

Communications strategy and plan:

Online Content Scheme and Abhorrent Violent Conduct Powers Regulatory Guidance

<p>Purpose of the Communication plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 Online Content Scheme and Abhorrent Violent Conduct Powers under Australia's new Online Safety Act. The regulatory guidance for our Online Content Scheme will detail how eSafety will now have powers to take action against illegal online content like child sexual exploitation material no matter where in the world it is hosted. The new regulatory guidance for Abhorrent Violent Conduct Powers will detail how the powers address the viral, rapid and widespread distribution online of terrorist and extreme violent material...
<p>Link to eSafety strategy 2019-2022</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> eSafety provides education leadership, coordination and best practice guidance to help Australians have safer and more positive experiences online. eSafety uses multiple channels to raise awareness about online safety and where to seek help.
<p>Background</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On 23 July 2021, the Australian Parliament passed into law the Online Safety Act 2021. The Act creates a modern, fit for purpose regulatory framework that builds on the strengths of the existing legislative scheme for online safety. The regulatory framework includes important updates to our existing image-based abuse, cyberbullying, Online Content schemes, introduces a world-first adult cyber abuse scheme, and gives us new Abhorrent Violent Conduct powers The regulatory guidance for each of the updated schemes have been released in a staged process, with the first being eSafety's world first cyberbullying scheme. The final regulatory guidance release will be for eSafety's Online Content Scheme and Abhorrent Violent Conduct powers. The updates to the Online Content scheme will include new powers to tackle child sexual exploitation material no matter where it is hosted in the world with significant penalties for online services that fail to comply with removal notices from eSafety. New Abhorrent Violent Conduct powers will allow eSafety to take action during crisis events like the Christchurch attacks, including to prevent the spread online of terror manifestos like the one shared by the Christchurch shooter.
<p>Objective(s) and measurables</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To proactively announce these key regulatory milestones which will increase protections for all Australians from exposure to illegal content like child sexual exploitation material and pro terror content 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.

<p>Target Audience(s)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media • General public • Industry
<p>Key overarching proactive messages</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • But in this short time, we’ve seen our remit widen to the protection of all Australians. • Under the Online Safety Act 2021, we will wield expanded powers to protect all Australians on all platforms where harm is occurring. • And this includes important updates to our Online Content Scheme which tackles illegal and restricted online content like the production and sharing of child sexual exploitation material. • One of eSafety’s main focuses since we were created in 2015 has been protecting children online and one of the ways we are achieving this is by tackling the online proliferation and trade in child sexual exploitation material. • Australia’s Online Content Scheme has been in operation for over 20 years and through it we have been very successful within our own borders, to the point that very little if any child sexual exploitation material is actually hosted in Australia. • But of course, Australians are still exposed to this very harmful material through sites and apps that operate from more permissive hosting environments overseas. • In 2020, we saw a 90% increase in reports coming to us compared to 2019, with the majority involving child sexual exploitation material. Sadly, we have seen a continuation of this elevated level in 2021. With these new powers, we will now be able to take real action against these online service providers. • This includes material or potentially websites being delinked on search engines, and apps being removed from app stores, where certain criteria are met. • As a last resort, eSafety may also apply for a Federal Court order that the provider of a particular social media service, relevant electronic service, designated internet service, or internet carriage service stop providing that service in Australia where certain criteria are met. • New industry codes will also put increased onus on industry to address illegal content like child sexual exploitation material. • In addition to this, new Abhorrent Violent Conduct powers cover abhorrent violent conduct material that is shared or spread online, including online manifestos like the one shared by the Christchurch shooter. • 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.
<p>Key stats</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During 2020 Our Cyber Report team received 21,000 public reports, the majority of which involved child sexual abuse material. This was the most in the scheme’s 20-year history and a 90 per cent increase compared to 2019. • 2021 stats from [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] showing that this elevated level is continuing in 2021.

