ARC CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR CREATIVE INDUSTRIES AND INNOVATION

SUBMISSION TO THE
INQUIRY INTO ISSUES SURROUNDING CYBER-SAFETY FOR INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS

Executive Summary

This submission has been prepared by researchers from the Home Internet for Remote Communities Project (HIP). HIP is a collaborative project between the Centre for Appropriate Technology, Central Land Council and Swinburne University that aims to investigate the feasibility of home-based computing and internet access in three small remote communities in Central Australia.

The nature and prevalence of cyber-bullying and other risks and threats, in particular via social networking sites and mobile phones, amongst Indigenous Australians
- Based on the limited available evidence, one of the most threatening aspects of the use of mobile phones and social networking platforms for cyber-bullying for community members in remote Central Australian settlements is its potential to cross personal, social, cultural and geographical boundaries rapidly. The misuse of ICT technologies in Indigenous contexts has the capacity to breach cultural protocols between family and intra-familial groups and, in doing so, to inflame existing conflicts.
- Our experience with the HIP to date suggests that incidents of cyber-bullying are more likely to be reported in relation to larger communities and regional centres with mobile coverage.

Whether and how these risks and threats differ in rural and remote Indigenous communities
- Many remote Indigenous community members, especially older and middle-aged people, are characterised by low levels of digital literacy and experience of communication technologies. Without further education and skills development in ICT use, they are likely to find dealing with cyber-safety issues particularly distressing and challenging.

The impact and implications of cyber-bullying and other risks and threats on access and use of information and communication technologies by Indigenous Australians
- Poor understanding of cyber-bullying and lack of mechanisms to address this issue may lead to a reluctance amongst some remote communities to adopt mobile and satellite ICT. This in turn may see some communities denied potential benefits such as connections to e-health, education, training and employment opportunities.

Ways to support indigenous communities, including rural and remote Indigenous communities, to reduce the incidence and harmful effects of cyber-bullying and other risks and threats
- Education and awareness programs which consider the limited exposure to computers and the internet, and low digital literacy skills of many remote Indigenous people, need to be developed. Ideally, these programs would be delivered in conjunction with the introduction of ICT infrastructure such as mobile coverage into new areas.
- Community members across all age groups should be engaged in developing approaches to manage any local cyber-safety issues. It is important to involve elders, because they have the authority to provide leadership to younger people about what is culturally appropriate in regard to use of ICTs.

Introduction

Swinburne Institute for Social Research, the Centre for Appropriate Technology (CAT), the Central Land Council (CLC) and the Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN) welcome the opportunity to provide a submission to the Joint Select Committee on Cyber-safety's *Inquiry into cyber-safety issues for Indigenous Australians.* The submission is based primarily on our research and findings from the Home Internet for Remote Indigenous Communities project. Furthermore, some of the comments in this submission are derived from our long-term understanding of issues surrounding information technology uptake and usage for Indigenous Australians.

The Home Internet Project (HIP) is funded through an Australian Research Council Linkage Project grant (LP110200440). An early stage of the project was funded directly through an ACCAN research grant. This project is relevant to the Inquiry because it concerns issues, including those of safety, surrounding access to computers, the internet and basic telecommunications services in remote communities, specifically smaller settlements in Central Australia.

The Home Internet Project findings are based on fieldwork undertaken by the research partners from August 2010 to March 2013 investigating the effectiveness of different types of internet and computing arrangements for Central Australian Aboriginal communities. From August 2010 to February 2011 we conducted a baseline study in three small remote Central Australian communities (Imangara, Kwale Kwale and Mungalawarru), with populations less than 100, to identify barriers and drivers to computer and internet access (see Rennie, E, Crouch, A, Thomas, J & Taylor, 2010; Rennie, Crouch, Wright, & Thomas, 2011). As part of the efficacy trial approach of the Home Internet Project, households in the three communities were then offered free computers and internet access, training and maintenance help, with funding support from the Aboriginals Benefit Account. The computers were installed during June to August 2011. The participating households are currently engaged in a longitudinal study from February 2012 to September 2014 that examines the social dimensions of internet adoption and use, alongside technical and practical considerations, for remote Indigenous consumers.

It should be noted that each of these communities received computers and internet access on a household basis for the first time (with only a handful of exceptions), and that this project was developed in response to recent research indicating that many remote Indigenous communities have limited access to and experience using the internet. At the time of the baseline study, Indigenous households in Central Australia were 76 per cent less likely to have internet access than non-Indigenous metropolitan households: outside Alice Springs, internet take-up was estimated at 2.2 per cent of households, a figure too low to be reliable (ABS 2006). No mobile coverage exists at the trial communities either, although some community members possess mobile phones for use elsewhere in towns and larger communities.

Additionally, the HIP team undertook a comparative study of Papunya Internet and Computer Centre in early May 2012 to assess its impact as a shared computing facility arrangement on the social and economic dimensions of remote community members' lives. The Papunya Internet and Computer Centre Report (2012) is relevant to the *Inquiry into Issues Surrounding Cyber-safety for Indigenous Australians* because it involved discussion with community members about usage of portable ICT devices, including mobile phones, if mobile phone coverage and wi-fi access was extended to the community. More generally, the Papunya Internet and Computer Centre Report sought to consider the technical and practical advantages and drawbacks of shared facility arrangements, which is currently the Australian and Territory Governments' preferred funding model for the delivery of ICT access

to remote Indigenous communities. This model, however, only applies under the Closing the Gap policy reforms to larger 'priority' settlements, the idea being that the residents of smaller settlements will travel or move permanently to larger towns to access services (see Glasson, 2008; McCallum, K. and Papandrea, 2009). It is problematic in Central Australia, where there are few priority communities: three in the CLC region, and over 200 smaller, remote settlements (Rennie et al., 2011). By contrast, home internet has been the dominant approach for mainstream (non-Indigenous) delivery programs, reinforced by the Australian Government's undertaking to build the National Broadband Network as fibre-to-premises in towns and cities with over 1000 premises.

