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23 May 2019

Queensland
Family & Child
Commission

Violence Prevention Team
Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women
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To whom it may concern,

Thank you for providing the Queensland Family and Child Commission (QFCC) with an opportunity to make a submission to the *Sexual Violence Prevention: Having the conversation* background paper. The QFCC supports the development of a Sexual Violence Prevention Framework to make sure sexual violence is prevented and victims and survivors get the help they need.

In particular, the QFCC is working on programs aligned with the background paper's **priority area 1**: education, awareness and cultural change, with a particular focus on online safety for children.

The QFCC works collaboratively to influence change so Queensland is a safe place where children, young people and their families thrive in supportive communities. This includes a range of projects to educate the community to prevent sexual violence in online contexts.

Studies show most sexual abuse is perpetrated by people already known to victims. Social media, which connect users with existing relationships, may further increase risks to children and young people from the adults they know. Online safety as a prevention strategy to reduce sexual violence should be considered across all four focus areas of the sexual violence prevention strategy.

To inform priority area 1, the QFCC provides the following information on current education, awareness and cultural change strategies aimed at preventing online exploitation.

The QFCC Out of the Dark program was established in response to the 2015 Queensland Organised Crime Commission of Inquiry to address internet-related child sexual abuse. Through this program, the QFCC has worked with professionals and young people to develop prevention strategies and prepare a range of educational online safety resources, available on the QFCC website at qfcc.qld.gov.au.

The QFCC encourages engaging children and young people directly in the design of educational resources to make sure they are engaging and relatable for young people. As part of the Out of the Dark program, the QFCC heard valuable information from children and young people to determine the best way to present educational materials to help prevent sexual violence. At the time, children and young people advised the best educational material would include:

- serious and believable stories presented in short videos
- colourful and brief written materials
- apps that provide humorous ways to respond
- peer-to-peer support.

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Work is now underway to produce the latest instalment of the *Out of the Dark* community education campaign to **recognise, prevent and respond** to online child sexual grooming. The QFCC is developing this campaign in collaboration with the Queensland Police Service's Taskforce Argos, the Department of Education, the Office of the eSafety Commissioner and Bravehearts. The campaign will help to educate, raise awareness and shift the culture around what is safe online behaviour.

In addition to the campaign, the QFCC is educating the broader community and professionals about online safety by delivering messages through multiple forums.

For example, on 5 February 2019, the QFCC took part in Safer Internet Day. This year's theme was 'Together for a better internet', which encouraged individuals and the community to create a better internet by developing four critical skills: **respect, responsibility, reasoning and resilience**. The QFCC provided a video message, highlighting the importance of critically questioning and reasoning when children and young people are interacting with others online to educate the community more broadly.

In addition, as part of its function to develop and coordinate a multidisciplinary research program to inform policies and practices, the QFCC holds quarterly Research in the Round forums to showcase the work of Australian researchers who focus on vulnerable children and families. On 29 November 2018, the QFCC held a Research in the Round forum on 'Protecting children from online grooming'. Participants heard from a range of experts, in research and practice, about risk factors and prevention strategies. Details of the forum are available on the QFCC website.

I trust this information will support your department to develop strategies to deliver on priority area 1: education, awareness and cultural change to prevent sexual violence.

If your officers would like to meet to discuss the Out of the Dark program in more detail, they may contact Tracy Fogarty, Director, Office of the Commissioners, on 07 3900 6069.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cheryl Vardon', with a long, sweeping tail stroke extending to the right.

Cheryl Vardon
Principal Commissioner
Queensland Family and Child Commission