

Re: Senate Select Committee on Cyber Safety - Enquiry into Sexting by minors

Home Loan Experts welcomes the enquiry by the Senate Select Committee on Cyber Safety into the issue of sexting by minors.

A study by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in 2011 reported that 79% of the Australian population had Internet connections. A 2012 report by the ABS also revealed that the number of children with Internet access has increased from 65% in 2006 to 79% in 2009 and to 90% in 2012. Out of all the minors aged 5 to 14 in this study, 818,500 of them had a mobile phone.

Therefore, due to the large number of children at risk, Home Loan Experts, firmly believes that sexting by minors is a serious issue that needs to be addressed immediately. Even at the workplace our colleagues, some of whom are parents, have felt that this issue has become very relevant in today's world of Facebook and the Internet where children are exposed to many online dangers and can fall prey to bad habits or activities.

Home Loan Experts thinks that this issue should be addressed through education and awareness campaigns.

For parents, they should:

- **Be aware of the issue and the potential dangers**
- **Be aware of their children's mobile phone or Internet habits and alert the authorities if necessary**
- **Be familiar with their children's phone and teach them about what to do or not to do**
- **Instruct their children not to participate in any kind of sexting activities**
- **Be aware of online resources such as cybersmart.gov.au to find more information about the subject**

For children, they should:

- **Know about the issue and to avoid it**
- **Be made aware that it is a very serious issue punishable by law**
- **Be taught to alert a parent or teacher if they have been approached or know about such activities**
- **Be instructed never to send anyone personal information or post the same on a public platform**

These instructions should be done at a school setting such as a classroom where the children can also ask and discuss the issue with their friends and teachers, probably in the presence of their parents.

Journalist and founder of Forbes magazine, B. C. Forbes once said that **"Upon our children, how they are taught, rests the fate or fortune, of tomorrow's world"** and we agree that our children are Australia's future.

We thank the committee for allowing us this opportunity to offer information and share our opinions on this matter. We look forward to hearing the outcomes of this enquiry.

Regards,
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