While the Home Internet Project does not claim to be representative of all remote communities, it offers useful insights into the experience of computer use in remote Indigenous communities. Importantly, cyber-safety has not emerged as a significant issue in the Home Internet for Remote Indigenous Communities Project (HIP), although here were some initial concerns raised in the baseline study about the use of social media sites (such as Facebook). This may reflect the fact that the communities in the project are minor remote settlements without mobile coverage; our experience is that concern about cyber-bullying is more likely to be reported in relation to larger communities and regional centres with mobile coverage. It is also possible that the ongoing consultation and training undertaken by the research team has alleviated the kinds of anxieties expressed by community members, particularly elders, in other contexts. (Both of these explanations are examined further in sections ii and iv.)

During the Papunya Computer Room Study, some residents raised concerns about cyber-safety in the context of discussion about the proposed extension of mobile coverage to the community. Notably, their comments related to the potential threat rather than the actual experience of cyber-bullying emerging within their community; there also appeared to be a range of opinions on the subject amongst community members (for further discussion, see section iii). More significantly, elders and their support workers at a community organisation in a regional centre recounted local instances of cyber-bullying to HIP researchers.

The cyber-safety issues brought to the attention of the HIP researchers reflect the spectrum of experience across remote Indigenous communities within the NT, in so far as instances of cyber-bullying have been mainly associated within towns and larger settlements with mobile coverage. However, these reports consist mainly of anecdotal evidence, or, in the case of HIP, in the context of a trial where particular variables and contextual factors need to be taken into account.

While the HIP team welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Inquiry, some of our research partners are disappointed that its terms of reference focus primarily on cyber-bullying and does not consider more general aspects of cyber-safety issues for Indigenous Australians. We are concerned that the Inquiry may be responding primarily to media reports and anecdotal evidence highlighting cyber-bullying incidents, rather than listening to, raising the awareness of and incorporating the views of Indigenous Australians around a broad range of cyber-safety issues. Comprehensive evaluation and research is required to determine the dimensions and extent of cyber-bullying issues in Central Australia and the most effective strategies for addressing cyber-safety in remote Indigenous communities generally.

A significant question is the degree to which cyber-bullying and cyber-safety require a different approach in remote communities to that which is being pursued for the mainstream Australian population. Cyber-safety refers to the protection of internet users, particularly children and teenagers, from online risks and security breaches such as 'exposure to illegal or inappropriate material, stranger danger, identity theft, invasion of privacy, harassment and cyberbullying'. (AMCA, 2010, p.5) Cyber-bullying refers more specifically to incidents of

harassment usually involving sending messages (text and images) via the internet or mobile phones to other parties. Cyber-bullying, in any context, originates from the broader domain of social interaction. Remote communities possess unique cultural attributes, alongside geographic isolation, income and education-related factors. Moreover, from our experience, uneven levels of digital literacy in remote communities can exacerbate cyber-bullying, or at least influence community responses to it. It is important that future research into cyber-safety is attuned to cultural difference and responsive to community concerns. However, we would also caution against knee-jerk solutions that might inadvertently curtail internet freedoms, particularly those that are over and above solutions or programs intended for the rest of Australia. Even where cultural differences *are* causing apparent problems, this does not necessarily require drastic solutions. Typical responses, such as education and digital literacy programs (as pursued through ACMA for mainstream Australia) may be entirely appropriate even where the social interaction underpinning cyber-bullying behaviour relates to particular Indigenous cultural norms.

Consideration of cyber-safety issues for Indigenous Australians is timely, especially given the rapid expansion of information and communications technology and infrastructure nationally and globally. However, existing inequalities experienced by Aboriginal people, especially within remote areas, may well be exacerbated if they are not provided with opportunities to enjoy the same benefits from ICTs as non-Indigenous Australian populations. Access to information and communications technologies has the potential to extend education, health, e-government, commerce, communication and entertainment applications to remote Indigenous constituents, which will help them manage aspects of daily life and ameliorate some of the disadvantage they experience.

***i. The nature and prevalence of cyber-bullying and other risks and threats, in
particular via social networking sites and mobile phones, amongst Indigenous
Australians***

Formal reporting on cyber-safety: To date, no comprehensive study has been undertaken
on the dimensions and impacts of cyber-safety issues in Central Australia; most commentary
on this subject exists at an anecdotal level. In fact, there is very little evidence or research
across all remote Indigenous Australian communities on cyber-safety issues. Probably the
best-known case of cyber bullying, and the development of strategies in response, is that
which occurred in conjunction with other conflicts at Yuendumu and has been documented in
the Human Rights Commission's *Social Justice Report 2011*, Chapter 4, (ATSI Social
Justice Commissioner, 2011; Central Land Council, 2012.)

Further, some limited reporting on cyber safety issues in remote northern Australia appears
in Section 10.2, 'Young people and cyber-bullying', of FAHCSIA's *Community Safety and
Wellbeing Research Study* (Shaw & d'Abbs, 2011), which surveyed 17 communities and
1343 participants across the Northern Territory between December 2010 and June 2011
about their lived experience in the three years following the Northern Territory Emergency
Response or 'Intervention'. The survey identified cyber-bullying as one of the top challenges
to the safety of young people in remote NT Indigenous communities. In the section relating
to youth, respondents were asked to rate 'people sending nasty phone messages' as a
problem in their community from a list of ten possible challenges to safety (Shaw & d'Abbs,
2011, pp.8, 9). Approximately 76% of respondents classified nasty phone texts as a 'very
big' or 'big' problem when 'don't know' or 'nil' responses were factored out of estimations.
As such, cyber-bullying ranked amongst the top four community safety challenges for young
Indigenous people in remote NT areas, along with 'young people not listening to older
people', 'kids being out at night' and 'gunja' use.

According to the *Community Safety and Wellbeing Research Study*, internet and cyber-
bullying on mobile phones and within use of chat rooms by these communities played a
major role in contributing to conflict amongst young people and typically involved a scenario
in which 'someone sends a derogatory message about another person, and the fights begin'
(Shaw & d'Abbs, 2011, pp.116, 104). Cyber-bullying emerged in contexts such as same sex
fights (including boys teasing each other, 'jealousing' fights between girls over boyfriends),
between couples and amongst groups of young men and women in communities, and was
'particularly problematic for young girls' (Shaw & d'Abbs, 2011, pp.106, 82).

