

# Bravehearts Position Statement



## Keeping Safe Online

Safety for children and young people on the Internet is front-page news and Bravehearts is committed to doing all we can to ensure that young people and their parents or carers are informed on how to ensure the Internet is a safe experience.

Technology is opening new opportunities for everyone, promoting creativity and effective learning. Children and young people are using the Internet more and more, and from an earlier age. The Internet is more assessable than every before, with around 60% of Australian children and young people going online via mobile devices (Green, Brady, & lafsson, Hartley, & Lumby, 2011).

To use technology effectively requires an awareness of both the benefits and the risks. This in turn, has created a world which can be both fun and exciting as well as providing potential dangers and harm. It is important that parents/carers and young people are aware of these risks and of the steps you can take to minimise them.

### WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

- Exposure to inappropriate material, such as pornography or violence
- Grooming
- Physical danger, such as meeting up with strangers met online
- Unwanted advertising & marketing towards children
- Exploitation
- Sexting
- Harassment & bullying
- Exposure of personal information & privacy
- Financial risks
- Unreliable information
- Spam
- Viruses

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## INFORMATION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

No matter what your age, the Internet is a great place to explore. There is so much information available at the touch of the keyboard and it makes it just so easy to keep in touch with friends and family... and of course meet people from around the world.

While on the whole, the Internet is fun and exciting, there are some people who use the Internet for other purposes. Just like in the real world, the cyber world has its risks and dangers; and just like in the real world to keep yourself safe, it is important to be aware of these and to do everything you can to protect yourself and those you care about.

If you are older you might feel that you don't need to take precautions, but it is important to know that just because you are older doesn't mean you are not at risk.

Remember that the Internet is a public forum. That means that whatever you post up there can (and will) be read by other people. You should never post anything on the Internet that you would not want other people to know. You should also remember that the people you meet on the Internet might not be who they seem to be. Because the Internet offers a degree of secrecy, people can be whoever they want.

### ***Things You Can Do***

There are some basic things you can do to keep yourself safe on the Internet and avoid risky and dangerous situations (whether you are searching, texting, instant messaging, in chatrooms or blogging):

- Be as anonymous as possible. So avoid giving out your full name, your address, your telephone number, the name of your school or any other information that someone might use to find out who you are and where you are. You should also not reveal any information like this about your family or friends.
- If you are creating your own e-mail, avoid using your name in the address (eg. john\_brown@...)
- Don't create nicknames or identities that may be interpreted as suggestive (eg. hot12). These types of names will attract some people who you might put you at risk.
- Never get together with someone you meet on line. This is one of the most dangerous things you can do. Even if you think you know someone because you have talked to them on-line, remember that people on the Internet may not be who they seem to be. It is easy to pretend to be someone you are not. If you do want to meet

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someone, make sure you discuss it with your parents, never meet the person alone and make sure you meet in a public place. The safest thing you can do is ask your parents to speak to the other person's parents first and for both of you to bring your parents along when you meet for the first time.

- Think about it before you post any photos. Remember that whatever you upload to the Internet can be downloaded by someone and passed around. One tip is that before you post a photo think about how you would feel about people seeing it.
- Don't respond to abusive or inappropriate e-mails, chats or instant messages. If someone sends you a message that is clearly abusive or makes you feel uncomfortable in any way, don't answer it. People who send these types of messages want you to respond and they will just keep doing it. Show it to your parents or an adult that you trust so that they can alert the appropriate people.
- Talk to your parents or carers about the Internet. Remember that it is most likely that your parents did not grow up with the Internet and they may still not know much about it. They might have concerns about what you do and see on the Internet and it can help you both if you sit down together and talk about how you can avoid dangerous or risky Internet situations.
- Talk to your parents about some of the tools available to make your computer safer for you. Information on things like filters, anti-spyware, pop-up blockers etc can be on various websites (see "Other Useful Sites").

## INFORMATION FOR PARENTS/CARERS

### *Pre-School Aged Children*

This age group is just beginning to learn how the computer works and the joy it can have. This includes visiting children's websites and joining them with friendly emails to family & friends. Be sure to sit with your child during this learning stage on the computer and chose websites which are suitable for your child's age group.

### *Primary School Aged Children*

Increasingly primary school aged children need access to the Internet for school work. Children of this age feel more confident using other services provided by the internet such as chat rooms, with some deciding to search for prohibited material. Your children will also notice marketing material. It is extremely important for your children to know not to give out personal information or details. Spend some time researching the Internet and how to keep your child safe. By making their time on the internet a family activity, you will be able to maintain very close supervision, while teaching them safe online behavior.

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## ***High School Aged Children***

This is the age group where the internet is a necessity to assist your children with research for projects and homework. Your child will want more independence and freedom while using the internet, while their email and instant messaging contacts will grow. This age group may also feel they want to explore prohibited material.

While it is more difficult to keep tight supervision on what your teenager is doing online, it is vital that you stay in touch with them and discuss any issues that may occur. Keeping the computer in a public area in your home can assist with this. Get to know the services your teenager uses, and develop reasonable computer usage rules. with them.

## ***Phones with Internet***

Children with mobile phones give their parents piece of mind knowing they can contact them at any time, but there are some dangers with certain phones on the market. Many mobile phones have access to the internet, just like a computer. This creates the same internet safety issues, except this situation makes it near impossible to supervise your child at all times.

If you decide that your child needs a mobile phone, make sure the device you purchase for them is appropriate for their age and experience. Consider purchasing a phone without an internet access or plan. There are also certain blocks you can put on the phone to stop the user accessing the internet and Bluetooth. This in turn will protect your child against hackers who can track your child's location as the phone is 'always on.'

## ***What can I as a parent do?***

- If you don't already, get to know the Internet. Its important to familiarise yourself with what is available to your child online.
- Talk to your children about the importance of safety online & show them how to implement this.
- Connect to a family-friendly internet service provider & use a family-friendly search engine.
- Set up the computer in a public area in the home - making supervision easier.
- Install safety software (anti-virus, filter and spyware software).
- Reassure your children that you are there if they need help.
- Create a contract or online rules with your children.

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- Take your child seriously if they report anything unsafe on the Internet and forward your concerns on. These can be sent to your Internet Service Provider as well as to the relevant authority (see "Internet Safety Contacts" below).

## ***Tips to share with your kids***

Additional information for your child:

You should NEVER:

- Tell anyone your name, address, phone number or school
- Send a photo of yourself to anyone that you don't know
- Tell anyone your credit card or bank details
- Make plans to meet anyone you find online - people you meet online aren't always who they claim they are
- Talk to anyone who is nasty or makes you feel uncomfortable

You should ALWAYS:

- Be careful who you talk to in chat rooms or on instant messenger
- Ask permission to use chat rooms
- Tell your parents or carer if someone says something to you in an email or chat room that makes you feel uncomfortable or unsafe
- Stay away from websites that are not meant for children
- Remember that people are not always as they seem online

## **ON-LINE RULES**

One of the most proactive steps you can take in protecting your child on the Internet is to sit down with them and come up with your family's on-line safety rules. As important as defining the rules is, this process also opens up a communication line between you and your child to discuss concerns and unsafe situations.

Rules may include, for example:

1. I will not give out personal information such as my address, telephone number, parents' work address/telephone number, or the name and location of my school without my parents' permission.
2. I will tell my parents right away if I come across any information that makes me feel uncomfortable.

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3. I will never agree to get together with someone I "meet" online without first checking with my parents. If my parents agree to the meeting, I will be sure that it is in a public place and bring my mother or father along.
4. I will never send a person my picture or anything else without first checking with my parents.
5. I will not respond to any messages that are mean or in any way make me feel uncomfortable. It is not my fault if I get a message like that. If I do I will tell my parents right away so that they can contact the service provider.
6. I will talk with my parents so that we can set up rules for going online. We will decide upon the time of day that I can be online, the length of time I can be online and appropriate areas for me to visit. I will not access other areas or break these rules without their permission.
7. I will not give out my Internet password to anyone (even my best friends) other than my parents.
8. I will check with my parents before downloading or installing software or doing anything that could possibly hurt our computer or jeopardize my family's privacy
9. I will be a good online citizen and not do anything that hurts other people or is against the law
10. I will help my parents understand how to have fun and learn things online and teach them things about the Internet, computers and other technology.

## INTERNET SAFETY CONTACTS

### **When a child is in immediate danger of abuse:**

Phone: 000 or Crimestoppers on 1800 333 000 or your local police station

### **Report suspected cases of child exploitation or contact with paedophiles to:**

Australian Federal Police, Online Child Sex Exploitation Team  
Virtual Global Taskforce

### **Report inappropriate or illegal online content to:**

Australian Communications and Media Authority

If you have concerns and are not sure who to report them to, please contact Bravehearts.

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