Submission to Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety

We launched the Safer Internet Group (SIG) to work with government to promote a safer online experience for Australian families. We have a practical plan for making the internet safer for our kids through comprehensive policing of the Internet, better education of internet users and by the use of tools and technology that really work. We support all practical measures to make the internet safer.

The Safer Internet Group brings together Australia's leading sponsors of research, outreach and online safety campaigns. These include Australian Council of State School Organisations Inc (ACSSO), Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA), Google, iiNet, Inspire Foundation, Internet Industry Association (IIA), Internet Society of Australia (ISOC-AU), Internode, System Administrators Guild of Australia (SAGE-AU) and Yahoo!

Our diverse membership is unified by its desire to promote real online safety.

We believe that real online safety can be delivered without the implementation of a mandatory internet filter, which locks parents and the industry out of keeping kids safe online. The mandatory filter gives parents a false sense of security regarding online safety. SIG is seeking a clarification from the Australian government on its position on mandatory internet filtering. The mandatory filtering regime proposed in 2009 is changing the way the world views Australia. The international environment also shows us what works and what doesn't in protecting Australian families from harmful online content. Australia's proposed filtering regime will force ISPs to filter private Internet connections in each home to remove all content deemed inappropriate by the government of the day. Australia needs to take effective action to ensure that Internet users, and particularly children, have a safe experience online, while preserving the benefits of open Internet access for all Australians.

We are looking to promote cooperation between the Government, industry and community groups, and Australian families to find solutions to the very real problems of abuse of children online, exposure to illegal and inappropriate content, inappropriate social and health behaviours in an online environment, identity theft and breaches of privacy. The government's response cannot lock families and industry out of the solution.

We believe that the most effective way to protect our children online is to promote our 5-point plan for a safer internet. This is:

1. More Effective Education
2. Comprehensive Policing of Illegal material on the Internet
3. User Tools that work
4. A new dialogue about Internet safety
5. Targeted Research of Internet Risks and Opportunities for Young People

We are looking to work with the government to make the internet safer.

The online environment

For the vast majority of users, the Internet is a safe place. Yet the Internet also reflects the real world, so adequate protections are needed for children and other vulnerable people. The best way to protect kids and parents is to educate them on how to be e-Smart. ISPs and online providers today offer users the tools that put them in control of their online experience. We all need to promote these tools better.

We also believe that industry, community groups, the Australian Federal Police and state police need to work together to promote online safety, especially to target the most serious problem areas.

Cyber-safety threats

Our members know that there are no silver bullets to keep our kids safe online. Real cybersafety can only be delivered with a multi-pronged approach that privileges effective responses to online threats over gimmicks, and which promotes tools and technology that really work. SIG members have developed a five point plan to make the internet safer. It is comprehensive and practical. And we know it works. It delivers on:

1. More Effective Education: Our aim is to help young people and parents understand the opportunities of the online environment and how to minimise risk. We will provide resourcing, material and expertise to deliver education programmes to people across Australia, directly using local libraries as delivery points, and through a range of online resources to reach all Australians.

2. Comprehensive Policing of Illegal material on the Internet: We will build on our existing relationships with law enforcement to facilitate mutual and cooperative efforts on training, research and knowledge sharing to ensure that illegal material is targeted as effectively as possible.

3. User Tools that work: Internet companies, including ISPs, provide, and will increase promotion and access to, tools which allow Internet users to shape their own online experience and avoid unwanted online material.

4. A new dialogue about Internet safety: The internet is a dynamic place, effective solutions need to be dynamic. We will promote opportunities that foster the best environment for achieving this, an environment that includes all stakeholders in a partnership – government, online and offline communities and the broader internet industry.

5. Targeted Research of Internet Risks and Opportunities for Young People: We will develop and deliver a research programme to identify and evaluate the risks and opportunities for children in using the Internet.

Australian and international responses to cyber-safety threats

SIG is part of a growing number of organisations that are seeking to promote effective online safety worldwide, while preserving the benefits of open Internet access for all Australians to conduct social engagegement, commerce, education and a raft of legitimate online activities.

Each of our members participates in international discussions about effective cyber safety measures. What these discussions tell us is that there are no silver bullets for promoting real cyber safety. Only through ongoing efforts to promote more effective education, comprehensive policing of illegal material on the Internet and through user tools that work will we keep Australian families safe online.

Our membership relects these beliefs.

Safer Internet Group

The **Internet Industry Association** (IIA) is Australia's national Internet industry organisation. The IIA advises governments on ways to promote a faster, safer and more trusted internet for Australia.

