

## Media Release

For Immediate Release

### Make every day Safer Internet Day with DigiTalk Online Safety Hub

Tuesday February 6 is *Safer Internet Day*, a global initiative led by the eSafety Commission in Australia that aims to raise awareness of online safety issues. The Alannah & Madeline Foundation is getting behind the campaign by encouraging parents and carers to have conversations with their children and teenagers to help keep them safe online by visiting the DigiTalk online safety hub.

Launched in 2023 by the Alannah & Madeline Foundation in partnership with Telstra, DigiTalk is an online safety hub dedicated to providing parents and carers with practical strategies and a range of free resources that help safely navigate the digital world.

In today's digital age, the internet is central to children's lives, with many Australian children and young people learning, playing, socialising and being entertained online. The average school-aged child owns three personal screen-based devices, and 80% of 16–17-year-olds use social media almost every day<sup>i</sup>.

*"It's undeniable that the internet provides children with amazing opportunities to connect, communicate, create and play. However, we need to be aware of some of the potential risks that young people face online, such as exposure to inappropriate content, privacy breaches, unsolicited contact and cyberbullying",* said Ariana Kurzeme, Director of Policy & Prevention at Alannah & Madeline Foundation.

Understandably parents and carers can feel overwhelmed when it comes to ensuring their child's online safety and often don't know where to start. DigiTalk has a range of resources to support Australian families in starting and continuing those conversations about being safe online, including topics such as screen time, gaming, privacy, bullying, artificial intelligence, and more serious online harms like image-based abuse.

*"It's never too early to start the conversation with children about being safer online. We know parents are busy and overwhelmed, DigiTalk aims to provide families with simple, practical tools to help have those conversations and feel confident that their children and teens are informed and safer when engaging online.",* added Ms. Kurzeme.

In research conducted by Telstra, four in five (79%) parents say they have had a 'talk' with their children about how to stay safe online, with half (49%) noting they talk about this matter a lot. But despite this, almost one third (31%) of Aussie parents of kids aged 5-17 years say they aren't sure/have no idea where their kids are spending time online<sup>i</sup>.

One way for families to establish a healthy approach to technology is to put a *Screen Smart Plan* in place. You can download a *Screen Smart Plan* template on the DigiTalk website. Involve the whole family, print it out and put it in an easy to access place in your home to remind everyone what you have agreed upon. Below are some key considerations to finding a healthy balance to tech at home. Read the full article '*Finding Balance: Becoming a Screen Smart Family*' at [www.digitalk.org.au](http://www.digitalk.org.au)

#### 1. **Set clear boundaries**

Establish rules and guidelines for screen use within the family, including designated areas for tech



usage and restrictions on screen time in certain spaces like bedrooms.

2. **Prioritise communication**

Engage in open and honest discussions with your child about the purpose and importance of age restrictions for accessing new games or shows.

3. **Strike a balance**

Encourage a healthy balance between screen time and other activities by defining appropriate time limits for tech use and ensuring that tasks such as homework and chores are completed before engaging with screens.

4. **Foster shared experiences**

Identify activities that the whole family can enjoy together, both involving screens and promoting offline interactions, to model a balanced and positive relationship with technology.

5. **Lead by example**

As a parent or caregiver, it's crucial to adhere to the established Screen Smart Plan and demonstrate responsible screen use – modelling the desired behaviour reinforces the importance of maintaining a balanced approach to screen time for everyone in the family.

Mum of two, Katy Reisler, said the DigiTalk resources were helpful with starting conversations about technology with her 9 and 12 year olds. “I first read about DigiTalk in a parenting magazine and was relieved to find the information was easy to understand and practical. My kids loved using the conversation cards, and talking through the *Screen Smart Plan* as a family was a great guide for helping set boundaries around tech use at home.

“There’s so much to know and understand about the internet and it’s hard to keep up! It’s great to know there are other parents grappling with this stuff and that we have resources like DigiTalk for reliable information that helps us keep our kids safe online.” Katy added.

**DigiTalk is a free resource to help Australian families make every day Safer Internet Day.**

[www.digitalk.org.au](http://www.digitalk.org.au)

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The Alannah & Madeline Foundation was founded 26 years ago by Walter Mikac AM, and a small group of volunteers in memory of Walter’s young daughters Alannah and Madeline Mikac, aged just six and three, who tragically lost their lives along with their mother and 32 others at Port Arthur in Tasmania on 28 April 1996. The Foundation was established with the belief that “*all children and young people should be able to live a happy and safe life, free from violence and trauma.*” Our mission continues today through our Care, Prevention and Advocacy programs – we fight for their right to be safe, so their future is strong. [www.alannahandmadeline.org.au](http://www.alannahandmadeline.org.au)

**For further information or interview requests, please contact:**

Simone Redman-Jones - Media Manager, Alannah & Madeline Foundation  
0499 202 001 or [simone.redmanjones@amf.org.au](mailto:simone.redmanjones@amf.org.au)

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<sup>i</sup> [Mind the Gap - Parental awareness of children’s exposure to risks online](#)

<sup>ii</sup> YouGov conducted online between 6-7 February 2023, sample comprised of 1,011 Australians 18 years and older. All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 1011 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 6th – 7th February 2023. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all Australian adults (aged 18+).

