The new Australian Families Guide to the Internet web site was developed by the ABA supported by the National Office for the Information Economy, and is designed to help families, parents, carers and children have a productive and rewarding time on the Internet.

Australian families guide to the Internet launched

The Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, Senator the Hon. Richard Alston, launched the Australian Families Guide To The Internet, a web site developed by the ABA, in Sydney on 27 November.

'The objective of the site is to provide parents and carers with information and tools so that they can guide their children towards a rewarding, productive and safe experience of the Internet—even if they don't know much about the Internet itself,' said Professor David Flint, ABA Chairman.

'The Internet is opening up a new world for children and is likely to change the way we communicate, entertain ourselves, study and work in the future. This is a challenge for parents who may be struggling to keep abreast with these technological changes,' said Professor Flint.

The 'Australian Families Guide to the Internet' site has been designed to help parents support children in getting the best from the Internet, while protecting them from the worst. As with the real world there are some parts of the Internet that are not safe for children. Young children in particular need parental supervision to stay safe online. Even when children know more than parents about the Internet, parents know more about the world and that knowledge can be used to guide children in the online world.

The site is a community education project developed by the ABA with the assistance of education, library, child development and web design experts, and funding from the National Office for the Information Economy.

What's on the site

Australian Families Guide to the Internet includes:
• links to good sites for children and teenagers, including sites for fact finding, help with homework, and just for fun;
• tips for parents on how to help children of all ages safely get the best out of the Internet;
• information on how to find things online and explanations of the jargon;
• information on risks to children and what to do about them;
• suggested Internet use rules as a starting point for parents to develop their own rules;
• a quiz for children on Internet safety rules with the chance to win a year's subscription to Kids.net, an Internet 'safe zone' for children; and
• ideas for parents on how to support their children's education in this new technology whether or not they have Internet access at home.

The site has numerous links to web sites appropriate for children. The ABA looked for sites that are appropriate for children within specified age groups and meet six main criteria. They are that the site:
• is entertaining;
• is well made;
• enhances a child's understanding and experience;
• is appropriate for Australian children;
• has content which does not demean or discriminate against any person or group, present images or events in a way which is unduly frightening to children; or present images or events which may encourage children to engage in activities dangerous to them; and
• if it carries advertisements and sponsorship announcements, they are clearly distinguishable from information to a child viewer.

At the launch of the Australian Families Guide to the Internet web site: (L–R) Lara Cox (who plays Anita in 'Heartbreak High'); Senator Alston; Callan Mulvey (Drazic in 'Heartbreak High'); Professor Flint and students from St Therese's Primary School, Lakemba, Sydney.

Visit <www.aba.gov.au/family>, launched as part of Online Australia Day.
For parents who may not have access to the Internet themselves the ABA has also produced a brochure, *What Every Family Should Know about the Internet*. Call the ABA on (02) 9334 7700 for copies.