

Tuesday, June 27, 2017

## Snap Map update raises concerns for child safety

Snapchat is in the top five social media platforms used by children and young people and with a new feature released over the weekend, Snap Map, Kids Helpline (KHL) is reminding parents to 'check-in' on their children's social media use and privacy settings.

The update which allows users to share their real-time location and activities on a map, automatically analyses the users exact geographic location, time of day and speed of travel.

According to **yourtown/KHL** Head of Client Services Brendan Bourke, the update to the platform increased risks to children and served as a timely reminder for parents to check-in on how much personal information their children are sharing online.

"Although there are real benefits to children's use of social media unfortunately, there can be some very serious downsides," Mr Bourke said.

"Sharing things like their location in real-time exposes children and young people to a raft of compromising scenarios including stalking, bullying and exposure to strangers.

"We have seen a rise in instances of cyberbullying and are aware of cases where predators have narrowed down their search for children through identifying details in photographs; the risk is significantly increased through geo-tagging.

Mr Bourke said the new update was particularly concerning because the geo-locating feature was different to other social media platforms where users have to manually check themselves in.

"Depending on the security setting, the users location automatically updates on Snap Map as soon as the Snapchat app is opened, potentially sharing home and school addresses," Mr Bourke said.

"In the age where building social media followers is as important as planning their next social outing, it means that children and in particular teens, often share information with people they don't know."

Mr Bourke said that knowing what your child is doing online, every day, is difficult but there are some key things parents can do to help ensure their safety.

"It's important to build trust and have regular conversations with your child about their use of social media but also to show you understand why their use of social media is important."

KHL works in partnership with the Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner (eSafety) to help children and young people tackle cyberbullying.

"Last year, close to 2,000 referrals were made from the eSafety website to the KHL site where kids can either choose to talk to one of our counsellors or look through our self-help resources," Mr Bourke said.

"eSafety has updated their Snapchat safety guidelines to include information on Snap Map (see [bit.ly/snapmapsafe](http://bit.ly/snapmapsafe)).

“We encourage parents and carers to take a look at the Snap Map information. KHL also recommends that parents take a moment to:

- Educate themselves about social media platforms their children may be using. With new updates released all the time, it’s important to understand how your child is using them and what they like about them.
- Talk with their children about what they may be sharing online and check privacy settings are set to the strictest levels. Not only does this help protect them from unknown exposure to predators but also to viruses and scams.
- Teach children about the permanence of the internet. Ensure your children understand that whatever is posted online creates a digital footprint and can remain there long after they have moved on.”

KHL gives children and young people choices, support and someone to listen. It is Australia’s only national 24/7 counselling service specifically for children and young people aged 5 to 25 years – free call **1800 55 1800** or **[www.kidshelpline.com.au](http://www.kidshelpline.com.au)**.

Parents or carers in Queensland and the Northern Territory looking for support can contact Parentline on **1300 30 1300** or **[parentline.com.au](http://parentline.com.au)**

**ENDS**

#### **INTERVIEW/PHOTO/FILMING OPPORTUNITIES**

- Peter Henderson, Assistant Kids Helpline Centre Manager
- Kids Helpline counsellors
- VNR footage available of Kids Helpline call centre and interviews with counsellors

#### **MEDIA CONTACTS**

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