

Media Release

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TEACHING KIDS ABOUT CYBERSAFETY

Cybersafety education expert Mandy Ross believes cybersafety education for all children and young people should be an integral part of a schools approach to this serious issue.

Ms Ross is the School Services Manager, Cybersafety and Wellbeing Initiative at The Alannah and Madeline Foundation, which is currently in pilot funded by the Federal Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, and will be speaking about the opportunities and risks to young people using the internet, at the conference on April 9-10.

“Teenagers are more likely than any other age group to engage in risk taking behaviors. This along with unprecedented access to the internet means that law enforcement agencies worldwide are seeing a surge in children and young people putting themselves at risk online,” Ms Ross said. “While young people are savvy with technology, often they do not understand the offline consequences of their online actions”

Social networking sites and chat applications used unwisely allow those with a sexual interest in children to access their personal information, she said. At the same time, the latest research shows that 25-40 per cent of child sex offenders are under 24, and also savvy with technology.

“The good news is, in my experience, young people are very positive and receptive to being taught about safe online behaviour,” Ms Ross said. The Internet is a wonderful and powerful learning tool. I am genuinely excited about the Cybersafety and Wellbeing Initiative as it offers schools, parents and the wider community the tools to ensure our children are smart, safe and responsible users of technology.”

The NCAB “Navigating the Maze” themed conference will give schools evidence-based information and strategies about cybersafety, how to use new technologies to enhance learning, and ways to improve student wellbeing. The 2010 Conference at the Hilton on the Park in Melbourne will seek a national, uniform approach to cybersafety in schools and the wider community.

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Information on the NCAB Conference see website www.amf.org.au/NCABConference

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The **National Centre Against Bullying** is an initiative of The Alannah and Madeline Foundation. The Centre is a peak body working to advise and inform the Australian community on childhood bullying and cybersafety, and the creation of safe schools and communities.

The **Alannah and Madeline Foundation** cares for children suffering the devastating impacts of violence, runs programs to prevent childhood violence and advocates for the rights of children.