

## **AMTA: Working with parents and children to cope with cyber-bullying**

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Children these days use mobile phones as if they were second nature. They have mastered the technology and can use a wide range of applications, including social networking and accessing the internet. They are short on life skills and experience, but in the technology stakes they know it all. But with this facility goes a capacity for misuse which leads to unacceptable things like cyber-bullying.

Parents, on the other hand, struggle to keep up with their children when it comes to technology, including mobile phones. However, they know a thing or two about how the world works and what is acceptable behaviour and what is not.

The mobile telecommunications industry in Australia aims to achieve an economically successful industry. The Australian Mobile Telecommunications Association (AMTA) is the industry's peak body. Its role and charter is much broader than just the bottom line.

People everywhere use mobile telecommunications technologies as an important part of their lifestyles and the way they interact with family, friends, work and the community. We know parents value mobile phones as a way of staying in touch with their children. We believe that the positive aspects of mobiles far outweigh the negative.

However, we are committed to providing practical advice to help prevent the misuse and promote the safe, responsible and affordable use of mobile telecommunications.

Cyber bullying is totally unacceptable and not to be tolerated. AMTA has, in conjunction with experts, produced a range of materials to assist parents and students to take steps to prevent cyber bullying and - in the unfortunate circumstance where it occurs - advice to assist.

We have practical tips to assist young people to protect their number from unwanted messages; things they need to think before they send text messages; and what to do if they receive threatening or intimidating messages. We provide a range of numbers from the mobile phone companies, who may be able to assist by stopping certain numbers call you.

For parents, we have produced a range of tips so they can assist their children who have been the victims of cyber bullying. Often young victims of cyber bullying are reluctant to talk to their parents because they don't believe they understand the technology and they are fearful they will take their mobile phone away.

These helpful tips can be found on our website: <http://www.amta.org.au> under the heading Consumer Tips. Other tips include advice to for parents buying mobiles for their children and taking steps to ensure that they keep within a budget.

AMTA has also has a website for young people, Str8tlk (Straight Talk), which has information for 10-18 year olds, covering subjects such as bullying, money, safety, recycling, technology and culture.

Finally, parents have a key role to play in ensuring their children use mobile phones responsibly and avoid potential pitfalls of extensive and/or unsupervised use of mobile phones.

Parents need to be aware of their children's mobile phone use and monitor their activities in a positive and supportive way. As part of this, parents should have a clear mobile phone policy in the home and work constructively with their children to see that the agreed policy elements are adhered to.

- For useful mobile phone tips: <http://www.amta.org.au/default.asp?id=367>
- For str8tlk - information for young people about mobiles: <http://www.str8tlk.amta.org.au/>