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Making a splash with online safety Netsafe launches new flagship programme for kids

Auckland, New Zealand

In response to growing concerns over New Zealand children's online safety in the fast-evolving digital landscape, Netsafe today unveiled its new, bi-lingual flagship programme Hector's World, to bridge the current gap in online safety education for vulnerable children aged 5-10 years, their teachers, parents and caregivers.

Covering topical issues such as cyberbullying, privacy, digital footprint and balancing online and offline time, Hector's World is a fun, animated series in English and te reo Māori, paired with educational materials to help children learn to navigate the online world safely.

As of today, [the first three episodes](#) are freely available to view nationwide for parents, whānau and teachers, to support online safety conversations with 400,000+ tamariki across the motu.

Embracing the era of 'binge-worthy' edutainment, subsequent episodes will be released weekly throughout May. These episodes will be available on the Hector's World website and a dedicated YouTube Channel, encouraging viewers to join Hector, a 9-year-old Hector's dolphin, on his digital adventures. [View episodes one through three here.](#)

The programme's official launch event took place at Auckland's SEA LIFE Kelly Tarlton's Aquarium. Attendees were treated to an appearance from 'Hector' himself, much to the delight of local school children.

Brent Carey, CEO of Netsafe, emphasised the programme's importance as a fundamental digital resource for both homes and schools. With children engaging with screens from an early age, whether for video streaming, online games or educational purposes, Carey stressed that Hector's World will be an indispensable tool for teaching safe surfing of the digital waves.

"Parents and teachers are increasingly concerned about the impact of this on our young people, however our research shows up to 43% of parents do not actively monitor the content, platforms or activities, or friend circles of their children online and 9 to 11-year-olds aren't sure about what kind of information should and shouldn't be shared online.

"Waiting until a young person turns 13, the legal age limit of many social media accounts, is much too late for New Zealand tamariki who are grappling with an array of issues as a result of online activities, including negative behaviours, inappropriate online contact and troublesome friendships", explains Carey.

“Hector’s World is a game changer for teaching good online rituals, early on.”

Designed to meet the needs of today’s tech-savvy generation, Hector’s World bridges the gap between safety awareness and pure entertainment with highly relatable storylines and characters. The seven-episode series and associated resources follows the adventures of Hector and his crew of marine friends as they navigate the sometimes-tricky seas of the online world.

The series is supported by over 60 purpose-built resources and activities, including curriculum-aligned resources for teachers to use in the classroom, and whānau resources to help support the programme at home, with conversation guides and ‘top tips’ for parents and guardians.

It was through the support of Foundation Sponsors Microsoft New Zealand and the Ministry of Education, that the new Hector’s World was able to be realised.

Danielle Vandendungen, Digital Security Engagement Advisor at the Ministry of Education, says they’re excited to support the launch of Hector’s World.

“Netsafe have done a wonderful job with the programme, which is a neatly pitched balance of education and entertainment and which is sure to strike a chord with young learners. We look forward to seeing a new generation of children introduced to Hector’s World to become well-equipped digital citizens who can navigate the online landscape securely and responsibly.”

Madeline Shepherd, Microsoft’s Digital Safety Lead Asia Pacific, says Microsoft is pleased to support Hector’s World, which they know will be popular amongst Tamariki.

“This is an invaluable resource that makes learning critical online safety skills fun and accessible.”

The creation of Hector’s World was also supported by the generous support of community grant-making organisations, including the Lion Foundation, the Trillian Trust, Aotearoa Gaming Trust, Blue Sky Community Trust, and contributions from everyday New Zealanders via [Netsafe’s Givealittle page](#).

Produced by Auckland-based creative powerhouse Method in collaboration with Netsafe, Hector’s World features homegrown voiceover talent, who bring life to each character and reflect New Zealand’s diverse culture and expressions familiar to our Tamariki.

Building on the legacy of its beloved predecessor, which captivated over a million people worldwide 15 years ago, the new Hector’s World series is a testament to its enduring success and much like the original, it is poised to hold a forever home in the hearts and minds of the next generation.

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For further information call or email:

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Background information

About Netsafe

Netsafe is an independent charitable organisation supporting people in Aotearoa to have safe and positive online experiences. We keep people of all ages safe online by providing free support, advice, and education. Visit [netsafe.org.nz](https://www.netsafe.org.nz) or phone 0508 Netsafe for free resources or to report incidents of online harm.

Hector's World

Originally created by Netsafe back in 2007, the first iteration of Hector's World was extremely popular and widely used in schools and homes across Aotearoa. Online safety and security issues have moved on significantly since 2007 and there was a huge demand to update and relaunch Hector's World. The new Hector's World has more entertainment value for today's audiences, paired with storylines that reflect current technological trends and social dynamics. It also caters to diverse learning styles and equip communities with essential digital literacy skills. Being online means it can reach into rural communities.

Additionally, Hector's World is of particular value to the SEND audience (special education needs and disabilities) as it creates opportunities for conversation in a non-confronting way with plenty of opportunities for activity-based learning to accompany the key messaging.

Visit: www.ectorsworld.com

About Method

Method is a creative tech production studio specialising in creating beautiful experiences, activations and bringing stories to life. We're a hub of imaginative minds dedicated to crafting experiences that resonate deeply with audiences, fostering connection and spreading joy to those who engage with our content and creations.

Te Reo Māori version

The reo Māori version of Hector's World contributes to showcasing the value of Māori language as part of Aotearoa's national identity and adheres to the national Māori language strategy, Te Whare o Te Reo Mauri Ora. This ensures that the te reo Māori version not only meets educational goals but also aligns with the broader objectives of promoting and protecting te reo Māori. Hector's World is being created to be as accessible as possible to a wide range of tamariki audiences and as such, we have committed to including optional subtitles in three versions. English with English subtitles, 100% te reo Māori with English subtitles, and 100% te reo Māori with te reo Māori subtitles.

Series credits

Online Safety Expertise and IP owner: Netsafe

Creative Partner: Method Digital

Creative Director/ Executive Producer: Samantha Ramlu

Motion Graphics/Art/Animation: Lahiru De Silva

Scriptwriter: Louis Mendiola

Designer: Sophie Douglas

Character, Prop & Background Artist: Anastasiia Hryvtsova

Audio: James Dean

Music / Jingle: Music with Michal

Tikanga Advisor: Amokura Panoho

Te Reo Translation: Kawiti Waetford

Editor / Compositor: Winsly Rathnasekera Animation: Jagath Priyadarshana Aroshan

Sudasinghe Sound Design: Ākau Audio VO Direction: Samantha Ramlu Kawiti Waetford

Research references

Factsheet: The digital parenting strategies and behaviours of New Zealand parents

<https://netsafe.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Parental-mediation.pdf>

Exploring New Zealand children's technology access, use, skills and opportunities

(<https://www.netsafe.org.nz/childrens-technology-access-use-skills-opportunities-2019>)

Factsheet: Parental awareness of children's experiences of online risks and harm

(<https://netsafe.org.nz/parent-awareness-child-online-risk-harm/>)