However, while cyber bullying ranked highly in 'the aggregated picture across the whole
sample', what was considered a pressing social challenge varied from community to
community. Communities with mobile coverage tended to prioritise problems such as fights
amongst young people 'triggered by texts or posts on chat room sites', whereas those
without mobile phone coverage 'instead struggle[d] with stopping their young people
spending all their time watching Austar.' (Shaw & d'Abbs, 2011, pp.106, 138)

Home Internet Project research: In some respects, the FAHCSIA report findings about the
nature and prevalence of cyber-safety issues in NT remote Aboriginal communities concurs
with observations from the HIP research to date. Cyber-safety has not emerged as a
significant issue in the HIP communities, which may reflect the fact that they are small
remote settlements without mobile coverage. The HIP researchers have been asking
residents, at quarterly intervals, whether they have any worries or concerns related to the
internet. We also document concerns raised impromptu on maintenance and training visits
(6 weekly intervals).

Social networking platforms: In our most recent survey we documented that five out of
thirty HIP participants interviewed regularly use facebook and other social networking sites

on their home computers. Neither they nor other community members have mentioned to us any cyber-safety issues or problems relating to their use of these platforms. In fact, residents seem to value the social connectivity with friends and family provided through Facebook and Diva Chat. Those using social networking sites appear to use them predominantly for interaction with friends and family not present in the community. Although there is potential for the HIP networks to be used for social networking sites on both PCs and mobile devices, so far we have not seen much evidence of local interaction via the internet, which is unsurprising given the small size of the communities. It should be noted, however, that these findings are not yet conclusive, as the introduction of home ICTs is relatively recent and the HIP longitudinal research is ongoing.

Children and cyber-safety: During the HIP baseline study, we inquired about cyber-safety as a potential issue, particularly in relation to children, but participants did not express much 'worry about kids'. This has continued to be the case during the longitudinal phase of the Project. The level of concern for cyber-safety amongst parents and guardians has been low and difficult to gauge. In the baseline study, the HIP researchers found that adults were more concerned about addiction to games and time-wasting behaviour than about what kids might access online. Overall, the experience of the researchers has been that children are sometimes considered a pest when it comes to media devices, especially as they 'get upset when they don't get to use it' or fight over it. For instance, participants spoke initially of kids bugging adults to play games on mobile phones. Adults also told us that they locked away their games console and would do the same with a computer when they had one, though we have observed that this has typically not been done with the computers provided through the project. A smaller number of people responded that children should nonetheless be allowed on computers because they can teach others. Since the trial's commencement, some adults have expressed surprise at children's aptitude on computers; however, concerns of time-wasting have not been significant.

In contrast to the low level of concern about cyber-safety, a report commissioned by the Australian Media and Communications Authority (ACMA) found that 71% of Australian parents 'were concerned about cyber-safety, with 32% of this group reporting that they were 'very concerned'" (Australian Communications and Media Authority, 2010, p.6). It is worth noting that most Australian parents regularly use the internet (88%) and access the internet from home at least several times a week (81%), whereas adults in our project communities were only 53% likely to have used a computer in the past, and only 6% of residents owned a computer of their own prior to the project. It is possible that these adults' limited exposure to computers has been a primary reason for their lack of knowledge, or concern for, cyber-safety.

Other Central Australian contexts: During the course of our research, the HIP team has incidentally been involved in discussions relating to cyber-safety in other regional centres and communities in Central Australia.

Staff supporting an Aboriginal elders' council at a large regional town expressed concern to our research team about episodes of cyber-bullying that had emerged in conjunction with tensions at local sporting occasions. Highly local use and existing rivalries characterise this scenario, which has reportedly led to some violence. The Diva Chat platform was also mentioned as a site where 'trash talk' and other forms of cyber-bullying took place; the relative cheapness of this platform (95 cents per day with unlimited data usage) has made it very attractive to remote community members, with the result that it is popularly referred to as the 'Indigenous Facebook'. Recently, the HIP researchers have heard anecdotal reports that these cyber-bullying issues have shifted to Facebook, possibly in response to the appointment of Diva Chat cops by the council to monitor activities in chat rooms on this social networking platform, a policy which had not yet been implemented. There were also

disturbing reports of truck-drivers and other itinerant workers using Diva Chat to make inappropriate contact with young teenage Aboriginal girls while passing through town.

These accounts of the nature and prevalence of cyber-safety issues for Indigenous people in remote regional centres and communities in Central Australia are similar to those documented in the FAHCSIA and HRC reports: i.e. cyber-bullying often takes the form of 'trash talk' via texting or online chat rooms, and can 'piggyback' on and inflame existing tensions, or create new ones, in contexts such as family feuds or sporting rivalries. In the reports of cyber-bullying at sporting occasions in a regional town, it was unclear whether this involved intra-Indigenous conflict, tension between local Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, or both. The approaches made to young Indigenous women via Diva Chat in town involved non-Indigenous men. To what extent cyber-safety issues in remote Indigenous contexts might have inter-racial elements is unknown and also requires investigation.

ii. Whether and how these risks and threats differ in rural and remote Indigenous communities

(a) ICT access and usage in remote NT Indigenous communities and settlements

Access to information and communication technology and infrastructure in remote Central Australian Indigenous communities is relatively new, and often limited or non-existent in smaller settlements. The communications profiles of the HIP trial communities during the initial baseline study revealed poor access and usage on multiple fronts, which has in turn impacted substantially on access and opportunities in these communities. For instance, prior to the implementation phase of the Home Internet Project:

- Only one household had access to the internet (out of approximately 25 homes)
- One third of those who had used a computer had never been online
- Three quarters of internet users were under the age of 30
- None of the communities had reliable mobile phone coverage
- A limited number of free-to-air television channels were available in Kwale Kwale and Imangara, while Mungalawurru had no free-to-air television transmission
- There was one shared public telephone in both Mungalawurru and Imangara (no home telephones). Kwale Kwale had two home telephones with restrictions on calls to one phone, and no public telephone
- None had access to fixed terrestrial internet services (such as ADSL).

