

Launch promotes internet safety for children

Keeping children safe while they're using the internet and mobile technologies can be fraught with difficulty, but the AFP is helping by providing parents, carers and teachers with the knowledge and skills they need to make a difference.

The national rollout of the ThinkUKnow program was officially launched on 19 February at Ithaca Creek State School in Barden, Queensland after the delivery of a successful pilot program in Victoria, the ACT and NSW in 2009.

ThinkUKnow is a partnership between the AFP and Microsoft Australia, which aims to raise awareness among parents, carers and teachers about how young people are using new technologies, and how to ensure they use them safely. The national program is also being sponsored by ninemsn, further strengthening the alliance between law enforcement and industry.

Around 500 people attended the national launch, including AFP Commissioner Tony Negus, National Manager High Tech Crime Operations Neil Gaughan, Microsoft's Chief Security Advisor Stuart Strathdee, State and Federal Members of Parliament, representatives from Queensland's Department of Education and Training, students, teachers and parents.

As part of the national rollout, trained volunteers from the AFP, Microsoft and ninemsn will conduct ThinkUKnow seminars in capital cities around Australia, and also in Cairns and Alice Springs. And while

the ThinkUKnow team will endeavour to visit schools in more remote areas, it is also urging schools and parents to visit the website, where they can find online seminars and other information about the program. This ensures that people from non-metropolitan areas have access to the same resources as those who attend a ThinkUKnow presentation.

The aim of the cyber safety initiative is to increase awareness and understanding of the online safety and security risks faced by primary and secondary children and how to minimise these risks. This





01: Attendees at the ThinkUKnow launch. 02: National Manager High Tech Crime Operations Neil Gaughan speaks to the media at the launch, accompanied by Stuart Strathdee.

will be achieved by educating their parents, teachers and carers through interactive presentations.

This enables parents, teachers and carers to educate the young people in their lives about the risks they may encounter online and where they can seek help, and supports the key themes of ThinkUKnow, which are 'have fun', 'stay in control' and 'report'

Minister for Home Affairs, Brendan O'Connor officially launched the national rollout of the program and said that while the internet is a very important educational tool and a great source of entertainment, it also has potential risks and is not a benign playground.

"For that reason we have to be ever-vigilant," he said.

"That is why the Federal Government is behind this initiative. The ThinkUKnow initiative complements the recent legislation that we have introduced into the House of Representatives to protect children from predators and, in particular, to protect them from predators who use the internet for improper and illegal purposes."

"I would like to thank the Australian Federal Police, Microsoft Australia and ninemsn

who, of course, through their combined good work, will ensure that we get this message out."

ThinkUKnow began in the United Kingdom. Its success there led to Australia implementing the initiative as a pilot program, which was then evaluated to ascertain the program's overall effectiveness. The result was positive, with 96 per cent of adults who completed the program reporting that they knew more about the potential risks of the internet than before they commenced the program.

AFP Commissioner Tony Negus says this is a significant result, and praised the efforts being

made by law enforcement, industry and in homes around Australia to protect children from predatory activity on the internet. He said these partnerships are essential in order to adequately address online safety and security issues affecting young people, particularly in relation to technology-enabled crime.

ThinkUKnow is an important part of a suite of initiatives in the whole-of-government approach to protecting children from online offenders. The Australian Government is in the process of changing the laws and increasing the penalties for those who engage in predatory behaviour on the internet.

