

Communications strategy and plan:  
**Cyberbullying Scheme Regulatory Guidance**

<b>Purpose of the Communication plan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The purpose of this communication strategy and plan is to provide communications support for the promotion of the release eSafety's regulatory guidance for its updated Cyberbullying Scheme under Australia's new Online Safety Act. The regulatory guidance will detail how the scheme will expand from social media platforms to also include online gaming sites and platforms as well as private messaging platforms.</li> </ul>
<b>Link to eSafety strategy 2019-2022</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>eSafety provides education leadership, coordination and best practice guidance to help Australians have safer and more positive experiences online.</li> <li>eSafety uses multiple channels to raise awareness about online safety and where to seek help.</li> </ul>
<b>Background</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On 23 July 2021, the Australian Parliament passed into law the Online Safety Act 2021.</li> <li>The Act creates a modern, fit for purpose regulatory framework that builds on the strengths of the existing legislative scheme for online safety.</li> <li>The regulatory framework includes important updates to our existing image-based abuse, cyberbullying, and online content schemes and introduces a world-first adult cyber abuse scheme.</li> <li>The regulatory guidance for each of the updated schemes will be released in a staged process, with the first to be eSafety's world first cyberbullying scheme.</li> <li>The updates to the scheme will look to protect children on the platforms where they spend a lot of their online time, including online gaming sites and private messaging platforms.</li> <li>The time these sites and platforms have to take harmful content down will be reduced from 48 hours to 24.</li> </ul>
<b>Objective(s) and measurables</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To proactively announce this key regulatory milestone which increases protections for children online, and inform stakeholders and industry of the new changes as eSafety readies for commencement of our new powers under the Online Safety Act 2021 on 23 January 2022.</li> </ul>
<b>Target Audience(s)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Media</li> <li>General public</li> <li>Industry – Gaming Industry, private messaging platforms</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stakeholders – TEPs, Schools, Parent associations</li> </ul>
<p><b>Key overarching proactive messages</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Six years ago, we became the Children’s eSafety Commissioner, the first government online safety regulator in the world with a focus on protecting Australian children online.</li> <li>• But in this short time, we’ve seen our remit widen to the protection of all Australians.</li> <li>• We’ve also seen abuse spread from the major social media sites and surfacing on new platforms and in new ways, which is why it is so imperative our laws continue to keep pace with this rapid evolution.</li> <li>• Under the Online Safety Act 2021, we will wield expanded powers to protect all Australians on all platforms where harm is occurring.</li> <li>• And this includes important updates to our very first scheme that protects children from being bullied online.</li> <li>• Six years on, this is still the only regulatory scheme in the world that performs this important function, and these updates will make sure it continues to provide protection to children on the platforms where they are spending much of their online time.</li> <li>• We know bullying isn’t just confined to the big social media sites.</li> <li>• And for this reason, and for the first time anywhere in the world, our cyberbullying scheme will now provide important protections for children on online gaming sites and platforms as well as on private messaging apps which have become an increasingly popular means for children to communicate with one another.</li> <li>• Added to this, the time platforms have to remove harmful content after receiving a notice from the eSafety Commissioner will be halved, from 48 hours to 24, greatly reducing the mental and emotional distress experienced by young victims.</li> <li>• The Government’s basic online safety expectations, the forthcoming industry codes, and our own Safety by Design initiative will also encourage industry to be more transparent and take a greater role in the protection of their users, particularly children.</li> <li>• While countries around the world look to the eSafety model as they take their first tentative steps towards online regulation, Australian is again leading the world in making the internet a safer place for all Australians.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Key stats</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Around 1- 5 kids report being bullied on online games (State of Play: Youth and online gaming 2018)</li> <li>• New research we’ll be releasing in 2022 shows that 60% of children with up to 5 social media and gaming profiles report being bullied online. If they have 10 or more profiles this increases to 70% (Youth Survey 2022)</li> <li>• While close to half (45%) of children surveyed said they had been treated in a hurtful or nasty way online, more children said they followed eSafety’s advice by blocking and unfriending perpetrators and talking to their parents and friends about being bullied online compared to when similar research was conducted in 2017.</li> <li>• In 2017, only 46 percent of young people blocked or unfriended people. By 2020, we have seen 64 percent of young people taking these actions.</li> <li>• 66 per cent of young people told their parents of their bad experiences online, an increase from 55 per cent from 2017.</li> </ul>

