



# Queensland children play Net Detectives

**M**ore than one hundred and twenty schoolchildren from across Queensland participated in the ABA's third Net Detectives activity. Thirty-seven teams played in the activity on 25 February, including Ayr East State School, Townsville; Coorparoo State School, Brisbane; Fitzgerald State School, Mackay; and Clarendon State School near Ipswich.

'Net Detectives is an exciting and innovative online role-play game which helps to teach children key Internet safety messages, especially those relating to Internet chat rooms,' said Professor Flint. 'It provides a safe environment where children learn to identify the dangers of meeting people who may not be all they say they are.'

## Key messages

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 a face-to-face meeting with someone they've chatted with, they should always take a parent with them.

The children played the role of Mr Saunders, a schoolteacher who learns that one of his students, Sarah, appears to be being bullied. Guided by a series of clues, children worked in teams to solve the mystery of what was worrying Sarah, and why. Along the way they learnt some important tips for chatting safely online.

The ABA, in agreement with Childnet International, has adapted the activity for use in Australian schools as part of its program of activities to educate the community about Internet safety.

Net Detectives was launched in Australia on 25 September 2003.

The ABA is hoping to conduct more Net Detectives activities in the future.

## Net Detectives

The Net Detectives activity was developed by the United Kingdom-based body Childnet International in co-operation with other community bodies, and is pitched at young people in the upper primary school to lower secondary school age range. It uses the Internet to teach young people key Internet safety messages – especially those related to using Internet chat rooms. Students try to solve



In the control room: ABA staff and experts

a problem 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 in 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

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' in the ABA's Sydney office. The group was led by ABA member Jane Marquard. The experts sent out messages including information and tasks and responded to questions from participants.

Guest experts for this event included Parry Aftab, Executive Director of WiredSafety.org, a comprehensive US online safety and educational program. Ms Aftab is a security, privacy and cyberspace lawyer, as well as an author and child advocate; and Senior Constable Russell Ng, Child Exploitation Internet Unit, Child Protection Sex Crime Squad, New South Wales Police Service.

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Senior Constable Russell Ng

### 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. 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](http://www.cybersmartkids.com.au) and a series of pamphlets.

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 on our web site, [www.aba.gov.au](http://www.aba.gov.au)

### Internet chat

Internet chat rooms are popular with young people who

often use Internet chat, 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 same information is available in printed form in the ABA's brochure, *Tips to help you chat safely*, which is distributed through a number of schools and community bodies.

### 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 programs 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.

### For more information

For more information about:

- the ABA's safety web site for families [www.cybersmartkids.com.au](http://www.cybersmartkids.com.au)
- chat safety tips [www.cybersmartkids.com.au](http://www.cybersmartkids.com.au)
- Tips to help you chat safely* (available free from the ABA or download from [www.aba.gov.au](http://www.aba.gov.au))
- the ABA's role in relation to the Internet [www.aba.gov.au](http://www.aba.gov.au)
- Childnet International: [www.childnet-int.org/](http://www.childnet-int.org/)

### Online safety awards to ABA

The ABA and its Internet safety web site, [www.cybersmartkids.com.au](http://www.cybersmartkids.com.au), have been awarded a special Wired Kids award for their work in promoting online safety and parental awareness on the value of a safe Internet.

The award was presented to Ms Jane Marquard, on behalf of the ABA, at a brief ceremony before the running of the successful 'Net Detectives' activity on 25 February 2004.

The award was presented by Dr Parry Aftab, Executive Director of WiredSafety.org, a US online safety and educational program.

Dr Aftab is a security, privacy and cyberspace lawyer, as well as an author and child advocate.

A separate award was presented to Andree Wright, Director of the Industry Performance and Review Branch, for her work protecting Australian families online.



L-R: Jane Marquard, ABA member; Dr Parry Aftab, Executive Director of WiredSafety.org; and Andree Wright, ABA Director Industry Performance and Review Branch, at the awards ceremony.