The initial HIP baseline study (Rennie et al., 2011) also identified several key factors constituting obstacles to social inclusion and economic development, and contributing to the lower take-up of technology in remote Australia. All communities rated cost as the main barrier to them getting a home computer and internet access: residents are unlikely to be able to afford initial capital expenditure, provision and protection of computer equipment or to have the technical expertise to maintain ongoing ICT use. This finding differs from studies of mainstream Australia where cost is not a significant factor for non-users (Ewing & Thomas, 2010).

Interviewees flagged the factors that have stopped them from getting a computer as follows:

- **Cost:** Affordability is a significant issue for these low-income families. Maintaining ongoing internet subscriptions may also be a factor.
- **Concerns about children:** Adults (particularly younger adults) were concerned about young people wasting time playing games and fighting over the computer. There was only a very low understanding of cyber-safety issues.
- **Lack of support, training and maintenance:** Some were concerned that computers would get damaged or break down and that they would not be able to fix them.
- **Limited computer skills/experience:** Digital literacy was low, especially for people over 30. Even those who described themselves as 'good' at using computers tended to have a limited knowledge of what computers could be used for. Although many identified everyday applications such as internet banking as something that would be useful, most did not know how to use them.
- **Limited English literacy:** Some participants were concerned that they would struggle to read the words on the screen.
- **Concerns over physical security:** Most adults asserted that they would need to be able to lock away their computer in order to protect it from theft and damage.
- **The home:** Some households were temporarily moving from two separate houses into one, to reduce (winter heating) energy consumption costs. These households were concerned about space for a computer, and that computers would keep too many people indoors.

Remote Indigenous communities also have limited choice when it comes to broadband technologies and providers. Many areas are likely to remain without cellular mobile (Next G and beyond) coverage due to market and geographical constraints. The participants in this study were unaware that satellite internet access was available, or that the government offers a subsidy to cover hardware and installation costs. The process for organising satellite broadband requires technical knowledge and regular telephone contact, both of which are significant limiting constraints in most remote Indigenous communities.

Furthermore, specific barriers and challenges exist regarding the geographic and physical environment, socio-cultural factors, energy sources, policy and regulation within the context of small remote Indigenous communities participating in the project. Harsh physical environments (dust, heat, lack of building weather sealing) in Central Australian remote communities in particular impact on ICT uptake and create obstacles for hardware maintenance and sustainability after take-up has been achieved.

(b) Implications of low digital literacy for cyber-safety in remote Indigenous contexts

Not surprisingly, given their limited access to and experience of ICTs, many remote Indigenous settlements are characterised by low levels of digital literacy which may mean that without further education and skills development in this regard, community members will find dealing with cyber-safety issues particularly challenging and distressing. In the HIP researchers' experience, older and middle-aged people in remote Centralian communities often lacked skills, experience and even interest using in ICTs. Younger residents (i.e. under 30 years) with computing experience from school or elsewhere were largely self-sufficient with application use, and only asked for specific assistance with problems or more complex tasks within applications, which fell more within the category of technical or application support than training.

Age-related differences: Within this context, some of the concern registered by certain older and senior people probably relates to the 'fear of the unknown' that might accompany issues emerging from the introduction of technologies of which they have little experience. Workers at the community organisation in the regional town where there had been incidences of cyber-bullying said it had been helpful to hold sessions for elders and older Aboriginal people to ascertain their level of digital knowledge and to provide information about mobile telephony and social networking platforms, and their possible uses (for further discussion, see section iv).

(c) Potential breaches of boundaries and protocols

One of the most threatening aspects of the use of mobile phones and social networking platforms for cyber-bullying for community members in remote Central Australian settlements is its potential to cross personal, social, cultural and geographical boundaries rapidly. In particular, the misuse of ICT technologies in Indigenous contexts has the capacity to breach cultural protocols between family and intra-familial groups and, in doing so, to inflame existing conflicts. Messages sent via mobile and internet technology can also intrude into personal and family space with great immediacy across distances—including long distances which would not usually be crossed quickly in a remote Indigenous context, due to climatic, transportation and other factors.

The potential impacts of these issues has been documented in reference to Yuendumu, where cyber-bullying fuelled conflicts between two camps (south and west) within the community after the death of a young man. (For discussion, see ATSI Commissioner, 2011.) Young women used mobile phones to send inflammatory messages, including altered photographs of deceased family members, via Telstra BigPond's Diva Chat platform to

members of the other camp. The transmission of these messages led to further physical fighting between young men in the community. The senders of the messages were often 'anonymous', as they set up false identities on Diva Chat, sometimes using the names of deceased relatives from the feuding families. The use of these identities and related images was highly disturbing to community members, as it violated Warlpiri cultural customs that prohibit using the name or viewing images of the dead. The situation was exacerbated when people from another community a couple of hundred kilometres away began to send bullying phone messages, crossing distances and boundaries that would not normally be so easily crossed.

Ultimately, the situation was managed with the assistance of the Australian Federal Police, the NT Department of Justice and AirG, Canadian-based company and host for Diva Chat, (discussed in section iv). However, this example indicates the potential for cyber-bullying to cause great distress in remote communities by inflaming existing conflicts and breaching cultural protocols and personal and social boundaries. The lack of digital literacy, particularly amongst older groups, coupled with the relative newness of the technology, makes it difficult for elders and others in community leadership positions to respond effectively to cyber-safety issues and to develop and implement culturally appropriate strategies and parameters for ICT use in remote communities. Lack of knowledge and understanding of legal culpability and civic responsibilities in relation to ICT use and cyber-safety can be problematic across all age groups amongst remote populations (discussed in section iii).

iii. The impact and implications of cyber-bullying and other risks and threats on access and use of information and communication technologies by Indigenous Australians

The impacts of cyber-bullying may include increased tension, including physical violence and verbal abuse (as described in the previous section), within remote communities, which may have social-emotional, well-being implications for residents. The social and legal implications of cyber-safety issues are often not particularly well-understood by people in remote Indigenous communities in Central Australia, because of their relative lack of exposure to information and communications technology, and their low levels of digital literacy. In working with communities with cyber-safety issues, NT Department of Justice officials found that local people and even police were often unaware, for example, that it was possible to be charged with committing a criminal offence if you sent violent, abusive and/or sexual content to others electronically.

