



Growing
Australia
Online 2002

NetSafe: The New Zealand Model for Internet (ICT) Safety Education

by

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Footnote:

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Abstract:

In 1998, the New Zealand Internet Safety Group established a national initiative to prevent cybervictimisation through education. This organisation developed a comprehensive program that included sending an Internet Safety Kit to every school in the country, stimulating research on Internet use in New Zealand, and co-hosting a national symposium on the social impact of the Internet. This article looks at who is participating in the Group, what strategies they have used, what they have been able to achieve and their plans for future development.

Key Words:

Internet Safety, Cyberviolence, Cybervictimisation, e-Crime

The Internet Safety Group (ISG) has developed a comprehensive national programme for the safe integration of communication technologies, including the Internet, into New Zealand society. The primary focus of the ISG is on the safety of children and young people but the scope of the group's work includes cybersafety for every New Zealander.

This effort is an educational response with a consistently positive, common-sense approach. The ISG encourages use of the Internet and mobile phones and consistently emphasises communication and collaboration between organisations, businesses and government bodies.

Early Development

The Internet Safety Group (ISG) was founded In September, 1998. The original five members were: New Zealand Police, Auckland Rape Crisis, SAFE Network (sexual offender treatment programme), Mt Roskill Grammar School, (a large, ethnically diverse high school) and an Internet Service Provider. Membership quickly expanded to include: Department of Internal Affairs – Censorship Compliance (who enforce child pornography laws), Department of Child, Youth and Family Services (child welfare), Department for Courts, numerous community groups, educators from primary to university level, students and businesses.

The ISG came together to address the issue of how to educate young people, parents and the wider community about risks on the Internet in a positive and pro-active national programme. The decision was made to do this initially through schools, in order to reach not only students and teachers, but also families and the wider community. The principle goals of the ISG were to:

- Develop realistic and achievable responses to Internet risk.
- Build knowledge and skill among young Internet users and assist those responsible for their safety and support.
- Enlist the support of government agencies, organisations and businesses in disseminating Internet safety education.
- Keep the education apace with technological development through communication with ICT industry professionals and those involved with research and development.

There were five key components to the early development of the Internet Safety Group's NetSafe programme: the Internet Safety Kit, the NetSafe website, the toll-free phone line, new research and the NetSafe symposium.

The Internet Safety Kit for schools

In March, 2000 the Internet Safety Kit was sent to every school in New Zealand and a modified version (a brochure and posters) went to every library. The Kit was sponsored by the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services, the Ministry of Education and the New Zealand Police and endorsed by the Department of Internal Affairs.

This Kit gave New Zealand schools the guidance and sample documents they needed to establish safe Internet practices, which is part of their legal responsibility to provide a safe learning environment. The Kit also included sample education handouts about Internet risks for primary and high school students and parents. These handouts were provided in the Kit in the form of photocopy masters. For each sample handout there was a version in English and in Maori (the language of the indigenous people of New Zealand), for use in kura kaupapa, the Maori language immersion schools.

The Internet Safety Kit raised awareness about two particularly serious forms of cybervictimisation:

- New Zealand and overseas paedophiles were using the Internet to groom children and young people for abuse.
- More than 20% of those caught trading in illegal child pornography in New Zealand were school-age males as young as fourteen.

The Kit included a protocol for response to an incident of misuse involving illegal material. Schools were encouraged to also use that protocol to deal with any material inappropriate in the school environment, such as hate messages, cult material, legal pornography and weapon and bomb designs.

The Internet Safety Kit outlined for school management and Boards of Trustees the infrastructure needed to establish a safe Internet learning environment. This included an Internet Use Policy (also called an Acceptable Use Policy), signed Use Agreements for every student and staff member (including all after-hours community education tutors and students), a protocol for serious incidents of misuse (e.g. downloading illegal child pornography) and rigorous monitoring. Other key recommendations included the appointment of an Internet Safety Officer from the school's senior management team, and the hosting of Parent Information Evenings where parents can learn about Internet Safety issues and the basic computer skills they need for monitoring at home. Discussion of filtering, monitoring and security options was also included. All Kit documents were posted on the website and schools (even from overseas) were encouraged to download those documents and modify them to meet their local needs. The Internet Safety Kit was copyrighted, but that copyright allows for the material to be freely used for educational purposes.

When the Kits were mailed out, they were addressed to the Principal of each school and sent in a Ministry of Education envelope. Significant national

publicity on TV, radio and in print was generated at the launch, with speeches by the Mayor of Auckland and a member of the national Police Executive.

NetSafe website – www.netsafe.org.nz

The NetSafe website went online the same day as the Internet Safety Kit was launched. In addition to having all of the Kit documents available in multiple formats, NetSafe had a section for schools that included specific information for Internet Safety Officers, ICT Managers, and Trustees. There were sections for young children, teenagers, and parents, as well as pages on law enforcement and community resources for assistance with problems related to the Internet. There was a video interview with a professional counsellor, who is also director of a sexual offender treatment programme, about adolescents and pornography, explaining what is 'normal' behaviour and what is of concern.

The huge growth of the website is where the progress of the Internet Safety Group is reflected. Queries are easily sent from the bottom of every website page, and many visitors have taken advantage of this, including those from overseas. This email facility is now being used for crisis assistance as well as for less urgently needed information and resources.

Toll-free phone service

The ISG toll-free number, 0508 NETSAFE, has handled calls from all over New Zealand. Primarily the callers are from schools, but there have also been queries from parents, business people and journalists. Some people respond better to voice contact, so the line has proved an important asset.

Follow-up to the release of the Kit

A concerted effort was made to identify every avenue of communication into schools and get information about the issues and the Kit 'in that pipeline'. Almost every general education publication in New Zealand published articles submitted either from or about the ISG.

National newsletters for Principals, Boards of Trustees, Counsellors (including School Guidance) and publications for ICT professionals all printed articles, sometimes published in a series. Journals for social workers and doctors ran articles, for these professionals might deal with situations of children at risk on the Net. The Board of Trustees' newsletter pieces have evolved into a monthly column on Internet issues. A new column in the Police Education Officers' newsletter is just starting.

In the year following the Kit launch, national conferences were targeted and workshops were given for counsellors, Trustees, ICT managers, a university Computer Science Department, a regional Family Courts Association and an IT Business Summit. Interviews were done for TV, radio and print media for each of these events.

National press releases were sent out in response to high-profile prosecutions involving child pornography trading or cybervictimisation. These were excellent opportunities to highlight the need for Internet Safety education and give the website address as a resource.

Monitoring effectiveness

A key step in gauging the effectiveness of this campaign has been the Education Review Office (ERO) school visits. ERO is the independent body that monitors school compliance with national standards. With encouragement from both the ISG and the Ministry of Education, ERO is now asking about Internet Safety policies and procedures when officials visit schools to evaluate compliance with national standards. To have this educational 'enforcement' body asking about the safety of the Internet environment will clearly put it high on a school's priority list.

A national survey done by ERO in June 2001 (Education Review Office, 2001) found that 82% of schools were addressing the inappropriate use of the Internet, with the most common source of assistance being the Internet Safety Kit. Further research is necessary to be able to truly assess the success of the Internet Safety Kit. In particular, one large school that has implemented all Kit recommendations since early 2000 has reported a marked decrease in the numbers of attempts by students and staff to access inappropriate sites and a growing atmosphere amongst students of being pro-active themselves to keep the Internet environment safe. This will need further study, but has some very exciting implications regarding the power of creating a 'culture' of Internet safety.

The acceptance of the Internet Safety Kit as a 'model of best practice' by the Ministry of Education and the inquiry into compliance of schools in this regard by the Education Review office together have had significant impact on schools. The Ministry of Education views the work of the ISG as an essential component of its national ICT Learning Strategy and has identified the Internet Safety Group as its 'agent of choice' for delivery of Internet safety education in New Zealand.

Research

To be most effective the Internet Safety Group needed academically rigorous research on what was happening in New Zealand. Working in collaboration with the Psychology Department of the University of Auckland, the ISG did an online survey of adolescent girls called 'Girls on the Net: The Survey of Adolescent Girls' Use of the Internet in New Zealand'. This survey had 347 respondents, age eleven to nineteen, and was patterned after an online survey in the US (Berson, Berson and Ferron – in press). The results of 'Girls on the Net' included:

- 36% had given out personal information
- 27% had sent a photo of themselves to someone on the Net
- 34% had met someone face to face that they had met online

- 32% went to that meeting alone
- 23% had felt unsafe or threatened while using the Internet (most commonly sexual threats)
- 75% reported their use of the Net at home was monitored rarely or never

These results prompted a more extensive survey of over 2500 students from seven years of age to nineteen. This survey, 'The Net Generation: Internet Safety Issues for Young New Zealanders' was done as part of a Masters Thesis by a University of Auckland psychology student, in collaboration with ISG, and remains one of the largest such surveys internationally. The key findings included:

