



D10/74410

**Senator Dana Wortley**  
**Chair**  
**Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety**  
**PO Box 6021**  
**Parliament House**  
**CANBERRA ACT 2600**

1 Treasury Place  
GPO Box 4912VV  
Melbourne, Victoria 3002  
DX 210753  
Telephone: (03) 9651 5000  
Facsimile: (03) 9651 5054  
Email: [premier@dpc.vic.gov.au](mailto:premier@dpc.vic.gov.au)  
Internet: [www.premier.vic.gov.au](http://www.premier.vic.gov.au)

**Dear Senator Wortley**

### **INQUIRY INTO CYBER-SAFETY ISSUES**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the Commonwealth Parliament's Joint Select Committee Inquiry into cyber-safety issues affecting children and young people.

I would like to highlight to the Committee a number of initiatives that the Victorian Government has introduced to promote a safe online environment for children and young people. While it is not standard practice for Victoria to make a submission of this nature, it may be valuable for the Committee to be apprised of the strategies and initiatives being pursued in this State.

Before detailing these actions, it is important to note that the internet, and information technology more broadly, provides students and schools with a new world of opportunities, as well as potential risks. Innovative technologies play a key role in personalising education, and motivating and inspiring students to learn.

To maximise the opportunities new technologies present for teaching and learning, the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) is developing the KnowledgeBank: Next Generation (KB:NG) portal, which will provide access to a range of quality assured and targeted digital resources for teaching and learning. The KB:NG project will also evaluate and research innovative ways to use new technologies that suit the way today's students learn, collaborate and network.

#### **Respect in Schools strategy**

As part of the Victorian Government's Respect Agenda, DEECD is also developing and will implement a *Respect in Schools* strategy that includes advice on dealing with bullying and cyberbullying. The strategy includes the reviewing the *Safe Schools are Effective Schools* policy with a view to replacing it with a new resource called *Building Respectful and Safe Schools*, demonstration projects to trial new approaches and document processes and outcomes, curriculum guidance and state-wide professional learning for teachers.





The *Building Respectful and Safe Schools* resource will provide renewed guidance to promote and support safe and respectful learning environments. This encompasses a broad definition of the school environment including digital learning spaces, communication using digital technologies, and situations when students are outside the classroom.

This new resource is also a supporting document to the *Effective Schools are Engaging Schools: Student Engagement* policy guidelines which require all Victorian government schools to develop and apply a Student Engagement Policy articulating the rights, responsibilities and shared expectations of everyone in the school community, including detailed information and strategies to prevent and respond to incidents of bullying (including cyberbullying) and other forms of unacceptable behaviour.

## **Learning On Line**

### Website

The Learning On Line website presents DEECD's advice for schools on cybersafety and the responsible use of digital technologies (<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/management/elearningsupportservices/www/default.htm>). This website has been developed to help schools make the most of the opportunities presented by new developments in, and increased accessibility to digital technologies. At the same time it aims to support the wellbeing of students in their use of digital technologies by minimising risks that may arise through the use of these technologies.

The website includes recommendations and resources for use by school leaders and classroom teachers to develop a whole school environment that supports the safe and responsible use of digital technologies. It includes many practical resources and templates that can be customised to suit the needs of the individual school.

For school leaders, advice to support policy development and Acceptable Use Agreements is provided along with internet management advice. The Learning On Line website also promotes the importance of supporting students to take increasing responsibility for their own actions and presents strategies to develop student leadership, action and voice to minimise incidences of cyberbullying.

Learning and teaching resources for use by teachers to support the development of student behaviours, skills and understanding of online safety and the responsibilities that underlie the use of digital technologies are also included. These resources use videos, animations and online games to present key messages and practices that students can use in engaging and interactive ways. The resources also include those developed by key national and international organisations, such as the Australian Communications and Media Authority and Childnet International.

### Cybersafety pilot program

In May 2010, Victorian schools were notified of the opportunity to participate in the pilot of the Learning On Line Cybersafety program. The pilot program is focused on cybersafety with a particular emphasis on developing children's ability to act safely and responsibly in their online worlds, and prepare them to effectively protect themselves and resolve potential issues that can be encountered online.



The Learning On Line Cybersafety pilot program is aimed at three levels:

- Years 3/4 program – Cybersmart: What does it mean to be cybersmart?
- Years 5/6 program – Shout Out, Make a Difference
- Years 7-10 program – Bystanders: What action can I take?

Each level of the pilot program will require students to participate in two online sessions where they will:

- discuss behaviours and strategies that will assist them to stay safe online;
- devise a series of questions that will assist them to collect data specific to their community's needs; and
- examine their data and begin to visualise the action they will undertake in order to raise awareness of cybersafety in their community.

The pilot program will conclude with the Student Action Teams attending a Celebration Day and presenting their action to the other pilot program participants. The action from each school will be submitted into a program competition for a chance to win a prize for their school. The actions collated throughout the pilot program will be shared with the wider education community through the DEECD teaching and learning portal FUSE ([www.education.vic.gov.au/FUSE](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/FUSE)).

A range of schools from across Victorian regions and sectors have been selected to participate in round one of the pilot program. Round one began in June 2010, with a teacher briefing session, followed by the commencement of the pilot program for students, both held in the DEECD Virtual Conference Centre. Round one will conclude with a Celebration Day in August 2010.

