Dr Helen McGrath: Psychologist, Australian Psychological Society, *Transcript of Evidence*, 9 December 2010, p. CS59; School of Education, Faculty of Arts and Education, Deakin University, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 June 2010, p. CS36. Associate Professor Karen Vered, Department of Screen and Media, Flinders University, *Transcript of Evidence*, 3 February 2011, p. CS37.

9   Dr Gerald White, Principal Research Fellow, Australian Council for Educational Research, *Transcript of Evidence*, 9 December 2010, p. CS48.

such a program must start when a child first enrols in school, and be continually reinforced throughout their education.

Roles of schools

8.9 Schools are complex, busy, diverse and demanding places for students, teachers and parents/carers. They are microcosms of their environments, reflecting the societies and cultural contexts in which they are placed. They have increasingly crowded curriculums, and are being asked by governments to take on more topics. Teachers are expected to do more and more without necessarily being provided with additional resources. Each new task brings responsibility and accountability to parents/carers, students and to government.[10]

8.10 Schools are the key places to work with young people and encourage them to make changes to improve their own safety and online ethics. However, schools have been reported to only have a 30 percent influence over what is learnt: 70 percent is outside that realm of influence. Principals are responsible for the safety of their students and the staff within schools, and this extends in many places outside their boundaries to the local community. Thus, Principals Australia argued, cyber-safety has to be a whole-of-community issue.[11]

Duty of care

8.11 Schools are important in providing young people with interpersonal, technological and conflict resolution skills.[12] Further, there is a 'huge need' to recognise that they are dealing with the whole social and emotional development of their students.[13]

8.12 The Alannah and Madeline Foundation referred to the duty of care to create a safe environment for students and staff.[14] Cyber-safety is part of this expectation, and Professor Hemphill of the Murdoch Children's

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10   Australian University Cyberbullying Research Alliance, *Submission 62*, p. 43; Mr Mark Anghel, Assistant Secretary, Legal Services, Queensland Teachers' Union, *Transcript of Evidence*, 17 March 2011, p. CS1

11   Mr Jeremy Hurley, Manager, National Education Agenda, Principals Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 June 2010, p. CS9.

12   Murdoch Children's Research Institute, *Submission 111*, p. 4.

13   Ms Dianne Butland, Executive Member, Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations of NSW, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 June 2010, p. CS37.

14   Alannah and Madeline Foundation, *Submission 22*, p. 11.

Research Institute suggested that schools had to go back to their policies on bullying to ensure that these, and any training for staff, covered cyber-bullying explicitly.[15]

8.13   The nature of technology means that there is a great deal more responsibility on schools to resolve cyber-safety matters.[16] There has been 'a significant increase' in the time spent by senior executive and welfare officers in schools dealing with these issues. The time that can be spent counselling young people appropriately can be 'extraordinary'. This is particularly so if restorative justice programs are included.[17]

8.14   It is important for greater clarity be given on the question of the responsibility of schools for student behaviour outside of school hours. The NSW Secondary Principal's Council stated that it was 'not appropriate' for schools to spend such significant resources dealing with out-of-hours communications that lead to student-to-student , or family, conflict. Nor, it believed, should the consequences of such communications be the sole responsibility of schools.[18]

8.15   The Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations of NSW stated:

> Some schools have reportedly buried their heads in the sand with regards to the issues around online bullying and its repercussions. They have suggested that, as the incident didn't happen at school, the school is not accountable and shouldn't get involved. However, where children are bullied, using any form of technology, the repercussions are often felt the following day at school.[19]

8.16   It is unclear how much schools are hampered by the 'often unrealistic fear' of being sued. If schools are required to sign up to provide everything

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15   Associate Professor Sheryl Hemphill, Senior Research Fellow, *Transcript of Evidence*, 9 December 2010, p. CS26; Associate Professor Marilyn Campbell, Australian University Cyberbullying Research Alliance, *Transcript of Evidence*, 3 February 2011, p. CS16. Murdoch Children's Research Institute: *Submission 111*, p. 5.

