

Queensland Police Service
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Task Force Argos
telephone 3364 4142

Life threatening emergencies or crime in progress
call Triple Zero (000)

www.police.qld.gov.au

For further information about safe ways
to enjoy the best of the internet visit the
Australian Broadcasting Authority web site
<http://www.cybersmartkids.com.au>
and

The Australian Internet Safety Advisory Board web site.
<http://www.netalert.net.au>

**To report information to police
call Crime Stoppers 1800 333 000**



QPS Vision Statement

We are determined to be a professional police service,
dedicated to excellence and committed to working in partnership with the people
of Queensland to enhance the safety and security of our community.

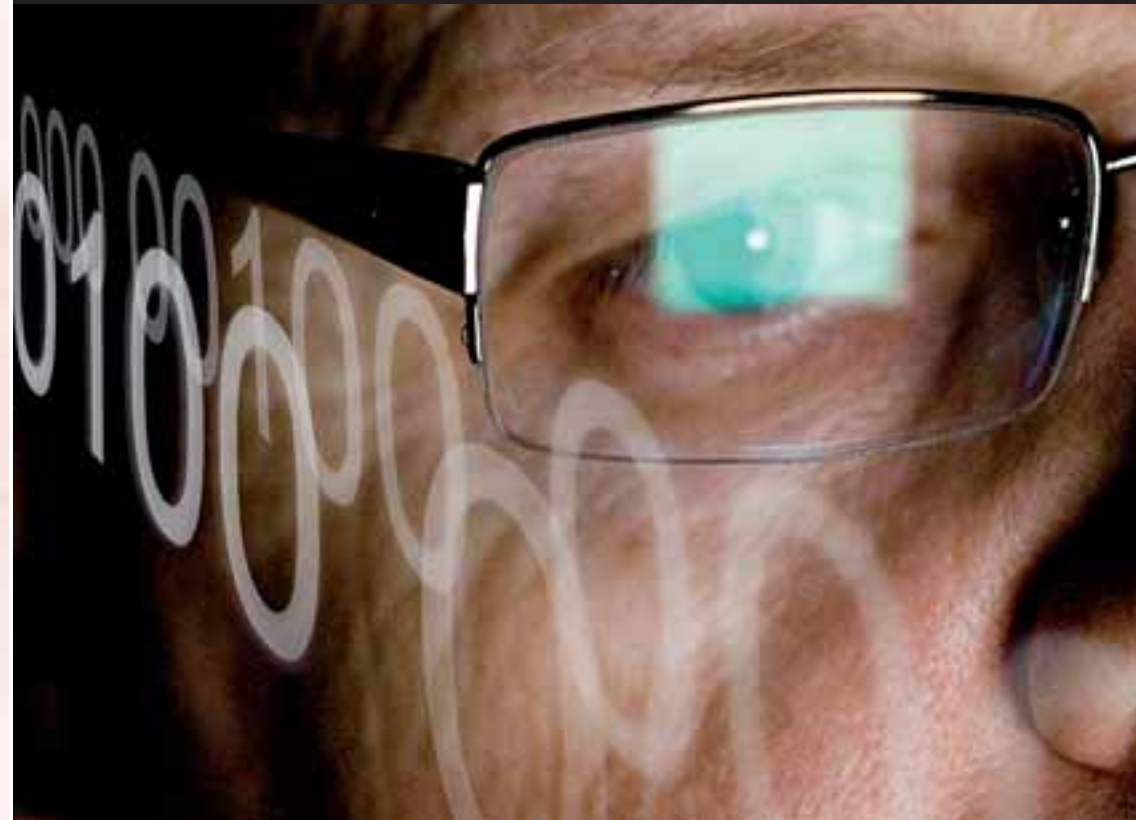


**Queensland
Government**

08/07

Who's chatting to your kids?

A must read for parents of children with internet access



**To report information anonymously to police
call Crime Stoppers 1800 333 000**



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Who's chatting to your kids?

The internet has brought the world into our living rooms, and in doing so has provided us with access to vast information resources and the opportunity to meet and communicate with people from all over the world.

However, advances in technology have also been embraced by sex offenders who have proven to be exceptionally skilled at utilising new modes of communication to exploit and harm our children. While the internet is fundamentally a great place for children, there are some areas of cyberspace that are not appropriate. This brochure provides you with practical information about internet safety and ways you can minimise potential risks to your children.

