

Townsville schools play Cybersmart Detectives

More than two hundred Townsville schoolchildren recently participated in Cybersmart Detectives, ACMA's online safety activity that teaches children key internet safety messages. It was the second activity to be held in Queensland and the first to exclusively involve Townsville schools.

Cybersmart Detectives is an innovative online game where children can learn, in a safe environment, tips for safe online chatting and ways to identify dangers associated with meeting people online. 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.

ACMA organised the event in partnership with the Townsville Police's Juvenile Aid Bureau. The bureau approached ACMA to run Cybersmart Detectives after receiving interest from schools eager to register for the activity. The bureau provided a virtual 'control room' to guide students through the activity. School-based police officers were on hand to answer student questions after the event. Support was also provided by Queensland Police, who operated a virtual control room at their Brisbane Headquarters.

Aimed at young people in the upper primary school age range, Cybersmart Detectives uses the internet to teach young people key internet safety messages, especially those related to use of internet chat rooms. These key messages 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 someone face-to-face who they've chatted with online, they should always take a parent with them
- people may not be who they say they are in the online environment.

The Cybersmart Detectives activity was initially developed by Childnet International, a body based in the United Kingdom, and operated under the name of Net Detectives until 2005. The activity is now independently operated by E-ngagelive. By agreement with E-ngagelive, ACMA adapted the activity for use in Australian schools under the name Cybersmart Detectives, as part of its program of activities to educate the community about internet safety.

The activity is managed by internet safety experts, including law enforcement and internet industry representatives, who deliver clues and respond to questions from virtual control rooms. Children play the role of a Deputy Principal concerned about the welfare of a new student, Sarah, who may be being bullied by someone she has met in an internet chat room. Guided by a series of clues, children work collaboratively in teams to solve the mystery of what is worrying Sarah, and why. Experts respond to the questions and theories posed by the students, and guide the teams through each of the clues. As the scenario unfolds, the children discuss the risks of certain online and offline behaviours, and ways of managing those risks.

Australia's co-regulatory scheme for internet content is administered by ACMA under

the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992*. Awareness and education are seen as essential components of the strategy to manage potential risks associated with the internet. ACMA works with internet safety bodies such as NetAlert

internet safety matters, primarily through its internet safety website, www.cybersmartkids.com.au, and printed resources, such as the brochures *Cybersmart Guide* and *How to be Phone Smart*. The brochures are on the



TOWNSVILLE SCHOOLCHILDREN PARTICIPATING IN THE CYBERSMART KIDS ACTIVITY



to raise awareness of internet safety issues and provide parents with information that helps them supervise their children's internet usage.

As part of the scheme, ACMA provides advice and assistance to families about

ACMA website (www.acma.gov.au and go to Internet > Content regulation > Community awareness).