AUSTRALIAN FIRST: CYBER SECURITY TO BE TAUGHT IN CLASSROOMS FROM 2019

Education, banking and technology sectors collaborate to deliver critical cyber security skills to students

#ACACyberChallenges

Sydney, Tuesday 19th February, 2019: The Australian Computing Academy (ACA), a University of Sydney centre, today announced the launch of the Schools Cyber Security Challenges (Cyber Challenges), a $1.35 million national program which will see cyber security taught to Years 7-10 students for the first time in Australia. The event was officially launched by the Hon Karen Andrews MP, Minister for Industry, Science and Technology, via a video statement.

The Cyber Challenges program will be taught in conjunction with the compulsory Digital Technologies Curriculum and aims to close the growing gap in cyber security awareness and skills amongst Australian students. The program, which will be delivered by the ACA, consists of four uniquely designed, interactive Challenges, the first of which was unveiled today. Challenge #1 introduces students to cyber security fundamentals and is now accessible by teachers and schools across the country.

The program is the first cross-industry coalition of its kind in Australia, with the ACA spearheading a unique collaborative effort with AustCyber (Australian Cyber Security Growth Network), ANZ, Commonwealth Bank (CBA), National Australia Bank (NAB), Westpac and BT (British Telecom). These industry partners have brought real-life cyber security experience and expertise to the program and the Challenges have been developed and designed with the input of their security experts.

The partnership also emphasises the critical need for schools, government and Australia’s business sector to address the immediate skills shortage, while also fostering a longer term cyber security culture within Australia’s education system and future workforce. According to AustCyber’s Cyber Security Sector Competitiveness Plan, Australia will need 18,000 more cyber security workers by 2026 and this program provides a step in the right direction to address that gap.

Students from St Andrews Cathedral School and other local schools attending the official launch had the chance to experience the program first-hand, demonstrating how Challenge #1 enables students to think from an attacker’s perspective. This first Challenge involves students hacking and collecting personal information from the social media profiles of fictitious characters, including simulated banking, email, online shopping accounts and even parent posts.

Speaking at the launch, Associate Professor James Curran, Academic Director of the Australian Computing Academy, and one of the original authors of the Australian Curriculum: Digital Technologies, stated: “There is a significant lack of awareness and skills around cyber security - in society in general, and amongst students. The Schools Cyber Security Challenges addresses this gap by fostering security-conscious students who are well equipped to deal with cyber security challenges both in their personal lives, and later, in the workforce.”

“Teachers and parents concerned about cyber security can now be confident that their students and children will be vigilant in all aspects of their digital lives by participating in the Schools Cyber Security Challenges. Students will also be presented with a new perspective on pursuing a potential career in cyber security,” Curran added.

CEO of AustCyber, Michelle Price, said: “It is critical for Australia’s economic prosperity that we build a highly skilled and educated cyber security workforce, as well as ensure all students, parents and teachers across the country have

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1 [https://www.austcyber.com/resources/sector-competitiveness-plan](https://www.austcyber.com/resources/sector-competitiveness-plan)
access to cyber security resources aligned to the Digital Technologies curriculum. By focusing on Australian students, Cyber Challenges provides an important foundational step towards resolving skills shortages and supporting a sustained skills pipeline for generations to come.”

Security leaders from ANZ, the Commonwealth Bank, NAB, Westpac and BT attending the launch, explained why the Cyber Challenges program is critical not only for cyber safety generally, but to also help address the cyber security skills shortage in the workforce (see quotes below).

The remaining three challenges are scheduled to launch over 2019 and will focus on: Data transmission and encryption; Wired and wireless network security; and Web application security. Teachers are encouraged to visit the Cyber Challenges website and get involved in the initiative.

