

Wednesday, November 30, 2016

Kids Helpline is reminding parents to 'check- in' on their children's social media use these holidays

With new social media platforms launching every day, Kids Helpline (KHL) has issued a timely reminder to parents to 'check- in' on their children's social media use these holidays.

KHL has issued the reminder amid recent reports referred to police of multiple cases of child grooming across Australia via social media platforms including the app 'Yellow'.

According to acting **yourtown/KHL** CEO Geoff Walshaw, social media use by children and young people can increase over holiday periods but some parents have little or no knowledge of what platforms their children use and how often they access them.

"Although there are real benefits to children's use of social media unfortunately, there can be some very serious downsides. It's important that parents have an understanding of their child's social media use," Mr Walshaw said.

"If they're online, they're connected, which also means there is the possibility of exposure to inappropriate content, cyber bullying and predatory behaviour."

A report of KHL contacts between July and December 2015 revealed 95 were about sexting. Of these, 38% discussed significant coercion associated with sexting.

"Perhaps most worrying is that the average age of those contacting about this issue was only 13 years," Mr Walshaw said.

Mr Walshaw said that knowing what your child was doing online at all times was difficult, but there were some key things parents could do to help ensure their child's 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," he said.

Kids Helpline recommends that parents also take a moment to:

- Educate themselves about social media platforms their children may be using
- 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.

Helpful information about cybersafety is available from the Kids Helpline website at www.kidshelpline.com.au, Facebook Safety Centre <https://www.facebook.com/safety> where parents can check privacy and security options, and the Office of the eSafety Commissioner's iParent site <https://www.esafety.gov.au/education-resources/iparent>

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.

Parents or carers in Queensland and the Northern Territory looking for support can contact Parentline on **1300 30 1300** or **parentline.com.au**

ENDS

INTERVIEW/PHOTO/FILMING OPPORTUNITIES

- Tony Fitzgerald, Kids Helpline Centre Manager
- John Dalgleish, Head of Strategy and Research
- VNR footage available of Kids Helpline call centre and interviews with counsellors

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