

MEDIA RELEASE

13 November 2009

NAPCAN TACKLES CYBER BULLIES WITH TEENS ONLINE

An innovative digital campaign was launched this month to help young people reduce the growing incidence of cyber bullying. The campaign, called *Cyber Bullying Affects Real Lives*, educates young internet users about the destructive nature of cyber bullying and empowers them with tools to help prevent it.

The campaign is part of the Smart Online, Safe Offline (SOSO) social initiative, which is a collaboration between the National Association for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (NAPCAN), digital marketing experts Profero, the Telstra Foundation®, Google Australia and the digital media industry.

The campaign includes a two-minute video clip, using YouTube as an educational platform to connect with young people. Once students watch the YouTube video, they can click on a link to an interactive game called *Web Warriors* where they can create a personal avatar character and join other Australian kids to take a stand against cyber bullying.

Research from Edith Cowan University reveals between seven and 10 per cent of young people in years four-to-eight are victims of cyber bullying each school term, with secondary students even more likely to be bullied online.*

Maree Faulkner, CEO of NAPCAN said, “The difference with the SOSO campaign is that it communicates directly with the kids, helping them to understand how they share the responsibility for bullying when they forward hurtful material. Tagged with ‘Share it, spread it, forward it, join it and you’re a bully too’, the aim of SOSO is to get young people to think twice before hitting ‘send’ and forwarding degrading content to share a laugh with friends at the expense of others.”

“The success of the first SOSO campaign, which focused on online predatory behaviour, showed that online interactive games are a really effective way of engaging with young people in this age group. We believe that the SOSO cyber bullying campaign will be successful in helping change online cyber bullying behaviour,” Ms Faulkner said.

Google, which owns YouTube, is providing a YouTube brand channel to share the SOSO message.

Alan Noble, Head of Engineering, Google Australia and NZ, said, "Education is vital for combating cyber bullying and we're proud to support the SOSO campaign through YouTube. YouTube is a great platform for reaching teens and speaking to them in a medium they understand. It's important that people know what action they can take to combat cyber bullying - like using the 'Flag' button on YouTube videos. Hats off to NAPCAN for involving young people in all aspects of their campaign!"

Dr Toni Noble, co-editor of *Bullying Solutions, Evidence-based approaches to bullying*, and senior lecturer in Education and Psychology at the Australian Catholic University said, "The SOSO campaign puts the tools in young people's hands, helping them relate to the harm associated with cyber bullying. SOSO will help stop the cyber bullying cycle and make young people think before participating in harmful behaviour."

The campaign relies on young people exploring the site themselves with the background support of teachers and parents who are urged to be aware of the SOSO message.

The YouTube clip – 'Kid at school gets a pants down – LOL FWD this!!!' – can be viewed at www.youtube.com/watchvCBjjaybt5Xwk, the Web Warriors game at www.webwarriors.com.au, and the SOSO interactive website at www.soso.org.au/pr.

INTERVIEWS ARE AVAILABLE WITH ALL PANEL MEMBERS.

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ABOUT SOSO

SMART ONLINE, SAFE OFFLINE (SOSO) is a unique social initiative which brings together community, government and the digital media industry as partners to deliver online campaigns aimed at educating young internet users about the dangers in their online environment. The SOSO initiative raises awareness and educates kids about how to be smart online in a relevant and engaging way, operating within the online social networking environments. SOSO campaigns target online threats such as predation, grooming, cyber bullying and identity theft.

**Donna Cross et al Edith Cowan University, 2009*