16   Ms Catherine Davis, Federal Women's Officer, Australian Education Union, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 June 2010, p. CS4; Mr Philip Lewis, Chair, Association of Principals of Catholic Secondary Schools (SA), *Transcript of Evidence*, 3 February 2011, p. CS3.

17   NSW Secondary Principal's Council, *Submission 32*, p. 3; Mr Chris Watt, Federal Secretary, Independent Education Union of Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 June 2010, pp. CS14-15.

18   NSW Secondary Principal's Council, *Submission 32*, p. 3; See also Ms Kelly Vennus, Programs and Training Officer, Stride Foundation, *Transcript of Evidence*, 9 December 2010, p. CS11; Ms Robyn Treyvaud, Founder, Cyber Safe Kids, *Transcript of Evidence*, 9 December 2010, p. CS31.

19   Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations of New South Wales, *Submission 76*, p. 3.

relating to cyber-safety, it was pointed out that they could be subject to litigation at a later time.[20]

8.17   Powers of suspension and exclusion provide a discretionary point of entry for principals in South Australia to talk about their concerns and the dangers in situations. Some parents are very protective of their boundaries, so that it is difficult for principals to talk about the behaviour of children in out-of-school hours. Such actions can be viewed by parents as matters outside the purview of school principals.[21]

8.18   As a result of the pervasiveness of technology and its impact on schools, two State education departments changed their policies on out-of-hours occurrences.

8.19   South Australia has changed its legislation to give principals authority to take action over behaviour that may occur away from the school or outside school hours. Action can be taken at the time of, or after an event affecting the wellbeing of another student, teacher or member of the school community. Principals are empowered to suspend or expel students who act in such a manner.[22] The system in South Australia appears to be working productively, and authorities in other States have evidently expressed some frustration that they do not have similar processes.[23] NSW has also changed legislation to clarify that schools are responsible for occurrences outside their premises and out-of-hours.[24]

8.20   This accepted duty of care that schools owe students is complicated by the 24 hour/seven days per week nature of technology. Where it used to be relatively easy to identify bullying behaviour in the schoolyard, the challenge for teachers is now what happens between 3pm and 9am, or over weekends.[25] There is legislation in the United Kingdom that provides

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20   Australian University Cyberbullying Research Alliance: *Submission 62*, p. 29; Dr Barbara Spears, *Transcript of Evidence*, 3 February 2011, p. CS16.

21   Mr Greg Cox, Department of Education and Children's Services, SA, *Transcript of Evidence*, 3 February 2011, pp. CS72-73.

22   Dr Helen McGrath, School of Education, Faculty of Arts and Education, Deakin University, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 June 2010, pp. CS16, 30; Mr Greg Cox, Department of Education and Children's Services, SA, *Transcript of Evidence*, 3 February 2011, p. CS69.

23   Dr Helen McGrath, School of Education, Faculty of Arts and Education, Deakin University, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 June 2010, p. CS30.

24   Dr Helen McGrath, School of Education, Faculty of Arts and Education, Deakin University, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 June 2010, p. CS16; Mr Greg Cox, Department of Education and Children's Services, SA, *Transcript of Evidence*, 3 February 2011, p. CS68.

25   Mr Chris Watt, Federal Secretary, Independent Education Union of Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 June 2010, p. CS15; Ms Georgie Ferrari, Chief Executive Officer, Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 June 2010, p. CS33.

schools with the authority to address student misbehaviour for 24 hours/seven days, wherever it occurs.[26]

> *Suspension and Expulsion of School Students - Procedures* specifically recognise that behaviour that may warrant suspension includes "hostile behaviour directed towards students, members of staff or other persons including verbal abuse and abuse transmitted electronically such as by email or SMS text message".[27]

8.21   As previously mentioned however, the New South Wales Secondary Principals Council expressed the view that it was 'not appropriate' that schools spend such significant staff resources dealing with communications generated out-of-hours.[28]

8.22   If responsibility is to be taken for students' actions outside school hours, and for the measure to be effective, it will be necessary to ensure that the necessary resources are available, and that the appropriate educational unions are involved in the process.

