The Cybersafety Help Button is a new Australian Government initiative designed to keep children and families safe online. It is an online resource that gives children and young people easy access to cybersafety help and information.

The internet offers huge opportunities for improvements in education, social interaction, innovation and convenience. Along with these benefits come risks that can make the internet unpleasant and potentially dangerous. Cyberbullying, scams and fraud, offensive content and unwanted contact are all common risks for children and teenagers.

Research by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) found that 11 per cent of Australians aged 12 to 17 years had experienced cyberbullying through either a mobile phone or the internet.

The button is a free application available from the website of the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy. Once downloaded, it sits on the computer desktop or within the taskbar. When the button is clicked, users are taken directly to a web page where they can talk, report or learn about cybersafety issues. The talk function gives a link to Kids Helpline. Users who are worried by cyberbullying or offensive online behaviour or content can phone or chat online to a professional counsellor.

The report function offers direct links to pages on social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace and Twitter that have site-specific cybersafety information. There are also links for reporting scams, fraud, inappropriate websites and improper behaviour and for contacting the Australian Federal Police.

The learn function provides a range of cybersafety educational resources through the ACMA’s Cybersmart website and the Department’s Stay Smart Online website. Visitors to these sites can learn about cyberbullying, social networking sites, scams and frauds, password protection, viruses and malware, unwanted contact and inappropriate behaviour.

The Cybersafety Help Button was developed in consultation with the Government’s Youth Advisory Group and the Consultative Working Group on Cybersafety.

The Cybersafety Help Button is available free of charge at www.dbcde.gov.au/helpbutton. It is compatible with all major PC and Mac operating systems and is easily installed onto home, school and library computers.

For more information on the Cybersafety Help Button visit the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy website.