

Closing The Net – Episode 3, I'm Just a Kid

Disclaimer:

Due to themes of child sexual abuse and exploitation, the content of this podcast may be distressing to some people. It is not suitable for children and listener discretion is advised. For advice and support, please visit accce.gov.au.

Simone McKeough:

The responsibility for protecting kids, we would say is a community- wide responsibility. It starts with parents and carers and teachers, that everyone has a role to play.

Julie Inman Grant:

You wouldn't let your child play in a sand pit with a complete stranger at the park. Why would you give them a device that opens up their worlds to almost everyone unencumbered without being engaged in their online lives?

Elliot Rubens:

And it can snowball, because as soon as there's one thing that's done that's embarrassing or shameful, that's then leveraged as a, well, you have to give me more otherwise this is then going to be sent around to other people.

Katrina Lines:

We try to equip kids with all sorts of skills to help them thrive, and resilience and a sense of their own self-worth is one of those things.

Rodger Corser, Narrator:

I'm Rodger Corser, and this is Closing The Net, a podcast series that explores the world of those policing online child sexual exploitation, the men and women who work tirelessly to eradicate this borderless crime.

Rodger Corser, Narrator:

That work is supported by an army of others who are passionate about raising awareness of this issue amongst parents, providing knowledge, tools, and education resources to help protect our children and keep them safe in the online space.

Rodger Corser, Narrator:

Coming up, when our kids are willingly producing and sharing their own intimate content, how do we protect them from the possibility of online sexual exploitation? And we'll hear the heart wrenching story of Kelly Humphreys.

Kelly Humphries:

At the age of seven, turning eight, around that time, he said to me, "I want to teach you what it's like to love." And it was that night that he came to the bedroom and he started to sexually abuse me, and he continued to do that opportunistically up until I was 15.

Rodger Corser, Narrator:

Some of what you'll be hearing may be confronting, but these are stories that need to be told, stories that need to be brought out from the shadows and acknowledged. To be talked about by parents, by people such as you and I.

Rodger Corser, Narrator:

Kids today are starting to experience the online world from a very early age. 81% of preschool kids are regularly online, and Aussie teenagers are online for roughly 15 hours a week. They're watching videos, listening to music, playing games, and chatting with friends.

Rodger Corser, Narrator:

For these older kids, once their hormones start kicking in many of them are also starting to share some extremely personal content online, content that can leave them wide open to sexual exploitation. As parents, our first instinct is to step in and protect our kids by telling them just to stop it.

Rodger Corser, Narrator:

But this is the world they live in now. So maybe the first step is to try and understand why they're doing it. Bravehearts is one of Australia's leading child protection organisations working to make Australia the safest place in the world to raise a child. Carol Ronken is their Director of Research.

Carol Ronken:

So one of the issues that I have long been interested in is the decision-making of young people when they are online. So when they choose to take a nude and send it on or share it, when that person who they send it to decides to on-share, what are the decision-making processes? What are they thinking about when they do this? Or alternatively, what are the decisions that they think about when they decide not to share an image?

Carol Ronken:

I think protecting kids in the online space, we have to be more cognizant of their realities and what the choices they make are based on, adults can sit here and tell them it's wrong, don't do it, but the reality is kids are going to do it. It's like when I was a kid, mobiles weren't around, we didn't have that technology so we used to explore our sexuality in different ways and explore who we are in different ways.

Carol Ronken:

But kids these days, they socialise mostly online. And I think certainly over the last 10 years or so we've seen an explosion of kids socialising online, perhaps more than they do offline. They'll go home on their phone, talking to friends, making friends. I think we've seen that shift in the way that kids interact with each other. I think we need to understand a little bit more around their thinking processes in order to be able to best protect them, talk to them around what messages would help them stay safe online.

Rodger Corser, Narrator:

Kids helpline is a national resource for kids of all ages who are seeking advice around the decision-making on a range of personal issues, including things like sexting and online exploitation. Elliot Rubens is a Kid's Helpline counselor.

