Safer Online Futures – eSafety Symposium 2026

23 November, Fullerton Hotel Sydney

Online safety is a shared, global responsibility. Safer Online Futures will bring together leading voices from online safety regulation, government, research, advocacy and education to explore emerging online harms, evolving regulatory approaches and the future of online safety prevention.

Indicative schedule

Please note session and speaker details are subject to change.

8am	Registration opens
9am	Intro and Welcome to Country
9.15am	Commissioner opening remarks
9.30am	**Keynote** **Jennifer Robinson: The cost of speaking up online** What happens to democracy when speaking out online comes at a personal cost? Drawing on landmark legal cases and human rights advocacy, Jennifer Robinson examines the rise of online violence against women, its chilling effect on public participation, and the challenge of balancing freedom of expression with safer, more inclusive digital spaces.
9.55am	**Hosted conversation: Julie Inman Grant and Jennifer Robinson** Following her keynote, Jennifer Robinson joins a hosted conversation exploring the impact of online violence on women, public participation and democratic debate, and what it will take to create digital spaces where more voices can be heard safely.
10.15am	**In the Regulator's chair: navigating online safety in 2026** Step into the regulator's chair for a candid discussion on what it takes to make online safety regulation work. Senior regulators share lessons from implementation and enforcement, reflect on emerging technologies and harms, and explore how regulators can drive accountability, adapt to change and deliver safer online experiences. • Dame Melanie Dawes, Ofcom • Julie Inman Grant, eSafety Commissioner • Francis Ng, Singapore Online Safety Commission • Jeremy Godfrey, Coimisiún na Meán • Facilitated by Paul Fletcher, Former Minister for Communications, Urban Infrastructure, Cities and the Arts

11am	**MORNING TEA**		
11.30am	**Keynote + Q&A** **Jeff Hancock: Evidence for the future: Informing online safety policy, regulation and intervention** As governments around the world consider age-based restrictions on social media access, robust evidence is essential to understanding their effectiveness, intended outcomes and potential unintended consequences. This presentation will reflect on the significance of the Social Media Minimum Age (SMMA) evaluation as a landmark contribution to the global evidence base on social media, online harms and youth wellbeing. It will also consider the importance of building a cumulative international evidence base, with the potential for other jurisdictions to draw on and adapt the SMMA evaluation's methods and measures to support comparison, shared learning and a stronger understanding of what works across different policy contexts. The presentation will also explore the implications of emerging technologies such as generative AI and AI companions for children's safety and wellbeing. While the evidence base remains nascent, some risks and harms are already emerging clearly enough to inform policy and intervention, while others require further research and evaluation. The session will consider what we know, what we can act on now, and the critical evidence gaps that must be addressed to support effective regulation and online safety outcomes into the future, while reflecting on lessons from the SMMA evaluation, including the value of multidisciplinary expertise in building evidence for emerging technologies.		
12.00pm	**Evidence in conversation: Reflections on the early findings from the Social Media Minimum Age evaluation, and what comes next** This follow-on session will bring together a youth co-researcher and members of the SMMA Evaluation Academic Advisory Group for a discussion on what the evaluation is revealing so far, what the findings might mean in the Australian context, and the questions that will shape the next phase of learning as the evidence continues to emerge. It will also highlight the value of multidisciplinary expertise and young people's perspectives in the evaluation, including making sense of the findings, understanding their relevance for Australia, and identifying priorities for future research on online safety and emerging technologies such as generative AI. • Raghu Vijayan, youth advocate • Julian Sefton-Green, Deakin University • Professor Susan Sawyer, University of Melbourne • Professor Amanda Third, Western Sydney University • Facilitated by Professor Jeff Hancock, Stanford Social Media Lab		
12.45pm	**LUNCH**		
1.45-4.10pm	Delegates can select sessions from three streams. Schedules for each stream outlined below		
	EDUCATION AND PREVENTION	**INSIGHTS AND INNOVATION**	**REGULATION AND ENFORCEMENT**
4.10pm	**AFTERNOON TEA**		
4.40pm	**The great AI debate**		

	As artificial intelligence rapidly reshapes how we learn, work and interact, fundamental questions remain about its long-term impact on society. In this lively debate, internationally recognised experts from technology, academia and civil society will explore the opportunities, risks and trade-offs AI presents for future generations. Spanning education, wellbeing, employment, misinformation and social connection, the discussion will challenge prevailing assumptions and examine what it will take to ensure AI serves the public good. • Toby Walsh, UNSW • Ed Santow, UTS • Jim Steyer, Common Sense Media • Kieran Donovan, k-ID • Jess Wilson, Good Things Australia • Facilitated by Alastair MacGibbon
5.25pm	Commissioner closing remarks
5.30-7.30pm	Post-event reception