Recommendation 13

That the Attorney-General, as a matter of priority, work with State and Territory counterparts to develop a nationally consistent legislative approach to add certainty to the authority of schools to deal with incidents of inappropriate student behaviour to other students out of school hours.

National Safe Schools Framework

8.23   The National Safe Schools Framework (NSSF) was originally endorsed by all Australian Ministers for Education in 2003. It included an agreed set of national principles to promote safe and supportive school environments,

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26   Associate Professor Marilyn Campbell, School of Learning and Professional Studies, Queensland University of Technology, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 June 2010, p. CS12

27   New South Wales Secondary Principals Council, *Submission 32*, p. 3.

28   Mr Jeremy Hurley, Manager, National Education Program, Principals Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 June 2010, p. CS9. New South Wales Secondary Principals' Council, *Submission 32*, p. 3.

and appropriate responses schools could adopt to address bullying, harassment, violence, child abuse and neglect.[29]

8.24   As a result of a review, the revised NSSF was endorsed in December 2010 by the Ministerial Council of Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs. Ministers undertook to implement the Framework in all jurisdictions and use it to inform the development of safe and supportive school policies. The NSSF was launched on 18 March 2011, to coincide with the National Day of Action against Bullying and Violence, and is available to all Australian primary and secondary schools.

8.25   The NSSF is supported by a comprehensive and practical online resource manual. This includes an audit tool that assists schools to make informed judgements about what they are doing well, and to identify gaps in existing policies and procedures.

8.26   All Australian schools are encouraged to use this Framework as a basis for developing approaches to address bullying. It recognises that sustainable approaches are required to reduce bullying in the long-term.

8.27   The NSSF is 'highly regarded' by Australian and international researchers and practitioners, and is the only national Framework of its kind in the world. Cross-cultural collaboration and effective working relationships across all jurisdictions, and with other key stakeholders, underpin the success of the NSSF.

Curriculums and programs

8.28   The Ministerial Council for Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs, comprising Ministers for Education and Training, has previously stated the goals for education in Australia. The *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (2008) provides a mandate and guide for schools about curriculums. It made four important points about information and communications technologies (ICT):

- young people need to be highly skilled in its use;

- schooling should also support the development of skills in areas such as social interaction, cross-disciplinary thinking and the use of digital media that will be essential in all 21st century occupations;

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29   Material in this section was drawn from Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Submission 135*, pp. 7-8.

- successful learners have essential literacy and numeracy skills, and are creative and productive users of technology as a foundation for success in learning areas; and

- for further learning, curriculums will include practical knowledge and skills development in areas such as ICT and design and technology.[30]

8.29   The Australian Council of Educational Research noted that the generally low adoption of ICT, especially in the middle secondary years, is 'by no means' specific to Australia. It did not signal a lack of interest to the use of ICT in curriculums. One study nominated technological reliability, limited access and limited bandwidth as barriers to greater uptake of ICT in these years.[31]

8.30   The Queensland Catholic Education Commission suggested that ICT programs tended to lack credibility because they are not seen as part of the mainstream curriculum. Concerns were also expressed about 'bolt-on subjects' that students generally see as down-time.[32]

8.31   Symantec Corporation recommended that a national approach is required so that cyber-safety is included in a standardised, mandatory curriculum. The Queensland Teachers Union also observed that if there was to be an effective campaign on cyber-safety, it had to be appropriately funded and resourced, and not just 'forced' on to the ever-increasing curriculum.[33]

