

**Launch**

Net Detectives will be launched in Australia on 25 September 2003 by the ABA, working in partnership with UK agency Childnet International.

Participation invited

Schools across Australia are invited to participate in various Net Detectives activities.

For more information

email:
Net-Detectives@aba.gov.au

Net detectives

Late in the evening of 22 July members of the Content Assessment section took part in a session of 'Net Detectives' being run for schools in the UK. Sharon Trotter, Richard Fraser, Nada Rogic, Rosalie O'Neale and Graham Rodrick worked in the virtual Control Room, answering questions from more than 35 teams of primary school students taking part in the game around Britain.

Net Detectives is an online activity which promotes Internet safety for young people (particularly young people in the upper primary school to lower secondary school age range) and which is designed specifically for use in the school environment.

The activity connects young people, working in teams on a web site, with experts in an online control room. Participants in the control room may include organisations such as the ABA and Childnet International, teachers, local police and child advocates.

Participating teams of children assume the role of a teacher as they work through an unfolding scenario. The scenario is fictional but realistic, involving a girl's experience of meeting someone in real life that she has met in a chat room. Clues relating to the scenario are sent out periodically

from the control room and teams work co-operatively interrogating the data and posing questions and theories about what is happening. Teachers provide guidance for students and lead the discussion on Internet safety that follows.

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Part of the ABA Content Assessment team at a recent link up with the UK for Net Detective: l-r: Richard Fraser, assistant manager, Sharon Trotter, Manager, Nada Rogic, assessor.

Internet chat rooms are popular with young people, text messages and email help young people stay in touch. Richard Fraser, assistant manager, Content Assessment section at the ABA, provides some advice for potential chatters.

Chatting safely on the Internet ;-)

Internet chat rooms are popular with young people and Internet chat is often used by children and teenagers, in conjunction with mobile phone text messaging and email, to make and stay in touch with friends, plan social activities and even do homework!

There are many positive aspects of chat rooms – they can help children to build social, literacy and conversation skills, as well as being a fun way to learn about computers and the Internet. Internet chat is also being used by some education bodies to brainstorm ideas, conduct role-play scenarios and provide tutoring and guidance. However, as with the Internet

generally – and the 'real world' for that matter – there are certain risks associated with chat rooms that families need to be aware of.

Internet chat allows Internet users to converse in real time – either as a group in a chat room or on a one-on-one basis. Many popular web sites host chat rooms as part of their service. Alternatively, dedicated chat programs can be used to connect to chat networks. Some chat rooms are supervised by chat moderators, but most are unsupervised.

While most people who use chat are honest and polite, some take advantage of the fact that they can't be seen or heard by the person they are chatting to. Of particular concern to the ABA