Elliot Rubens:

There's a lot of sexting obviously that goes on in... When we get into the later teens, which then has the potential for exploitation online and people taking advantage of that. But there also seems to be a lot of awareness there of this is something that I need to watch out for, and a lot of the problem that actually happens is in same aged people sexting, because, well, it's my own age group, it doesn't really matter as much. And then those photos being leaked or sent around afterwards.

Elliot Rubens:

It can snowball, because as soon as there's one thing that's done that's embarrassing or shameful, that's then leveraged as a well, you have to give me more otherwise this is then going to be sent around to other people. And it just grows and grows and grows from there.

Elliot Rubens:

There's actually a course that Kids Helpline offers for free on their website, their Parentline website, for cyber bullying and online exploitation of children.

Elliot Rubens:

So what parents can do, not just around online safety or child exploitation, but in supporting their teenagers and young people through all of that, available for free for everyone.

Rodger Corser, Narrator:

Kids using technology to share intimate pictures of themselves has almost become normal social behavior. They want to be accepted, to be liked, and have the most friends. And they may see sharing these kinds of images as a way of growing their social network.

Rodger Corser, Narrator:

But what happens if those images fall into the wrong hands? Lana is one of the victim identification unit team members inside the ACCCE. Every year they receive thousands of referrals involving seemingly innocent user-generated content that have quickly escalated into cases of child exploitation.

Lana Palmer:

There was a group of children, I think they were 10 or 11 years old, and they'd all been involved in a group chat on one of the applications and sending images and pictures and just normal stuff, healthy stuff.

Lana Palmer:

But at some point, one of them had been taken into a different area by who they thought was their school friend, and that person had asked them to send a naked image of themselves. And they'd gone back and forth with who they thought was somebody that they went to school with and that they knew in the real world, and it turns out that that person had just used all the credentials of that kid at the school and wasn't actually that person at all. And then they'd come back into the main group of people where everybody was and they'd shared those naked images to the entire group.

Lana Palmer:

And there were 15 or 20 kids in this group that all went to school with this person, and it was only because one of the other friends had said, "Hey, that's not okay," and then blocked all the people in the group and disbanded the group, and then went to their parents and told them. And I think that was a really empowering step for that person who had a really good relationship with their parent, to be able to go and say, "Look, this has happened and my friend has done this, but probably doesn't feel comfortable enough talking about it."

Lana Palmer:

And that again kicked off another investigation that helped to identify a whole bunch of kids that had been exploited in the same way, because one kid was strong enough and had a good enough relationship with their parent to say, "This has happened," and also to say to the rest of the kids in the group, "No, that's not okay. That's not okay behavior online."

Lana Palmer:

So I think part of the conversation has to be empowering kids to look after themselves, but also their friends. And maybe that's a way you can get into some of the teenage... Or the more entitled kids, is to say, "Actually you're helping us to look after other people online who might not be as smart as you, who might not be as savvy as you on the internet."

Lana Palmer:

So the more people that we can have looking out for each other online, the less kids are going to come to harm on the internet.

Rodger Corser, Narrator:

It's a critical piece in the online safety puzzle, empowering kids with the knowledge about what is and isn't okay. It begs the question, at what age should we be teaching our kids about online safety? Carol Ronkin from Bravehearts.

Carol Ronkin:

We can start educating kids from a very early age. Very young children can learn some of the very simple messages around personal safety, things like their body is their own, that they have the right to say no, that if something happens that makes them feel unsafe or unsure, that they should tell somebody. So some very simple messages that we can start instilling in children very young.

Rodger Corser, Narrator:

It can be very common in contact offending cases that a victim knows their offender.

Carol Ronkin:

We need to be really careful not to focus on strangers because you may have had the same experience growing up, all I was ever taught was stranger danger in school. The research varies, but anywhere between 75, 90% of the time, the offender is someone that the child knows, loves and trusts. So we need to really ensure that those messages are clear.

Rodger Corser, Narrator:

Teaching kids about online safety doesn't need to be hard. Part of the process is getting kids to understand the concept of the internet, something already being undertaken in our schools and preschools.