Concern about potential extension of mobile coverage: A lack of awareness and information concerning ICT access and usage may contribute to a 'fear of the unknown', which focuses on the threats associated with information technology and communications, rather than the development of greater digital literacy and a capacity to respond to safety issues.

HIP researchers observed a divided outlook on the potential safety risks versus the benefits of the extension of mobile coverage amongst community members during fieldwork for the Papunya Computer Centre Study (Hogan, Gregory, & Thomas, 2012). The main source of internet access at Papunya was through its computer centre, a closely supervised, shared facility occupying two rooms. Research undertaken by the HIP team indicated that while most community members had mobile phones for use in town, only a few people surveyed possessed home computers, none of which had home internet access. Some community members had portable ICT devices such as tablets, which they brought to the Centre to sync to its computers and to access the free wi-fi available outside the computer room.

Some non-Indigenous people in management positions and a couple of senior Aboriginal men expressed concern to the HIP team about the potential for mobile phone access to feed or to create conflict at Papunya through cyber-bullying, sexting, and so forth. In particular, they noted how cyber-bullying had fed recent payback conflicts at Yuendumu (See Central Land Council, 2012, p.5), and how mobile phone usage in town (i.e. Alice Springs, Tennant Creek) amongst young people was sometimes associated with 'trash talk'. At the time of the study, the proposed erection of mobile phone towers later in 2013 was under discussion in the community.

One senior Papunya man was ambivalent about mobile phone access: he could see benefits but was concerned about young people having access to 'bad things'. One youth worker reported that another senior man didn't want mobile phone access because of its potential negative effects on young people. Another youth worker also reported that a senior man (not clear whether it was the same one) had said that being at Papunya gave young people a 'break' from the texting and possible cyber-bullying that went on in town (i.e. Alice Springs).

By contrast, some women interviewed were positive about mobile phone access (more so than computer and internet access): they said mobile phones were good for (physical) safety reasons and for urgent matters like sorry business and emergencies.

This division of opinion is not uncommon; people have expressed caution in discussions at Council meetings of the CLC about the introduction of new ICT technologies into their communities and, in particular, an underlying fear that communication devices may increase community conflict between younger generations. This division of opinion indicates the need

for all community members to be apprised of the challenges and advantages accompanying extension of ICT access, including mobile coverage, to remote settlements. Anxiety about the potential threat of cyber-safety issues leading to prohibitive access arrangements could mean that community members might miss out on the benefits of e-technology, such as use of health and education programs, and labour and cost-saving opportunities, including banking, shopping and financial management applications. Additionally, lack of mobile coverage limits the potential safety advantages of this technology, such as the use of mobile phones for emergencies: there is often only one public telephone available, particularly in smaller remote communities.

Use of mainstream security measures: Other potential risks accompanying ICT use in remote Central Australian communities include the propensity of people to forget or to share passwords, in part because they have less experience of 'mainstream' non-Indigenous security issues and may not understand the full implications of privacy and safety surrounding ICT access. This can also make them more vulnerable to external threats such as spamming and internet hoaxes.

Overall, our researchers have found that community residents responded well during the longitudinal phase to the introduction of filters on the computers and to increasing security options of these filters. However, while several HIP households introduced passwords to limit access to Windows user accounts, there has been a degree of sharing of these between trusted adults. Cultural values such as demand sharing of resources (e.g. money, cars, food, phones), especially amongst family members, also promote looser and potentially exploitative arrangements concerning password access and use. For example, HIP researchers heard a report of children under 13 year olds using 'granny's BasicCard' in town to make iTunes and phone card purchases.

Children and cyber-safety: As of yet, the HIP researchers have not seen any evidence of cyber-safety issues developing amongst children in the Home Internet Project (discussed in section i), and parents have reportedly been cautious and diligent in the supervision of their children's ICT access at home. Internet access and use of tablets to play games and so forth have been highly popular amongst children in the HIP communities and at the Papunya Computer Centre.

There is perhaps some potential for cyber-safety issues to emerge given the higher degree of autonomy traditionally permitted to Indigenous children at younger ages than non-Indigenous children, which may entail different social and cultural behaviour in relation to supervision of computers by parents and other older community members. The relatively low level of direct instruction by adults that often characterises supervision of children in Central Australian Aboriginal communities may be a reason why, for example, the HIP researchers did not receive much feedback from parents during the longitudinal phase concerning 'worry for kids' in relation to ICT use. It may also be compounded by the lack of digital literacy and general awareness of ICT issues of many remote Aboriginal community members over the age of 30.

A typical 'mainstream' response to cyber-bullying amongst young people is to put the onus back onto parents for monitoring their children's cyber-safety: for example, requiring that they talk more to their kids about their internet and computer usage, and monitor their activities on social networking platforms. Different approaches may be needed for remote Indigenous communities, emphasising engagement between older and younger generations in relation to ICTs and providing information to parents and older community members about, for example, mobile phone and social networking usage (similar to the cyber-safety awareness workshops discussed in section iv (b) (ii) 'preventative' strategies.) Such approaches could be incorporated into digital awareness and education programs for these communities.

However, we would recommend against imposing overly cautious cyber-safety restrictions that might inhibit the positive aspects of children's frequently enthusiastic uptake of technology in remote Aboriginal communities. Anthropologist Ute Eickelkamp cautions that the relative emphasis on children's autonomy amongst Central and Western desert people should not be confused with Western liberal notions of freedom and individual expression, but viewed instead within the context of 'the social embedding, the mirroring and constant responsiveness to others — what Myers called "relatedness" — that allow a person to be socially effective and in this sense to exercise autonomy and socio-psychological mastery.' (Eickelkamp, 2011, p.507) She describes this process of childhood development as follows:

> The much-observed "freedom" from parental discipline, however, does not simply mean that children assert their will without regard for certain social rules. Rather, it is suggested that it is precisely the relatively low level of direct instruction and reprimand by adults that fosters children's ability to pattern their behaviour in relation to one another and to structure their social world and understandings according to the meanings that they co-create. Agency of this kind often occurs through imaginative play and spontaneously. (2011, p.502)

The capacity for self-directed play and discovery are advantageous in developing literacy and technical skills, which has been reflected in the quick adoption and high level of use of maths games by children on home computers in the HIP study, along with use of computer programs for other skills-based activities such as song and story-writing, and making booklets. We have also seen, for example, young people in their twenties use their digital knowledge and skills to assist older, less tech-savvy relatives in navigating Centrelink and banking websites. It would be a shame to apply cyber-safety restrictions that might inhibit the development of children and young people's ICT literacy and skills, given the potential contributions that such skills development might make to their own education and to the long-term sustainability of remote communities.

