

## **“SOCIAL NETWORKING; BE ALERT!”**

The 21st Century has seen the advent of a totally new and innovative form of social networking amongst our students.

Gone are the days of meeting at the milk bar or going for a walk, run or bike ride to chat. The new way for our young IT natives to network, is through texting, emailing, chat rooms, twittering and networking websites. The number of text messages sent daily exceeds the population of the planet.

An amazing fact is that social networking websites make up at least six of the top fifteen websites worldwide; examples of these are Youtube, Bebo, Facebook and My Space. They are an excellent way to communicate with people of all ages; our students are globally connected.

As with any new things, there are also negative aspects to this electronic form of communication. Parents and schools are scrambling to come up with ways to address the adverse impact, especially in terms of their capacity to be an anonymous method of stalking, bullying and harassment.

It is essential for parents at home to have a real awareness that there are undesirable people out there who anonymously trawl these sites masquerading as young teenagers.

At school these websites can be blocked, but what as parents can you do at home? Our children are so proficient with IT that there is very little chance of us “oldies” knowing what they are up to, even though we may think we have a handle on it. In most cases, these social networking sites are fun for our children, but there are things we can do to safeguard and protect our precious children.

Included is a focus in all three planners called “*My Cyber Health*” or “*Net Health*” that raises our students’ awareness of the potential hazards these websites may present:-

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There is an excellent resource for all of us to use to cope with this new phenomenon; we encourage all parents to access the following website for tips <http://www.netalert.gov.au/> .

Should you have any queries or concerns regarding your son/daughter's progress please do not hesitate to contact his/her Year Level Co-ordinator/Advisor.

“It’s all about T.E.A.M. - Together Everyone Achieves More”. Anon