

# Internet pornography causing long-term public health crisis amongst Australian children, seminar hears

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By Danuta Kozaki

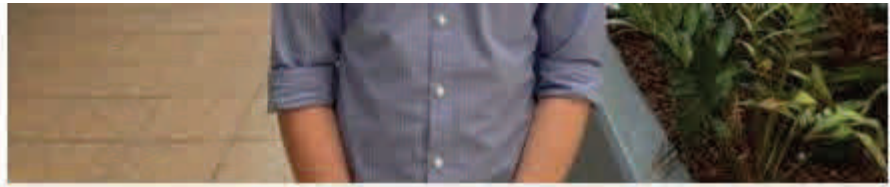
The widespread availability of porn to children and young teenagers is a public health crisis in the making, a seminar into the impact of porn-addicted children hears.

The widespread availability of pornography to children and young teenagers is a public health crisis in the making, a national seminar held in Sydney has been told.

The head of the Australian



The head of the Australian Childhood Foundation, Dr Joe Tucci, told the Porn Harms Kids seminar that the widespread availability of pornography online was shaping children's behaviour.



Tim Gordon, 23, said he was addicted to porn at age 11 to 13, and found it difficult to see women as anything other than sex objects. (Credit: ABC)

"Research has shown over 90 per cent of boys under the age of 16 have visited a pornography site online, with around 60 per cent of girls doing the same," Dr Tucci said.

He said a public health crisis was emerging, with online pornography so widely available that it was "impossible for children not to see it".

"You only have to put innocent words like 'love' into Google and it takes you three or four results to get to a porn site," Dr Tucci told the seminar.

"We will see a lot more adults emerging with sexually offending behaviour and sexually harmful behaviour towards others.

"I think the community would be shocked by the kinds of consequences we are seeing in a small group of children being exposed to this kind of pornography.

"This is a public health crisis. Like smoking or other public health issues, this will have long-term consequences."

Dr Tucci said health authorities had seen an increase in the number of children engaging in problem sexual behaviour with other children.

### **Man became addicted to porn at age 11**

Attendee Tim Gordon, 23, from Melbourne, told the ABC he was addicted to pornography from the age of 11 to 13.

"For me personally porn made it pretty difficult to see women as anything other than sex objects," Mr Gordon said.

"To a certain extent, no matter how much you try and tell yourself that they're intelligent, complex people, your mind just doesn't let you when you're in that space; porn has a way of just dominating your mind."

Coralie Alison from anti-pornography group Collective Shout agreed that early exposure to pornography online was affecting the way some young men treated women.

"We are seeing that some women, especially young ones, are being coerced into sexual acts that might not be appealing to them," she said.

### **'There's so much shame and guilt, so it's hidden'**

Mr Gordon said this was the first time he had spoken about his addiction publicly, and that the problem was still hidden in society.

"What frustrates me so much is that it is not something that is talked about. You have guys, friends of mine, who are struggling with it, but they just don't feel at liberty to talk about it with anyone, and that is really what allows it to thrive," he said.

"There is so much shame and guilt associated with it. So it is very common ... for young guys and girls who are struggling with porn to just keep it to themselves."

Dr Tucci said the exposure was too much, too soon for children.

"We have dropped children into an adult world where the concepts that they are faced with are too complex for them to understand and process properly," he said.

Ms Alison said more education was needed, and while some schools were teaching about the negative impacts of viewing sexually explicit material at too young an age, a national approach was needed.

"It is not just up to parents, it not just up to teachers and it is not just up to government," she said.

"It will take a multi-pronged approach to find a solution. We need to have the conversation about what to do next."

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