

# BUSINESS OWNER

industry, ideas and innovations [www.NEWS.com.au/dailytelegraph](http://www.NEWS.com.au/dailytelegraph) JANUARY 30, 2007

THE Daily Telegraph

PROFILE

## Mum stuck on fast type



By JOANNA TOVIA

**D**O your kids wish they could breeze through their homework at lightning speed? The secret could be in learning to touch type. Mother-of-two Janet Littlehales has come up with a touchtyping teaching tool which gets people putting the right fingers on the right keys in no time at all.

Janet came up with the idea when her then 12-year-old son began asking her to type up his homework.

Having just started high school, his workload had increased and much of it was expected to be completed on the computer.

"He knew I was a fast typist... but I said 'no, you have to do it yourself,'" Ms Littlehales said.

The first step towards producing the Keyboard Genius was to graph out on



Speedy... Daniel and Richard Littlehales refine their typing skills with the help of keyboard stickers designed by mother Janet (left)

paper the keyboard letters which were then colour coded and numbered so her son would know which hand and fingers to use for particular keys.

"Within a week, he was typing correctly with his fingers in the right positions," Ms Littlehales said.

And in just three to four weeks, he was typing fast without looking at his fingers.

"He was away!"

Ms Littlehales then went on to teach her husband to touchtype the same way, and soon tested the prototype on others with

some quite successful results.

She sought out a manufacturer to produce the stickers for each key — the stickers had to be resilient enough to endure extensive use, but the stickers also had to be easy to remove without leaving a sticky residue on the key.

Ms Littlehales approached several schools with her idea and all have taken them on for use in the 2007 school year — Scots College, Pymble Primary and Greenwich Public School to name a few.

The Keyboard Genius stickers are now

being sold through Officeworks and Ms Littlehales has signed an agreement with worldwide distributor Kalnin.

Before she started the key sticker business, Ms Littlehales ran a nutritional goods distribution business part-time from her Frenchs Forest home.

The Keyboard Genius stickers fit all keyboards, including laptops, and are designed to improve typing skills every time the keyboard is used.

For more information on Keyboard Genius, visit [www.keyboardgenius.com.au](http://www.keyboardgenius.com.au).

### INVENTIONS

#### Online patents to ease hassle

ALL new inventions will be available online next year under a new system to be developed by national intellectual property regulator, IP Australia.

Australian patent information is currently held on paper, microfiche and electronic systems, requiring several searches for businesses to ensure their inventions are truly "new, inventive and useful".

Only patents registered after December 1998, are available online.

"Our new search system will be more user-friendly and provide a single point of inquiry for authoritative information on Australian patents," says IP Australia patent commissioner Fatima Beatrice.

The plan will bring the Australian patent system up to international standards.

US patents from 1860 have been available online for more than seven years. IP Australia will start scanning all patents this year to allow electronic access of paper applications, starting from now and working backwards to 1904.

Visit [www.ipaustralia.gov.au](http://www.ipaustralia.gov.au) for more information.

### YOUR RIGHTS

## When things get hot on prices



Graeme SAMUEL

**E**VERYONE loves a bargain, except for it seems, some distributors of so-called premium or exclusive products. But does having a premium product give suppliers the right to tell small retailers selling their goods how much they can charge customers?

As a small business, you retain the right to set prices at whatever level you choose. A supplier may recommend a price, but ultimately it is up to the retailing business to decide what it sells for.

When that supplier recommendation turns to overt pressure, small businesses should make a complaint to the ACCC.

The practice of dictating minimum prices to retailers is known as resale price maintenance and is prohibited under section 48 of the Trade Practices Act.

Manufacturers and suppliers work hard to build and protect the reputation of their goods. But a number of recent court cases have shown that some businesses go too far, sometimes to the point of



Let it be... retailers control prices, even for premium products

threatening retailers, to maintain their product's status.

For the retailer, often a small business, they can become the victim of heavy-handed behaviour from suppliers for simply trying to be competitive and offering their customers a good deal.

Recently two Adelaide stockists of Bamix and Magimix brand kitchen products found themselves under threat from their supplier for offering discounted prices to their customers.

The Federal Court was told the supplier, Cambur Industries, had tried to prevent retailers from selling the kitchen products at a lower price than that specified by the supplier, who had made it known that they would stop supplying products to the retailers if they continued selling the kitchenware at the lower price.

One of the arguments often used by suppliers for asking that sellers don't go below a minimum price is that selling an item cheaply dam-

ages the brand's reputation or premium image.

The Federal Court has already demonstrated it takes a dim view of that argument, as demonstrated by the Cambur case.

Cambur was ordered to pay \$280,000 for breaching the Trade Practices Act, but this example is far from the only case.

In addition to any penalty imposed, suppliers may also be required to inform customers they broke the law by trying to keep prices at a higher level.

The ACCC has also recently launched legal action against several Jurlique companies, alleging they attempted to induce retailers not to discount their skin care, cosmetic and herbal products.

To date, the ACCC has taken a number of suppliers to court for trying to put an artificial floor under the price of their goods or products ranging from golf clubs and paragliders through to digital set-top boxes and computer parts.

For more advice on resale price maintenance and other issues that can arise between suppliers and sellers, visit [www.accc.gov.au](http://www.accc.gov.au) or call the small business helpline on 1300 302 021.

Graeme Samuel is chairman of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission.