

Teachers Credit Union supports the ThinkUKnow Australia initiative.

To find out more, read the information below, or visit the ThinkUKnow website.

What is ThinkUKnow?

ThinkUKnow is an Internet safety program offering interactive presentations to parents, carers and teachers via 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.

ThinkUKnow 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.

Some topics to discuss with children and teenagers in your care:

Cyber-bullying

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 carried out using mobile phones or the Internet and can include 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.

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, and feel that they are heard.

What parents can do

To remember the following ways to help prevent and address cyber-bullying, use the acronym I-CURRB.

- Investigate what your child is doing online.
- Communicate with your child/ren
- Use family safety software to keep track of what your children are able to access online.
- Research your schools 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.

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.

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 website www.afp.gov.au.

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

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 have repercussions. Social networking can also be used as part of the grooming process. Child sex offenders may gain information about the young person from their profile and use that information to communicate with them. The information could also be used to identify the physical location of the young person.

Most social networking sites are restricted to people thirteen years old and above. However, young people may bypass this restriction by lying about their age in order to create a social networking profile. This can mislead other Internet users and could expose the young person to material which is not age-appropriate.

The images (photos) and information posted on a social networking site can potentially impact on a young person's online reputation. These photos may have been posted by the young person themselves or sometimes this happens without their knowledge or permission. It's worth remembering that employers sometimes 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 affect their future prospects.

How young people can stay in control

- Always 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, visit the "Privacy" section of the social networking application you are using.
- 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 photos 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.
- 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.
- Select the "no picture forwarding" option on your social networking profile so that people cannot send your picture to people you don't know.
- Don't share your social networking password with anyone.

For more information on these and other issues, check out www.thinkuknow.org.au