The pilot program will be formally evaluated to examine the benefits of the program in promoting positive action for students to raise awareness of and encourage cybersafety, as well as the implementation of the program and the recommendations for future programs. Any necessary amendments will be made to the program before it is made available to all Victorian schools in Term 3, 2010.

### **Youth Central Website**

Victoria's Youth Central website is the Government's web-based initiative for young people aged 12-25 ([www.youthcentral.vic.gov.au](http://www.youthcentral.vic.gov.au)). This website devotes an entire section to 'Cyber Smarts', which includes guidelines for young people on how to protect themselves from cyber-bullying, tips for keeping the 'person versus private' balance right, and how to be 'cyber-safe'.

### **Working with young people**

In the 2010/11 Budget, the Victorian Government committed \$3.6 million to enable six community based organisations to extend their cyber safety education programs to more school aged young people, particularly those from diverse or marginalised backgrounds who are often more at risk of bullying behaviours. This initiative will fund community organisations to develop young leaders who will work with their peers to help reduce bullying behaviours and minimise the impact of bullying by giving vulnerable youth the skills to keep themselves safe online.



In October 2009, DEECD convened the Leading Responsibly in a Digital World student summit attended by 230 Year 10 students. The summit facilitated two-way discussion between adults and young people about the issues associated with digital technologies. The students summarised the day's thoughts and declared each school's personal commitment to take action and lead responsibly in a digital world. The Summit revealed students' views that proactive cultural change is essential to combating cyberbullying, and also that students need support to take action.

The Youth Affairs Council Victoria (YACVic), a not-for-profit organisation funded by the Victorian Office for Youth, Department of Planning and Community Development, has also hosted a number of events which bring together young people, teachers, youth service providers and researchers to examine the prevalence and impact of bullying in Victoria and to look for ideas for interventions and solutions, including "The Sticks and Stones and Mobile Phones – Bullying in the New Millennium" forum, hosted in Melbourne on 27 August 2009.

### **Safe and Supportive School Communities: Finding workable solutions for countering bullying, harassment and violence in schools**

DEECD is an active member of, and financially contributes to, the national *Safe and Supportive School Communities: Finding workable solutions for countering bullying, harassment and violence in schools* project for the Australian Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs Senior Official's Committee.

This is the only national project that brings together representatives from all Australian educational jurisdictions in active ongoing collaboration to create safer school communities free from bullying, harassment and violence in schools. The widely known and well-respected comprehensive *Bullying. No Way!* website ([www.bullyingnoway.com.au](http://www.bullyingnoway.com.au)) is a key outcome of this project to date.

Throughout 2010-11 the project group will particularly focus on strategic support for implementation of the National Safe Schools Framework (NSSF) and related national priorities and through the following activities:

- provision of an agreed national definition of bullying, harassment and violence developed in a national and international context in consultation with key researchers for inclusion in the NSSF;
- investigation of evaluation tools to help schools assess the effectiveness of available resources and programs so they can choose those which best suit their needs;
- assessment of whether providing a 'toolkit' or checklist of effective practice in schools is appropriate and feasible;
- provision of position papers on priority or emerging issues including school-based violence and reporting on bullying; and
- update the *Bullying. No Way!* website to enhance resources and reflect current research.



## **Legal landscape**

Victoria does not directly regulate social networking. Under the *Crimes Act 1958*, Victoria has the power to prosecute crimes which may arise from actions taken on social networking sites, for example:

- threats to kill;
- stalking, including repeatedly using the internet to publish material about someone which is designed to make them apprehensive;
- abduction with intention to rape; and
- sexual penetration of a child under 16.

Victoria has also recently introduced the *Personal Safety Intervention Orders Bill*, which will provide people with better protection against stalking and other inappropriate behaviour, including cyber and schoolyard bullying.

Under last year's amendments to the *Sex Offenders Registration Act*, registered sex offenders must now provide additional personal details including internet, instant messaging, facebook and chat room user names or any other user names or identity used by the person on the internet or through other electronic communication services.

Victoria Police has a number of dedicated officers within the Sexual Crime Squad – the Internet Child Exploitation Team – that target offenders who use the internet to groom young teens via social media. Victoria Police are able to access the information on the Sex Offenders Register and can use this information to target offenders who use the internet to groom young teens via social media.

Victoria also supported the establishment of the National Cybercrime Working Group to review Australian arrangements to fight cybercrime.

## **Victorian Government Support for the Alannah and Madeline Foundation**

Finally, as Victorian Premier I am proud to be the Victorian Patron of the Alannah and Madeline Foundation. Victoria, along with the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, actively supports the Foundation's Cyber Safety and Wellbeing pilot in Victoria schools and, in 2009, contributed \$250,000 to the pilot program. The program will contribute to our understanding of the best ways to ensure our children benefit from the learning opportunities provided by the internet in a safe way.

I hope that this information is of value to the Committee. If you would like any further information about Victoria's activity in this area, you can contact Ms Katrina Reyen, Acting General Manager, Innovation and Next Best Practice, Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, on (03) 9637 2962.

**Yours sincerely**

**HON JOHN BRUMBY MP**  
Premier of Victoria