

THEMATIC DISCUSSION ON AGENDA ITEM 5: -

PANEL 2. *Countering cyber-crime, including the abuse and exploitation of minors in illegal activities with the use of the Internet* - TUESDAY 17 MAY

WESTERN EUROPEAN AND OTHER GROUP

Julie Inman GRANT, Commissioner of eSafety, Australia

Key Messages

1. **Acknowledge** the significance of the discussion on countering the abuse and exploitation of minors in illegal activities with the use of the Internet, at the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice.
2. **Introduce** yourself and your role.
3. **Provide** an overview of eSafety's role as Australia's online safety regulator
 - eSafety is the world's first government regulatory agency dedicated to keeping our citizens safe online. This includes serving as Australia's hotline for reporting child sexual exploitation material, and tackling the scourge of child sexual exploitation material online.
 - As part of our mission to protect our citizens and reduce survivors' ongoing trauma, we can use a range of civil powers to compel the takedown of illegal or harmful content. The bulk of this work is focused on the removal of child sexual exploitation material.
 - We do this in tandem with Australian law enforcement and our global partners. These include organisations like INHOPE and Interpol, and groups like the We Protect Global Alliance.
4. **Combatting child sexual exploitation and abuse**
 - eSafety offers tangible, rapid redress by getting this material taken down. We do this through our accessible and trustworthy complaints mechanisms. These allow us to investigate and take action to remove certain types of content to reduce ongoing trauma and re-victimisation.
 - This important job falls to the eSafety Investigations team. They are on the frontline of our collective effort to eradicate child sexual exploitation material – the volume and scale of which is increasing at an alarming rate.
 - Our hardworking investigators are exposed to some of the worst of humanity. Unfortunately, through the pandemic we have seen demand for our services and assistance increase significantly.
 - Since 1 July 2015, eSafety has finalised about **60,000** regulatory investigations into child sexual exploitation material (CSEM).
 - **87%** of reports received October– December 2021 related to CSEM. The percentage of reports about child exploitation material has risen by **24%** over the past 2 years.

- Some of the most distressing content our investigators encounter involves child sexual abuse material that depicts the torture and abuse of innocent children – often for sexual gratification and profit.
- Like others on the frontlines of CSEM, our investigators are also seeing higher volumes of ‘coerced’, self-produced material. This is where children are manipulated or intimidated into performing sex acts for the camera on iPhones or iPads in the “privacy” of their bedrooms and bathrooms.
- In a number of these cases, we can hear the voices of their parents in the background, clearly unaware of what is happening to their child in the next room.

5. The importance of international cooperation

- Though we continue to be horrified at the scale and scope of child sexual exploitation online, I am encouraged by our forward progress. Governments, police, industry, and the not-for-profit sector are working together and using advanced technologies to better detect this material, disrupt offender communities and prosecute offenders.
- In Australia, we have succeeded in creating an extremely hostile environment for those who create and distribute child sexual abuse material. This has been achieved through the creation of a national investigation and disruption capability in our law enforcement agencies, and with the support of eSafety and seven years of comprehensive online safety regulation,
- Thanks to this joint reform effort, eSafety now rarely deals with child sexual exploitation material that is hosted in Australia. We are almost exclusively dealing with content that is hosted overseas.
- While this shows our efforts are having a real impact on our own shores, we at eSafety understand that we are part of an incredibly complex global ecosystem. We know that combatting child sexual exploitation and abuse is a borderless epidemic that requires a collaborative approach.
- We need to encourage other governments to step up and strengthen their laws. This tightens the net and eradicate those permissive hosting environments which enable this devastating material to exist – and persist.
- Our collective success hinges upon robust partnerships and a whole of society response.
- We all have a responsibility here to ensure we are turning this concern for online safety into action – across all sectors of the economy and industry. Victims and survivors of these abhorrent crimes deserve no less. Thank you!