



The ACMA continues its fight against cyberbullying

Following the recent release of two cybersafety initiatives for children—a new Hector's World™ episode on cyberbullying and a national Cybersmart Detectives activity—comes the ACMA's latest teaching resource to help combat cyberbullying, *Let's Fight It Together*.

Launched on 25 September, *Let's Fight It Together* is a short film targeted at teenagers. The resource aims to equip students with strategies to avoid cyberbullying and encourages them to get help if it has occurred. The program also shows parents and teachers how they can provide support to teenagers

hostile messages can be sent at any time from any place; they can be sent anonymously and distributed more rapidly to wider audiences. For the target of the cyberbullying, there can be nowhere to run—places previously considered safe and personal are safe no longer.'

for young Australians, teachers and parents,' said Senator Conroy.

Presented in a DVD format, *Let's Fight It Together* stages a cyberbullying scenario derived from real experiences of teenagers who have been cyberbullied. The DVD includes interviews with the characters in the story—teachers, parents and young people—about their perspective on the cyberbullying scenario. It also features vox pops with students who discuss their understanding and experience of cyberbullying. An accompanying booklet offers a comprehensive guide for teachers including lesson plans and activities.

The impact of cyberbullying—the use of social networking sites, mobile text messages, instant messaging, email and other websites to bully others—can be very damaging, and is becoming a significant issue for children and for schools.

affected by cyberbullying. As with all ACMA cyberbullying resources, *Let's Fight It Together* is available free to all schools in Australia.

'The impact of cyberbullying—the use of social networking sites, mobile text messages, instant messaging, email and other websites to bully others—can be very damaging, and is becoming a significant issue for children and for schools,' said Chris Chapman, Chairman of the ACMA.

'Cyberbullying can be more harmful than traditional forms of bullying:

The Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, Senator Stephen Conroy, said educational resources such as *Let's Fight It Together* are a key part of the Australian Government's comprehensive approach to cybersafety.

'New technologies offer a world of opportunity but it is important that young people are empowered to address issues such as bullying in the online environment. This new resource will help raise awareness while providing important advice and support

Let's Fight It Together was originally developed by Childnet International and the UK Department for Children, Schools and Families, where it has received high acclaim. In addition to use in schools, the resource is also designed for parents and organisations working with, or for, young people.

The Sydney launch of the program was attended by the chief executive officer of Childnet International, Will Gardner, the Executive Director of Netsafe New Zealand, Martin Cocker, and



At the launch of *Let's Fight It Together*, from left to right: Rosalie O'Neale of the ACMA; Will Gardner, CEO of Childnet International and Chris Chapman, Chairman of the ACMA; Chris Chapman presenting; Will Gardner presenting.

representatives of Australian education and child welfare bodies. The highly successful launch drew a significant amount of media attention.

A workshop for cybersafety education practitioners on how to effectively communicate with children about cybersafety issues was held after the launch. The workshop provided advice on a range of subjects, including:

- > the importance of listening to children and young people
- > the need to involve education practitioners in the design and delivery of cybersafety programs
- > the need to properly evaluate the success of such programs, to be sure that they are making a positive difference.

Schools and organisations can order a free copy of *Let's Fight It Together* by contacting the Cybersafety Contact Centre on 1800 880 176. ☎

For more information on *Let's Fight It Together* and other ACMA cybersafety initiatives, visit the Cybersmart website at www.cybersmart.gov.au.

What is cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying can include:

- > spreading rumours online
- > sending unwanted taunting, or threatening messages
- > excluding individuals from social interaction online
- > defacing images on or setting up fake profiles on social networking sites.

Anyone can be bullied online and the bully can act anonymously if he or she wants to.

People can also be bullied online by groups of people such as class groups or collectively by members of an online community.

Cyberbullying in Australia

Research indicates that cyberbullying becomes more prevalent among school students in the mid-secondary years. An average of seven to 10 per cent of students in Years 4 to 9 report that they have been cyberbullied, according to the *Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence Study* undertaken by Edith Cowan University for the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

A July 2009 ACMA quantitative survey of more than 800 students aged 8 to 17 years—*Click and Connect: Young Australians' use of online social media*—indicated that the incidence of cyberbullying increases with age. By the age of 16 to 17 years, nearly one in five report having experienced some form of cyberbullying.