

Video transcript – Beacon App Launch

Introduction with Sinead Taylor – Bankwest Executive General Manager

[Sinead:] Bankwest has been supporting the community for 125 years, and our support now extends to the digital world where parents desperately need trusted help to keep their children safe online.

I'm delighted to iconic WA based institutions, Bankwest and Telethon Kids Institute have come together to make a positive difference to our kids' online safety in a rapidly changing digital world.

The partnership combines Telethon Kids' high-class research capabilities with Bankwest's expertise in technology and cyber safety.

And I'm thrilled to share with you that together we've launched Beacon, an Australia first cyber safety app for parents.

Beacon is designed specifically for parents as a tailored one stop shop for reliable, trustworthy information about digital threats facing kids, such as online grooming, cyber bullying and stalking.

It's been great to use the expertise of Bankwest colleagues in developing this exciting project. From providing input into the app prototype to user testing the initial version of the Beacon app.

And I'll be speaking to Bankwest colleague, Carol Abrahams about this shortly. I will also be joined today by Professor Donna Cross from Telethon Kids Institute to talk more about the partnership and what makes the Beacon app, the first of its kind in Australia.

I really hope this app will help our customers and all Australian parents in our communities keep their kids cyber safe. And if you haven't already done so, make sure you download it today.

Q&A with Sinead Taylor and Professor Donna Cross from Telethon Kids Institute

[Sinead:] Welcome Donna, thanks for joining us today. It's so exciting to see the Beacon app launch. And it didn't seem like that long ago that we sat down to announce the partnership.

[Donna:] That's true, it was about a year ago that almost to the day that we received funding from Bankwest and thank you for that. Bankwest gave us the opportunity to build a platform that we would never have been able to do through the usual funding sources to get evidence out to families. So it's really exciting time for us.

[Sinead:] Oh, we're so excited. And the app is obviously based on some deep scientific research, so I'd love you to explain that to us.

[Donna:] We've been doing research in this area for about 14 years at the Telethon Kids Institute. And during that time we've been studying children's behaviours as they've changed over time. We've been studying the sorts of content that children are engaging in, in online environments, the sorts of devices that they're using and the ways that they're using technology and also the sorts of people that they're meeting online. And so, all of that evidence has really been collecting, and of course, research is no good if it stays with researchers. So we need platforms that take that information out to the public.

[Sinead:] That's fantastic. So how do you think it will actually, the Beacon app will actually help families and you know, protect their children?

[Donna:] The first is that there isn't an app that exists that we know of anywhere in the world in fact, that does what this app does. Firstly, the tailoring or the customising of content. So parents probably have apps that are like libraries that have lots of information like the internet. If you want to know something, you go and search for it, and it gives information back. Of course our app operates like that, but it also has an algorithm, so it uses machine learning to select content and push it forward to families in a way that enables parents to just find the kinds of content that's relevant for a 14 year old or a six year old.

And I think the other thing that is particularly unique is that we have something known as a family agreement. And I think often families, one of the biggest challenges they have is working out the kinds of rules and ways that technology should be used within the home. And what we've done is to create an agreement that parents can sit down with their children and negotiate a whole bunch of questions that maybe parents wouldn't have thought of that really helped them to set rules and to support their children to use online environment in a really positive and safe way.

[Sinead:] I really want wish the app had been around when my kids were young, I was a master of blocking and banning, and I can tell you it does not work.

[Donna:] Me too. Thanks very much.

Q&A with Sinead Taylor and Bankwest colleague Carol Abrahams

[Sinead:] Thanks for joining us, Carol. It's so exciting that our Bankwest colleagues were able to get involved in and set their expertise to help with the Beacon app. Can you tell me why you got involved?

[Carol:] Yeah, sure. I have two children, eight and 11, and they're just really getting themselves into the digital world at the moment. So when the opportunity came up to get involved, I was really excited to take part in testing the app. It was about the same time that COVID hit, so I found the children were, you know, in front of the screens more often as we tried to navigate working from home, home schooling. And I realised that I was being confronted with lots of games and apps that I had no idea about. So I was yeah, really excited to take part in this and give the feedback where I could.

[Sinead:] And so what has the app enabled you to do?

[Carol:] It's enabled us to have conversations with the children that are probably a bit more meaningful because before this, we were just relying on what they were telling us, but it meant that we could actually understand what was age appropriate, what the content is like and, and have those conversations.

[Sinead:] So I'm a mum of four and I wish that the app had existed when my kids were younger, but how do you think that the Beacon app will help families across Australia?

[Carol:] I think it's gonna be really good. So my children, you know, their friends also have access to a lot of digital content and screens and not every parent is, you know, tech savvy. So, I'll definitely be promoting this to my school friend mums, because I'm sure it will help them to actually get across what their children are looking at.

[Sinead:] Thanks Carol, thank you for your commitment to helping us get the app launched and in market for everyone to use. And thank you for joining us.

[Carol:] My pleasure, I was super pleased to take part.

Conclusion with Sinead Taylor – Bankwest Executive General Manager

[Sinead:] It's been great to hear from Carol about how our brilliant Bankwest colleagues have been involved in the launch of the beacon app. I love seeing the passion our colleagues have for supporting the community.

And I'm really looking forward to sharing more about what Bankwest and Telethon Kids are achieving together to support our customers, our colleagues and communities across Australia.