



## Media Release

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### Third millennium parents learn new kind of homework

- *Learning in the Third Millennium* will be more about access to technology in the home
- Parents need to be more engaged in their children's homework online
- The National Broadband Network will open global opportunities for Aussie students

A new report released today suggests that Australian parents need to better prepare their children for a fiercely competitive internet-enabled future.

The *Learning in the Third Millennium* Report, commissioned by NBN Co\* revealed that while the majority of parents surveyed (96 per cent) understand the importance of using the internet for educational purposes in preparation for their children's future, few of them feel equipped to support their children. The survey also revealed that almost half (45 per cent) of Aussie parents believe their children have problems using the internet for homework which they are unable to help resolve.

According to international education expert Professor Stephen Heppell, this shows there has been a fundamental shift in how parents view education. With computers and ubiquitous access to high speed broadband education never stops he says.

"What's exciting is that a large number of parents have made the leap to embrace online learning, and this is pretty recent, it's only happened in the last five years. For those who haven't, it's often just because they are yet to experience how magnificent the new world of broadband-enabled education can be," says Professor Heppell.

"What we have seen in other countries with high-speed broadband like the National Broadband Network (NBN) connecting homes and schools, is that the role of learning in the home is changing. Homework becomes the time for self-directed discovery in exciting online worlds, where students can collaborate via the internet with real authors or scientists as well as each other.

"Students compile and share assignments with students from other countries using high definition video. They swap cultural insights across continents by following each other's journeys to school and chuckling at the contents of their respective lunch boxes. They monitor data from the local ecology and watch each other's wildlife via nest-cams," he says.

When parents are familiar with computers and the internet they can be partners in their child's online world and can help set an example of smart internet use, guiding their children's online journey so that these tools do not become a distraction from learning.

"The link between home and the internet is becoming the vital umbilical cord of learning," says Philip Argy, member of the NSW Parents' Council State Executive and father of two primary school-aged children.

"At so many levels schools are quickly harnessing kids' love of all the internet has to offer by including it in their day-to-day school work – whether that be by alerting them to the importance of distinguishing between authoritative and worthless material, or online stranger danger, or even through the use of school portals for students and parents to engage more easily with the school and staff," he says.

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“In the same way that parents help their kids to become ‘streetwise’ in the real world, parents have a vital role in helping their kids become ‘streetwise’ on the information superhighway. My experience shows that many parents do not feel up to that task and part of our work at the Parents’ Council is to help parents to understand the important role internet-connected learning has in their child’s education instead of being sidelined through technology mysticism.”

Professor Heppell says schools in places such as Scandinavia, Korea and parts of the UK, where they have access to high speed broadband like the Australian NBN, become hotbeds for innovative learning, preparing students for global jobs.

“There are a growing number of highly skilled, stimulating job opportunities around the world that draw on people who are adept at collaborating globally in virtual teams,” Professor Heppell says.

“What overseas experience shows is that to take advantage of these great opportunities, a child needs to have the confidence to compete and the proven ability to work with others via broadband-enabled technologies like video.”

“The NBN will help enable Australian students exchange fresh ideas across the globe, and produce a generation of graduates as adept at working and communicating with the world online as the previous generation was at exploring it with their backpacks,” concludes Heppell.

*Parents who are looking to learn more about how high speed broadband is impacting the education of their children can visit [www.nbnco.com.au/schools](http://www.nbnco.com.au/schools) .*

### **“Learning in the Third Millennium” Report Results:**

- Australian parents understand the importance of the internet in the preparation of their children for the future. Virtually all (96%) feel their children using the internet for homework, research or educational games is important in their preparation for the future, of which 51% consider it very important.
- The internet plays a significant role in the education of Australian children with the majority of parents (87%) indicating their children are using the internet at least weekly for homework, research or educational games.
- As children get older their frequency of using the internet for these purposes also increases. Daily usage rises from 25% among primary school aged children to 44% among high school aged children.
- With this greater usage of the internet comes a greater onus on parents to assist with this aspect of their child’s education. Many parents (45%) have been unable to resolve issues for example when searching for information, accessing Youtube for video, or Skyping friends to discuss group assignments their children have had on the internet. Around one in ten (11%) report this happens on a regular basis.
- Most parents (61%) still feel more confident than their children when it comes to using the internet. Whether it is the children catching up or the parents falling behind, parents of high school aged children are less likely to feel they have the upper hand (47%) than parents of primary school aged children (74%).
- Despite the importance parents place on the internet in their child’s future most are keen to limit its use to a few hours a week. Very few (1%) think their children should be using the internet for more than 10 hours a week, with the overwhelming majority (78%) of the opinion that it should be used for no more than 4 hours each week.
- Parents of primary school aged children are more likely to feel their children should be spending less time on the internet. The majority (65%) of parents of primary school aged children feel their children should be using the internet for less than two hours a week, compared to 45% of parents of older children.

- The consensus among parents (94%) is that having high speed internet at home is important for the future of their child's education. Similarly, 84% feel that improvements in the National Broadband Network will be important in their child's educational outcomes.

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#### **Notes to Editors**

*\* The "Learning in the Third Millennium" Report was conducted by Galaxy Research during May 2012 and included responses from 1,004 parents from all over Australia with children aged between 5-17 years*

#### **About Professor Stephen Heppell:**

*"Europe's leading online education expert" Microsoft*

*"The most influential academic of recent years in the field of technology and education" (Department for Education and Skills – UK)*

Professor Stephen Heppell is an internationally recognised leader in the fields of learning, new media and technology. As CEO of the education consultancy firm, Heppell.net, he has worked, and is working, with governments around the world, with international agencies, Fortune 500 companies, with schools and communities, with his PhD students and with many influential trusts and organisations.

Heppell is a Professor at Bournemouth University, Chair in New Media Environments, Emeritus Professor Anglia Ruskin University and a Visiting Professor University of Wales, Newport. He is best known for his work at Ultralab, the learning technology research centre at Anglia Ruskin University in Chelmsford, Essex, building it into one of the most respected research centres in e-learning in the world.

Professor Heppell has dedicated his career to promoting innovation in education to ensure the best possible education experience for every child. He has been involved in the design and construction of new learning environments in locations as diverse as the United Kingdom, the Caribbean and Australia. For more information please visit <http://www.heppell.net/>.