INQUIRY INTO BULLYING OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Organisation:	Leopard Labs
Name:	Ms Meg Dennis
Position:	Director
Date received:	21/05/2009

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Thursday, 21 May 2009

The Hon Robyn Parker
Chair
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 2
NSW Legislative Council
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Thank you for the invitation to make a late submission to the inquiry into the bullying of children and young people. There is little coverage which explores the solutions available and it is important for parents to know there are now tools that you can use to help protect kids from cyber bullying.

Please find enclosed a response to the terms of reference.

Regards

Meg Dennis

Director
Leopard Labs

Terms of Reference

1. The nature, level and impact of bullying among school age children and young people under the age of 18, including apprentices and trainees

In relation to cyber-bullying via mobile phones, in discussions with teachers, parents and social groups we are finding two aspects are exacerbating the use of mobile phones for cyber-bullying:

> i) PC filtering – Australian parents have been well educated around installing and maintaining PC filters in their homes, until now there has not been software to do the same on mobile devices. Children are aware controls exist on PCs but not mobiles and therefore where social networking sites are monitored and blocked on the family PC, they are not controlled on mobile phones, allowing uninterrupted and unsupervised usage.
>
> ii) Attachment and dependence on mobile phones – it is common amongst children who are being bullied via text messaging NOT to communicate this with parents or teachers for fear of mobiles either being banned or confiscated.

2. Factors contributing to bullying

Technology has changed the shape of bullying. Behaviour that was once typically only found in schoolyards now has a 24 x 7 enabler – PCs and mobile phones. These technologies provide the platform to allow bullying to go beyond the schoolyard. The nature of many web sites now days make the bullying far more public than ever before, blogs, pictures and footage can be viewed around the globe. The ease and low cost of messaging can be used by a bully to bombard their victim any time of the day or night with hurtful or threatening messages.

The camera installed in almost all mobile phones nowdays makes them highly accessible to film fights and inappropriate pictures or scenes, for example, which end up on an internet site.

Parents, schools and social groups have been voicing interest in mobile phones which do not have cameras, messaging and internet access. Regression of technology is not the solution, rather some management of mobile services is required.

3. Prevention and early intervention approaches to address bullying, including 'cyber-bullying'

Education and social structures need to evolve to support children's use of technology – it's a combination of shift in thinking, education programs and solutions. For parents it's important to make them aware there are now tools that they can use to help protect children from cyber bullying.
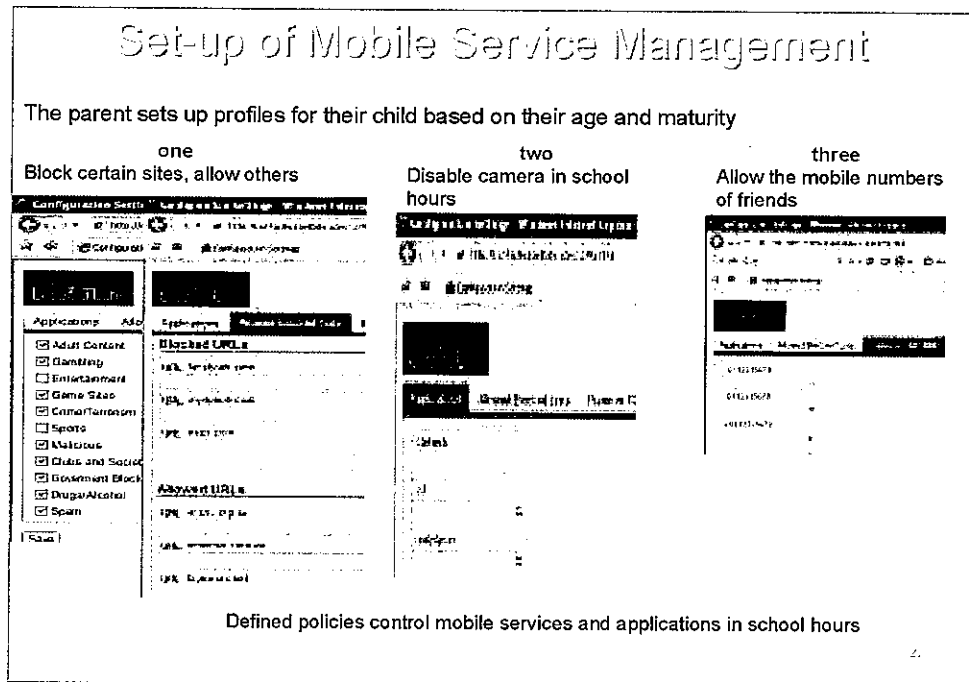
Australian company Leopard Labs has a solution to assist with both prevention and management of cyber-bullying via mobile phones.

