



23 March 2012

Committee Secretary
Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety
Department of House of Representatives

By email: jssc@aph.gov.au

Dear Secretary,

Brisbane Seniors Online is pleased to respond to the Inquiry into Cybersafety for Senior Australians.

Established in 2001, Brisbane Seniors OnLine is a self-funded Association with over 1,000 active members and no paid staff. Our mission is to provide seniors of the Greater Brisbane area with training and support in using computers and related digital technologies.

To my knowledge, our service is unique in Australia in that we offer training in the home on the learner's own computer for a reasonable and cost-effective annual membership fee. During the first visit our volunteer trainer makes a basic security assessment of the learner's computer. This provides the learner with added confidence when using the internet, as the lesson delivery utilises their own equipment.

I have read and endorse the submission to this Inquiry by Nan Bosler of Australian Seniors Computer Clubs Association. BSOL is a member of ASCCA.

One of the major barriers is fear. In training seniors to use the internet we often hear "I'd never do Internet Banking. It's too dangerous." Education and safeguard guarantees would make services such as paying bills, banking, online shopping, and making travel arrangements more accessible to the more vulnerable members of our society.

It is becoming increasingly difficult to obtain information without seeing the phrase "for more information go to www..." Organisations at all levels, be they governments, local councils, utilities or business of all types and sizes are gradually 'forcing' their clients to use the internet as a means of doing business by making all other mechanisms too difficult or too expensive. This particularly affects seniors who cannot easily adapt to the new technologies and are fearful of the possible consequences. Yet seniors are a demographic that can greatly benefit from internet services if they can be properly educated.

Computing for the over 50s

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In a study *Older Australians and the Internet* by Queensland University of Technology researcher Dr Sandra Haukka, the key barriers preventing participants from using the Internet were '*don't know how to use the Internet/lack of skills*', '*confused by the technology*', and '*concerns about security and viruses*'. This report also noted that *Positive attitudes towards the Internet decrease with age. However, around 70% of those aged 65 years and older 'agreed' with the statement that they would like to use the Internet but feel intimidated by the complexity of it all.* A copy of this report can be accessed from www.cci.edu.au/olderAustraliansInternet

There are a growing number of seniors computer clubs scattered right across Australia. In BSOL's experience, seniors helping seniors is a most effective medium. Most of these community groups struggle to keep up with current technology and resources to provide up-to-date training facilities. I strongly support the ASCCA recommendation that "Funding to community groups outside the vocational area should be provided for computer literacy for daily living skills..." Education is key to encouraging the safe use of cyber resources by senior Australians.

Sincerely,

BRISBANE SENIORS ONLINE ASSOCIATION INC

Brenda Williams, President

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