Rodger Corser, Narrator:

Early childhood futures is a research program at the Australian Catholic University, which has been looking at ways to incorporate digital concepts in very early education. Director of the program is professor Susan Edwards.

Susan Edwards:

Our research group did one of the first ever studies internationally to ask four year olds what they thought the internet was? The answers were really, really interesting.

Susan Edwards:

So we started that study by asking the children some fairly basic cyber safety questions, like if someone tried to talk to you online and asked you your age, what would you say? And they all said, "Oh, I'm four." And if someone said to you, "Where do you live?" What would you say? And many of them just rattled off their actual address.

Susan Edwards:

And then we showed them pictures of different objects. So we might have shown them a newspaper, a computer, a television, and we said, "Is this object part of the internet or not?" To get a sense of their awareness of objects that were connected to the internet. And then we asked them to actually say now, what is the internet? And what we found was that the children could tell us all about the internet from a social perspective, so they would say, "Ah, the internet, Mummy uses that for email. Mummy uses it for work. Daddy uses it to talk to friends. My big brother uses it to play games. I use it to watch Pepper Pig." So they had a very strong social sense of the internet.

Rodger Corser, Narrator:

With basic building blocks in place, early childhood educators can now employ innovative methods to help very young kids to understand how the internet works. Play-based learning is one of those simple but effective methods.

Susan Edwards:

So one way we've done that is... You're probably quite familiar with the idea of a home corner, that you go into a kindergarten room or a childcare center and you'll see a little stove, maybe a little fridge, or sometimes the home corner gets changed into an office, or sometimes it's set up as a doctors or a medical center.

Susan Edwards:

So what we're starting to do is make sure that there are representations of technologies in those spaces. What we're starting to play around with is connecting those devices with pieces of string in the home corner, putting little paper clips on them and attaching envelopes, so that when the children are sending an SMS or an email, they actually push it physically along the string to the next device.

Susan Edwards:

We're trying to make the internet, which is a rather, from a technical and social perspective, a rather abstract concept. We're trying to drill down to the physicality of the internet so that children can understand the network technologies.

Rodger Corser, Narrator:

Early educators, parents and carers are being provided with more and more resources to help them teach kids who haven't started school yet about how to stay safe online. Playing it safe is an example of one of those early learning initiatives, which has been developed by the AFP in partnership with the Alannah & Madeline Foundation and the esafety commissioner.

Rodger Corser, Narrator:

Julie Inman Grant is Australia's esafety commissioner and believes starting early with kids in their understanding of the internet is critical.

Julie Inman Grant:

There are different strategies that parents should be using for children at different ages, so that overall guidance is the minute you hand over a digital device you need to talk to your child in an age appropriate way about what are the rights and the responsibilities. But for children under five, we start with four key themes. Be safe, be kind, make good decisions, and ask for help.

Julie Inman Grant:

As we move more into the school year, parents do have a responsibility, they are the frontline of defense. The moment we're handing over that digital device we should let them know that is a privilege not a right, that we will be engaging in their online lives like we do their everyday lives. And I think that's really key, is starting early. But also letting young people know that if something goes wrong online, we're going to be there to help them through it.

Julie Inman Grant:

They may be more technologically proficient but we have the judgment, maturity and life experience that we can help them through anything, and we're not going to penalise them in some way if things do go wrong. When they get into the school years, we talk a lot more about the four Rs of the digital age. So instead of the reading, writing and arithmetic, that of course is still fundamental and we learned about, it's really about respect, responsibility, building digital resilience, and also critical reasoning skills.

Julie Inman Grant:

The second two Rs are obviously critical because we're not going to be able to be there every time something goes wrong for a child online, it's not really a matter of if, it's when.

Julie Inman Grant:

So how are we building their grit and their resilience to be able to make the right decisions when something does go wrong, and to come to us or another trusted adult or even even a sibling?

