



Monday March 31st

Dear parent/carer

It has come to our attention that many young people across the Mornington Peninsula are engaging in “sexting” activity. Whilst this activity is by no means restricted to the peninsula, as a group of secondary schools we are concerned that information is provided to our community that assists in dealing with this issue. Consequently this information is being provided to all families of students attending Secondary Schools on the Mornington Peninsula.

What is sexting?

‘Sexting’ is when someone uses technology to share personal sexual content. The content can be

- sexually explicit text messages
- images depicting partial nudity, nudity, or sexual activity
- videos depicting sexual activity.

These texts, images and videos can be shared via mobile phone, Skype or via social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Flickr, YouTube, Instagram etc.

Why are we so concerned?

There are many potential consequences for a young person who has engaged in sexting activity. Some of these are as follows:

- Once the sexual image or video has been sent, it is very difficult to retrieve it or destroy it.
 - o This means that there is no control over who will view the sexual text, image or video, where it is sent or where it is uploaded on to the internet.
 - o This also means that it has the potential to be seen by anyone including friends, family members, prospective employers, and even those who engage in the sexual exploitation of children.
 - o The sexual text, image or video may also become part of the young person’s digital footprint. This means that it may last forever and may damage a person’s reputation, their future careers and job prospects, and their professional and personal relationships.
- The sexual image or video can be used to humiliate, harass, bully, cyberbully, intimidate, manipulate, bribe, or coerce the young person
- Sending sexually explicit texts, images or video can have a profound effect on the young person’s emotional wellbeing. It can be very distressing for the young person to realise that the text, image or video has been disseminated and not know how wide it has been spread, who has viewed it, and who has a copy of the text, image or video.
- The creation, possession, transmission, or publication of a sexual image or video may also amount to a criminal offence, particularly if the image is of a person under the age of 18 years of age. Penalties for these offences can be very serious and may result in the person being placed on the Sex Offenders Register.

What is the school doing?

Support

The leadership and welfare staff at all schools are working in partnership with Student Support Services and the South Eastern Centre Against Sexual Assault to support students who may have been involved in, or affected by sexting activity.

If your child would like to discuss their concerns or receive these support services, you should contact Angela Connelly or Angela Banfield at the school on 97876288 to make an appointment.

If your child would prefer to receive external support services, you should contact the South Eastern Centre Against Sexual Assault on (03) 9594 2289.

If you would like to discuss your concerns or your child's with the police you can contact the Sexual Offence and Child Abuse Investigation Team Frankston on 8770 1000

What should parents do?

- Warn your children about the consequences of sexting
- Remind your children to think before they act
- Give your children clear rules about how they can use their mobile phone and social media
- Talk regularly with your children about their experiences using social media. Ask them what they have seen or done, and if they have had any problems.
- Encourage your children to speak to you or another adult if they have seen anything, if they have done anything that they regret and /or if they have had problems with social media

Where can I get more information?

More information about sexting and its potential consequences can be found on the following websites:

Parents are encouraged to work through the interactive learning modules, developed in to help address standards of behaviour in the context of cybersafety and social media.

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/parentmodules.aspx>

South Eastern Centre Against Sexual Assault (9594 2289)

<http://www.secasa.com.au/pages/respect-me-dont-sext-me/>

Australian Communications and Media Authority

<http://www.acma.gov.au/Citizen/Take-action/Complaints/Internet-content-complaints>

In addition, we have attached the following factsheets that provide additional information:

- Inappropriate content:
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/adviceinappropriatecontent.aspx>
- Sexting:
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/advice sexting.aspx>
- Social media:
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/advice social media.aspx>

If there are any questions, or you would like to discuss this further, please contact Angela Connelly or Angela Banfield at the college on 97876288.

Yours sincerely



Angela Pollard

Principal

Mount Eliza Secondary College