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Media Release

IS CYBERBULLYING THE GREATEST SCREEN RISK FOR CHILDREN?

Prof Elizabeth Handsley, President of the Australian Council on Children and the Media (ACCM), and Professor of Law at Flinders University, today questioned the federal Government's focus on cyberbullying as the major role of the proposed E-Safety Commissioner.

She said

Research just released by the University of Western Australia highlights the struggle parents are having with managing limits on the use of all screens, old and new. Especially for younger children, television use remains higher than social media use, so cyberbullying is not so much of a priority. ACCM knows well that children are still watching television every day and for several hours, making continual exposure to age-inappropriate content as great a risk (though of a different kind) as infrequent exposure to internet hazards.

She continued

It's a real shame then that the Federal Government's intended role for the E-Safety Commissioner is significantly narrower than that outlined in the Liberal Party's pre-election policy. That policy included provision for "advice to parents about the appropriateness of television programmes, films, computer games and websites" but the role now is focussed almost exclusively on cyberbullying. Help for parents in starting early in managing all screen use is needed just as much. E-safety should encompass all screens.

ACCM Vice President and child psychologist, Dr C Glenn Cupit emphasised the need for parental support in managing screens. He said,

We teach road safety and water safety to kids. Screens are as much a part of their environment as cars and water and equally, we should be teaching screen safety. Just as the government supports other safety campaigns and affirms parental responsibility, they should be also providing similar support to parents, especially from an early age, and in regard to all media, old and new.

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