Julie Inman Grant:

And then of course the critical reasoning skills can be useful for anything in terms of potential grooming behavior, is this person who they say they are? We're seeing a lot of use of impersonation imposter accounts in bullying scenarios.

Julie Inman Grant:

Even if they're looking at porn, something like 90% of the most popular adult pornography that children have ready access to have very violent themes.

Julie Inman Grant:

So again, if the child can say, "Hey, this is not what my parents taught me about what a respectful relationship looks like," these are actually two actors playing out a scene, maybe we have a chance of ensuring that this whole next generation of children, the social sexualization is a healthy one, rather than something that is unhealthy.

Rodger Corser, Narrator:

To help connect with kids when talking about online safety, parents and carers should have an active interest in what's happening in the digital lives of their kids, especially if they're online gaming.

Rodger Corser, Narrator:

Child sex offenders have been known to use the messaging feature within gaming platforms to target and groom children for potential future abuse, and sometimes that grooming can happen inside a matter of minutes.

Rodger Corser, Narrator:

The AFP's ThinkUKnow program has information on a range of different gaming platforms, apps, and technologies that kids use, the challenges they bring, and importantly, how they can be overcome.

Rodger Corser, Narrator:

Simone McKeough leads the AFP's online child safety team who run the ThinkUKnow program.

Simone McKeough:

We would encourage parents and carers to learn about the types of apps and games that their children are doing online, through our program ThinkUKnow, we do aim to help parents understand the different types of apps and games and platforms out there. So we call this our see, say, do approach. So understanding what your children are seeing, saying, and doing online, and we try to break this down into the most popular types of functions or apps out there. So it might be image sharing, it might be instant messaging, it might be gaming, it might be social media and networking. And once parents understand those key functions, many of the most popular apps and things you might see all fit into those types of categories.

Simone McKeough:

So you don't have to understand individually how something works, just the features, which are important to understand.

Rodger Corser, Narrator:

Understanding how apps work is one thing, providing a safe home environment for kids to explore those apps is another. The eSafety Commissioner has some simple measures that are practical and easy for parents to implement.

Julie Inman Grant:

One of the primary pieces of guidance we give parents is make sure that their children are using technology in open areas of the house where they can look over to their shoulders, or if they're playing Fortnite in the lounge room, that they don't have earphones on. Because what we do see is children in the privacy of their bedrooms or the bathrooms performing sex acts for the camera remotely, and we can often hear parents voices in the next room calling them for dinner.

Julie Inman Grant:

So this can happen under our noses, and what we have to realize is that when we give our child a digital device and we know that 81% of children by the age of four have some access to a connected digital device, we can't just set and forget. It's not a passive entertainment mechanism like the TV that our mothers used to put us in front of, it opens up children to a vast range of wonderful engaging content, but if it's left unchecked, it can also welcome strangers into our lounge rooms.

Julie Inman Grant:

We often use the analogy, you wouldn't let your child play in a sandpit with a complete stranger at the park. Why would you give them a device that opens up their worlds to almost everyone unencumbered without being engaged in their online lives?

Rodger Corser, Narrator:

Anne Hollonds is Australia's national children's commissioner, a role created to help promote the rights, wellbeing and development of young people in Australia. She believes allowing kids some degree of control when they're on the net is healthy, but that autonomy doesn't mean parents should just walk away and leave them to it.

Anne Hollonds:

We now know that even eight year olds are not safe to cross the road because their peripheral vision is not that great, that parents should still be walking their kids to school at that age because the limitations that the children have. But very soon after that, kids are wanting to take steps to be very independent in the physical world, and that's appropriate.

Anne Hollonds:

So I guess it's about really encouraging that wisdom and resilience and capacity to think through things from an early age in the online world. The other thing to do with just kids, not parents, is the school environment, and I think what we can do as parents is to really ensure that the schools and the school community are alive to what needs to be done to educate children, again from an early age. And they can also do an awful lot to educate parents.

Rodger Corser, Narrator:

Bravehearts Carol Ronken agrees that education is critical to preventing the victimisation of children, no matter what stage of life they're at.