8.32   The Australian Parents Council advised that:

> schools have been at the forefront of efforts to incorporate principles of resilience and well-being in their students in the offline environment through a number of programs and cross curriculum initiatives over past years. So perhaps it is not a change of the culture of schools that is needed but the expansion of

30   Australian Council of Educational Research, *Submission 20*, pp. 3-4 citing the Ministerial Council for Employment, Education, Training, and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), 2008, *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians.* Melbourne: MCEETYA. Retrieved May 20, 2010, from http://www.curriculum.edu.au/verve/_resources/National_Declaration_on_the_Educational_Goals_for_Young_Australians.pdf. This body has been replaced by the Ministerial Council of Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs.

31   Australian Council of Educational Research, *Submission 20*, p. 7.

32   Mr Robert Knight, Executive Officer, Education, Queensland Catholic Education Commission, *Transcript of Evidence*, 17 March 2011, p. CS30; Mr Mark Anghel, Assistant Secretary, Legal Services, Welfare, Queensland Teachers Union, *Transcript of Evidence*, 17 March 2011, p. CS8.

33   Queensland Teachers Union: *Submission 21*, p. 1; Mr Mark Anghel, Assistant Secretary, Legal Services, Welfare, Queensland Teachers Union, *Transcript of Evidence*, 17 March 2011, pp. CS1, 8.

existing prevention and intervention strategies that have proven successful in offline environments to promote cyber safety.[34]

8.33   Including ICT material in any curriculum is complicated by the lack of data on trends, successfulness of intervention programs, restorative justice initiatives and perpetrator rehabilitation. Research in such areas would inform the development of prevention strategies, as well as a national curriculum.[35]

8.34   The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) is developing the Australian Curriculum. With particular reference to cyber-safety, it has been identified that students will develop ICT competence when they apply social and ethical protocols to operate and manage emerging technologies.

8.35   Conceptual statements are being prepared by the ACARA for publication to support teachers and schools wishing to use them to assist the development of their teaching and learning programs. Each document will include:

- the conceptual framework, evidence and references for the capability; and

- a continuum of learning, showing development across bands of year levels.

8.36   For competence in ICT, this work will include descriptions of developments expected of students at the end of Years 2, 6 and 10.[36]

Partnerships with the Australian Communications and Media Authority

8.37   The South Australian Commission for Catholic Schools acknowledged the work of the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) in:

providing access to free, high quality cyber-safety training through the *Cyber-Safety Outreach Professional Development for Educators* program and the *Internet Safety Awareness Presentations* to students, teaching staff and parents in school communities ... Feedback from Catholic school communities is consistently favourable about the relevance and usefulness of the training and resources.[37]

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34   Australian Parents Council, *Submission 10*, p. 4.
35   Australian Secondary Principal's Association, *Submission 33*, p. 3.
36   Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, *Submission 119*, pp. 1-2.
37   South Australian Commission for Catholic Schools, *Submission 9*, p. 3.

8.38   Further, on 16 May 2011, ACMA launched the *Connect.ed* interactive e-learning program for teachers that buttresses the professional development seminars.[38]

> Probably the single biggest driver for take-up of our professional development workshops for teachers has been their concern about issues relating to cyberbullying and also, in a very personal way, if they are legally responsible for that.[39]

8.39   The role of ACMA is addressed in Chapter 1.

Technological approaches

8.40   A number of schools are employing technological approaches to assist them to address cyber-safety issues. Secondary schools in particular are using a dedicated email system where concerns about an individual's cyber-safety, or that of others, can be reported anonymously.