Social Networking

The internet today contains many sites that are designed to encourage children and teenagers to communicate by messaging each other in real time.

These sites allow children and teenagers to chat one on one with family and friends on their 'buddy' or contact list, or to chat with various other people at the same time.

Many of these sites contain areas where children can post personal information about themselves including their name, age, location, photographs, contact details and in some instances their sexual preference.

Many children feel safe communicating on these sites as they only chat to people they know or people who their friends know or trust.

However, it is very easy for anyone using the internet to identify a child from:

- details that have been posted on the internet
- identifying information that a child's friend has disclosed during chat conversations
- information sourced from other predators.

Predators may contact several children at once. In many cases they attempt to gain a child's trust by pretending to be the same age as their victim.

It only takes one reply from an unsuspecting child and the predator may commence regularly chatting with that child.

Once they have access to one child they soon gain access to the child's list of contacts. Those children then introduce this person to their friends who in turn introduce their friends.

In a very short period of time, a predator can be chatting with several groups of children whilst pretending to be another

school age friend.

Some children believe that adding large numbers of contacts to their buddy lists increases their social status. Police have identified children who have as many as 700 contacts on their buddy lists. In one investigation police arrested five predators on one child's buddy list.

It is important that your child personally know every one on their buddy list.

They should also be able to tell you each person's real name and how they know them.



Online Chat Rooms



Online chat rooms have proven to be a dangerous destination for children who are unsupervised, or who have not been provided with sufficient information and guidance to ward off approaches by sexual predators.

These individuals listen to and empathise with the problems of children, and are aware of their latest music, hobbies and interests. Some attempt to lower a child's inhibitions by slowly introducing sexual context and content into their conversations, while others immediately engage in sexually explicit conversation. Others may seek a face-to-face meeting with your child.

Investigations conducted by the Queensland Police Service have identified that some individuals gradually seduce children through the use of attention, affection and gifts.

The standard rules you teach your children about meeting new people in the real world also apply when they meet and 'chat' with people online.

Consider for a moment whether you would feel comfortable if your child spoke to a total stranger on the street for several hours.

Or if the phone rang at home and your child told an unknown caller all about themselves - their age, address, school or mobile phone number? Just as you wouldn't let your child give their personal details to someone they meet on the street, they shouldn't give them to anyone in a chat room.

Mobile Phones

Today many children are provided with mobile phones by parents as a way of maintaining contact in emergency situations.

Internet predators are constantly looking for ways to facilitate direct contact with children and on many occasions have obtained mobile phone numbers from children during online chat conversations. They will also search the internet for children's online profiles that contain a mobile telephone number or personal information.

These people have been known to send expensive mobile telephones to children as gifts. This gesture is part of the grooming process, and can result in the child feeling indebted to the predator. In these situations, predators have also paid the child's telephone bills to ensure that communication can continue without the knowledge of the parents.

Of significant concern are the next generation mobile telephones that include features such as satellite navigation and a GPS location capability.

This technology can prove valuable if used correctly, however parents should carefully consider the serious safety implications resulting from the possibility that anyone can pin point the exact location of their child at any time.

Parents are urged to monitor their child's telephone usage, and be wary of gifts that children receive from unfamiliar people, in particular mobile telephones.

- Choose a mobile phone for your child that does not feature internet access, or alternatively, speak with your carrier to block internet access. All carriers are able to do this.

- Talk to your telephone provider about blocking other services that are not required by your child's phone. This gives parents the opportunity to limit incoming and outgoing calls, text messages and picture messages.
- If you are concerned, check the received and dialled call register of your child's mobile phone and phone accounts for numbers other than known friends or family.
- Consider limiting your child's access to the phone. For example, advise your child to use the mobile phone for emergencies and calls to home only.
- Talk to your child about the appropriate use of camera phones. It is important that they seek another person's permission before taking a photograph, and that your child tells you if anyone else's use of a camera phone makes them feel uncomfortable.
- Stress the importance of not responding to any messages from unknown people. If your child receives persistent calls or messages from an unknown person, you should report it to the police, taking a note of the number and saving any messages or pictures on the mobile handset.

Web Cams

Web Cameras (web cams) can be connected to almost any home computer. These cameras are regularly used to capture and send images or live video stream whilst chatting to other internet users. If operated appropriately, they are a great way to stay in contact with family and friends.

