



ESMART LIBRARIES FOR CYBERSAFETY

JOANNA WHITFORD tells us how the eSmart Libraries framework has helped to bring about positive change to the way libraries relate and work with their communities now that the online world is a part of everyday life.

eSmart Libraries is a free, purpose-built system developed by The Alannah and Madeline Foundation, with support from the Telstra Foundation that provides library staff and users with the skills for smart, safe and responsible use of technology. It is now in almost half of public libraries in Australia.

The program is adaptable and flexible to reflect the variations and diversity in the library's location, current staff skills, resource availability and level of cybersafety awareness across the community.

eSmart Libraries requires the library service to register, review their current level of cybersafety and complete actions for accreditation. The process is adaptable to specific requirements and can take from six months to two years to complete.

Sue North, Wanneroo Public Libraries (WA) Manager, believes that it is important to consider the impact on children and the wider community when accessing the internet in libraries. 'eSmart Libraries fits our aspiration to continually build on our existing technology strength and be recognised leaders in the community in terms of innovation and access to digital technology,' she said. 'Patrons and the wider community benefit from the library's commitment to the principles of the eSmart Libraries program. Staff have benefited through planned

training resulting in increased confidence in dealing with both cybersafety and new technologies.'

Astrid Hancock from Mount Isa City Library Service (QLD) said one of the fundamental changes the library has seen by implementing the framework has been the training and inclusion of all staff. 'Through identifying areas that they required more knowledge in, and gaining that knowledge, they now have the capacity to deal with situations as they arise,' Ms Hancock said.

Anna Marie Restall of Brimbank Libraries (VIC) said displays and posters placed around each branch help make staff aware of the importance of being cybersafe. They have also been engaged in monthly conversations focused on cybersafe issues and suggestions to improve safety.

eSmart Libraries provides a framework and access to an online system tool to review actions and track progress, with links to resources which have been created and shared by other libraries. Other support includes training, newsletters, phone and email assistance. It provides practical solutions to help the library feel confident that it has integrated cybersafety into its policy, agreements, staff development, organisational culture, training and day-to-day operations. 🌐

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