Carol Ronken:

I think that if we're serious about prevention, we want to actually stop this from happening in the first place. And to me, education is absolutely key. We have an opportunity, I guess, as we're fortunate enough to be so much more aware now of online, we've got some amazing agencies, the eSafety Commissioner as well as ACCCE, doing some fabulous work in this space. So we should be taking advantage of that now, educating our children now from a very early age.

Carol Ronken:

I strongly believe that if we're able to put in those programs to support communities and families to be safe, then our next generation of children will be so much more safer. The statistic of one in five kids being sexually harmed, hopefully we'll see that dropping.

Rodger Corser, Narrator:

Act For Kids is an Australian not-for-profit organisation working to prevent and treat child abuse and neglect. They've been providing support for children and their families for over 30 years, and yet time hasn't made what they do any easier.

Rodger Corser, Narrator:

In 2019, the organisation received 30,000 reports involving the abuse or neglect of a child or young person. Within these incredibly high numbers, there are concerns that many of the kids who are the subject of these reports could present a potential target for online child sex offenders, something which Act For Kids CEO, Katrina Lines, is trying to prevent.

Katrina Lines:

In terms of emotional neglect of kids in particular, and then the process of grooming and being a special friend or having a special relationship with the child that results in sexual abuse, then I think kids who have been starved of emotional connection and attachment to their parents, and even love, are going to be completely seduced by someone who is offering that.

Katrina Lines:

We try to equip kids with all sorts of skills to help them thrive, and resilience and a sense of their own self-worth is one of those things. And we try to link it to achievements, which I think a lot of the research on self-esteem has shown is much more powerful anyway for everybody. Someone pumping up your tires and telling you you're good at something is actually quite different to doing something and achieving something and feeling really good about it, so having a goal and achieving a goal, those are the kinds of things we try to teach kids how to do.

Katrina Lines:

It doesn't matter what the goals are. And then when you achieve them, feel really good about those goals. So then they're not relying on other people to tell them whether they're good at something or not, it's not that external validation all the time.

Katrina Lines:

The online world is full of people judging and external validation, you need to build kids' skills and resilience in able to think for themselves about, okay. I know I tried my best at that, I gave it a really good shot. I'm good at that and good on me.

Katrina Lines:

So that comes from within rather than somebody giving you 15 likes on Instagram or whatever.

Rodger Corser, Narrator:

Kids Helpline is just one of the organisations currently working with schools to deliver education programs designed to strengthen that sense of resilience in kids.

Rodger Corser, Narrator:

Elliot Rubens explains the thinking behind Kids Helpline at school.

Elliot Rubens:

It's a early intervention and prevention program, so working with the counseling services, you're working with one client at a time. It's after something has happened and then trying to build skills to stop it from happening again.

Elliot Rubens:

So the thinking behind KHAS was that it was going to be something that we can do with classrooms at a time, and giving them the skills, giving them information that they might not have otherwise that can cover a range of topics.

Elliot Rubens:

So it's things like online citizenship, how can we be safe online? How can we respond to cyber bullying, but also the importance of not cyber bullying, speaking to those people before they get dad stopping it from both ends.

Rodger Corser, Narrator:

Teaching a child about online safety from an early age is recognised as one of the key measures in combating online child exploitation. Another key measure is parents, carers and teachers knowing how to pick up on those subtle cues that kids exhibit when something in their world isn't right.

Rodger Corser, Narrator:

It means being alert to the changes in their behavior, although our national children's commissioner, Anne Hollonds, admits that it's not easy.

Anne Hollonds:

Now, this is a hugely complex area. We would have fixed it by now if it was simple. Online child exploitation I think is very difficult to pick up by anyone other than someone who knows the child very well. And so you know the child well enough to know that their behavior is changing.

