

Sex pests targeted by new phone app

JEFF WICKS

A SMARTPHONE app for school pupils that facilitates anonymous reporting of sexual abuse or bullying was launched in Durban yesterday.

Creator Marc Hardwick said the Guardian Schools app gives children a safe and instant portal to report abuse.

Schools that sign up for the app, for R500 a month, will designate staff members to receive the e-mailed reports.

“The staff members can request further information from reporters but will never know their identities. This is extremely important to us, as the power of the app is ensuring the anonymity of the reporter,” said Hardwick.

“This application will not only help children to report abuse and get the help and support they need timeously, but will make sure the perpetrators are brought to book,” said Hardwick.

“We see it as a proactive tool

Pupils who report abuse will remain anonymous

in the fight against these kinds of crimes which often go unreported.”

Hardwick said that the need for an abuse-reporting portal had been underscored by the Parktown Boys’ High School scandal, in which more than 20 pupils were allegedly sexually abused by a water polo coach.

“If the school had had the app there is a possibility that the kids could have made a disclosure about what was happening to them and the abuse may not have been so widespread,” he said.

A pilot version of the app was launched late last year.

On its website, Hardwick’s company states that it works with many schools including Kearsney and Michaelhouse.

— *TMG Digital/TimesLIVE*