

INTERNET SAFETY FOR STUDENTS ATTENDING SCHOOLS IN WA

The internet is a valuable educational tool for children and young people, providing easy access to wide range of materials for homework and research. However, as with any tool, there are some inherent risks to students using the Internet. The following information is provided with the intent of raising awareness of some strategies that can be used by schools and families to counter these risks.

Information for Schools

If school staff become aware or have a strong suspicion that a student is at risk due to Internet contact, this should be managed in the same manner as any disclosure or suspicion of child abuse, in accordance with the *Child Protection Policy*. See 'Our Policies' on the Department's Intranet: <http://policies.det.wa.edu.au/> In the case of threats posed via the Internet, school staff are advised to contact the Operations Manager, Child Protection Squad, on 9492 5444 or A/H 0421 617 141.

In terms of prevention strategies, schools will already be aware of the Department's *Educational Institutions - Legal Aspects of Internet Compliance* kit, specifically Section 8: Offensive Material on the Internet. This information is also accessible through the 'Our Policies' link: <http://policies.det.wa.edu.au/>

The Department provides a central filtering service for schools through its black list service. Additional filtering can be done at school level if a higher level is required. Information regarding filtering is available from <http://www.det.wa.edu.au/education/cmisis/eval>

This site also provides information on Acceptable Use Policies. Online templates are available for written agreements between students, parents and the school with regards to acceptable use of the Internet.

Given recent publicity about detection and arrests of cyberpredators, parents may be seeking reassurance and advice about their children's safety. The following information for parents can be adapted by schools and provided to families.

Information for Parents

The internet is a valuable educational tool for children and young people, providing easy access to wide range of materials for homework and research. However, as with any tool, there are some inherent risks to students using the Internet.

With increased use of the Internet and other technology for teaching and learning, schools are doing everything possible to ensure students are not exposed to inappropriate material online. Some schools may request that students and/or parents sign a written agreement regarding appropriate Internet use.

At home, parents can take the following steps to ensure their children's online experiences are safe and pleasant:

- Remind children that people online may not be who they say they are.
- It is helpful to keep the computer in a public area at home, so you can keep an eye on what's going on.
- Reinforce safety messages and continue to remind children of the need to protect their privacy.
- Specifically, they should not give out personal information such as name, address, phone number (including mobile phones), and should check profiles to ensure the information there doesn't identify them.

- Remind children that identifying information also includes school, year group, hair colour, suburb, sporting team and picture. Children need to be aware that any information they post on the Internet is public and difficult to remove.
- Encourage them to log out of a chat session if it becomes unpleasant or uncomfortable, and to speak with a parent or trusted adult when these issues arise.
- Report inappropriate behaviour or material, eg call the police, contact your Internet or chat room provider, or contact the Virtual Global Task Force (http://www.virtualglobaltaskforce.com/reprt_abuse.html)

The Net Alert website produces a free Internet Safety Newsletter every month containing advice and information on Internet safety issues. This is distributed via email and you can view past issues online.

A pamphlet called "Who's Chatting to Your Kids?" is available for download from the WA Police website. It is also attached for your information.

Useful websites:

<http://www.acma.gov.au>

<http://www.netalert.com.au>

<http://www.cybersmartkids.com.au>

<http://www.police.wa.gov.au/Services/Services.asp?ChildAbuse>

To report inappropriate behaviour or material you can call Crime Stoppers: 1800 333 000