

PRESS RELEASE

Cyberbullying and porn paves the way for kids dealing with their own #MeToo

For Immediate Release: Wednesday March 14, 2018

Last month cyberbullying came into the spotlight with COAG indicating [strong government support](#) to address the issue. The move is being applauded by Kids Helpline and other child focused organisations. Following the tragic death of 14-year-old Amy Everett, Queensland Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk pushed for COAG to put cyberbullying firmly on the table, and [ministers agreed](#) they need to better understand the underlying drivers of cyberbullying.

Weeks later, [news breaks](#) about the culture of hazing fuelled by hardcore pornography in Australian university residential colleges, and [protests erupt around the world](#) on International Women's Day. #TimesUp and #MeToo are [here to stay](#) and continue to gain momentum. The whistle has blown, women are speaking out and men are forced to confront attitudes and behaviours that cause harm to women. The Office of the eSafety Commissioner respond to women's fears for their safety by establishing [an online space](#) to help them deal with abuse and cyberstalking, and provide an avenue to [report image-based abuse](#). The message is loud and clear: cyberbullying and sexual harassment are not welcome in a society where human decency is paramount for mental health wellness, respectful relationships and peaceful communities.

Leading child-advocacy charity [eChildhood](#), applauds responses arising to address these issues but says a huge piece of the conversation remains hidden, and believes it's well overdue to recognise pornography as one of the underlying drivers. Dedicated to mobilising responses that reduce the harmful effects of pornography on children and young people, eChildhood Chair Liz Walker, says that to ignore the role that pornography plays in coaching children and young people to sexually harass, intimidate and bully girls and young women, both online and offline, is a gross oversight.

Walker explains *"content that kids have access to is demeaning and degrading in every sense of the word. Mainstream hardcore porn regularly depicts choking, slapping, derogatory name-calling, incest, bondage, group and rough sex. Regular viewing is linked to sexually abusive behaviours and teaches young men to have an attitude of sexual entitlement; young women struggle to recognise their own abuse. Kids having easy access to pornography is like steroids for the #MeToo women of tomorrow. We can't ignore the role it plays in normalising bullying, sexual abuse and harassment."*

Researcher, Dr Michael Flood, weighs in by adding that *"if we're genuinely concerned about sexual harassment and abuse, whether at work or on campus or in school, then we have to address pornography. Pornography is a key influence on sexist and sexually objectifying attitudes and sexually coercive behaviour."*



The charity, (formerly known as Porn Harms Kids) makes it clear that it is well overdue to bring this conversation out of the shadows. CEO of Families Australia and convenor of the National Coalition on Child Safety and Wellbeing, Dr Brian Babington, takes it a step further. *"We must do better through legislation and policy, digital solutions, and education."* A leader in policy, Babington believes that eChildhood shines much-needed light on how pornography harms children and young people and adds *"I strongly commend decision-makers and the broader community to support this vitally important work so that every child grows up safe and well."*

Executive Director of the health promotion charity Tamara Newlands, leads a solid campaign to place the issue of children accessing pornography firmly in front of key stakeholders. Ms. Newlands says *"The reality is, children now have an online childhood. We take all precautions to ensure they don't enter 'adult shops', yet online they have full throttle access to even more damaging content and material. This is a child injustice and there is no excuse for not ensuring the protection of our children online. Digital Experts confirm technology can prevent these harms now, so we must implement every available digital solution and do all we can."*

[One in three](#) internet users are estimated to be below the age of 18, and Ms Newlands is adamant that we must place children's online safety rights at the fore. *"Like alcohol, pornography was never intended for children, and unless a parent knows how to put filters on all internet access and monitor all apps, kids have 24/7 access. In addition to sites, porn companies make apps available for limitless porn downloads, and without placing the full onus back on the industry to prevent kids accessing pornography, violence, sex, and rape fully infiltrate our children's lives. Somehow we are then alarmed with the rise of child on child sexual abuse, confusion for youth around consent, and rampant sexual harassment in our schools. No one argues that children should have access to porn, yet we are lagging behind in terms of action to ensure they don't. In the meantime, every day the harms are increasingly compounding. Action must be supported now to ensure nationwide protection is created for our children."*

Protective education expert Holly-ann Martin, works with indigenous children who have ready access to this content, and has been called upon in communities where children express to her that they 'play act' strangling because of what they've seen in porn. Ms Martin says *"my real worry is that a child will die due to this; that through 'playing', a child will become unconscious. They may not seek help, but instead run and hide."*

[eChildhood](#) has expressed concerns to our nation's leaders including the Minister for Children, The Hon Dr David Gillespie MP, and a representative from the Department of Communications. Walker issues a strong wake up call. *"It took a tragic death to see cyberbullying placed front and centre and receive much-needed funding. How many more children will be emotionally, mentally and physically harmed by accessing violent and abusive pornography? I truly hope it won't take the death of a child at the hands of a kid mimicking porn acts, for this injustice to be taken seriously."*

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Interview opportunities with experts:

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Story ideas:

See the report: *Protecting our kids from online pornography harms is everyone's business.*

- Conversations to have with teens about cyberbullying and sexual harassment
- What Age Verification means for pornography viewers
- Australian Indigenous children at high risk
- Messages kids learn from porn
- The role of policy and legislation to frame responses
- Solutions to solve the problem of kids accessing hardcore violent porn

About:

[eChildhood](http://eChildhood.org) is a registered health promotion charity dedicated to mobilising responses that reduce the harmful effects of pornography on children and young people. We provide education and training to parents, professionals and the public. We advocate for measures that improve children and young people's mental and physical health outcomes, and decrease vulnerabilities to exploitation. eChildhood takes a public health approach through research, education, legislation and digital solutions.

Concerned Australians can pledge their support on the [eChildhood website](http://eChildhood.org).