



## MEDIA RELEASE

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### Screenagers: Growing up in a Digital Age A Community Screening and Q&A Discussion

*Is face to face conversation being overtaken by screen use in the modern household?*

*Are you concerned about 'losing' your family to screens this Christmas?*

Parents in Maroondah had been speaking out about their struggle to navigate the complexities of parenting in a digital age. By way of response, [EACH Health Promotion Team](#), [Eastern Community Legal Centre](#) (ECLC) and [Maroondah City Council](#) presented a screening of award-winning documentary *Screenagers: Growing up in a Digital Age* at the Melba College Theatre on November 29 in Croydon, followed by a Q&A discussion with a panel of young people and experts.

*Screenagers* highlights how families can struggle over digital media use. Psychologists, academics and brain scientists offer a deeper understanding of both the issue and the solution. The film combines smart insights and practical tips for raising happy, healthy, technologically-empowered teens.

Over 120 people attended, with parents, teachers and young people eager to hear the panelists' advice for navigating the complexities of living in a world where digital media is so prominent. Chaired by Zoe Francis, EACH Senior Health Promotion Officer, the panel comprised four young people, a mental health professional, a parent and a lawyer.

Ms Francis emphasized that young people are not the only ones who are allured to digital devices and we are, in fact, all vulnerable to the emotional gratification that technology gives.

"It is not an individual weakness. We are all neuro-chemically rewarded by the stimulation we get from our devices. Once we are aware of this, we are a step closer to making new choices," said Ms Francis.

Belinda Lo, Principal Lawyer at ECLC, said legal issues were also important to consider.

"Teenagers are increasingly using screens to connect with their friends. Bullying and misuse of personal images are some of the problems that can arise, which can lead to getting into trouble with the law. Talking to young people about respectful online behavior helps to prevent these problems from occurring," said Ms Lo.

The panelists were unanimous that using a strengths-based approach to deal with family struggles over screen use or screen time was the way to go. (See over page for further information).

**For further media information and interviews, please contact:**

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## Audience comments

*“Talk, talk, talk to your kids and let our kids talk to us. Parents need to listen.”*

*“We are not the only family going through this” and “It all stems from a healthy child/parent relationship.”*

*“It's not too late for boundaries - children need them & thrive within loving & consistent guidelines.”*

*“Have open conversations with your children & develop rules for device use together.”*

*“Modelling healthy digital behaviour as a parent is important.”*

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85% of attendees said that, despite the topic of healthy digital media use being a complex one, they had a better understanding of navigating the digital world and finding a healthy balance following the session.

88% of attendees felt more confident to have a positive conversation with their family about healthy digital media use following attending the session.

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## Tips for Parenting in a Digital Age: A Strengths-based Approach

### **Be an open channel for communication**

Be interested, curious, patient and non-judgemental about what the young person is doing online.

### **Allow young people to mentor you**

Ask young people to demonstrate what they are doing. Be respectful of it and take the opportunity to learn about their online world.

### **Share digital entertainment time with young person**

Sharing time with young people online allows you to connect with them. It can be a very good opportunity to develop mutual respect and even for fostering more respect for screen time limits later on.

### **Offer offline activities**

Ask the young person what they would like to do. Spend time doing what they might like to do, preferably outdoors.

### **Model positive online behaviour**

You can't have a conversation with your kids for crossing boundaries when you can't put your own devices down.

### **Be aware of your own use at night time in particular**

Research shows that screen media in the 90 minutes before bed has an adverse effect on sleep patterns.

### **Hold honest conversations with kids about pitfalls and concerns**

If you are concerned about some aspects of the young person's technology use, have a conversation about it. Choose a good time to share your concerns, like on the way to school or at the dinner table. Remember that humans respond better to reward than punishment.

### **Use 'I' statements, rather than 'you'**

'I am concerned...' rather than 'You are playing...'

Source: Teens and Screens: How can adults respond effectively?, Zoe Francis, Senior Health Promotion Officer, EACH.  
<http://www.each.com.au/teens-screens-forum-18th-may-2017/>

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