

# MEDIA RELEASE

## Telstra puts millions of parents in control with free tool to help manage kids' screen time

**Embargoed until 16 March, 2015** – Australian parents are buying children smartphones earlier, and device screen time among kids is on the rise, according to new research released today by Telstra.

The research coincides with Telstra providing millions of its customers with a free cyber-safety tool that can set time-of-day limits on calls and mobile web use for kids using a mobile.

The research reveals 68 per cent of Aussie children aged 12 to 17 now own a smartphone – and average screen time amongst these young smartphone owners is 3.1 hours per day.

### The research of parents with children aged 3 to 17 with a smartphone also found:

- On average a child is 12 when they first get a smartphone – but some parents give their kids their first smartphone when they're as young as three.
- 65 per cent of parents say they equip their kids with a smartphone to give them peace of mind they will be able to contact them when needed while 38 per cent say they do so to enable them be more independent.
- Despite the upsides, 39 per cent of parents say social media apps on smartphones are distracting their kids from their studies.
- And for some, touch-screen connectivity is encroaching on bedtime with 66 per cent of parents saying their children use smartphones between 9pm and midnight on school nights, with 29 per cent saying their kids can fall asleep while using their phone.
- Parents are often concerned about mobile cyber risks. 79 per cent fear their child will receive unsolicited contact from strangers and 74 per cent are concerned about the online content they can access.
- Despite the concerns children often use mobiles unsupervised, with 73 per cent of children with a smartphone using it in their bedrooms and 55 per cent of parents admitting they don't set any guidelines as to the type of content they can access on their mobiles.

To help parents better protect their kids from cyber risks and help bring balance to mobile screen time, Telstra is today giving millions of customers peace of mind through a free-to-access mobile service that lets parents tailor a mobile phone or tablet service to the needs and maturity of their children.

Shelly Gorr, Cyber Safety Manager at Telstra, said Telstra Mobile Protect would allow parents to set time-of-day limits on calls and mobile web use, block unwanted calls and texts and choose the mobile web content that can be accessed on their kids' mobile devices.

"We know mobiles provide an important way for parents to keep in touch with their children and, for kids to gain greater independence. However, we also know that they bring challenges. Telstra Mobile Protect helps parents confidently support and protect their kids as they explore the digital world," Ms Gore said.

"Using Mobile Protect, parents can agree limits with their kids and schedule online access so they have distraction-free homework periods and internet-free bedtimes."

Mobile Protect is managed through an easy-to-use web portal where parents can:

- **Block unwanted calls or callers, texts or texters made over the Telstra Mobile Network** – Manage a list of numbers kids can call, text or be called and text by on their phone.
- **Set up a safe list of numbers and websites** – Choose numbers that can always be accessed.
- **Manage the time kids can spend online and making calls** – Place time-of-day limits on web browsing and phone calls.
- **Choose the mobile web content which can be accessed** – Mobile Protect allows parents to select internet browsing profiles that are tailored for young children and teens that permit some sites, while blocking adult-oriented content.

### My first mobile agreement to help parents set healthy boundaries

Telstra is also launching a 'My First Mobile Agreement' – a free downloadable tool that allows parents and kids to agree proper and safe smartphone behaviour.

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“We’ve created the agreement so parents can sit down with their kids and discuss how they can stay happy and safe when using a mobile. It outlines some basic ground rules for kids to follow, but also includes rules for parents,” said Ms Gorr.

## **How to access Telstra Mobile Protect and My First Mobile Agreement**

Telstra customers can add Mobile Protect to their child’s eligible Telstra mobile phone service, by heading to the features section of the plans & usage tab on their Telstra My Account page.

Parents can download the ‘My First Mobile Agreement’ by visiting [www.telstra.com.au/consumer-advice/cyber-safety/resources](http://www.telstra.com.au/consumer-advice/cyber-safety/resources).

## **TELSTRA PARENTING TIPS FOR THE DIGITAL AGE**

### **1. Stay involved**

Talk with your kids about their digital lives, create conversations and stay involved. Assure children that their internet privileges won’t be taken away if they are exposed to content that makes them feel uncomfortable or concerned.

### **2. Educate yourself**

Ask your children how they use technology and try it for yourself – try playing a game or uploading a video together.

### **3. Set ground rules and agree limits**

Explain the rules of responsible device ownership (such as care of equipment, staying within data limits) and help your children create a media use roster, allocating blocks of time for homework, chores and their screen time.

### **4. Keep it personal**

Talk to your children about the value of personal information, what it is and why it’s important to be careful sharing it. Encourage children to ‘think before they click’, to think about content and the consequences of posting.

### **5. Be an offline supporter**

Encourage kids to have some screen-free time each day and turn off devices before bedtime.

### **6. Do unto others**

Teach kids to treat others the same way they’d like to be treated online and be zero-tolerant to rude or mean online behaviour.

### **7. Make the most of parental controls**

Consider parental controls to help manage children’s digital activity and restrict access to sites with adult content. For Telstra products and services, we recommend Telstra Mobile Protect for mobile devices and Telstra Online Security for your home network.

### **8. Role model it**

Don’t just talk about the right thing to do, be a role model with your own digital habits.

**Reference:** 040/2015

**\*About the research:** This research was conducted via online survey by Maidstone Consulting and Empowered Communications on behalf of Telstra in February 2015, uniquely researching Australian parents with smartphone owning children regarding their use of smartphone and tablets. One thousand, three hundred and sixty five Australian parents of children aged 3-17 participated in the study.