ThinkUKnow Australia

What is ThinkUKnow?

ThinkUKnow is an Internet safety program delivering interactive presentations to parents, carers and teachers through primary and secondary schools across Australia using a network of trained volunteers from the Australian Federal Police (AFP) and Microsoft Australia.

Created by the UK Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Centre, ThinkUKnow Australia is being rolled out nationally by the AFP and Microsoft Australia

We are now taking bookings for face-to-face parent, carer and teacher sessions around Australia. In addition to registering for a school presentation, you can obtain further information from the website www.thinkuknow.org.au, in relation to how young people have fun online, and the role that adults can play in helping to keep young people safe.

Cyber-bullying

What is it?

Cyber-bullying involves the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behaviour by an individual or group that is intended to harm others (see www.*cyberbullying.org*).

This form of bullying is often committed using mobile phones or the Internet and includes such activities as:

- Posting hurtful messages on social networking sites.
- Sending repeated unwanted messages either by SMS, instant messaging (IM) or email.
- Excluding someone from an online group.
- Creating fake social networking profiles or websites that are mean and hurtful.

Advice

It is vital to talk to young people about behaving appropriately online and with their mobile phone. They need to be aware that there are real world consequences for their virtual world actions.

Young people also need to know that they can tell someone if they are being cyber-bullied. Ignoring the problem won't make it go away, and there are steps that they can take to address the cyber-bullying. What is most important is that they tell someone.

What to do next

In order to prevent and address cyber-bullying, a useful acronym to remember is I-CURRB.

- Investigate what your children are doing online.
- Communicate with your children.
- Use family safety software to keep track of what your children are able to access online.
- Research your school's and Internet Service Provider's (ISP) policies on cyber-bullying. Online applications, such as IM, will also have their own policies.
- Report cyber-bullying to your child's school and/or ISP. If you have serious concerns for your child's safety, contact your local police.
- Block communications from cyber-bullies. Most IM applications, chat rooms and email account providers allow you to block messages from identified people.

For more information, check out www.thinkuknow.org.au

Online Grooming

The deliberate actions taken by an adult to form a trusting relationship with a child with the intent of later facilitating sexual contact is known as online grooming. This can take place in chat rooms, instant messaging, social networking sites and email. Once contact has been made, child sex offenders then move towards more traditional means of communication such as over the phone.

Advice

It is important to educate young people on the ways in which to recognise inappropriate or suspicious behaviour online. They need to be careful who they communicate with and should never agree to meet in person someone that they have only met online.

It needs to be reinforced that personal information should not be posted or shared over the Internet. Young people need to be aware of what messages they are sending about themselves which may appeal to online child sex offenders.

If you believe that someone has behaved inappropriately or in a sexual manner towards a young person, you should report it. You can report this to the Australian Federal Police (AFP) via their online form.

If you believe a child is in immediate danger or risk, call 000 or contact your local police.

For more information, check out www.thinkuknow.org.au

Sharing Personal Information

Social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace have great appeal for young people, but the information which is shared on a social networking site can potentially be used to identify the physical location of the young person.

Social networking can also be used as part of the grooming process. Child sex offenders may gain information about you from your profile and use that information to communicate with you.

The images and information posted on a social networking site can damage your online reputation. These images may have been posted by the young person themselves or sometimes this happens without the young person's knowledge or permission. Employers may use social networking sites to "research" job candidates. This may not affect young people now, but the content they post on the Internet today, could damage their future prospects.

Young people may lie about their age in order to create a social networking profile. Most social networking sites are restricted to people thirteen years old and above. Young people bypass this restriction by making out that they are older than they really are. This sends out the wrong message to other Internet users and could expose the young person to material which is not age-appropriate.

How can young people stay in control?

The default privacy settings for social networking sites are not necessarily the safest. You should make sure that your profile is set to "private" so that you can control who has access to your details. For more information on how to do this, you should visit the "Privacy" section of the social networking application you are using.

You should never share where you live, your school or any other information which could potentially be used to identify you. It is important to realise that this information can be in a photo, so you should never post photos of yourself in your school or sporting uniform.

Think before you post pictures or videos on your profile. If you aren't happy for the photo to be passed around your dinner table, or shown at your school assembly, it shouldn't be posted online.

Select the "no picture forwarding" option on your social networking profile so that people cannot send your picture to people you do not know.

Don't make out that you are older than you really are. If you are lying about your age, imagine how many other people are lying too.

Don't share your social networking password with anyone.

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