



Extra Police and New Campaign to Target Online Child Predators

Tuesday 13th October 2009

Minister for Police Michael Daley and Minister for Community Services Linda Burney today launched a new crackdown on child cyber-groomers, with extra investigators to catch offenders and a new online safety campaign to help parents stop predators preying on their children.

Mr Daley said the NSW Government was doubling the number of investigators in the NSW Police's Child Exploitation and Internet Unit (CEIU) to detect, investigate and arrest online predators.

"The sad fact is there are perverts who spend hours trawling the internet trying to lure innocent young kids into their web," said Mr Daley.

"The reality is you never know who you're talking to when you're online or what they'll do with information you send them.

"With more young people signing up to sites like Facebook, MySpace and Twitter every day, Police and parents need to be more vigilant than ever before.

"The increase in computer ownership in recent years – especially in the home – has led to the creation of online child grooming as a new crime type.

"Investigators have detected an increase in incidents of online grooming, which is why we're adding an extra seven investigators to the Child Internet Exploitation Unit to catch predators before they have the chance to act.

"The CEIU operates as part of the Sex Crimes Squad in State Crime Command. Investigators pose as a child and make contact with a suspected predator following complaints about the suspect contacting children over the internet.

"Police also pose as children online and wait to be approached by potential offenders.

"While it's important Police can catch child groomers swiftly, the best result for everyone is if parents are vigilant in reducing the chances of their child being preyed upon.

"It's clear that an increasing number of young people are getting themselves into trouble online and we want to give parents the tools to stop this from happening," he said.

Ms Burney said the NSW Government's new education campaign will give parents advice to help their children play it safe in cyberspace.

"It's so easy for predators hiding behind a computer screen to prey on young people using sites like Facebook or MySpace, so parents need to know how to keep their kids safe online," said Ms Burney.

"Stranger danger is a reality in cyberspace – the Community Services Helpline has received reports about girls as young as 13 being exploited by online lurkers.

“From today, information including a new fact sheet for parents will be available on the Community Services website www.community.nsw.gov.au.

“It’s very important parents monitor their children’s internet use and talk to them about the dangers of cyber-stalking.

“Parents need to constantly remind their children not to share personal information, send photos or video footage to strangers.

“Parents should become involved with children’s online experiences; learn about social media and chat rooms.

“It is also crucial to learn online jargon. It may seem like a foreign language at first, but it will help you to understand the world your child is living in,” said Ms Burney

The new fact sheet will help parents decode so-called ‘teen-glish’ such as PIR or ‘parents in room’. It includes a comprehensive list of advice to help parents educate their children on the dos and don’ts of the internet.

The fact sheet also contains information for kinship and foster carers about the laws on identifying children in care online.

For more advice on online safety, contact Parent Line on 1300 1300 52. Parent Line is a NSW Government-funded 24-hour parenting advice service staffed by experienced counsellors.

TIPS FOR PARENTS

- Monitor your children’s use of the internet – keep track of how much time they’re online.
- Know who your child is communicating with online and always supervise them in chatrooms. Keep the computer in a room the whole family can access; not in your child’s bedroom.
- Cyber predators can also target children through gaming consoles and mobile phones with internet capabilities. Always monitor your child’s use of these communication tools.
- Never allow your child to meet up with new online friends.
- Remind your child to never give personal information online. This includes names, addresses, photos and video footage.
- A person can pretend to be whoever they want to be online. Remind your child to be wary of online strangers.
- When using social networking sites, make sure your child knows who to contact to report abuse or bullying.
- A social networking page (such as Facebook, MySpace or Bebo) is a public place. Remind your child to think twice before posting comments or uploading photos and information.

CASE STUDIES FROM THE PARENT HELPLINE

Note: All names have been changed to protect privacy

Case Study 1

Tegan, aged 13, was using her laptop and webcam to engage in sexual acts with older men online.

Several men took an interest in Tegan, with one male willing to drive from another town to see her. The Police were alerted when Tegan's mother found out about the risky behaviour.

Case Study 2

Sara, aged 16, began contact with a man she met through Facebook. After establishing a friendship online, the man asked Sara to send him sexual images of herself. He also asked to meet her and paid for her airfare to visit him.

The Police became involved after Sara's mum discovered the relationship, shortly before Sara was due to fly out to meet the man.