



Herald Sun  
Wednesday 22/4/2009  
Page: 18  
Section: General News  
Region: Melbourne Circulation: 515,500  
Type: Capital City Daily  
Size: 128.55 sq.cms.  
Published: MTWTFS-

Brief: REEDHEALTH

# Children left at net risk

A MILLION Australian children are roaming the internet as they please, a new study has found.

Almost four in 10 teens and one in 10 aged 4-7 also have a computer in their bedroom.

The study found while eight in 10 parents control their kids' internet use, only a third use filters. Twenty per cent had no control over their child's online activities.

Experts warn the study is a wake-up call for parents who "have their heads in the sand" on cyber safety. They add children as young as seven are illegally joining the Facebook social networking site, putting themselves at risk.

The March StollzNow poll, for the Generation Next parenting group, found only 42 per cent of parents checked the history of sites their children visited.

Just four in 10 restricted computer use to shared family areas. About 38 per cent of teens, 15 per cent of kids aged 8-11 and 9 per cent of those aged 4-7 had computers in their bedrooms.

Former Victoria Police

## Cheryl Critchley

cyber safety expert Susan McLean, now a private consultant, said many parents were ignorant about the net and what children did on it.

Ms McLean said children as young as seven lied about their age to join Facebook, and many didn't realise what they posted went worldwide.

Ms McLean said kids were tech-savvy but lack of cognitive development made them vulnerable. She urged parents to learn about the net and communicate with children.

They should also know where their kids went online, and learn how to view the history of sites visited.

While kids think they are net-savvy, Ms McLean has spoken to them undercover "hundreds of times".

"I've never been caught out yet," she said.

Ms McLean will speak at the Generation Next cyber safety seminars from next month. Melbourne's is on June 13.

**Net link:**

[www.gennextseminars.com](http://www.gennextseminars.com)