Resourcing of responses to cyber-safety issues: Finally, government agencies tend to devise elaborate solutions to social and other public policy issues with limited consultation and consideration of the resourcing requirements or skilled resource availabilities at community level. These policy initiatives can be costly and burdensome for remote communities and their service providers to implement, particularly given their frequently negligible resources, and the distances and climatic factors that typically need to be negotiated in Central Australia.

A related example is the rather onerous requirement for reporting against the publicly funded computer provisions of the *Northern Territory National Emergency Response Act 2007*. Under this legislation, the person responsible for a publicly funded computer was required to maintain continuous records of computer usage by each individual user, and obtain and forward computer audit records to the Commonwealth Government for each such computer on a six monthly basis.

iv. Ways to support Indigenous communities, including rural and remote Indigenous communities, to reduce cyber-bullying, etc.

This section will outline and discuss ways to support Indigenous community members, especially in remote and regional areas, to address cyber-safety issues. As already discussed, there is a particular need for engagement with and education of older and middle-aged Indigenous community members about the uses of mobile phones, how social networking sites work, how cyber-bullying occurs and what challenges it might present to their communities. It is important to ensure the participation of community members across all age groups in developing strategies to manage any local cyber-safety issues. The dissemination of information through appropriate channels, especially within digital contexts to engage younger community members, is significant in apprising community members of their civic, legal and cultural responsibilities regarding cyber-safety. In some cases it might be relevant for this type of education program to be linked with more general information about the advantages and disadvantages of computer and internet for remote communities to avoid unnecessary caution or reluctance about using communication technologies.

(a) Education of elders, and older and middle-aged Indigenous community members about social networking sites and cyber-bullying.

Education, information and awareness need to be made available to remote community members, especially middle-aged and older people, about cyber-safety, the possible impacts and implications of ICT use, as well as their participation in the development and implementation of strategies to manage any issues that may emerge. In particular, these age groups often require information about the possible uses of mobile phones and social networking platforms. One older man commented of the 'age gap' in knowledge and experience in digital technology: 'Old people don't know how to use it, but they (younger people) are tricking them with it.' (Central Land Council, 2012, p.5.) Given this context, education and awareness programs which consider the limited exposure to computers and the internet, and low digital literacy skills of many senior Indigenous people need to be developed.

Strategies are required to include elders and other community members within dialogue about and development of cyber-safety strategies. It is important to engage elders in responding to cyber-bullying because they have the authority to provide leadership to younger people about what is culturally appropriate in regard to use of ICTs concerning the potential risks of crossing cultural boundaries and causing distress to other community members. Education about the risks and implications of cyber-bullying in regard to legal and civic responsibilities also need to be provided to those using ICTs in remote communities.

Another educative tool the government could consider developing in consultation with Aboriginal communities and people is an Indigenous equivalent of the DBCDE-produced *Easy Guide to Socialising Online* [http://www.dbcde.gov.au/easyguide] that is specific to their cyber-safety concerns.

(b) Development and participation of community members in strategies to address cyber-safety

Community members across all age groups should be engaged in developing approaches to manage any local cyber-safety issues, and also to include relevant stakeholders such as police, service agencies and local retailers in broader dialogue about the implementation of such strategies.

In the Northern Territory, the Department of Justice's Strong Choices project, funded by FAHCSIA, has been active in developing responses to local cyber-safety issues that involve

participation and ownership by Aboriginal community members, and engagement with other relevant local stakeholders. Strong Choices was developed by Eileen Deemal-Hall from the NT Department of Justice, and comprises a set of partnerships between key agencies providing specific expertise across a range of areas to address cyber-bullying: the Australian Federal Police (legal and technical advice; intervention), AMSANT (social-emotional wellbeing support), NAPCAN (child protection) and SkinnyFish (musical and digital media production).

Strong Choices' approach to cyber-safety has two main prongs: intervention and prevention. Intervention strategies include engaging with community leader and elders, the police (local and federal) and ISP providers to identify and close the social networking accounts of people sending offensive messages, and appointing monitors (e.g. 'Diva Cops') in chat rooms to identify and report potential concerns.

Prevention strategies may entail conducting workshops and information sessions with elders, other community members and stakeholders to promote awareness about cyber-safety and to develop measures to address any local issues, actual or potential. They could also include providing information about community members' civic and legal rights and responsibilities in relation to cyber-bullying, such as what activities may constitute a criminal offence. Other effective approaches have entailed involving elders in mentoring young people on cultural responsibility, and the use of community members' talents in creating preventative and awareness-raising material about cyber-safety for dissemination through digital media.

Some examples of the application of intervention and preventative strategies in the Central Australian context follows.

(i)   *Intervention* – Strong Choices was invited to work with Yuendumu when cyber-bullying and identity theft fed into feuding within the community. In this situation, where there was already a high level of conflict, Strong Choices thought it made sense to apply direct intervention before using preventative measures. Strong Choices also wanted to implement more immediate measures than were available: they found ACMA's complaints process laborious to use and fairly inaccessible to remote Aboriginal people: i.e. making a complaint involves downloading and completing a several-page form from the internet, then faxing it to ACMA, who assign a Complaints Officer to investigate your case. In HIP's experience, remote Aboriginal people are quite unlikely to make formal complaints or report problems formally, and need assistance (usually face-to-face assistance) to do so.

Strong Choices collaborated with the local police sergeant at Yuendumu to identify the false names under which the Diva Chat accounts had been set up for cyber-bullying purposes. In conjunction with Australian Federal Police, they then asked Canadian-based company AirG, which hosts Diva Chat, to close them.

Strong Choices also worked with community members, identifying three people whom they could speak to if they received bullying messages: in some cases, it was difficult for people to talk about the harassment they'd experienced, because of inter and intra family relationships).

