

Police Warning re Online Sexual Exploitation of Children

Police are urging both parents and children to be aware of online safety following a marked increase in the reporting of online child sexual exploitation.

Detectives from the Victorian Joint Anti Child Exploitation Team (JACET), which is comprised of both Victoria Police and AFP investigators, are urging parents to have age-appropriate conversations with their child around personal safety online and what to do if they find themselves in a situation that makes them feel uncomfortable.

Police have received reports from at least 100 families of instances where offenders are coercing children – particularly teenage males – into producing explicit images before extorting them for money.

Most commonly, offenders engage victims through chat based social media platforms, often purporting to be a young girl of a similar age to those they are targeting.

Offenders establish a rapport with their victims, often flattering them or pretending they're in some of kind of relationship, before sending what they suggest are intimate images of themselves. They'll then coerce their victims into sending sexualised personal images back. Once they've received the images, the offender threatens to on-share the content with friends and family of the victim, making demands for money, gift cards or cryptocurrency.

Even if the demands are met, the offenders will still distribute the images.

It appears offenders are not known to the victims and are predominantly based offshore. In some cases, the victims are children as young as 14-years-old.

If you are subject to any type of concerning behaviour like this online, we would urge you to contact police and discuss the circumstances with us.

Anyone who contacts police will be supported and treated with respect, courtesy and dignity. We believe that these matters are under reported and that can be for a range of reasons, including fear or embarrassment, and sometimes feeling unsure if an offence has occurred or if they will be believed.

Victoria Police is committed to investigating these matters and holding offenders to account. If you, your child, or anyone you know is subject to any type of concerning behaviour like this online, we would urge you to contact police and discuss the circumstances with us.

Quotes attributed to Detective Acting Inspector Carla McIntyre, JACET:

"If you are a parent, aunty, uncle or grandparent – please have the brave conversation with the young person in your life about this type of offending.

"Let them know how it happens, that is frequently happening to children in Victoria – that it is not their fault, and it is absolutely nothing to feel about embarrassed about.

"Ensure you create an environment where they feel they can come to you so they can be supported appropriately. The psychological anguish this type of offending can have on young people can be really significant.

"Please know that you are not alone; it is happening to other people and police can and will help you. Support is available for you.

"With open lines of communication, you'll be more approachable in the eyes of your child if something doesn't feel right and they do need help. And critically, if something does go wrong online – know how to support your child and to report it.

“It doesn’t matter how small or insignificant you make think it is – something that may appear small could later prove vital in an investigation.”

Further helpful information:

For more information and access to tools, resources and advice, as well as reporting and support services, please visit:

[Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation \(ACCCE\) online blackmail and sexual extortion response kit](#)

[ThinkUKnow](#)

[eSafety Commissioner](#)

[NAPCAN](#)

[Bravehearts](#)

If you have been abused or have any information relating to the abuse or exploitation of children, report it immediately.