

Parenting at the speed of light

Jan 15, 2018 - Safe on Social Media Pty Ltd

Online Predators, the Police and parents



Much of the news about social media can often come across as hysterical. Scaremongering even. But this past month or so has seen a volley of news stories that are anything but...

The topic of online predators, children, and the police.

Links here.

<https://au.tv.yahoo.com/plus7/sunday-night/-/watch/37835610/sunday-night-sun-12-nov/>

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-09-12/self-generated-child-abuse-material-on-the-increase/8895634>

Safe on Social watched, at the recent eSafety conference in Sydney the head of Police Operation Argos, speak out of extreme frustration asking for parents to parent – and supervise their children’s online activities.

Why are the police becoming so concerned?

They are struggling under the weight of a proliferation of self-produced material posted online by children.

It’s a safeguarding issue. Before the police can prosecute an offender, they must identify the children in each and every clip they find. This is to determine whether or not a child has been trafficked, or is at risk of harm. The police- nationally and internationally are being deluged by the sheer quantity of material they are finding - and it is preventing them making arrests as swiftly as they would like, and placing more children in the sites of online predators.

Where is this material coming from?

A large proportion is being self-produced by children. Mobile devices have given predators the access they needed to communicate with children, often under the eyes of their parents.

Collections are made by online predators from the wealth of public social media accounts of children too young to be responsible online, those improperly supervised, and by parents who fail to parent online.

Examples of sources:

Any young tween with a [Musical.ly](#) account that is not set to private. A Kik account that isn’t supervised by a parent. From Snapchat From You-tube From Instagram

<http://www.shreveporttimes.com/story/news/investigations/2017/05/25/kids-interact-predators-home-via-social-media/101801508/>

The latest online crazes participated in by children and teens, found in pedophilia collections included:

- **Touch my body** - A challenge which spread virally this year. The premise was for one of two participants to be blindfolded and then guided to touch a part of the other's body. They then needed to guess which "bit" they were touching. The more explicit the area touched, the more likes, as many of those blindfolded ended up touching a private part of another's body.
- **Am I pretty or ugly?** – courtesy of You-tube has been around for a few years now. Self-explanatory but the number of pedophiles contributing likes and adding encouragement was disturbing.
- **[Musical.ly](#)** – some of the dance moves performed by adult performers may be called pornographic. When these are imitated by a 8-year-old girl they are of great concern. When they are publicly posted to garner "likes" and therefore popularity, children are being encouraged to take their raunchy acts further by their online "friends". They are doing so – without a full understanding of their actions.

Parents are continuing to ignore age restrictions on apps and failing to oversee their child's online behaviour.

And before anyone gets angry - it is highly, highly likely that your child's latest cute video gyrating to their latest favourite song, recorded in their bedroom, broadcast to the world via their public social media account – has ended up in a pedophile's library of clips. Think about that.

A recent newspaper article quoted Commander Gale of the Child Exploitation Assessment Centre:

“When children are accessing technology in an unsupervised way, that is what we are seeing, younger and younger children in this self-produced sexually explicit material,” Cdr Gale says. They upload pictures of themselves and often their private parts in return for “virtual gifts” used in games or in exchange for being told how they are beautiful”.

What to be aware of?

Children need to be educated to where these images they take- go. As do their parents. This is an area where it is considerable, real online risk.

Some of the images these children are posting are illegal. Children must be educated in what can be considered criminal, and so must their parents.

Children need to understand that their pursuit of likes, and the possibility of online fame and that the requests they receive at times hold an inherent danger. Parents should understand that a lack of supervision can be putting their own children in danger. Education about the legalities of the images they are posting online is essential.

What Can We Do?

- If your child MUST have a Musically account, a Kik account, a Youtube channel or be using social media, and you are going ignore age recommendations that they need to be over 13yrs (see our age recommendations cheat sheet if you subscribe to the Safe on Social Toolkit) – you NEED to have a firm grip on their online activities. Whom they are friends with, whether or not their account is set to private, what apps they are using and what kind of content are they producing.
- Review their chat history, and make this a condition of them using the account.

- Do not allow public accounts where anyone can become their friends. Look at the comment they are receiving- and report/block anything or anyone you are uncomfortable with.
- Make sure you approve everyone they connect with.
- Don't let them take their phones and tablets into their room where you can't see what they are doing.
- Do you want them to have a live streaming account where they can interact with others in real time?
- Don't let them film themselves in school uniforms, or in recognisable locations.
- Make sure the locations services feature pertinent to each app and mobile device are switched off.
- Educate your child thoroughly in the realities of online stranger danger. Strongly reinforce that they never agree to meet anyone they have connected with online.
And keep in mind.

“Leaving a young child unsupervised on the internet is akin to abandoning a child in a busy shopping centre.” Commander Gale AFP.

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