

Media release



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MEDIA ALERT

Kids Helpline draws attention to child safety around sexting

Kids Helpline is greatly concerned about graphic images of school-aged girls being posted and traded on the internet.

According to **yourtown**/Kids Helpline CEO Tracy Adams, for the first six months of this year, Kids Helpline's teens & young adults tip sheets on sexting received over 40,000 page views, making it the third most popular topic overall on the site. Over half of all traffic to the page resulted from web searches on the issue."

"We welcome the debate around sexting and the impacts on young people," Ms Adams said.

Kids Helpline counsellors all too often hear that kids are feeling powerless and unsure of how to respond to requests for sharing explicit images online to their friends.

"Young peoples' understanding of the consequences of oversharing explicit images is low or they may think they're the exception and nothing bad will happen to them.

"Perhaps most worrying is that the average age of those contacting us was only 13 years, suggesting the objectification of girls begins at a much earlier age than many imagined.

"Teens are telling us that a sexting episode can be one of the hardest challenges to raise with their parents. While it's important for parents to feel comfortable to talk to their children about sexting, it is also important that through early education around cyber-safety kids are given the tools to enable them to talk about this issue with parents or teachers," Ms Adams said.

"Navigating damage to reputation through non-consensual sharing of explicit images can be problematic, it can affect behaviours, emotions and self-identity, potentially leading to stress, anxiety and depression.

Kids Helpline is a perfect way to help young people going through a tough time. It gives young people 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

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yourtown Corporate Affairs & Media Advisor: Maree Reason-Cain Phone 0423 843 786 OR mreason-cain@yourtown.com.au