Internet and Digital Technology for Parents
Tip Sheet # 3 – Respect for Self and Others

Web 2.0 tools (e.g. blogs and wikis), social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, Twitter) and user generated content (e.g. YouTube) have become increasingly popular and have established a new medium for communicating and interacting with others socially and professionally.

Prior to the existence of social media the major concerns regarding children and young people's use of the internet was the availability of inappropriate content and the potential for predatory individuals to make contact with them through chat rooms and/or email. These issues still exist, but Web 2.0 tools and social networking spaces now allow students to view and comment on information they view online, create and share their own content and actively seek information that meets their needs. This functionality leads to concerns about what students are contributing; what personal information it contains; where they are posting; and who has access.

It is important to be familiar with your child's online activity, including any content they are creating and posting online. Pay an interest in what your child is creating and use these conversations as a means of educating them about appropriate and inappropriate disclosures and interactions.

Talk to your child regularly about content (YouTube clips, images, blogs) they are creating:
- The purpose of the content
- Where they may share this content
- Why they want to share this content
- Who will have access to the content
- Any potential risks to themselves or others that the content may give rise to.

Be respectful online and do not participate in online bullying

Children and young people often feel that they are anonymous when online. The space or chat they use in their leisure time might have explicit language and they will feel they have to or want to be part of it. These spaces will often have limited adult participation or moderation. For these reasons the online environment may sometimes feel different. It is not uncommon for children or young adults to behave differently online to how they would in the physical world. The language can be misinterpreted or at times they may say things that they would never say to someone's face, voice uninformed opinions and/or post images that misrepresent them.

Bullying can take place in a playground, a party, via text message or email or on a social networking site. Gossip can be spread by conversations in the corridor or published on a blog. Young people can be excluded from games in the playground or excluded from another person's Facebook friend list.

Restricting access to these technologies is not the answer. Educating children and young people to make informed decisions about their online behaviours is the key to empowering them to assess potential risks and take steps to actively manage their privacy and safety while online.
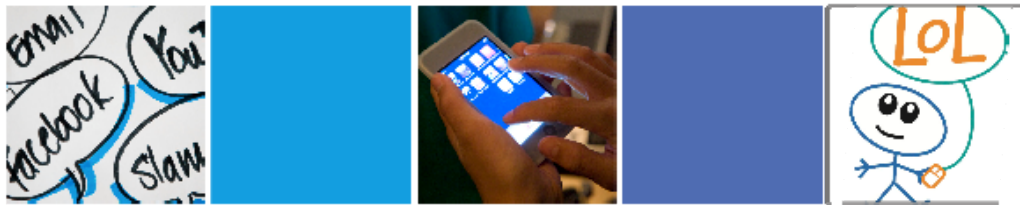
Having open and frank 'chats' with your child can assist them to be a safe and responsible user of the digital and online world. You may like to ask your child whether they have seen or participated (knowingly or unknowingly) in any bullying online. What did they choose to do and why? Were they able to contact someone who could help the victim? Having regular chats with your child can give you an insight into what is happening in your child's digital world. It can also help you highlight strategies for dealing with inappropriate online behaviours.

Support links for parents
- **Cybersmart** (www.cybersmart.gov.au) provides activities; resources and practical advice to help parents safely enjoy the online world.
- **Childnet International** (http://www.childnet-int.org) provides resources on e-safety information for parents and carers.
- **NetSafe** (www.netsafe.org.nz) provides cybersafety education for all New Zealanders, but its information also holds relevance for Australian parents.

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development