

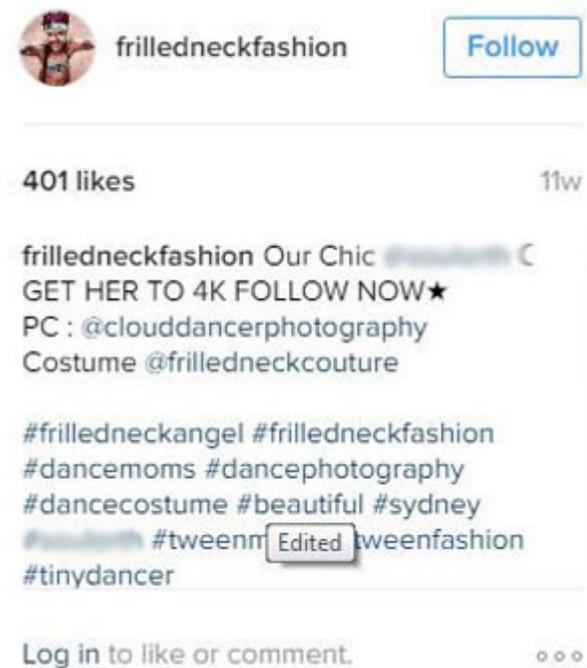
# **Dancewear company Frilled Neck Fashion accused of sexualising pre-teen models**

**Critics have dubbed them a "reckless" risk to the safety of the child models, but those involved have defended publishing the photographs of scantily clad, young girls on social media to promote a popular dancewear label. It comes as Australia's eSafety Commissioner warns parents that paedophile parasite websites are publishing seemingly innocent photos found on Facebook.**

By Antoinette Lattouf

*Updated Wed 20 Jul 2016, 1:52pm*

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Frilled Neck Fashion post, photographed by Lisa Young of Cloud Dancer Photography.

(Supplied)

A model lies on the ground, her back arched as the sun illuminates her frame. A protruding chest is teamed with a longing gaze. And lipstick-kissed lips form sumptuous pouts.

The models featured in these photographs are as young as nine. Most of them are under the age of 15.

The photographs are posted on an Australian dancewear company's social media site and are shared with tens of thousands of followers.

Frilled Neck Fashion's followers post comments of appreciation — and while many people give positive feedback about the costumes, the praise is largely directed at the models:

"Wow you are so gorgeous."

"Love this one!"

"Sexy."

"You look extremely stunning."

"Hey follow me."

Women's advocacy group Collective Shout received complaints about the photo shoots and its campaigns manager, Caitlin Roper, started to investigate.

She acknowledges there are photos of dance performances and dance moves, but says she is appalled and shocked by the adult-like poses and styling contained in the photo shoots.

"When girls are young, they all like to put on their mum's heels and somehow always find the red lipstick, that's child-led curiosity," she told ABC News.

"What's disturbing about these photographs is that at some point, someone told this child, 'Lay down on the ground, arch your back, don't smile, look serious and pout'."

Ms Roper also discovered parents approved of the posts, and often boasted about how beautiful their child looked.

"Girls as young as nine don't have the emotional maturity or context to understand the potential implications of sharing these photos publicly and promoting them on social media," Ms Roper said.



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Social media post by Frilled Neck Fashion.

(Supplied)

Using information publicly available on the dancewear company's social media pages, ABC News was able to quickly locate the schools and addresses of two of the young models who feature heavily on Frilled Neck

Fashion's Instagram page.

"It's really quite risky; it's something [parents] need to be aware of," Ms Roper said.

"It's reckless behaviour that is putting young girls at risk. You can find these girls so easily by tracking them online, their profiles are often public and they give up a lot of information about who they are and where they live."

In an interview with ABC radio earlier this year, eSafety Commissioner Alastair MacGibbon warned parents to take more care in selecting photos they share on social media.

Even seemingly innocent family photos of children in everyday life were being extracted and sexualised by paedophiles, Mr MacGibbon says.

Ms Roper says if regular photos of "kids being kids" could be sexualised and posted elsewhere, the risk to these young models is "hugely concerning".

"This is a case of adults failing to act in the best interest of the child," she said.



Director of Frilled Neck Fashion, Amelia Annand.

(Supplied)

Ms Roper contacted the dancewear company over the course of several weeks, to no avail.

ABC News's repeated requests for comment from the NSW Central Coast based business were ignored, and its director Amelia Annand also did not reply to private messages.