Education and prevention stream

1.45pm	**Before the next Mia: Building better responses to deepfake abuse in schools** Rules, policies, and procedures matter but they won't prevent the next incident on their own. Genuine protection for young people requires prevention education embedded in everyday school life and processes that staff, students and families can rely on when harm occurs. This session explores what that looks like in practice. • Pauline Kotselas, NSW Department of Education • Emma Mason, lawyer and child online safety advocate • Dr Naomi Pfitzner, Monash University • Commander Jo Cameron, ACCCE • Facilitated by Kellie Britnell, eSafety
2.30pm	**Panel: Content, contexts & cultures - what's in young people's feeds?** Through the lenses of youth voice, education and prevention research, lived experience of online harm and mental health advocacy, this discussion explores the content shaping young people’s attitudes, behaviours and social norms, examining its impact and identifying practical opportunities to minimise harm and strengthen protective influences. • Mia Bannister, Ollie’s Echo: Pathways to Prevention • Dr Zac Seidler, Movember • Dr Stephanie Wescott, Monash University • Bradley, eSafety Youth Council

	• Facilitated by Pnina Hagege, Teach Us Consent
3.20pm	**The protection gap: What will it take to close It?** This discussion will explore where Australians remain inadequately protected from online harms. Panellists will examine gaps across regulation, policy, platform responsibility and education, and consider what more needs to be done to strengthen protection, prevention, response and recovery. • Micaela Cronin, Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commissioner • Sue-Anne Hunter, National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People • Wayne Holdsworth, SmackTalk • Conor Pall, family violence advocate • Facilitated by Sarah Davies AM, Alannah & Madeline Foundation

Insights and innovation stream

1.45-4.10pm	**PART 1: Show me the evidence — how do we know what platforms are really doing?** Platforms make important commitments about safety, trust and user wellbeing, but how can we tell whether they're delivering on those promises? This rapid-fire session brings together researchers and practitioners using innovative methods to understand how digital platforms operate in practice. Through real examples and case studies, speakers will present how to uncover what users experience online and provide evidence to inform policy, regulation and advocacy. **Can we really measure online safety? why evidence matters for platform accountability** Rys Farthing, Reset Tech **Testing the rules — what content moderation research can tell us** Lishu Gang, Reset Tech **What the algorithm shows us — using audits to understand platform behaviour** Rys Farthing, Reset Tech **Finding signals in plain sight — what open-source intelligence can reveal** Mark Scott, Christchurch Call Foundation **Turning evidence into action — using research for advocacy** Josephine Ballon, HateAid
	PART 2: Emerging research on online harms Featuring leading voices from research, government and the not-for-profit sector, this session showcases emerging evidence and new perspectives on online harms, helping to inform more effective prevention, intervention and policy responses. **Technology-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse — new challenges for prevention** Michael Salter, UNSW **Reaching, engaging and transforming boys and young men's digital lives**

Krista Fisher, Movember

Compassionate digital innovation, AI companionship and online safety

Raffaele Ciriello, University of Sydney

Technology-facilitated abuse in the workplace

Isabella Hall, eSafety

What we know about consumers of live streamed child sexual abuse

Rick Brown, Australian Institute of Criminology

Regulation and enforcement stream

1.45pm

Beyond borders — strengthening the global response to child sexual exploitation and abuse

As child sexual exploitation and abuse transcends borders, this panel explores how regulators and child protection experts can strengthen the global response through collaboration, innovation and enforcement.

- Arda Gerkens, Netherlands' Authority for the Prevention of Online Terrorist Content and Child Sexual Abuse Material
- Colm Gannon, ICMEC Australia
- Emilio Puccio, European Parliament’s Intergroup on Children's Rights
- Brent Carey, Netsafe NZ
- Facilitated by Mike Skwarek, eSafety

2.35pm

Global issues, global responses — keeping children safe online

Children's online safety, rights and opportunities are shaped by the intertwined actions of governments, regulators, industry and communities. As countries grapple with emerging online harms and the rapid evolution of digital technologies, join international leaders as they share their perspectives, discuss common challenges and explore opportunities for collective action.

- Filipe Batiwale, Fiji's Online Safety Commissioner
- Caroline Flora, New Zealand Classification Office
- Oliver Griffiths, Ofcom
- David Sullivan, Digital Trust and Safety Partnership
- Facilitated by Ella Serry, eSafety

3.25pm

From drivers to disruption – tackling terrorist and violent extremist content online

What fuels violent extremism online, and how should we respond? This panel explores the drivers of terrorist and violent extremist content and the implications for prevention, policy and regulation.

- Tahli Blicblau, The Dor Foundation
- Dr Yasmin Chilmeran, Christchurch Call Foundation
- Gemma Huggins, Australian Ambassador for Counter-Terrorism
- Mariam Veiszadeh, Founder and Chair, Islamophobia Register Australia
- Facilitated by Brendan Dowling, Department of Home Affairs