Inspire believes that the internet has immense potential for positively impacting youth mental health and wellbeing. The opportunities available however, can only be fully utilised within a safe online environment. **Inspire** is committed to making the internet a safe and positive place for children and young people.

The **Australian Library and Information Association** (ALIA) is the professional organisation for the Australian library and information services sector. It seeks to empower the profession in the development, promotion and delivery of quality library and information services to the nation, through leadership, advocacy and mutual support.

The **Internet Society (ISOC-AU)** is an independent international nonprofit organisation founded in 1992 to provide leadership in Internet related standards, education, and policy around the world.

As an internet service provider, **iiNet** is focused on constructive actions that work like raising awareness and education, and basing the debate on facts not emotion.

Internode is an Australian owned, national Internet services provider. Internode delivers more than just an Internet connection while supporting saftey online.

Yahoo! has a long history of contributing to a safer online environment and strongly believes in the provision of tools and information to inform individual decisions about how to stay safe online. SIG provides Yahoo! with an opportunity to collaborate with like-minded organisations to increase awareness of effective safety measures and pool resources to implement targeted safety strategies in Australia.

SAGE-AU is a not-for-profit professional IT organisation. **SAGE-AU** promotes, supports and represents System Administrators and IT Operations professionals in Australia. As the technical people behind the network **SAGE-AU** adheres to a Code of Ethics which includes requirements to educate users about social and legal issues that arise in computing environment - including safety on the Internet.

Google is strongly committed to better online safety. It partners with a wide range of government agencies and NGOs in Australia and globally. **Google** works hard to put users in the driving seat with a range of educational materials and tools.

Opportunities for cooperation

SIG provides a genuine partnership between like-minded organisations all united in pursuit of a common objective to improve online safety for Internet users in Australia. Opportunities for cooperation exist at every stage of the campaign to deliver online safety. From the initial identification of risks to the eventual development of appropriate and effective responses, government, industry, community groups and Australian families need to work together to develop collective responses to online safety threats. Each of our member organisations is already actively involved in partnerships to promote online safety.

Maximising opportunities

SIG is committed to promoting effective online safety, while preserving the benefits of open Internet access for all Australians to conduct social engagegement, commerce, education and a raft of legitimate online activities. We believe that the Internet is a highly effective form of communication for business. It provides a frictionless distribution network that provides a level playing field in terms of convenience, promotion and competion playing for small and large businesses. The Internet, for example, allows even

the smallest operator to have a direct relationship with an infinite number of customers. This enables innovation and allows Australian businesses to compete effectively in the global marketplace.

Support for schools

SIG is committed to raising awareness about cybersafety tools that really work. SIG brings together Australia's leading sponsors of research, outreach and online safety campaigns. This includes mobilising industry funding and know-how to analyse best practice approaches to training and professional development programs and resources that are available to to effectively respond to cyber-bullying. Importantly, we believe that our efforts should target kids, not just parents. Young people are informed users of technology whose insights into promoting real cybersafety are invaluable. We should see young people as a resource in this campaign. SIG is committed to contributing to more effective education on cybersafety through a suite of programs targeting young people, parents, carers, teachers, community groups, the Govenrment and industry.   Our members are committed to delivering tools that really work, and raising awareness about the simple steps Australian families can take to make their online experience safer. We do not let our children drive cars without guidance; we should not let our children trawl the internet without guidance.

A portal to SIG members' online safety tools can be found here.

World's best practice safeguards

SIG brings together Australia's leading sponsors of research, outreach and online safety campaigns. Through a raft of initiatves we are coordinating research into world's best pratice safeguards that would provide real online safety in Australia and promote good digital citizenship. Our member organisation the Inspire Foundation is currently leading an initiative to coordinate investment into research to build practical tools that promote cybersafety and good digital citizenship. This intiative will bring together young people, practitioners, corporate, policy makers and academics to undertake research, harvest and analyse data and develop products and services that promote cybersafety, wellbeing and good digital citizenship. Our conviction is that technology can be a positive contributor to the lives of young people, but this potential is under-developed. ICT can bridge social and economic divides and engage young people most at risk. The initiative will support the Australian Government's cyber-safety agenda, leveraging the first nationally coordinated data on young people and technology to identify and evaluate the risks and opportunities for children and young people using the internet.

To find out more about the Safer Internet Group (SIG) please visit our website
http://www.saferinternetgroup.org.au