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Parents urged to be cyber safe over kids' internet use

● AUSTRALIAN parents are rolling out the welcome mat for paedophiles by allowing children unfettered access to the internet, a parenting expert said yesterday.

The founder of the Generation Next parenting seminars Dr Ramesh Manocha said a recent survey by his organisation indicated one million Aussies aged four to 18 were allowed unsupervised internet access.

Only one third of parents had internet filtering in place and 760,000 Aussie teens had computers in their rooms.

Only 40 per cent restrict internet access to shared family areas, as experts advise, and the same amount never check the history of websites kids visit.

Dr Manocha, who works as a GP at Burwood, said the results were a major wake-up call. "There's a growing gap between parents and children," he said.

"Our survey shows parents think they have the

situation under control and they comprehend the nature of cyber safety but the reality is they don't."

Dr Manocha said there were dangers children would encounter pornography or websites that encourage destructive behaviour such as violence and suicide.

He said they may also be targeted by online predators, who could ask them intimate questions and encourage them to send pictures of themselves on the internet.

"The biggest concern parents have at the moment is bullying — but they're not aware that the commonest form of bullying is cyber bullying," Dr Manocha said.

Cyber safety expert and former police officer Susan McLean, who will discuss the research at a Generation Next seminar at the University of NSW on May 23, said it was important children only used the internet in areas where their parents could see what was going on.



Keeping watch: Melissa Bye, of Oatley, with children Jack and Harriet