



'Net Detectives' Internet safety game

Australian children can now learn how to chat safely on the Internet, with the Australian launch of Net Detectives by the ABA on 25 September. The (then) Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, Senator the Hon. Richard Alston, formally launched the initiative at International Grammar School, Ultimo.

Originally developed by the United Kingdom-based Internet safety body Childnet International in partnership with a number of other community bodies, Net Detectives uses the Internet itself to teach young people key Internet safety messages – especially those related to use of Internet chat rooms. The ABA, by agreement with Childnet, has adapted the activity for use in Australian schools, as part of its program of activities to educate the community about Internet safety.

'With more and more families going online all the time, and chat rooms being particularly popular amongst young people, it's important to understand how to manage the potential risks associated with this activity. In particular, the ABA is concerned children may experience contact from people who are not who they say they are,' said ABA Chairman Professor David Flint.

Nigel Williams, Chief Executive of Childnet, said at the launch, 'Net Detectives has proved very successful in Europe and won two prestigious awards. We are delighted to work with the ABA to provide an additional fun way of communicating internet safety to Australian children.'

The key messages of Net Detectives are:

- Parents should monitor their children's use of the Internet, particularly chat rooms;
- Children should never give out personal information when they're chatting online;
- If children want to meet face-to-face someone that they have chatted with, they should always take a parent with them.

The ABA would like to thank the International Grammar School Principal, Ms Kerrie Murphy, for assisting the ABA with the launch of Net Detectives.

Net Detectives

Five teams of children from International Grammar School participated in the launch, as well as teams of children from Green Point Christian College, Kincumber Public School, Woodport Public School, Oatley Public School and The Coast Christian School.

The activity was managed by a group of experts, representing law enforcement, education and child welfare bodies, and the Internet industry, in a virtual 'control room' located adjacent to the area in which the IGS children will be located. Further information about each of the experts is provided below. Students try and solve the scenario with the help of their teachers who are briefed beforehand. All schools must register before taking part.

When playing the game, students assume the role of a teacher who investigates bullying activity taking place at a school. It becomes apparent that the activity has links to the Internet – and could have been avoided if some basic Internet safety rules had been followed!

Experts

Experts sit in the control room and send out messages including information and tasks. They also respond to any questions from participants. Experts participating in the launch were:

- Ms Keren Skyring, Primary Teacher-Librarian, International Grammar School
- Ms Gillian Calvert, New South Wales Commissioner for Children and Young People
- Ms Sasha Carrel, Manager Regulatory Policy, Telstra Retail and member of the

Internet Industry Association's Online Content Virtual Taskforce

- Ms Kaaren Koomen, Group Manager Multimedia and Regulatory Policy, Singtel Optus, Deputy Chair of the Internet Industry Association and Board Member of Net Alert
- Senior Constable Russell Ng, Child Exploitation Internet Unit, Child Protection Sex Crime Squad, New South Wales Police Service, and
- Ms Mary-Jane Salier, General Counsel, OzEmail.

The ABA and the Internet

The ABA administers Australia's co-regulatory scheme for Internet content, established under Schedule 5 to the Broadcasting Services Act. As part of the scheme, the ABA provides advice and assistance to families about a range of Internet safety matters, primarily through its Internet safety web site for families, www.cybersmartkids.com.au and related printed resources.

Interested in participating?

Schools and other bodies who are interested in participating in future Net Detectives activities should send an email to net-detectives@aba.gov.au.



Because of the vast and global nature of the Internet, awareness and education are seen as essential components of a strategy to manage the potential risks associated with some aspects of the Internet. The ABA works with international Internet safety bodies such as Childnet International to raise awareness of Internet safety issues and provide parents with information that helps them supervise their children's Internet usage. Further information about the ABA's role in relation to the Internet is available at www.aba.gov.au/internet.

Internet chat

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!

Of particular concern to the ABA and other Internet safety experts is that children may encounter in chat rooms people who aren't who they say they are. The ABA recognises that safety in chat rooms is a key aspect of Internet safety generally, and the ABA's Internet safety resources and activities include components directed specifically at chat.

- The ABA's Internet safety website for families, www.cybersmartkids.com.au, sets out a range of chat safety tips.

- The same information is available in printed form in the ABA's brochure titled *Tips to help you chat safely* – copies of the brochure are being distributed through a number of schools and community bodies, and are available from the ABA free of charge.
- Following the Australian launch of Net Detectives, the ABA intends to run additional events based on this activity as part of its program of community education activities.

Childnet International

Childnet International is a registered charity set up in 1996 with the mission to work in partnership with others around the world to help make the Internet a great and safe place for children. The vision of the organisation is to ensure that all those involved in developing, producing, controlling, using and regulating international telecommunications (current and future), recognise and implement policies and programmes which prioritise the rights of children so that their interests are both promoted and protected.

The ABA has worked with Childnet on a range of Internet safety matters since 1997. Childnet's (then) executive director Nigel Williams spoke at the launch and Childnet representatives from the UK assisted the ABA in managing the activity.

Further information about Childnet is available on its website at www.childnet-int.org.



At the launch:



Nigel Williams, (then) chief executive Childnet International, looks on as a school team plays Net Detective at the launch.



Experts in the control room: Mary-Jane Salier, General Counsel, OzEmail; Senior Constable Russell Ng, Child Exploitation Internet Unit, Child Protection Sex Crime Squad, New South Wales Police Service; and Nigel Williams.



Senator Alston, (then) Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, launches Net Detectives.