ThinkUKnow e-Newsletter - Issue 19

This week is National Child Protection Week, a national campaign held annually throughout Australia to raise awareness of child abuse prevention. One of the major goals of the ThinkUKnow program is keeping children safe online and protecting young people from exploitation. One of our activities during this week is the launch of our new educational video on ‘sexting’. This video is available on our YouTube channel and supporting resources will be available soon.

ThinkUKnow what will happen to your images?

Young people may send sexually explicit text or picture messages to their boyfriend or girlfriend, but these images don’t always stay within the boundaries of that relationship. There may be peer pressure to engage in this behaviour, or even relationship pressure, that is, showing how much you love someone by sharing these types of images. Once something is created in a digital format and then shared, you lose control over who sees it and what they then do with it. The relationship may end badly and these images may be distributed outside the couple as a form of revenge.

Who will see them?

Once these images are shared online, there is no way to be sure of deleting every copy. This means that there is an invisible audience able to view the image: peers, family members, strangers, online sex offenders. These sexualised images of young people can end up in the collections of online sex offenders or even be used as a form of blackmail in order to receive more of these sorts of images.

How they will affect you?

Think again

We strongly encourage young people to think twice before creating these types of sexualised images of themselves. One moment of thoughtlessness can have serious implications for their future. Everything a young person shares digitally or online is a permanent reminder of the things they have done, like a digital shadow of their lives. It will follow them for the rest of their lives and even if they think they can hide their past, all it takes is someone to shine the light on their digital activities for it to reappear.

Parents, carers and teachers need to talk with young people about sexting; how to not become involved in it and what to do if you’ve already sent or received these types of images. Developing strategies around saying no to requests for these images are useful, as is encouraging young people not
In a previous e-newsletter, we highlighted how employers are now searching for their job applicants online and through social media sites. They can then base their decisions on employing someone on how they present themselves online. Having sexualised images linked to a person may hinder their employment prospects, or even their ability to undertake tertiary education.

Sexting may also fall under the legal definition of child pornography and young people may find themselves charged with the production, distribution or possession of child pornography. If convicted of these charges, the maximum penalty is 15 years imprisonment and a young person may find themselves on the sex offenders register.

to contribute to the problem by forwarding these images onto others.

**National Child Protection Week 2010**

For more information about National Child Protection Week (NCPW) 2010 activities, please visit the Australian Federal Police's NCPW website.

Please, help us help our children.