Partner Quotes

- **Banks:**
  - Lynwen Connick, ANZ Chief Information Security Officer: “The Cyber Challenge provides an opportunity to build greater curiosity and passion for cybersecurity amongst young Australians, particularly females. Currently, women represent only 10% of the world’s cyber security industry. However, through greater education, I am confident we can alter the technology stereotypes amongst young females, by encouraging them to develop and become more confident in their skills, while showcasing the genuine career opportunities available to them.”
  - Pete Steel, CBA Chief Digital Officer and acting Chief Information Security Officer: “Commonwealth Bank is proud to be supporting the Australian Computing Academy’s Schools Cyber Security Challenges. Australia is facing a skills shortage in cyber security and we must inspire more young Australians to join the cyber workforce. To do this, we need to equip them with the foundational STEM skills and cyber literacy they need to embark on pathways that lead to careers in cyber security and technology. We are committed to working with government, industry and educators to address this shared challenge. The Commonwealth Bank is proud to support this fantastic programme and continue our contribution to uplifting cyber security maturity in Australia.”
  - David Fairman, NAB Chief Enterprise Security Officer: “The Cyber Challenges give secondary students the opportunity to experience the interesting and challenging field of cyber security at a time when we know they are starting to consider their chosen career paths. This partnership will help the cyber security industry to attract young people to what is a rewarding and growing field, where they can have a real impact on people’s lives.”
  - Richard Johnson, Westpac Chief Information Security Officer: “This program is an important part of Westpac’s STEM commitment, especially how we’re helping change the conversation about STEM and backing talent for the future. Supporting the Schools Cyber Security Challenges is exciting because it offers a practical tool for educators to help inspire Australian students by showing them the transformative impact that digital technology skills will have on their lives and the lives of future generations. We are committed to helping facilitate STEM industry pathways in partnership with our industry peers for a diverse range of students - helping create a future-ready workforce to support Australia’s ability to succeed in the long-term.”

- **Tim Cavill, Regional Managing Director, BT Australasia:** “We are extremely proud to be working collaboratively across the private and public sector to provide a tangible step forward in addressing the cyber-skills shortage in Australia. BT works to raise cyber awareness among school-age children across the globe, and we’re delighted to support this initiative for high school students across Australia. We hope this will lead the participating students towards a fulfilling and rewarding career in one of the many cyber related fields in our industry.”

- **Federal Government:** Please visit the Cyber Challenges website for Minister Andrews’ video statement.

Background and Funding

The Cyber Challenges complement ACA’s existing work to deliver classroom activities and teacher professional development that support the implementation of the Australian Curriculum: Digital Technologies. The Cyber
Challenges will include free interactive teaching resources, immediate intelligent feedback, automated marking and professional development for teachers. There will be a national roadshow to showcase the project taking place in 2019. The next leg of the roadshow will take place in Victoria from 20-21 March 2019.

In August 2018, the Australian Cyber Security Growth Network (AustCyber) announced that the University of Sydney would receive a total of $1.35 million of funding through an initial joint contribution from ANZ, the Commonwealth Bank, NAB, Westpac and BT, which was then matched by AustCyber. The Cyber Challenges program will be taught in conjunction with the $10 million Federal Department of Education and Training project being carried out by the ACA in collaboration with Australian EdTech startup, Grok Learning.

For more information on the Schools Cyber Security Challenges, please visit the website.

For more information, videos and photography, or to organise an interview, please contact:
Adrianne Kern, AKA Consulting  Mobile: 0411 426 135  Email: adrianne@akaconsulting.com.au
Kelly Kerr, Text100  Mobile: 0450 009 296  Email: Kelly.kerr@text100.com.au or acarsvp@text100.com.au

About the Australian Computing Academy
The Australian Computing Academy (ACA) is a University of Sydney centre. It is dedicated to supporting teachers deliver the requirements of the Australian Curriculum: Digital Technologies (AC:DT) through the design and development of classroom challenges, resources and teacher workshops. The ACA is unique in combining the talents of AC:DT authors, academics, technology education experts and industry professionals. The team uses their expertise and passion for digital technologies to create free classroom-ready resources that enable teachers to confidently engage every student in the AC:DT.