

### Media statement

5 February 2018

#### Safe internet day creating safer communities

In the digital age, cyber safety is top of mind for most parents.

This year, Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service (SCHHS) is acknowledging the importance of Safer Internet Day (6 February).

The annual event, helps encourage a better, safer internet. Celebrated globally in 130 countries, Safer Internet Day is coordinated by the joint Insafe/INHOPE network, with the support of the European Commission, and national Safer Internet Centres across Europe.

SCHHS, Clinical Nurse Consultant, Child Protection Unit, Laura Easterbrook said parents needed to be aware of internet safety, when children were online.

“As parents, we generally do everything we can to keep our children safe and well but when it comes to cyber safety it is easy to feel out of our depth, and to be unaware of the dangers,” she said.

“We encourage parents to speak to their children about what they are doing online and reach shared agreements about what is safe and what is not.

“Innocent searches online can lead to not-so-innocent results, so it’s wise to know how to use the parental controls/search restrictions offered by web browsers, internet service provider and devices.

“As adults, we know that some people online aren’t who they say they are, but children and young people can be alarming naïve about who they are chatting with if they are not taught to be cyber wise from an early age.”

If your child uses social networks, be sure they know how to:

- Report inappropriate and/or offensive posts
- Block someone
- Keep information private.

Ms Easterbrook encouraged parents to: “Lead by example and always model the kind of positive online behaviour you would like your children to use”.

“Remember you and your children have a digital footprint once information is shared publicly, it can be used in ways you may not expect and cannot control. We all need to be smart about protecting our images and information online,” she said.

# Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service

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Clinical Director, Mental Health and Addiction Service, Dr Chris Lilley said adults were responsible for helping children understand this new social world.

"We are incredibly well-connected; we all know each other's business all the time.

"We are linked up by social networks so we have got great opportunities for both positive and negative conversations with each other.

"Our young people absolutely embrace these technologies, I think, to their detriment."

He recalls his own childhood, when he had a skateboard and BMX bike and a few close mates he could trust and have a good time with.

"These days you don't have that small cohort of friends, you have contacts with everybody, everywhere."

He said news coverage of tragic events was also much more instant and graphic.

"I think as society we're going to have to think about how we are going to handle this huge information overload that means that, in particular, young people are exposed to much more horrific, graphic media.

"As adults in their world we've got a big responsibility to not necessarily protect them from it but at least help them understand it.

For more information: <https://www.esafety.gov.au/saferinternetday#resource>

### REACH OUT

24-hour mental health assistance line: 1300 64 2255

Kidsline: 1800 55 1800

Lifeline: 131 141

Headspace Maroochydore: 5409 4900

### ENDS

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