- 63% reported using the Internet at least two or three times a week.
- 84% reported using the Internet at home, while 43% use the Internet at someone else's home.
- Maori and Pacific Island students reported the highest levels of school use (61%) and were least likely to have the Internet at home (51%).
- Seven to ten year old students reported Mum or Dad were most likely to have taught them to use the Internet (56%), but 40% also learned from a sibling and 16% from a friend.
- 31% of 7-10 year olds and 67% of those 16 or older reported sending or receiving email from someone they met on the Internet.
- More than eighty students (7%, does not include Primary) reported feeling unsafe or threatened as a result of interactions with someone they met on the Internet.
- 23% of 7-10 year olds and 37% of those 16 or older reported having had a face to face meeting with someone they met on the Internet. Although many reported having safety strategies for the meeting, 16% (does not include Primary) didn't think they needed any such strategies.
- One in three students (33%) reported never having their use of the Internet monitored at home.
- 11% reported not having heard about Internet safety at all.
- 46% reported owning a mobile phone and 25% reported using 'text-chat' as a way of talking to people they haven't met before.
- 18% reported they had no safety rules when meeting someone they don't know well.

Both surveys are posted on www.netsafe.org.nz .

After receiving ISG encouragement to take up Internet projects for papers and thesis topics, a Masters-level paper has been completed on cyberstalking and another, and very important one, on disinhibition.

National symposium

The University of Auckland, the New Zealand Police and the Internet Safety Group co-hosted the February 2002 invitation-only symposium in Auckland, 'NetSafe: Society, Safety & the Internet'. Over one hundred leaders from

government, community work, education, research and law enforcement came together for two intensive days of presentations and discussion about the social impact of the Internet in New Zealand. Overseas keynote speakers and a number of workshop presenters highlighted the issues of safety in businesses, in schools, in the home, in the workplace and legal, ethical and cultural issues.

The symposium was developed as a first step to an international conference on the same themes.

Where are we now? – the NetSafe Programme

The Internet Safety Group has been on a steep learning curve as educational responses have been created to address the risks presented by rapidly developing technologies. The approach of the group has evolved in several interesting ways.

1. The safety risks are now seen in the context of the social impact of communication technologies.
2. Safety messages have been broadened to include the converging technologies of the Internet, computers and mobile phones.
3. Old safety messages like ‘don’t give out personal information’ were clearly not working for too many young people. New online safety rules were developed that stress critical thinking skills in young people so they question everything and everyone they encounter in cyberspace.
4. Safety education focussed on New Zealand society as a whole, not just young people. Information was offered for home, schools and businesses.
5. The risks that ISG educated about expanded to include:
 - **sexual victimisation** This is an issue for all ages, especially those who use Internet chatrooms and phone text-chatrooms and then agree to face to face meetings.
 - **grooming children for abuse by paedophiles** This process is made easier on the Internet because of paedophiles’ ability to easily mask their identity and gain a child’s trust, change their identity when an approach fails, and groom multiple children simultaneously. The grooming process has also become significantly accelerated by use of the Internet.
 - **harassment and bullying** Research by NCH in Britain shows one in four children have experienced this either via the Internet or their mobile phone. 29% in that survey told no one of the harassment. (NCH, 2000)

- **cyberstalking** Threats can range from “I’m watching you” to “I’m going to kill you.”
- **anti-social material** Hate material, drug recipes and bomb designs are readily available on the Net.
- **‘cloaked’ or ‘embedded’ websites** These websites are legitimate on the outside but have very different agendas once you are in. An example is an American site that is a mainstream-looking suicide prevention site on the outside but when you go in is actually a virulent anti-gay site.
- **disinhibition** The fact that the Internet is a ‘disinhibiting’ environment (we easily let our guard down, behave atypically)) contributes to both risk-taking and anti-social behaviour on the part of both young people and adults. Research is beginning to indicate that this may be one of the most significant contributing factors to risk.
- **addiction** An issue for all ages, but this is a serious problem for a young person to be on the Internet 30 hours a week or more on top of their school week.
- **hacking** Very talented young people can get into mischief just to test their skills. Some hackers, however, are bent on malicious vandalism.
- **fraud** This will become a more urgent issue for young people as more become active in e-commerce activity, as many adults already are. Some of the fraud approaches are done via spam.
- **scams** From Nigerian money laundering propositions to work from home schemes, people of all ages are vulnerable.
- **identity theft** Without firewalls and basic security, information entered or stored on home computers (such as credit card details and passwords) is vulnerable. This old crime is made easier by the Net.
- **online gambling** Many of these sites (illegal in New Zealand) use credit cards for age-verification, making children vulnerable.
- **copyright infringement** A serious issue for everyone: plagiarism from the Internet is reaching epidemic proportions in tertiary institutions in New Zealand, and is becoming a significant problem in secondary schools. Also, MP3 file downloading may become an issue for homes and schools if the recording industry decides to pursue copyright infringers.
- **legal pornography** We do not know what effect the quantity of pornography available on the Internet, the ease of access to such material and the extreme nature of some of the images will have on young people and society in general. Pornographic spam emails are exacerbating the problem.
- **illegal pornography** Primarily involving child pornography, offenders caught in New Zealand have increasingly large collections with thousands of images, yet sentencing does not yet adequately reflect the severity of the crime. As well, sentencing does not yet include mandatory assessment and treatment with sexual offender treatment programmes, as the ISG has strongly recommended. This recommendation is to better address the underlying issue for child