However, children who have a web cam connected to a computer in their bedroom are often targeted by internet sex predators. Images or video from a child's web cam can be used to identify the child on the street or literally obtain a window into their bedroom and family life.

Predators seek out and chat to children with web cams and can place enormous pressure on them to transmit indecent images of themselves.

They have been known to blackmail children into transmitting indecent images of themselves after tricking them into disclosing embarrassing or sensitive information about themselves or their family.

Once a child has transmitted an indecent image across the internet, that image can be saved and uploaded to the internet for public viewing. It is all but impossible to remove the image as it can be copied and downloaded often hundreds of thousands of times.

Parents should carefully consider the possible implications of allowing their children to have unsupervised access to web cameras.

Is your child at risk?

You find pornography on your child's computer.

Child sex offenders may use pornography as part of the process to facilitate open sexual discussion, and it may be used to show the child that sex between children and adults is acceptable and normal.

Your child is receiving phone calls from people you don't know or is calling numbers you don't recognise.

It is very rare that a child sex offender will not attempt to speak directly to a child they have met in a chat room. Investigations to date have proven that most want to talk to the child on the telephone for the purpose of setting up an actual meeting. While your child may be hesitant to give out your home phone number, the sex offender will give out theirs. If you do not have a silent number and your child

calls, the offender can easily obtain your number using the 'caller ID' function on their telephone.

Your child is spending a large amount of time on the internet.

The longer your child is online, particularly in 'chat' rooms, the higher the likelihood that they will be approached inappropriately, or be exposed to objectionable material. While exploring the internet can be a valuable experience, parents should consider monitoring the amount of time children spend online. Children are at greatest risk from online sexual predators in the evening, during weekends and school holidays. Be aware that the visitors to chat rooms are from all over the world, not just Australia. Research by investigators at Task Force Argos has shown that some offenders are online for up to 16 hours at a time.

What should you do?

Your child is receiving gifts or mail from people you don't know.

Sex offenders use many strategies to gain the confidence and trust of a child. They will send letters and use gifts as part of this process, and have even paid for flights for the child to travel across the country to meet them.

When you enter the room your child changes the screen or turns the computer off.

If your child is engaged in inappropriate conversation or is looking at pornographic images it is likely that they will attempt to hide this from you.

Your child is becoming withdrawn or displaying behavioural problems.

Child sex offenders are masters at exploiting the every day issues that trouble children. They will provide your child

with a sympathetic and comforting ear, and will turn insignificant family problems into major issues in order to gain the affection of your child. Children may also become withdrawn after sexual victimisation.

Every element of society has dangers associated with it, and the internet is no different. Like learning to cross the street, it is important that we take the time to guide, assist and supervise our children in the use of the internet.

- Be aware of the programs and files that are on your computer. If you don't feel that you have the knowledge or technical ability to do this, ask a friend, colleague or qualified technician.
- If you believe your child may be at risk, you should consider talking with them about the dangers associated with online conversations.
- Spend time exploring the internet with your children, and let them teach you about their favourite web sites.
- Keep the computer in a room the whole family accesses, not in your child's

bedroom. Opportunities for exploitation by a sexual predator are limited if the computer monitor is visible to all members of the family.

- Parents should carefully consider the possible implications of allowing their children to have unsupervised access to web cameras.
- Consider installing filtering and/or computer blocking software provided by your Internet Service Provider. The Netalert web page provides information on a number of commercially available products. (www.netalert.net.au)
- Ensure you are able to access your child's email and randomly check the contents. Remember they may also be a member of free email accounts other than the one provided by your Internet Service Provider such as 'Hotmail' and 'Yahoo'.

- Consider approaching your telephone service provider to discuss the options they may be able to provide to ensure your privacy and security.
- Your child could encounter an online sexual predator at any place outside your supervision. Inquire with your child's school, public library, or anywhere that you believe your child accesses the internet to ascertain what safety measures they have in place.
- Tell your children:
 - Not to send a picture of themselves to someone they don't know, and to never place a full profile and picture of themselves anywhere on the internet.
 - Never give out personal information including their name, home address, phone number or school.
- Never arrange a face-to-face meeting with someone they have chatted with on the internet.

If any of the following situations occur, you should immediately contact your local police station or Queensland Police Task Force Argos:

- Your child or anyone in the household has received child pornography.
- Your child has been sexually solicited.
- Your child has received sexually explicit images.

If any of these scenarios occur, keep your computer turned off in order to preserve evidence.