Fact sheet: Early Years Online Safety Program

The Early Years Online Safety program will provide tailored training, support and resources for the early childhood sector. The program will run until 30 June 2020 and provide the Office of the eSafety Commissioner with an additional $2.5 million over two years.

Research by the Office of the eSafety Commissioner (eSafety Office) shows that 81 per cent of parents with children aged 2 to 5 report that their child is using the internet. However, only 57 per cent of parents directly monitor usage by viewing what is on their child's screen, and 37 per cent of parents think their pre-school aged child spends too much time online. With over 90 per cent of a child's brain development occurring in the first five years of life, this period is critical for their future educational outcomes. Incorporating online safety in early childhood education has never been more important.

The eSafety Office will develop and roll out competency-based training for early childhood educators to ensure they have the skills necessary to support our youngest Australians and their parents and carers. The training will be delivered online to ensure that as many educators and other early childhood workers as possible can participate. The eSafety Office will also develop targeted resources and information for parents and carers of children in the 0 to 5 years cohort and distribute this information through childcare centres and other early learning settings.

Program outcomes

Address the gap in eSafety resources for pre-school aged children

Research shows that very young children are active online and that parents are concerned about how to moderate online safety risks. Education and resource materials currently made available by government agencies are typically focussed on school-aged children, with little content targeted towards, and suitable for, the birth to 5 years cohort.

The program will support development of age-appropriate online safety education and resources. Hard copy information packs will be distributed to parents and carers at every childcare centre starting in 2019. These resources will also be available online through the eSafety Office's iParent portal.

Prepare and support early childhood educators

The program will include the development and delivery of training modules targeted at early childhood educators. This training will complement foundational training for early childhood educators and ensure these frontline workers have the skills and knowledge to guide parents and children with respect to online safety matters.

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