pornography offenders, that they have developed a sexual interest in children. The process could also identify those who are already hands-on offenders.

Police Youth Education Service (YES)

The Internet Safety Group has formed a permanent alliance with this network of over 140 police youth educators across New Zealand. These officers deliver both the *Keeping Ourselves Safe* programme and the *Kia Kaha* (anti-bullying) program. Internet and mobile phone safety education will be a big part of all future printed editions of the programmes. ISG is now training all of these officers on Internet issues and how to use the Internet Safety Kit.

This alliance is extremely important for three reasons:

- Police education officers in uniform give the educational messages the full authority of the Police.
- The YES education material both supplements and complements the Internet Safety Kit.
- When in schools, police education officers can see if a school is having trouble establishing a safe Internet environment and can offer assistance in instituting practices recommended in the Kit.
- The Police Youth Education Service is a national network, which facilitates Internet safety classroom education reaching the maximum number of New Zealand schools.

New resources

The ISG and the Police Youth Education Service have collaborated on a pamphlet for parents. This will be given out in every school where they deliver education and ISG is supplying it to community groups and schools as well.

The ISG new Online Safety Rules have been printed on a colourful card that is available free of charge. It can be easily put near the computer to remind anyone about the importance of staying safe in cyberspace.

The response to both resources has been very positive. Girl Guides New Zealand just ordered enough to ensure every girl in their programme in New Zealand gets a safety rule card and a parent pamphlet.

A new brochure is in the design stage that will be in every Police station in New Zealand next year. This resource will offer ISG as a 'first port of call' for victims of electronic crime to help them identify the crime. ISG would also facilitate the process of reporting the crime to the proper law enforcement or government agency (it may not be immediately obvious who should handle the complaint), while continuing to educate to prevent such crimes.

NetSafe website

The amount of material on this site has grown exponentially since the launch in 2000. It is now averaging 120,000 hits a month with some visitors staying for over 101 page views. The education on the site reflects the breadth of focus of ISG. Queries about problems such as pornographic spam email, cyberstalking, sexual victimisation and fraud have come from New Zealand, Australia, the US, Canada, Barbados, Italy and other countries.

NetSafe staff

NetSafe has had a full-time Director, Liz Butterfield, since January, 2002. In order to better meet the growing needs of schools, ISG now has a School Education Manager, Claire Balfour, who will answer all school-related queries and develop new materials to address emerging issues for schools. Claire has been Associate Principal of one of New Zealand's largest and most culturally diverse schools and is well aware of the many benefits, and challenges, of ICT in education. New ISG staff positions are planned for 2003.

Teaching materials & practices

There is a need for lesson plans and teaching materials related to Internet Safety instruction at every level of education. Also, the practice of including basic Internet safety instruction at the start of each course using the Internet needs to be promoted (much like science lab safety instruction). The ISG is working to develop such materials but will also use the NetSafe website to help New Zealand teachers connect to some of the superb work being done by organisations like ChildNet International in Britain, the Center for Missing and Exploited Children in the US, the EU Online Children's Education Project (The Once Project), and the Peel Regional Police in Ontario, Canada. There is no need to reinvent the wheel; it is far preferable to collaborate and share resources.

The ISG is also looking at how to make such education accessible to those with disabilities and/or special needs. For example, members of the Deaf community are very reliant on the Internet and text-messaging for communication and may need safety education specially tailored to their needs. Students who study by Correspondence School (the largest school in New Zealand) are another group with specific needs in this area.

