

BYOD in the West

Faced with an unaffordable \$150,000 annual cost, **Leeming Senior High School** has developed a parents pay strategy

In common with the majority of Australian primary and secondary schools, Leeming Senior High School in suburban Leeming 15 minutes south of Perth's CBD, took full advantage of the Digital Education Revolution (DER) program funding. By the end of 2011, a fleet of 630 machines, mostly laptops – Dell notebooks at commencement and later HP machines – had been acquired.

Knowing that no more funding for computer purchases would be available, in mid 2012 Gabby Raggio ICT co-ordinator and Ian Nichols network administrator were handed the task of researching and developing a plan for the school's future ICT needs.

"It would have cost \$150,000 each year to give a computer to each student," Gabby Raggio says. "Clearly, the school could not afford this so we had to work out a plan for parents to buy computers for their offspring."

The final decision was to implement a BYOD policy to commence in 2014 Term 1. The school would have preferred an earlier start but was delayed by the longstanding WA Department of Education ban on personal devices being connected to the education network, which has since been removed.

Though the outright ban is no longer in place, WA school principals must sign a statement agreeing that all BYOD devices used in school must go through the school's server, allowing the school to block access to Facebook and other popular social media during school time.

Raggio says: "We can control what the students can access while they are at school, but not at home. We are very conscious of internet safety and developed our own eight-page *Staying Safe* online booklet, which we are sharing with local primary schools."

Though the school's ICEA value is a comfortable 1089 (national average 1000) and in distribution of students just 2 per cent are in the bottom quarter (www.myschool.edu.au) Raggio says that she has been acutely aware of the need to keeping the cost to parents as low as possible. With this in mind, the school will recommend students may use the free Kingsoft Office Suite instead of MicroSoft Office.

"We will be very strict about using only free Apps... in a year or two if a teacher finds a fantastic App that has to be paid for, it will have to go onto the book list."

The school introduced the BYOD strategy in September this year at three parent information sessions. Of the school's parents a gratifying 96 per cent of those who attended agreed with the



From left: Ian Nichols, Network Administrator, Brendon Wallwork Principal and Gabby Raggio ICT co-ordinator



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policy and proposed staged introduction.

Working with Computelec, the school has recommended sturdy education build Toshiba machines, with two models to choose from: the Portege Z10 Celeron and the Malaga Notebook. The Portege is priced at \$1135 plus gst and the Notebook at \$664 plus gst, with a \$336 three-year service and repairs contract as an optional extra.

Raggio adds: "Of course parents are free to purchase a computer elsewhere, provided it is a Windows 8 machine, however we think that the education build Toshiba models with the tougher screens are a good idea."

150 Year 8s moving up to Year 9 will start Term 1 with their new computers while the new Year 8 cohort will have to wait for Term 2 to start using theirs. Year 10, 11 and 12 students will continue to use their Dell or HP machines to "squeeze maximum value out of the DER funds."

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