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Australian children need protection from online pornography. Australian parents should be well aware of the real dangers. This is part of the awareness campaign.

The Morrison government aims to force service providers to protect children from online pornography through the introduction of age-verification of online porn sites.

In the words of a 2021 federal government consultation, “The rules and protections we enjoy offline should also apply online.”

Currently, a child wishing to purchase, hire or view R18+ films (content high in impact, offensive to adults) *may* be asked for proof of age, and a child wishing to purchase, hire or view X18+ films (content with actual sexual intercourse and other sexual activity) *must* produce proof of age.

However, children may readily access explicit hard-core pornography, showing close-up sexual intercourse: oral, vaginal and anal, almost anytime on their devices.

The federal government has established the eSafety Commissioner and passed the Online Safety Act as steps towards implementing age-verification and is working towards the next phase.

Email the federal Communications Minister Paul Fletcher to thank him for work done so far to protect children and encourage him and his team to keep going! paul.fletcher.mp@aph.gov.au

1. Sexual content should be hidden

Research released by Telstra in 2015 said that more than two thirds (68 per cent) of children aged three to 17 own a smartphone and an average of 21 hours and 48 minutes per week is spent on the devices.¹

Tragically, five-year-old children searching the word ‘porn’ on their mobile phone browsers immediately access explicit hard-core pornography, showing close-up sexual intercourse.

A recent search by FamilyVoice showed the top site offered a choice of 16 free explicit videos, all with explicit sexual intercourse, some portraying incest or sex with students, and links to a wider selection of porn. No restrictions, no payment required, videos already playing as the viewer scrolls down.

Service providers should ensure that any explicitly sexual content should be hidden from all Australian viewers and accessed only by verification of adult status.

¹ <https://www.smh.com.au/technology/kids-smartphone-usage-rampant-says-study-20150316-1m0nti.html>

2. Pornography in Australia should not be accessed by children

There are many recent examples of children being traumatized by porn. A seven-year-old Victorian student² allegedly sexually abused classmates in the playground, and the behaviour of a four-year-old boy from South Australia³ was so sexualized he had to be chaperoned at all times, in case he starts playing “sex games” with the other children.

Michael Flood, the Australian academic – “Pornography is becoming a primary sex educator for boys and young men, displacing explanations from parents, formal instruction in schools, and even conversations with peers. However, what they learn from pornography websites is kinky practices which strip sex of intimacy, loving affection and human connection. And they learn that women are always ready for sex and have insatiable sexual appetites.”⁴

To protect children, service providers should ensure that any explicitly sexual content being delivered through mobile phones, tablets or PCs should be hidden from all Australian viewers and accessed only by verification of adult status.

3. Australian children should be kept safe from harmful internet pornography

The federal government has said, “The rules and protections we enjoy offline should also apply online.”

Currently, a child wishing to purchase, hire or view R18+ films (content high in impact, offensive to adults) *may* be asked for proof of age, and a child wishing to purchase, hire or view X18+ films (content with actual sexual intercourse and other sexual activity) *must* produce proof of age.

These standards have been developed to keep children safe from harm.

However, five-year-old children searching the word ‘porn’ on their mobile phone browsers will immediately access explicit hard-core pornography, showing close-up sexual intercourse.

Internet service providers should ensure that any explicitly sexual content should be hidden from all Australian viewers and accessed only by verification of adult status.

The Australian government has a responsibility to keep Australian children safe from damaging porn.

4. Children act out what they see – so they should not see disturbing internet pornography

Australians trust governments to legislate for the protection of children.

Kindergartens and primary schools have strict protocols in place for children to be protected from harm.

However, five-year-old children searching the word ‘porn’ on their mobile phone browsers or tablets will immediately access explicit hard-core pornography.

² <https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/grade-one-student-sex-acts-cover-up-angers-and-shocks-parents-20160526-gp4goz.html>

³ <https://www.mamamia.com.au/porn-and-young-children/>

⁴ <https://www.mercatornet.com/articles/view/is-pornography-a-public-health-crisis/17664>

This exposure is extremely harmful, as noted by many researchers including forensic psychologist Russell Pratt, who spent 12 years with the Centre Against Sexual Assault and is one of Australia's leading authorities on sexualised behaviour in children.

According to Dr Pratt, "One of the most concerning cohorts for us is the very young kids – the children who are under 12 or even under 10 and their sexually abusive behaviour is quite severe. We're seeing a lot more of anal, oral and vaginal penetration of younger children."

He said that in the past, a child who was abusing a little brother or sister would have taken a long time to "get the mechanics right" and progress to penetrative sex acts.

"It used to be a cycle of offending, where there was a build up to this. Now, what we're seeing is that because of the impact of porn these kids are really getting the template to do this very quickly."⁵

Kids act out what they see. Watching internet pornography sets them up to damage themselves and others. Governments need to legislate for internet providers to protect kids through age-verification of porn sites.

5. Teenagers want a crackdown on porn

Sue Dunlevy, National Health Correspondent for *The Advertiser*, said in 2016 that more than half of all teenage girls are receiving uninvited sexually explicit material on the internet and say their boyfriends are pressuring them to send sexy photos online.

And they are pleading for a crackdown on the problem of online pornography that is influencing men's attitudes towards women.

A survey of 600 Australian girls aged 15-19 by aid agency Plan International has found eight out of 10 believe it is unacceptable for their boyfriend to ask them for a naked photo.

However half the girls said there was pressure to take sexual photos and share them online.

"We need some sort of crack down on the violent pornography that is currently accessible to boys and men," an 18-year-old girl told the survey.

"This violent pornography should be illegal to make or view in Australia as we clearly have a problem with violence, and boys are watching a lot of pornography which can be very violent ... This is influencing men's attitude towards women and what they think is acceptable. Violent pornography is infiltrating Australian relationships," she said.⁶

The Australian government should ensure all internet service providers hide any explicitly sexual content from Australian viewers and that it be accessed only by verification of adult status.

Teenagers are calling out for a crackdown on online porn. Government should act to protect them.

⁵ <https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/porn-family-violence-linked-to-surge-in-childonchild-sex-abuse-cases-20150626-ghykne.html>

⁶ <https://www.adelaidenow.com.au/technology/online-porn-turning-teenage-boys-into-sexist-pigs-say-their-girlfriends/news-story/3652b926f398b9691c4f3effdbf2dfa6#load-story-comments>

Conclusion:

1. **Sexual content should be hidden**
2. **Pornography in Australia should be not be accessed by children**
3. **Australian children should be kept safe from harmful internet pornography**
4. **Children act out what they see – so they should not see disturbing internet pornography**
5. **Teenagers want a crackdown on porn**
6. **FamilyVoice welcomes the government’s endeavors to protect children from online pornography through age verification and is very willing to continue to be involved throughout the process.**

Join FamilyVoice to be part of the fight for child protection: <https://familyvoice.org.au/>

Support FamilyVoice: <https://familyvoice.org.au/donate>

Further information:

<https://aifs.gov.au/publications/effects-pornography-children-and-young-people-snapshot>