

Submission: Age Verification – online wagering and Online Pornography

I have 2 sons, aged 12 & 13 yrs of age. In year 7, my 13 year old complained to me there is a boy obsessively watching pornography and showing many of his peers. The boy bragged to my son: 'I watch Porn Hub and have an upgraded membership'. He downloaded porn from the local swimming pool wifi during the swimming carnival. I asked the high school what they are doing to prevent porn addiction and the executive staff told me they are teaching the students' to 'self-censor'. But I don't believe children this age have the capacity to 'switch off' from porn images, when they have a natural curiosity about sex.

I work as a school counsellor. I'm concerned about the rampant sexual harassment girls in high school are subjected to. Why? One year 9 girl said her boyfriend harassed her to send him nude photos because 'it's normal on Porn hub'. This is a common occurrence – girls from early high school age are expected by boys to act like porn stars. Girls report being strangled during sex with boys because these are the images they regularly exposed to. Boys report they learn sex education from pornography (which includes 90% degrading treatment of women).

The uncensored images impacting on children in primary and high school are devastating on their self esteem (unrealistic body images children aspire to), on their sense of self as only valued as a 'sexual being', rather than their personality or intellect or ability to be a good friend or contribute to society.

As a school counsellor, I see children from as young as kindergarten, attempting to look up pornographic sites on school computers. Primary school age children talking about strangers asking them to 'online date' through sites such as 'Roblox'. These children are severely impacted – rates of anxiety, depression and self harm are at all time high, costing the health system and severely impacting on these children's ability to engage at school and perform to the best of their ability in school.

Online wagering is also an increasing problem, partly due to the obsession about sports betting advertising during prime-time sports games.

Age verification is necessary to safeguard our children in our society, and this needs to be implemented urgently.