Another strategy for intervention that Strong Choices has pioneered is the use of chat room monitors or 'Diva Cops' to observe and intervene, if necessary, in chat room activities. For example, a strategy was developed at one regional centre in which six young men were appointed chat room monitors or 'Diva chat cops' to monitor activities in local chat rooms under the direction of a committee of local elders representing language groups across the region. The monitors were to report any

offensive behaviour in the chat rooms to the elders, who could take disciplinary action if they thought it necessary. Telstra lent support to the strategy by undertaking to donate six iPhones to the chat room monitors. There were some reports that this strategy had been preventative in advance: offensive behaviour had diminished in the chat rooms before its implementation, because of the threat of being monitored. (We do not know whether any incidents have been investigated by police, because such information is not accessible. However, it is information that the Joint Select Committee on Cyber-safety might request.)

(ii)   *Prevention* — Strong Choices conduct workshops with communities, in which they seek to provide education and to raise awareness about cyber-safety issues. This often involves providing basic information about ICTs and how they work to people (especially older) lacking digital knowledge and experience. The workshops began with an 'elders-only' day, before allowing other community members and stakeholders to attend. The purpose was not only to provide information about ICTs to the elders and to increase their awareness of the legal and civic implications of cyber-bullying, but to encourage them to exercise leadership and to develop a strategy in which they could teach cultural responsibility to young people in this area. On the second day, service agencies attended the workshop, including the Aboriginal health service, the police, schools and retailers to share information about local cyber-safety issues and to participate in developing strategies to address them. The Australian Federal Police have also been invited to workshops in communities to provide education to community members, especially younger people, about the legal implications of cyber-bullying.

Another important aspect of these cyber-safety awareness workshops involved identifying elders' skills and qualities, such as musical and leadership ability, which could be useful in implementing approaches to prevent cyber-bullying. For example, elders can be involved in making mp3 files with messages about community members' cultural and legal responsibilities in using ICTs for distribution on YouTube or through downloading onto portable IT devices.

Researcher Inge Kral also notes that digital media can be a way of bringing 'two ways together' – i.e. the knowledge and experiences of older and younger generations, particularly through language and cultural maintenance activities. She states: 'Such media work is validated by elders who need young people to mediate between old knowledge and new technologies.' (Kral, 2010, p.9.) Older and younger people could work profitably together to exchange knowledge and skills in developing responses to cyber-safety issues in regard to Indigenous communities.

In conjunction with Skinny Fish music, Strong Choices developed a YouTube clip as an educational aid for use in NT Indigenous communities as part of its Stronger Choices program. The clip features music by B2M, a Tiwi Islands band, and participation by local community members. The YouTube clip is also 'sectioned' for use as shorter bites. The clip can be downloaded onto a portable device and 'bluetoothed' around communities or used for public presentations and information-sharing at workshops. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9nQoP-XfO_4&list=PLhVW2l7sc6ggwOsZIFV62jglWu35bpXZr]

(c)   Potential strategies for community management of ICTs

The application of filters, passwords, and other technical (and essentially externally designed and applied) security safeguards on ICTs to restrict cyber-bullying could also be considered

in remote community contexts, but we believe these are likely to have limited benefits because:

- Cyber-safety is at its core a social rather than technical issue
- Language used in cyber-bullying is likely to be highly context specific and dynamically changing, and therefore often difficult to categorise as inflammatory
- Aboriginal language use and idiom would complicate language interpretation for filter designers
- Safeguards would have to be implemented across multiple platforms (mobile, fixed, multiple providers), and would require continuous updating and monitoring
- As stated in section iii of this submission, passwords are apt to be forgotten or shared
- Technological knowledge and experience is often required to ensure that a filter is used to full potential. Most often filters required input from those using them.

Community wireless network: Indigenous ICT uptake on an individual and household basis, including through mobile devices, is likely to increase in remote Australia within the next decade. For example, when HIP researchers returned to Papunya in December 2012, six months after their previous survey trip, more ICT devices (especially tablets) were being used in the community, which may well be indicative of a trend towards increasing ownership, use and accessibility of computers and the internet. This is likely to be encouraged by the greater availability of portable ICT (especially mobile) devices, the extension of mobile coverage, increasing numbers of private wi-fi networks and gradual improvements to satellite internet services through the NBN.

It should be noted however, that extensions to cellular mobile coverage in very remote Australia are likely to be incremental and infrequent. Despite the very low existing land area coverage (and low population coverage with respect to smaller Indigenous settlements in particular), the commercial viability of such extensions is marginal.

In case of larger communities such as Papunya, with shared computing facility arrangements, extension of the current internet access service could be considered by providing a community wireless network covering the whole town area. A significant reason for considering the implementation of a local area network within the context of increasing individual and home internet access would be that it could remain under the control of the community and its associated organisations, so that network-level filtering and terms of use could reflect the specific concerns of elders and residents. Community networks would also provide a further opportunity for the development of local or regional support and maintenance capabilities.

Future implications

It would not be surprising to find internet and mobile telephony access and use increasing dramatically over the next few years within remote Australia, especially in larger Indigenous communities. Telstra and the NT Government recently announced a joint initiative to roll out new mobile and fixed broadband services to remote Territorian communities, including the installation of eight new mobile sites at Ampilatwatja, Arlparra, Barrow Creek, Mutitjulu, Newcastle Waters, Palumpa, Papunya and Peppimenarti, and of ADSL2+ fixed broadband equipment at Mutitjulu, Hermannsburg, Ngukurr, Numbulwar, Elliott and Wadeye. (Telstra, 2013.)

Initiatives such as these may well lead to greater ICT uptake on a private household basis through subscriptions to mobile and/or satellite services, and the use of low-range private wi-fi networks. Internet TV will also offer alternatives to VAST and the Austar/Foxtel service. In communities with shared facility arrangements, the result of these changes may be to shift responsibility for the management and control of network access, and the supervision of users from these centres to households. Mobile cellular services in particular are likely to present new challenges for users and require different approaches in terms of managing cost and harmful or offensive use, as they have elsewhere.

