

ninemsn and NetAlert partner to create a safer Internet for Australian families

Parents number one concern is child safety online

The top Internet fears facing Australian parents are the safety of their children online, pornography and their own need for better education. These are the findings of research from two of the big names on the Internet, who today joined forces to tackle the issue of online child safety.

NetAlert, the Internet education and safety advisory body, and ninemsn, Australia's most popular website, have formed a Corporate Community Partnership to work together to promote a safer online environment for Australian families.

Together they will develop a co-branded website that will launch in early October, on the ninemsn network. The website will provide Internet safety and child protection information to the six and a half million parents and children who visit ninemsn each month. NetAlert and ninemsn will also work together on further research into Internet use and online safety technologies.

The results of the first joint study, released today*, reveal the number one Internet concern for Australian parents is safety - the fear that their children will be exposed to pornography or will be approached by strangers online. This concern, parents acknowledge is largely due to their own lack of understanding about the Internet.

However, far from being anti-Internet, Australian parents are very much aware of the value of the web as an essential educational tool. They see a need for improved information so they can better monitor their kids time online.

Key online child safety findings include:

49 percent of parents regard child safety (protection from online strangers and inappropriate content) as their number one concern when their kids are online

47 percent of parents think the Internet is unsafe for their children.

Almost 20 percent claim their child has been approached by a stranger online.

Almost a third of parents don't feel comfortable that they know enough about computers and the Internet to keep their child safe.

An overwhelming 86 percent of parents agree they need to be more educated about the internet in order to best protect their kids

However, 90 percent of parents recognise the Internet as a valuable education and communication tool for children.

Martin Hoffman, CEO of ninemsn said, Its vital that the Internet, a source of such benefit for children and families, remains a safe, enjoyable environment and is not undermined by those who seek to exploit it.

NetAlert is a fantastic resource on Internet safety and this partnership is a real step forward in enabling us to share its wealth of information with visitors to ninemsn who make up three quarters of all Australians online.

Karyn Hart, Chair of NetAlert and a Queensland school principal said, The NetAlert Board and I are delighted that we have joined forces with ninemsn to promote a safe online environment for Australia's children. The ninemsn partnership will provide much greater reach and allow us to communicate with many more parents, teachers, and children.

NetAlert has recently launched its Cybersafe schools project and distributed a Teachers guide to Internet safety throughout all Schools in Australia and the ninemsn partnership will be a valuable boost to this important work.

ninemsn locally and MSN globally, have an ongoing commitment to online child safety. ninemsn closed its Australian chatrooms late last year as part of an effort to provide consumers with a safer, more secure and positive online experience. Overseas, MSN has partnered with organisations such as Interpol and the International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children on internet related initiatives.

The partnership is valued at \$600,000 over two years and is the first of its kind for both ninemsn and NetAlert.

* A random selection of 925 parents participated in the ninemsn Internet Safety Survey, conducted online on the ninemsn network over a 24 hour period in August 2004.

About ninemsn

ninemsn is Australia's number one website, capturing the largest online audience in Australia, with over 6.4 million people visiting each month. Formed in 1997, ninemsn is a 50:50 joint venture between the Microsoft Corporation and PBL. ninemsn is currently ranked as Australia's leading online publisher with over 75 percent reach to all Australian Internet users.

About NetAlert

NetAlert Limited (NetAlert) is Australia's Internet Safety Advisory Body, a one-stop-shop for Internet safety advice, information and resources in Australia available free from 1800 880 176 or www.netalert.net.au. NetAlert's primary objective is to promote a safer Internet experience, particularly for young people and their families. NetAlert was established by the Australian Government in December 1999.