Our kids run amok on the internet

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VICTORIAN children are the most likely in Australia to engage in illegal activity on the internet.

A new survey into the online habits of eight to 15-year-olds found dodgy activities ranged from illegally downloading music without paying to accessing a neighbour's wireless internet without their knowledge.

The wide-ranging survey carried out on behalf of home computer support service Gizmo also revealed that Victorian children are the most likely in Australia to have tried hiding their internet activities from their parents.

Their parents are also the most concerned about what their kids are doing online.

The study conducted by Lonergan Research surveyed more than 1000 parents and their children across Australia.

Researchers concluded that while most kids don't understand the dangers of the net, almost all parents do. Despite this, many have failed to put in place effective safety controls to protect their offspring.

While the survey found two out of three children have encountered inappropriate content, almost half of parents rarely or never monitor their child online. Only 13 per cent of children perceive the internet as dangerous, compared to the majority of their parents.
Researchers found the older a child becomes the more confident and safe they are likely to feel online.

More than 84 per cent of 13-15 year olds perceived the internet as safe compared to 78 per cent of 8-10 year olds.

Concerns about the risk of identity theft have also failed to make an impression on many web savvy youngsters.

More than 60 per cent admitted to sharing personal information online; 44 per cent talk about personal interests and hobbies and 22 per cent give out home addresses and telephone numbers.

The study also found that almost one in three children have seen images of naked people online and more than 29 per cent have seen violent images, played games rated MA15+ and been contacted by someone they don't know. About 17 per cent have been asked for personal details and 14 per cent have been teased or bullied online.