A broader emphasis on developing digital literacy across all age groups will be crucial within this emerging context. It will also be beneficial for elders and other leaders in these communities to engage their members in an ongoing dialogue about the implications of widespread access to ICTs and the internet, including any potentially harmful or offensive uses. It is important, however, to be mindful of the advantages of ICT use for community members and to avoid the application of potentially counterproductive administrative regimes that hinder digital self-education and people's access to internet applications that will enhance their daily lives. It should also be noted that not all cyber-safety issues and threats for remote Indigenous people occur within or are generated by people in their communities; Indigenous people can be particularly vulnerable to hoaxes and scams generated elsewhere nationally or internationally. Although we do not have evidence of inter-racial bullying between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people via ICT devices, the potential for conflict between these groups to occur should be factored into future considerations of cyber-safety issues for Indigenous Australians.

While current evidence (anecdotal and reporting) indicates that cyber-bullying is likely to be a more significant issue in towns and settlements with mobile phone access, it would be an oversimplification to conclude that 'not having mobile phone coverage' is the solution to limiting cyber-safety problems in communities. Nor should it be assumed that 'ignorance is bliss' regarding the adoption of ICTs, especially mobile telephony, in remote Indigenous Australia. The lack of knowledge, experience and exposure to ICTs, especially amongst middle-aged and older members of the remote Indigenous population, may have the potential to accelerate, rather than minimise any harms accompanying the use of these technologies.

Preventative educative approaches such as awareness-raising through digital media and educational workshops, are useful in providing general information to help remote community members 'get up to speed' about the risks and implications of cyber-bullying. However, cyber-safety issues probably require a case-by-case approach, taking into account individual communities' level of digital literacy, ICT access and use, and providing suitable information and support to assist them in developing appropriate measures and responses. The HIP project has provided support that other communities do not have, which may explain why we have not encountered major issues to date. This possibly suggests that cyber-safety can be tackled through assistance programs.

The ideal time to introduce awareness-raising measures is in conjunction with the introduction of infrastructure such as mobile coverage into new areas, when peoples' vulnerability through lack of digital literacy and experience is at its greatest. Where commercial providers are set to gain revenue through extended usage, we consider that it is appropriate for them to contribute substantially to the costs of integrating awareness-raising and education in the community with the provisioning program.

Mobile telephony and high speed broadband technology are important and evolving elements in meeting basic communication needs of Indigenous people to help them live sustainably on their traditional lands. It would be a shame, and ultimately counterproductive, to pursue a protectorate approach in Central Australia which restricted or prohibited access to and use of information and communication technology in remote settlements. ICTs are an important part of sustaining and developing remote communities for the future.

Broadband in particular has the potential to connect dispersed communities to services such as hospitals, community agencies, financial management, enterprise development, online purchases and emergency assistance. It also presents opportunities for developing archives, documentaries, language preservation, stories, and young people's creative expression, numeracy, technical and linguistic literacy. In considering the adoption and use of ICTs by Indigenous communities, especially within remote areas, the potential to decrease not only the digital but also existing social divides and disadvantage should be taken into account.

REFERENCES

ATSI Social Justice Commissioner. (2011). *Social Justice Report 2011*. Commonwealth of Australia, Sydney. Retrieved from https://www.humanrights.gov.au/publications/chapter-4-cultural-safety-and-security-tools-address-lateral-violence-social-justice

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). (2006). Population Characteristics, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. *cat no. 4713.0*. Retrieved December 20, 2010 from http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/0/C7AACF2EBB6B1876CA257718002A77F1?opendocument

Australian Communications and Media Authority. (2010). Cybersmart Parents: Connecting parents to cybersafety resources. Retrieved from http://www.acma.gov.au/webwr/_assets/main/lib310665/cybersmart parents_connecting parents to cybersafety resources.pdf

Central Land Council. (2012). Divas Chat causing social chaos. *Land Rights News Central Australia*, pp. 5–6. Alice Springs.

Eickelkamp, U. (2011). Agency and structure in the life-world of Aboriginal children in Central Australia. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *33*(4), 502–508. doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2010.05.014

Ewing, S., & Thomas, J. (2010). *The Internet in Australia*. ARC Centre of Excellence for Creative Industries and Innovation, Melbourne. Retrieved 20 January 2011, http://www.cci.edu.au/publications/digital-futures-2010.

Glasson, B. (2008). *Regional Telecommunications Independent Review Committee Report: Framework for the future.* Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.

Hogan, E., Gregory, R. &, & Thomas, J. (2012). *Papunya Internet and Computer Centre Report*. Swinburne University of Technology, Melbourne.

Kral, I. (2010). Plugged in : Remote Australian Indigenous youth and digital culture. CAEPR Working Paper No. 69. Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, Canberra. Retrieved 20 December 2010, http://caepr.anu.edu.au/Publications/WP/2010WP69.php

McCallum, K. and Papandrea, F. (2009). Community business: the internet in remote Australian Indigenous communities. *New Media & Society*, *11*, 1230–1251.

Rennie, E., Crouch, A., Wright, A., & Thomas, J. (2011). *Home Internet for Remote Indigenous Communities*. ACCAN, Sydney.

Rennie, E, Crouch, A, Thomas, J & Taylor, P. (2010). Beyond public access? Reconsidering broadband for remote Indigenous communities. *Communication, Politics and Culture*, *43*(1), 48–69.

Shaw, G. & P. d'Abbs. (2011). *Community Safety and Wellbeing Research Study: Consolidated Report*. Bowchung Consulting, Canberra.

Telstra. (2013). New communications technologies for the Northern Territory. 18 April 2013. Retrieved 24 May 2013, http://www.telstra.com.au/abouttelstra/media-centre/announcements/new-communications-technologies-for-the-northern-territory.xml

Acronyms key

ACCAN	Australian Communications Consumer Action Network
ACMA	Australian Communications and Media Authority
AMSANT	Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory
CAT	Centre for Appropriate Technology
CLC	Central Land Council
DBCDE	Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy
FAHCSIA	[Department of] Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
NAPCAN	National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect

This work can be cited as:

Hogan, E, Rennie, E, Crouch, A, Wright, A, Gregory, R & Thomas, J. (2013) *Submission to the Inquiry into Issues surrounding Cyber-safety for Indigenous Australians*. Swinburne University of Technology, Melbourne.