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Communications action plan

Channel/Audience	Aim	Communications collateral – items required	Who to action	By When?
Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <p>████████████████████ ████████████████████ ████████████████████ ████████████████████</p> <p>regarding updates to our Online Content Scheme and Abhorrent Violent Conduct powers. This would include latest statistics that show elevated reports of CSEM continue into 2021 from 2020 when compared to 2019 before the pandemic.</p> Our Online Content Scheme will now be able to tackle CSEM no matter where it is hosted, ability to delink rogue websites on search engines and remove apps from app stores. There also will be some significant penalties for services that repeatedly fail to comply. Additionally, new Abhorrent Violent Content powers cover material that promotes or incites terrorism including manifestos 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embargoed media release with weblink to regulatory guidance document (to be provided to journalist ahead of interview) Embargoed regulatory guidance (to be provided to journalist ahead of interview) Q&As and talking points for Julie Radio Release grabs recorded by Julie ahead of launch. 	██████	16 December

Channel/Audience	Aim	Communications collateral – items required	Who to action	By When?
	like the one shared by the Christchurch shooter.			
Social Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To explain the updates to both schemes to the industry and general public. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Series of short posts on our social channels on day of launch with link to media story and weblink to our regulatory guidance. 	██████████	20 December
Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To explain the updates to our Online Content Scheme and our Abhorrent Violent Conduct powers to the general public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential for a landing page. 	████	20 December (going live)

Media release

EMBARGOED UNTIL 12.01am 20 December 2021

Strong new powers to tackle child sexual exploitation and abhorrent violent conduct material online

Australia's eSafety Commissioner will soon have significantly strengthened powers to protect Australians from exposure to harmful illegal online content, including child sexual exploitation material, no matter where in the world it is hosted under new regulatory guidance released today.

Under updates to Australia's Online Content Scheme, online service providers who fail to comply with eSafety removal notices to take down illegal content that is accessible to Australians face financial penalties of up to \$111,000 per offence for individuals and \$555,000 for corporations.

Those services may also have their sites delinked from search engines and their apps removed from app stores if they fail to comply.

As a last resort, where a service is deemed to pose a serious threat to the safety of Australians, eSafety may also apply for a Federal Court order that the provider of a particular social media service, relevant electronic service, designated internet service, or internet carriage service stop providing that service in Australia.

"One of eSafety's main focuses since we were created in 2015 has been protecting children online and one of the most important ways we are achieving this is by tackling the online proliferation and trade in child sexual exploitation material," eSafety Commissioner Julie Inman Grant said.

"Australia's Online Content Scheme has been in operation for over 20 years and through it we have been very successful within our own borders, to the point that very little if any child sexual exploitation material is actually hosted in Australia.

"But of course, Australians are still exposed to this very harmful material through sites and apps that operate from more permissive hosting environments overseas.

"And our statistics show this. In 2020, we received over 21,000 public reports through our Online Content Scheme, the majority of which involved child sexual exploitation material. This was the most in the scheme's 20-year history and a 90 per cent increase compared to 2019. Sadly, we have seen a continuation of this elevated level in 2021 and it represents a new normal.

"With these new powers, we will now be able to take real action to disrupt the trade in this distressing material and if online service providers fail to comply with our removal notices, they will face very real and significant consequences."

The updates to Australia's Online Content Scheme form part of Australia's new Online Safety Act, and eSafety has also released new regulatory guidance for its Abhorrent Violent Conduct powers protecting Australians from abhorrent violent conduct material that is shared or spread online.

Under the new powers, eSafety can request or require an internet service provider to block material that promotes, incites, instructs in abhorrent violent conduct, including manifestos like the one produced and shared by the gunman responsible for the 2019 Christchurch attacks. Already, eSafety has a 93% success rate in tackling abhorrent violent material overseas through its notification powers

Updates to the eSafety's Online Content Scheme includes provisions for the development of new industry codes, which are currently being developed by the online industry. The codes will address illegal and restricted online content including child sexual exploitation material.

The new Online Safety Act will come into force on 23 January 2022, while new industry codes are expected to be in place by next year..

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

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