NetSafe II: Society, Safety & the Internet International Conference

The same partnership that produced the February NetSafe symposium, (the Internet Safety Group, the New Zealand Police and the University of Auckland) is now planning a much larger international gathering in 2003 to expand on symposium themes. This will be held in Auckland, New Zealand July 9-12 and will feature speakers and presentations from a number of countries. It is expected that there will be significant interest and participation in the conference from education, business and community sectors, both

nationally and internationally,. Turning the proceedings from the conference into a university textbook on the social impact of communication technologies is under discussion.

Internet Safety Kit for Schools 2003

A new version of the Internet Safety Kit is in the works. Even though updating can be easily done on the Netsafe website, schools seem to appreciate having a hard-copy version. This new edition of the Kit will contain a lot of additional material, including a CD of sample documents for easy downloading.

Internet Safety Kit for the Business Workplace

The ISG, NetGuide Magazine and Meredith Connell, a prominent New Zealand law firm, are collaborating on a Kit aimed at small to medium businesses, for release in 2003. This will cover employers' responsibilities when offering Internet access. Like the Kit for schools, there will be sample documents, case studies, etc.

NetSafe newsletter

The first edition of this electronic newsletter went out in November 2003. Anyone can easily add their email address to the mailing list on the Newsletter page of the website. Each edition will be emailed to everyone on the list as well as being available on the site. This will give the ISG a powerful way to raise issues of concern. The 'lead story' in the first edition was the ISG's call for mandatory assessment and treatment of child pornography offenders by qualified sexual offender treatment programmes. The newsletter will provide the ISG with a powerful national and international platform for raising such timely issues.

New research

A major new research project is being planned that will be done in Britain, the US and New Zealand. A number of other new projects are being considered as well.

Global Internet safety networking

There is much to be gained through on-going collaborations between the Internet Safety Group and the many individuals and groups doing exemplary work overseas. This Growing Australia Online 2002 conference is an excellent example. If the Internet is a global information highway, then a global Internet Safety campaign, facilitated by linked national initiatives, is ultimately the best way to protect all children.

NetSafe receives international recognition

The Internet Safety Group and the New Zealand Police were recently honoured with the International Law Enforcement Cybercrime Award by the Society of the Policing of Cyberspace (POLCYB). This society, based in British Columbia, Canada, includes representatives of law enforcement agencies from Britain, Canada, the US, Australia and Hong Kong.

This award recognises *innovation and best practices pertaining to prevention, detection, and/or response to cybercrimes*. One of the aspects considered in the judging of this award was the cost-effectiveness of the work. Since inception in 1998, the ISG work to date has been accomplished on less than \$NZ 230,000. This was possible because of the tremendous volunteer effort and commitment of every member of the Internet Safety Group, including those who are now paid staff. The ISG is currently in discussion with a number of government officials and Ministers on securing long-term stable funding from the government for ISG as the Parliament-nominated NGO to do this very important work in New Zealand.

Keeping pace with technological change

When the Internet Safety Group began its work, the task at hand was to create a Kit for schools and the vision did not, in the very early stages, go far beyond that point. What quickly became apparent, though, was that the Kit was an important aspect of a larger need to change the way in which New Zealand society perceived communications technologies and the way citizens were interacting with those technologies.

The first stage was to create awareness of both the issues and the appropriate educational response. The second crucial stage is for that educational response to modify behaviour. Across New Zealand, schools, businesses and families are establishing 'safe Internet environments' with a very similar combination of education, policies and protocols, and tools like filtering and security software packages and services. Behaviour is being modified as children, parents, students and employees adjust to the appropriate use of these technologies.

These stages of response to social impact are, of course, part of an on-going cycle of change and response. For with each new facet of technological development, there are new safety challenges that must be addressed. As examples, consider the new cameras on mobile phones or global satellite positioning technology. We know they will have an impact when commonly available, yet until these technologies are out interacting with humans there is a limit to how much can be predicted about the impact they will have. Thus the educational responses must be very fast and comprehensive once the nature of the impact is clear.

The Internet Safety Group will continue developing its pro-active educational approach which focuses on children in schools and the society at large (families, community organisations, businesses, and government). NetSafe

will help ensure that New Zealanders can enjoy the many benefits of communications technologies, while using education to minimise the risks. In truth, this safety programme must succeed – for the sake of this generation of New Zealand children and generations to come.

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