### Communications action plan

Channel/Audience	Aim	Communications collateral – items required	Who to action	By When?
Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <p>██████████ ██████████ regarding updates to our world-first cyberbullying scheme, including our new jurisdiction over video game platforms, messaging apps and other platforms used by children. This would include a sneak peek at our latest research about the prevalence of bullying on gaming and messaging platforms from our Youth survey and leveraging Julie’s speech to the World Anti Bullying Forum in Stockholm, Sweden.</p> </li> <li>Other notable updates include the time platforms have to take down cyberbullying material will come down from 48 hours to 24 hours.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Embargoed media release with weblink to regulatory guidance document (to be provided to journalist ahead of interview)</li> <li>Embargoed regulatory guidance (to be provided to journalist ahead of interview)</li> <li>Embargoed copy of Julie’s WABF speech (if required)</li> <li>Q&amp;As and talking points for Julie</li> <li>Radio Release grabs recorded by Julie ahead of launch.</li> </ul>	██████████	1 November
Social Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To explain the updates to our world-first cyber bullying scheme to the general public.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Series of short posts on our social channels on day of launch with link to media story and weblink to our regulatory guidance.</li> </ul>	██████████	1 November

Channel/Audience	Aim	Communications collateral – items required	Who to action	By When?
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• [REDACTED]</li> </ul>		
Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To explain the updates to our world-first cyber bullying scheme to the general public.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• [REDACTED]</li> </ul>	[REDACTED]	1 November
Industry/stakeholder engagement	<p>To inform affected industry groups and stakeholders of the new changes.</p> <p>Could include:</p> <p>Education departments            Parent groups            Trusted eSafety Providers (TEP) network            NGOs like [REDACTED]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EDM</li> <li>• Regulatory guidance</li> </ul>	[REDACTED] and cyberbullying team  [REDACTED]	Preferably before

# Media release

**EMBARGOED UNTIL 12.01am 1 November 2021**

## Australia continues to lead the world in helping kids stand up to online bullies

Australia's world-first cyberbullying scheme is set to be significantly expanded to provide protection for children being bullied in online games and on private messaging platforms, according to new regulatory guidance released by the eSafety Commissioner today.

eSafety's current cyberbullying scheme, which is still the only one of its kind in the world, has been protecting Australian children from bullying on social media platforms for the past six years, but with the boom in online gaming and private messaging, updates to the scheme were needed.

The release of the new regulatory guidance comes as eSafety Commissioner Julie Inman Grant is set to give a landmark speech at the World Anti Bullying Forum in Stockholm, Sweden, outlining eSafety's core approach to the problem through education, regulation, and the promotion of systemic industry change to prioritise safety.

"Technology never stays still for long, and neither do kids, who are always moving on to the next popular game or app, so we need to keep pace," Ms Inman Grant said.

"We know that around 1 in 5 kids have experienced bullying when playing online games and the more social media and gaming profiles they have, the greater the risk they face of being bullied. New research we'll be releasing in early 2022 shows that 60% of children with up to 5 social media and gaming profiles report being bullied online. If they have 10 or more profiles this increases to 70%.

"Kids are now spending a large proportion of their lives online, whether it's watching TV, gaming, or chatting with friends through popular messaging platforms like WhatsApp and Discord. In fact, a third of our cyberbullying reports have occurred over encrypted private messaging platforms. These new updates allow us to help children in more places where they are spending their online time."

"Covid-19 has also turbo charged online bullying and last year we also saw a 30% increase in cyberbullying reports compared to 2019.

The updates to the cyberbullying scheme are a key part of Australia's new Online Safety Act and will also include a reduced timeframe platforms have to remove bullying content once they receive a notice from eSafety, down from 48 hours to 24.

As part of her speech to the World Anti Bullying Forum, Ms Inman Grant will also deliver some good news about the positive impacts eSafety's prevention programs are having in this complex space.

“While our latest research shows close to half (45%) of children said they had been treated in a hurtful or nasty way online, we are now seeing more children taking control and following eSafety’s advice by blocking and unfriending perpetrators, and importantly, confiding in parents and friends about being bullied online compared to when similar research was conducted in 2017,” Ms Inman Grant said.

“I think this shows that the messages are getting through and children and their parents are feeling more empowered to take action against this insidious form of abuse, because the last thing anyone wants is for our kids to suffer in silence.”

The expanded cyberbullying scheme will begin on 23 January next year.

For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact:  
0436 322 272 or [media@esafety.gov.au](mailto:media@esafety.gov.au)

[Link to paper on our website here...](#)