8.41   A Queensland high school has online counselling, appointments to see the counsellor can be made online, and there is also a chat facility.[40] The Australian Education Union called for the number of, and resources available to school counsellors be increased so to better assist students:

> There can never be guarantees against malicious behaviour, but many risks which are simply borne of ignorance can be significantly reduced if children are educated properly in the use of technologies.[41]

8.42   The use of mobile phones is restricted at some schools, and banning them has been suggested as a way of reducing cyber-bullying.[42] However, this would be a challenge for schools and there is little evidence supporting this strategy. Professor Phillip Slee of the Australian University Cyberbullying Research Alliance stated that 'robust research' had found

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38   Ms Andree Wright, Acting General Manager, Consumer, Content and Citizen Division, Australian Communications and Media Authority, *Transcript of Evidence*, 3 March 2011, p. CS4.

39   Ms Andree Wright, Acting General Manager, Consumer, Content and Citizen Division, ACMA, *Transcript of Evidence*, 3 March 2011, p. CS19.

40   Associate Professor Marilyn Campbell, School of Learning and Professional Studies, Queensland University of Technology, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 June 2010, p. CS30.

41   Australian Education Union, Tasmanian Branch, *Submission 137*, pp. 1-2

42   Association of Independent Schools of SA, *Submission 19*, p. 8.

that it was not at all effective in dealing with abuses such as cyber-bullying.[43]

8.43   In evidence submitted to the Committee, at least one Australian school enforces a policy whereby the school survey's a number of students' mobile phones every week to see what sites they have accessed. Sanctions are imposed if a student has deliberately gone onto sites that are not acceptable under school policies.[44]

8.44   Some schools use filters on their local networks. However, these can be bypassed easily by using proxy sites. The Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development found that using a 'lock down' approach kept students safe at school but they were more vulnerable overall.[45] Research has shown that 'lock-down' systems are less effective in helping students to learn to use the Internet safely and responsibly. While they kept them safe at school, students from such schools are 'more vulnerable overall'.

8.45   Some Australian education systems already have 'Acceptable Use' Agreements with students, and breaches can include disciplinary action.

8.46   According to the Alannah and Madeline Foundation, schools with effective behaviour management systems and vigilant supervision of computer use provide another layer of support. It believed that Australian schools are lagging behind in producing robust 'Acceptable Use' policies that reach beyond the school to include parents/carers and the wider community.[46]

8.47   The Australian Parents Council discussed the broader effort required:

> Parents need to be informed of the current online and digital environment and the relative dangers of predators online, sexting, cyber bullying and the technology available to guard against inappropriate content material, such as hate sites. They need to be aware of issues of cyber crime, computer security, identity theft: the consequences and sanctions which may be imposed for bad or

43   Professor Philip Slee, *Transcript of Evidence*, 3 February 2011, p. CS12; Australian University Cyberbullying Research Alliance: *Submission 62*, p. 27. See also Associate Professor Sheryl Hemphill, Senior Research Fellow, Murdoch Child Research Institute, *Transcript of Evidence*, 9 December 2010, p. CS26.

44   Dr Gerald White, Principal Research Fellow, Australian Council of Educational Research, *Transcript of Evidence*, 9 December 2010, p. CS48.

45   Australian Council of Education Research, *Submission 20*, p. 7 citing Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (2010) *Are the New Millennium Learners making the Grade? Technology use and eduacational performance in PISA*, Paris CERI, OECD.

46   Alannah and Madeline Foundation: *Submission 22*, p. 8; Dr Judith Slocombe, Chief Executive Officer, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 June 2010, p. CS37.

criminal behaviours and the ways in which inappropriate use of technology can interfere with other important activities and responsibilities in the lives of their young people.[47]

8.48   Netbox Blue also recommend promoting and enforcing Acceptable Use policies, as

- The creation of an acceptable policy framework and its communication to all stakeholders - students, teachers, parents and carers;

- Education for all stakeholders on minimising known risks, or dealing with them if presented with a situation that places them at risk – focusing on working with students, teachers, parents and carers;

- Technology enforcement – in and outside the school network on all school owned equipment; and

- Regular reviews of attempts to breach such policy frameworks to improve education and to manage individual behavioural issues.[48]

