

Dumb phone's smart for kids

■ Sydney

Australian children are spending on average almost an entire day of the week on their smartphones.

Research released by Telstra yesterday says that more than two-thirds (68 per cent) of children aged three to 17 own a smartphone and an average of 21 hours and 48 minutes a week is spent on the devices.

The online survey of 1365 parents concluded that their top concerns involved the time-sapping power of phones and risks around cyber safety and sexting.

However, while two-thirds of the parents said they had discussed usage guidelines, a quarter reported difficulties carrying them out.

Sydney-based family researcher Justin Coulson advised parents that the best rules were those created with the child's input.

"There's no point writing out the terms of a contract if the kids have no say in it," the father of six said.

Dr Coulson also recommends a minimum age of 12 or 13 for children to be given a phone.

"And then make it a dumb one. Smart parents give their kids dumb phones," he said, advising that phones with only text and call capabilities were better options than smartphones.