# 'There is nothing sexual about these photos'

Sydney woman Cindy's 11-year-old daughter is a dancer, and appears on Frilled Neck Fashion's Instagram page.

Cindy says she does not see anything wrong with the photographs.

"They are gorgeous girls wearing gorgeous costumes. There is absolutely nothing sexual about these photos," she told ABC News.

"The girls love to dance and love to wear beautiful costumes."

Dance teacher and dance industry code of ethics campaigner Jemma Nicholl disagrees.

"There's no denying that these children are positioned to have attention clearly drawn to specific body parts — their chest, their crotch," she said.

"Facial expressions are sultry, and some images even present the illusion of nudity. There is nothing child-like about these pictures."

Ms Nicholl is working on stronger guidelines for studios and dance schools, called the KidsPace Dance Code of Practice.

The voluntary guide was developed in conjunction with child psychologists and educators, and provides tools and information on how to combat sexualisation of children in the dance industry.

"My question to parents is: 'Are you seriously this comfortable with the way your daughters are being depicted, and are you aware of the consequences?'" Ms Nicholl said.

## Images reproduced on pornographic websites

The UK's Internet Watch Foundation study tracks the number of child and adolescent images lifted from social media and posted on parasite pornography websites.

In 2012, it found 88 per cent of photographs uploaded to parasite websites were found on social media pages of individuals.

These parasite websites had often been created for the sole purpose of offering sexually explicit images and videos of young people, often with commentary or fantasy storylines.

"How would these parents feel ... knowing that others may be viewing their child's image on other sites?" Ms Nicholl said.



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Frilled Neck Fashion post, photographed by Rob Eyre.

(Supplied)

But Cindy vehemently denies she is potentially putting her daughter in harm's way.

"None of us are out there exploiting our children, and there is nothing disgusting about any of these photos," she said.

"All these children are well supervised and have responsible parents."

## Photographers defend pictures and poses

Dance photographer Rob Eyre captures beautiful mid-air dance manoeuvres during performances.

He is also the photographer behind some of the highly stylised photographs Collective Shout want taken down.

ABC News asked him if he felt his photograph of a young model wearing black lace, posing on the ground with a serious expression on her face, could be seen as "sexual".

"That's a shock as it seemed a cute image when I took it. I wouldn't have thought just laying there would be seen as suggestive," he told ABC News.

He said he did not have a say in what the models or dancers were wearing.

"I'm always mindful of what I shoot with these dancers, as they do put themselves in moves and positions that, to the wrong person, can be taken the wrong way," Mr Eyre said.



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Social media post by Frilled Neck Fashion.

(Supplied)

Photographer Lisa Young works closely with the fashion brand, and her daughter also models for them.

She said her photos were only used commercially if the model's parent or guardian gave permission.

"The poses in the photos are poses that are widely used on stage in lyrical and contemporary routines by dancers and photographed by many dance photographers," Ms Young said.

But Collective Shout and KidsPace Code fear safety is being overlooked for commercial gain.

"I would advise those involved to take far greater care and consideration in their photography and social media moderation, when it is the wellbeing and safety of young girls at stake," Ms Nicholl said.

"Is there surely not another way to style and position a child, for the purpose of a sale?"

## An industry-wide responsibility

Last year, global dancewear brand California Kisses — which is widely distributed in Australia — was called to account for its Pop That campaign photograph.

The particular image featured three models aged 12-16 posed alongside the slogan "Pop That", a phrase commonly used when referring to a female losing her virginity.

Several weeks later, the company removed the photograph from its homepage.

Ms Nicholl says sexualised styling and representation is not limited to the internet, and is present on the competition stage and in public performance through choreography, music and costuming choices.

Earlier this year, a male dance student who gave evidence before the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse Survivors, called for better regulation of the industry.

He was one of many survivors of paedophile dance teacher Grant Davies.

The male student said he hoped the inquiry would lead to stricter guidelines and governance of the dance industry.

Ms Nicholl agrees.

She says safer, smarter practices in local dance halls could help prevent the exploitation of children.

"As dance educators, we have the potential to be a key influence in the most formative years of a child's life, and that automatically issues us with a responsibility to safeguard not only the physical, however, the mental and emotional wellbeing of children too," Ms Nicholl said.



'Pop That' photo from global dancewear brand California Kisses. (Supplied)

The KidsPace Dance code of practice will be available next month.

**Topics:** children, community-and-society, social-media, australia

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