

# *Protecting children on the Internet*

## *ADAM TOMISON*

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Since the modern discovery of child physical abuse in the 1960s, knowledge of the nature and types of child abuse and neglect that may be experienced by children and young people has continued to grow. In the field of child sexual abuse, the development of the internet has led to the rapid development of a strong paedophile and child pornography cyberspace presence. For many, paedophile behaviour on the Internet represents the most recent (and a quite virulent) form of child sexual abuse/exploitation that must be combated and prevented.

As a result, efforts have begun to focus on creating a safe environment for children who surf this new virtual world, and ensuring the right of children to protection from harmful and illegal material.

Developed under the auspices of UNESCO, The World Citizens' Movement to Protect Innocence in Danger (IID), an Australia-based non-profit organisation, kIDs.ap, was formed in March 2000

to provide information to the Asia-Pacific region to help to eradicate child pornography and the activities of child molesters or paedophiles on the Internet.

Following the aims of Innocence in Danger – “to support endeavours to protect children online, to sensitise world opinion and to mobilise resources” (Koichiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO) – kIDs.ap has mobilised regional support for an online presence designed to provide information to parents, children, professionals, volunteer workers, academics and others who accept responsibility to protect and empower children against sexual exploitation via the Internet (online services). It aims to prevent the sexual exploitation of children via online services in the Asia-Pacific region by providing a website that highlights this problem through the provision of timely information of general and academic value.

Stage One of the development of kIDs.ap Internet resources was the successful launch of the kIDs.ap website in March 2001. The site provides: a guide to safe surfing and safety tips; material

describing the dynamics of paedophile activity and the use of child pornography; and a description of the activities of paedophiles online. It also contains an online survey that enables visitors to anonymously provide information about their use of safe surfing tips, experiences of online child exploitation/pornography, and their views on the site and its future development.

A key component of the Stage One website is a confidential email system that enables parents, children and other users to access professional advice from a large number of professionals located in countries across Asia-Pacific. kIDs.ap is continuing to actively recruit professionals from across the region to join the expert panel of supporters who provide specialist email advice. Interested professionals are encouraged to contact the Executive for further information.

In Stage Two, further development of the website will include the creation of an email forum for kIDs.ap members to facilitate information sharing and networking, to produce a comprehensive list of the services available in member countries for families, and to provide access to current research material.

The Executive of kIDs.ap are all professionals working full-time in the areas of victims/offender counselling, child protection advocacy,

and law enforcement. For logistical reasons they are all based in Victoria, Australia; however, the aim is to include executive members from other countries in the region over time. kIDs.ap members, contributors and supporters are child protection professionals and concerned citizens resident in the Asia/Pacific region.

What has been achieved to date, has been done without corporate sponsorship and would not have been possible without the generous support of ECPAT Australia, kIDs.ap's sponsoring non-government agency, Echo Beach TNW who designed the website, Dr Chris Yates (IT specialist), and Ms Alice MacDougall (Freehill, Hollingdale and Page, Solicitors). kIDs.ap is currently seeking corporate sponsorship to fund the organisation.

- Further information is available from the Executive, which can be contacted at: kIDs.ap, PO Box 451, South Melbourne, Victoria 3205. Email: [kidsap@kidsap.org](mailto:kidsap@kidsap.org) Internet: [www.kidsap.org/](http://www.kidsap.org/)
- For confidential advice on safe surfing, or concerns about online activities, email: [kidsap@kidsap.org](mailto:kidsap@kidsap.org)

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**Adam Tomison** is Research Advisor to the National Child Protection Clearinghouse at the Australian Institute of Family Studies, and a Director of kIDs.ap.