8.49   As already noted, Roar Educate believed that 'sensationalist' reporting has shaped the national response to cyber-safety incidents. It also believed that, to protect students, the first instinct of schools has been to 'lock down'. Within their 'sandbox environments', they have been slow to encourage the use of Web 2.0 tools. Roar Educated stated that this environment seems to have reduced the need for engagement about cyber-safety across school communities: students, teachers and parents/carers.[49]

8.50   The Alannah and Madeline Foundation would like to see the introduction of a user-friendly toolkit in text and online versions be made available to all schools to assist with the measurement and the effectiveness of cyber-safety policies and the whole of community approach.[50]

8.51   The Director of the South Australian Office of Youth commented that:

> We found that young people probably were not that interested in getting information from schools about how to engage with social networking. They were more aware of how to use and engage with those sites than their teachers and even their parents were. One of our views in the Office for Youth is that education exists

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47   Australian Parents Council, *Submission 10*, pp. 2-3.

48   Netbox Blue, *Submission 17*, p. 4.

49   Roar Educate, *Submission 100*, p. 6.

50   Alannah and Madeline Foundation, *Submission 22*, p. 12.

outside the school system. We would like to see a greater
emphasis on engaging with other community organisations,
sporting clubs and youth development programs as well as
parents to better engage and educate young people because they
are more likely through research to listen to their friends, parents
and relatives rather than schoolteachers.[51]

8.52   The role of schools, parents/carers and the wider community is
inextricably linked. Research by the British Office for Standards in
Education, Children's Services and Skills revealed that the most effective
schools have a well-considered approach to keeping students safe online
and helping them to take responsibility for their own safety. Successful
schools have a multi-layered managed approach, involving students,
parents and teachers, where there are fewer inaccessible sites.

8.53   There are many cyber-safety programs, but not all have been taken up. For
example, it was suggested that while the 2009 National Safe Schools
Framework went out to every Australian school, 'about 80 percent' did not
take it up because there was no way for them to implement it. The
Alannah and Madeline Foundation also expressed concern that while
schools might have anti-bullying policies, they may not be implemented.[52]

8.54   Other cyber-safety programs and initiatives are available, and have been
referred to in this Report, but it is not clear how many of them have been
appropriately evaluated and accredited.[53] Strategies that could be
employed by the whole of school community are addressed in Chapter 10.

Coordination

8.55   Time-poor teachers may benefit from having material accessible from a
central on line resource. Netbox Blue consider that schools could be
encouraged to adopt available solutions if a central body was established
to:

- provide advice and online collateral, papers, policies and best
  practice examples to schools;

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51   Mrs Tiffany Downing, Director, Office of Youth SA, *Transcript of Evidence*, 3 February 2011, pp.
CS19-20.

52   Dr Judith Slocombe, Chief Executive Officer, Alannah and Madeline Foundation, *Transcript of
Evidence*, 11 June 2010, p. CS37.

53   Australian Secondary Principal's Association, *Submission 33*, p. 3.

- provide certification for providers within each 'pillar', such as the Family Friendly Filter scheme;

- establish a clear set of standards for a school to have achieved to fulfil their duty of care;

- establish a national certification standard for schools in providing a cyber-safe environment for students;

- promote the program to all schools and encourage them via incentives to benefit for adherence to the standards, and

- establish an ongoing review of the standards and an annual re-accreditation.[54]

8.56   The NSW Secondary Principals' Council suggest that assistance to schools should:

- include a clear legal definition of 'cyber-bullying';

- include consistent State and Federal legislation, and

- provide guidelines regarding the actual legislation governing cyber-bullying and how it affects young people.[55]

Accreditation

8.57   Given the nature and pervasiveness of the online world, in a context where warnings and filters have limited efficacy, the most effective approach to cyber safety is to build good teaching and learning experiences into classrooms.[56]