Leopard Labs have developed software called *mozone* which can be simply downloaded onto a mobile device either from the internet or from an application store such as Nokia download store or Optus Zoo, for example.

The software has the following features which can be utilised by a parent as <u>preventative</u> cyber-bullying measures:

- **Mobile phone internet filtering** – parents can set up access to social networking and instant messaging sites which they feel are suitable based on the age and maturity of the child and not allow others which are not appropriate.
- **Time-of-day access to mobile internet** can be limited to times when the child is within their parents care and blocked when at school.
- **Messaging 'allowed' and 'blocked' lists** can be used by a parent to set up numbers which can send messages from/to and block others. This is one easy way a parent can have visibility of who their children are socialising with. Any new contacts if not added to the 'allowed' list will not be able to message the phone, unless the child asks their parents to go into the settings, which are password protected, and add the new number.
- **Key-word filtering** can be set up by a parent to ensure picture or text messages with certain words or terms are used are blocked.
- **Application management which can restrict the use of camera** on mobile phones. This can prevent harmful images/clips from being taken and uploaded onto the internet.
- **Time-of-day access to camera** can be limited to times when the child is within their parents care and blocked when at school and/ or other times to be certain the camera is not being used to film inappropriate footage or pictures of themselves.
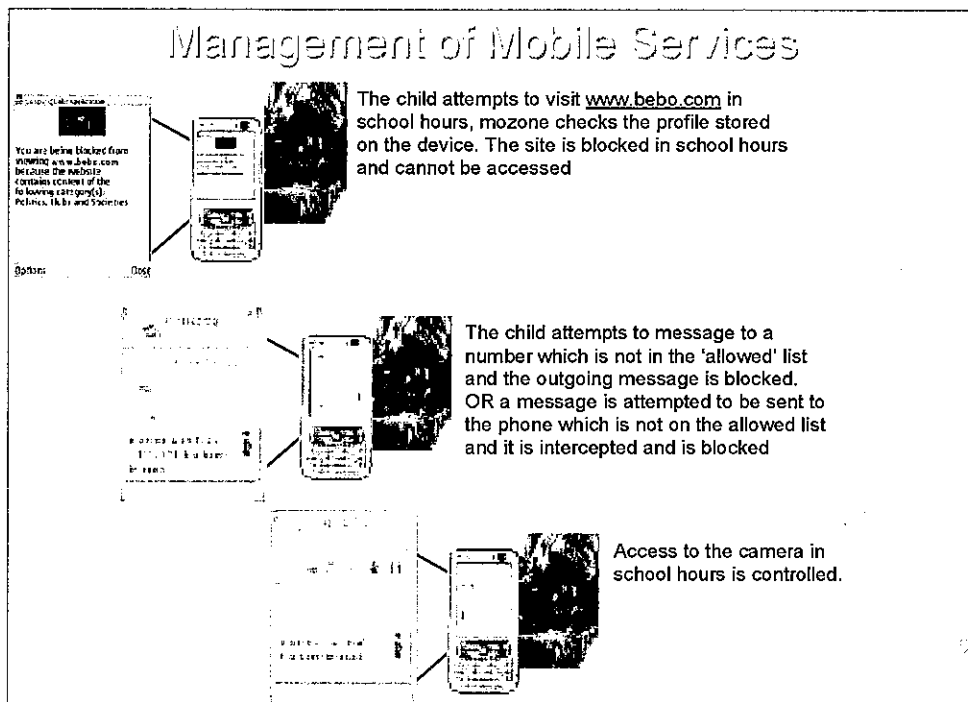
The following diagram provides an illustration of how the software can be used to ensure the mobile phone technology is not used in a cyber-bullying context:

Set-up of Mobile Service Management

The parent sets up profiles for their child based on their age and maturity

one	two	three
Block certain sites, allow others	Disable camera in school hours	Allow the mobile numbers of friends

Defined policies control mobile services and applications in school hours

The software has the following features which can be utilised by a parent as cyber-bullying intervention measures:

- **Bullying via social networking sites on the mobile phone internet–** parents can block their child's access to certain social networking and instant messaging sites should they be the instigator of bullying. The parent of the victim of bullying can also limit their child's access to the sites through which they are being bullied to manage their child's exposure to the trauma whilst addressing the bullying with the offender, parents and authorities.
- **Bullying via picture or text messaging** – parents can take the mobile number of the bully and add it to a blocked list – once this is done, no messages will be received by their child. In addition, the parent has full visibility of the blocked messages via the software reports which can be can be used by a parent to address the bullying with the offender, parents or the authorities.
- **Should the camera be used to film, fights, crimes or inappropriate pictures of themselves or peers,** the parent can simply block the camera in school hours or allow it only at times where they are within their care to stop harmful images/clips from being taken and uploaded onto the internet.

The following diagram provides an illustration of how the software can be used to manage a cyber-bullying event:

Management of Mobile Services

The child attempts to visit www.bebo.com in school hours, mozone checks the profile stored on the device. The site is blocked in school hours and cannot be accessed

The child attempts to message to a number which is not in the 'allowed' list and the outgoing message is blocked. OR a message is attempted to be sent to the phone which is not on the allowed list and it is intercepted and is blocked

Access to the camera in school hours is controlled.

4. Co-ordination and co-operation between relevant government agencies to address bullying

Leopard Labs requests the opportunity to include the *mozone* within the construct of an anti-bullying solutions program. The software provides some physical tools and when combined with appropriate education can be used to both physically and actively prevent and address cyber-bullying via mobile phones.

5. The evidence-base for effective anti-bullying approaches
Few options are available to parents and our educators to manage mobile phone cyber-bullying situations. Parents have communicated that access to solutions with the ability to do the following would be highly sought after:

- Stop harmful messaging gives them confidence they can prevent emotional damage to their child and gives them time to address and work to resolution of the situation. Additionally, to have visibility of blocked messages is a powerful tool to provide evidence which is needed to draw the appropriate attention to the situation.
- Control the use of the camera when their children are out of their care is very important to ensure inappropriate footage or images of themselves and others do not end up in a public forum
- Manage the use of internet sites on mobile phones in the same way they can with PCs so that they are not a vehicle for bullying.

The education sector and schools have communicated it is near impossible to be held responsible for the use of mobile phones in the act of bullying where the majority occurs outside of school hours. Tools such as *mozone* which put the control of mobile management in the hands of the user (the parent) is much needed on mobile phones and are welcomed by the education sector.

6. Approaches to address bullying in Australian and overseas jurisdictions
There have been few tools, in the form of technology in the world in which have been introduced to assist the prevention, and management or cyber-bullying.
A solution such as Leopard Labs *mozone* is world-first technology, created in Australia which will change the shape of managing children's mobile usage.

7. Any other relevant matter
The Leopard Labs software has only been available for less than 12 months in the Australian market. The company has been working to expose the software to those who need it – parents, so that features of the software can be used to ensure the use of mobile phones is a positive experience for their children.

The software is design not to 'block', rather, to be used to create balance over the extent of their child's usage of mobile phone services. Combined with the appropriate level of education, Leopard Labs software, *mozone* gives parents a practical solution to have some rights over what mobile services their children use so they are not exposed to an unsafe experience.

Note: the name '*mozone*' is derived from the mobile **ozone** – *the ozone layer for your mobile,* which sits around the mobile phone sheltering the user from inappropriate use and enabling the services which enrich the lives of those who use mobile phones.