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Classroom wireless could be harmful: parents

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PARENTS have raised concerns about the radiation risks of internet wireless technology, which the State Government admits it introduced to all public schools without researching the health implications.

Only a few years after the Government introduced the technology in its 1600 schools, parents at an inner-city primary school have asked the department to switch off the system when it is not in use, amid growing fears about the possible dangers.

Parents Klara Hansen (with son Jude, right) Kath Wilson (and Oscar, middle) and Mark Stevens are concerned about wireless internet in the classroom. Photo: *Michael Clayton-Jones*

Evidence about the risks of wireless technology is not conclusive, but some research suggests radiation from the service could cause mild chromosome damage. The Education Department said last night it had not done any research examining the possible health implications of wireless before it rolled out the system to government schools.

But spokeswoman Melissa Arch said there was "no evidence to suggest a link between the use of wireless networks and damage to health".

At Brunswick East Primary School, Katherine Wilson, mother of prep student Oscar, questioned whether the Government was meeting its duty of care. "Food is recalled even if there's the remotest threat of a risk. So are toys and pharmaceuticals. Why aren't governments applying the same safety principles to technology products?" Ms Wilson said.

The concerns of parents come amid mounting questions about the technology throughout the world. In the US, parents took legal action against an Illinois elementary school, arguing it "failed to adequately examine the risk that wireless local area networks pose to humans, particularly children who are still growing".

And a British Government adviser, Professor Lawrie Challis, who heads the committee on mobile phone safety research, also called for pupils to be monitored amid public concern over wi-fi networks.