8.58   To ensure quality and consistency across jurisdictions, educational standards for cyber-safety education need to be developed.[57] Standards need to be developed by the Australian Government for cyber-safety, and the safe, responsible use of digital technologies. Such standards should prevail across all Departments and agencies, to provide 'a beacon for the non-government sector'.[58]

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54   Netbox Blue, *Submission 17*, pp. 4-5.
55   NSW Secondary Principals Council, *Submission 32*, p. 5.
56   Australian Education Union, Tasmanian Branch, *Submission 137*, p. 2.
57   Australian Education Union, Tasmanian Branch, *Submission 137*, p. 2.
58   Australian Education Union, Tasmanian Branch, *Submission 137*, p. 3.

Committee views

8.59   While many different policies and programs have been put in place to deal with cyber-safety issues, allocation of resources is an issue for all schools. The continuing pressure on curriculums must also be recognised, because it is clearly not simply a matter of adding topics without displacing or reducing times for other, existing items.

8.60   Cyber-safety is, however, of such importance to the education and future of young people that the effectiveness of the current approach(es) needs to be analysed.

8.61   There is no doubt that awareness of threats to the safety of young people in the online environment has grown, within schools and in the community generally. Perhaps because of media interest, this is especially true of cyber-bullying. Many responses to cyber-safety problems developed and implemented across Australia were revealed during this Inquiry.

8.62   The dedication with which solutions have been sought to reduce the risks to those, particularly young people, using the online environment cannot be faulted. While authorities in all jurisdictions are justifiably proud of their cyber-safety programs, there are two measures that can be taken to reduce online threats to users, especially young people.

8.63   The first and most important of these was addressed by many participants in this Inquiry: a national cyber-safety education program, devised and implemented with the cooperation of all Australian jurisdictions. The introduction of such a program must be accompanied by a second measure: an extension of the role and powers of ACMA. These proposals will be addressed in Chapter 19.

8.64   Many parents/carers are not involved in cyber-safety issues as individuals or via the schools to which their young people go because they lack two things: time and knowledge and/or confidence about the online environment. Their involvement is vital to reducing the incidence of abuses in the online environment. Ways to give them confidence, and extend their knowledge of cyber-safety issues will be addressed in Chapter 10.

8.65   At least one important measure can and needs to be taken by schools. 'Acceptable Use' Agreements and supporting policies covering the use of the technology supplied to their students is an area that schools need to address. These Agreements are not always backed by procedures that are followed consistently, or even widely known and understood.

8.66   For such Agreements to be effective, they must be:

- clear about the rights and responsibilities of users, especially penalties for breaches of conditions of use;

- signed by students and parents/carers;

- preceded by information sessions on cyber-safety, perhaps presented wholly or partially by the young people themselves, and

- supported by policies that are known and understood by all staff and students, so that they can be implemented promptly, effectively and consistently.

8.67   As noted above, the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority is developing the Australian Curriculum. Together with the revised National Safe Schools Framework, there is progress in the development of national core standards in education in this country.

8.68   The Ministerial Council of Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs is the appropriate forum to guide national action towards such core standards for courses in cyber-safety. Using the revised National Safe Schools Framework, it is in a position to encourage the introduction of core standards, including the development of national Acceptable Use' agreements, that will assist schools to deal with threats to their students and staff from the online environment.

Recommendation 14

That the Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth propose to the Ministerial Council of Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs:

- to develop national core standards for cyber-safety education in schools,

- to adopt a national scheme to encourage all Australian schools to introduce 'Acceptable Use' Agreements governing access to the online environment by their students, together with the necessary supporting policies, and

- to encourage all Australian schools to familiarise students, teachers, and parents with the ThinkUknow program, and the Cyber-Safety Help Button and other resources of the Australian Communications and Media Authority to promote the cyber-safety message.

Recommendation 15

That the Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth and the Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy consider extending the Australian Communications and Media Authority's *Connect-ED* program and other training programs to non-administration staff in Australian schools including school librarians, chaplains and counsellors.