Anne Hollonds:

And again, every child is different because of their personalities, but usually there will be a change of some kind in their behavior, in their... They might be more withdrawn, more secretive, it could be a range of things that are occurring. On their own, they may not mean that. So it's not like we jump to conclusions immediately, but I guess as a parent or a family member, or even a neighbor or someone who might know the child well enough to notice a change, that is a situation where you might want to ask a few more questions of perhaps the parent or someone else, or even of the child themselves, about is there anything that's worrying you? What can I do to help you today? Rather than are you okay? Because kids will just go, "Yeah."

Anne Hollonds:

You might need to, over time, ask in a variety of ways, through the base of a trusting relationship, try to understand what might be happening. If a child's behavior has changed quite markedly, there's usually something going on.

Rodger Corser, Narrator:

If something like sexual exploitation or sexual abuse is happening with a child, encouraging them to disclose that can be difficult. Parents, carers and teachers all have a role to play in creating a culture of safety around our kids, a culture which hopefully gives them the sense of protection and confidence they need to make that incredibly brave decision to reach out.

Rodger Corser, Narrator:

For some kids that decision can take years and can be made even tougher when the abuser is a trusted family member or friend.

Rodger Corser, Narrator:

Kelly Humphreys is a survivor of child sexual abuse. Kelly's uncle subjected her to years of sustained abuse, but even after that abuse stopped, it would take even more years before Kelly could bravely find her voice and speak up.

Kelly Humphries:

I grew up in the bush, I grew up in Queensland in the Outback, and a very innocent childhood. Flinging cow poo pies at my brother and running around with kangaroos, and jumping barb wire fences and sometimes getting stuck as you do. It was a beautiful, innocent childhood. And my mum, she had a big brother and he was our favorite uncle, spent a lot of time with us, helped us at the property. And in the big scheme of things, when you break it down, there was a lot of grooming going on, a lot of time spent making me feel very special and loved and cared for, a little bit more than everybody else.

Kelly Humphries:

And in hindsight, we can look back at that and we know what it is, but at the time he just looked like the wonderful, caring uncle that we all hope we can have.

Kelly Humphries:

At the age of seven, turning eight, around that time he said to me... One day when we were... I was at his place and as all innocent kids are, I was running around in my undies, and he pulled me close to him and he said, "I want to teach you what it's like to love." And it was that night that he came to the

bedroom and he started to sexually abuse me, and he continued to do that opportunistically up until I was 15.

Kelly Humphries:

And at that point, well, obviously there's a big story between those years, but it was only then that I found enough courage to get him to stop. And it was like a big showdown at the OK-Corral for me, I ended up hitting him and telling him he couldn't touch me again. I swore at him and told him not to touch my sister. And without swearing my head off and going through exactly what I said, it was a very courageous moment for me.

Kelly Humphries:

But I was waiting, I was waiting for something from him. And I realised at that moment that he was a freaking coward, and he dropped his head and said nothing. And that was that.

Rodger Corser, Narrator:

Initially, Kelly couldn't tell her parents about the abuse, but four years later the dam burst.

Rodger Corser, Narrator:

So just what was the trigger that gave Kelly the courage to finally speak her truth and tell her parents what had happened?

Kelly Humphries:

I think what it took was I wasn't in the environment anymore. See I got a scholarship to a private college because I was a very good athlete, and I was away from everything. And when I was away from everything I was able to pursue my sport. I got strong, I got smart. I got brave. I learned a few things.

Kelly Humphries:

And while it was still quite hard, I was able to find support outside of my family. I was able to disclose... And very accidentally, I was hit by a car actually and broke my leg. I was trying to get a scholarship to the United States at the time and it just so happened that I thought my whole world was over at that point. I was like, "I'm never going to get to the Olympics, I'm never going to become this scholarship athlete that I dreamed of being." Because here I am with a broken leg and I'm all busted arse, and I can't do anything.

Kelly Humphries:

And so I was talking to my coach, and I was sitting there with my broken leg and I was just crying my eyes out and I just couldn't take it anymore. And then I just blurted it out, and she's like, ""Well Kel, I don't know how to help you with that. I just don't." And I just kept crying, and I didn't real... It just came out. It just couldn't stay in there anymore. So she said, "I can't help you, but let me get you someone who can." So she connected me with somebody who I knew, it was that lady, that counselor who was actually my high school counselor, I was no longer in high school, but she was able to go with me to the police station.

