Cyber Safety and Social Media

The use of online and mobile technology is now a common part of life and allows young people to connect with their friends and access information and services. The constantly changing and increased use of technology increases the need for additional awareness and education surrounding the risks of technology and the need to promote cyber safety to young people. Many young people are engaging in risky cyber activity such as cyber bullying, sexting and posting details of their lives online which can have a negative impact on future job opportunities, friendships and family relationships. A national survey found that 59% of teenagers have sent sexually suggestive emails or messages to someone else. Furthermore, advancements in technology can pose a danger for young people in terms of cyber stalking and online grooming from individuals preying on young people. Increased education on cyber safety needs to be made a priority so young people can continue to engage in online activities but do so in a safe way. Education needs to focus on online predators, effects of cyber bullying and the reality of what you put online will always be accessible in some way regardless of whether it is deleted by the user or not.

Social media makes connecting to friends, creating events and groups easy and many young people use social media as their primary means of communication with the social group and peers. While there are many positive activities such as debates, focus groups and meeting a broad range of people, it is important to note that not all social media activity is positive. Young people may feel excluded if they don't have access to social media or if they are excluded on social events or bullied online. Education on positive ways to engage with social media is important and requires a holistic approach. Young people respond well to early intervention, prevention and education programs based on peer education and support and as many of the risks associated with technology can be managed through education and empowering young people to make safe choices when using the internet and social media.

YNOT is committed to:

ynot is the peak body representing the voice of Tasmanian youth

Tasmanian youth forum   Tasmanian youth conference

- Advocating for education on cyber safety targeted at young people and relevant to the ways young people are engaging with the cyber world.
- Advocating for social media to be used as an additional means of engaging with young people.
- Promoting the rights of young people to feel safe when online.

Future Vision

A Tasmania where young people are encouraged to use social media in a safe and positive way and the promotion of cyber safety and empowering young people to make informed and positives choices when using the internet and social media is a focus.

References

Victoria Law Reform Committee (2012), *Sexting in Australia: the social and legal ramifications,* Parliament of Victoria Law Reform Sexting Inquiry, retrieved from http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/images/stories/committees/lawreform/isexting/subs/S07_-_Salvation_Army_Oasis_Hunter.pdf