Kelly Humphries:

She took me down there and we made the complaint together, so she was my support person. And the only reason I spoke and the only reason I shared is because I had six months of repeated nightmares that he was chasing my sister, and my sister's 10 years younger than me so she was exactly the same age that I was when the abuse had started with me.

Kelly Humphries:

So it was playing on my mind and I knew enough at that point in my life to know that statistically speaking pedophiles re-offend, they don't stop. I had to say something because these dreams were... The last scene in my dream is her underwater looking at me trying to speak, but she couldn't speak. And as I've looked up, I've seen my uncle on the other side of this fountain. And I just had to say something. And so I ended up calling my parents. And I was at Toowoomba at that time, at university studying, called mum and dad and I said, "You need to come down, I got to tell you something." And they're like, "What? Are you pregnant?"

Kelly Humphries:

I was like, "No, no, but you need to come. I can't have this conversation with you over the phone." They couldn't actually really afford to come down but they somehow found the money, came down, and in the meantime I was pretty much shitting bricks because I was just like, "Oh my God, how am I going to tell them this thing that I've kept from them?" Because there was moments along the journey I could have shared with them, I could have said something. I have the most incredible mum and dad, we have a beautiful family. And the way that pedophiles work is they target you and they isolate you from your family so you feel you can't speak.

Kelly Humphries:

The most trusted and wonderful people in my life were the people that I couldn't share with, and that was the hardest thing. So when I finally got there, it just had... Mum and dad had half worked it out, but not really... Weren't really sure. And when I finally said this is what happened, mum said, "Oh, I never wanted that to happen to you." She said, "Because Kel, it happened to me too, and I've never told anyone."

Kelly Humphries:

My mum is 15 years older than me, she had me when she was... Oh it was 16, sorry. So she had me when she was 16 and a half, and we're very good friends. She's a brilliant mum but we're great friends. We didn't really need to discuss too much more because there's this beautiful thing when survivors speak and it doesn't require words, but it was just the understanding that I wasn't alone anymore and that somebody actually understood what I'd been going through.

Kelly Humphries:

And by far, that is still the hardest thing I think I've ever done.

Rodger Corser, Narrator:

In 2001, Kelly's uncle was charged with numerous counts of sexual assault and indecent treatment of a child under the age of 16. He pleaded guilty and was subsequently jailed.

Rodger Corser, Narrator:

Kelly is now an ambassador for Bravehearts, a child safe champion, an author, and a serving member of the Queensland Police Service.

Rodger Corser, Narrator:

Kelly was just a kid when the heartbreaking story of her abuse started, and to this day, she continues to share her story in the hope it will encourage other kids to find their voice to speak out and reduce the trauma and stigma surrounding child sexual abuse.

Rodger Corser, Narrator:

In episode four of Closing The Net, we examine the motivations of child sex offenders and speak with an everyday dad whose son shook off the shackles of fear and helped save other kids from an online child sex offender.

Peter:

It was about nine o'clock at night, or eight o'clock at night, and he'd said he had to go to his room urgently. And he'd picked his phone up, and I said, "No, well you can leave your phone here." And he goes, "No, I need my phone."

Peter:

And I'm like, "What for?" And he just started shaking, and I said, "What's going on?" And he said, "I'm scared to tell you." I said, "Well, if you're scared to tell me, then you really need to tell me."

Rodger Corser, Narrator:

If the content in this podcast has caused any distress or if you know a child is being contacted or groomed online, visit ACCCE.GOV.AU to find out how to report and where you can seek support.

Rodger Corser, Narrator:

If you see child abuse material online, it's important to report it to the Office of the eSafety Commissioner who can help get it removed. And if you think a child is in immediate danger, please call 000 or your local police. You can provide anonymous information to crimestoppers.com.au or by phoning 1 800 333 000.

Closing disclaimer:

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