



eSafety Commissioner

Via: submissions@esafety.gov.au

21.12.2023

Dear Executive Manager,

Re: eSafety Commissioner Industry standards – public consultation

Jesuit Social Services welcomes the opportunity to respond to the eSafety Commissioner's consultation on Draft Online Safety (Relevant Electronic Services – Class 1A and Class 1B Material) Industry Standard 2024.

Jesuit Social Services is a social change organisation working to build a just society where all people can live to their full potential. For over 45 years, we have accompanied the most disadvantaged members of the community, providing services and advocacy in the areas of justice and crime prevention; mental health and well-being; settlement and community building; education, training and employment; and gender and ecological justice.

We currently run Stop It Now! a child sexual abuse prevention program for adults concerned about their own or someone else's sexual thoughts or behaviours towards children. We are also developing a program for children and young people worried about their sexual thoughts and behaviours including questions and concerns regarding pornography and child sexual abuse material. In collaboration with University of New South Wales (UNSW) we recently launched the world's largest child sexual abuse perpetration prevalence study which demonstrated that 1 in 5 Australian men have sexual feeling towards children and/or have committed child sexual abuse offences (including 6.7% of men accessing child sexual abuse material during their lifetime)¹. Men who have sexual feeling and have offended against children were more present online including accessing; dating websites, pornography websites, online shopping, and online gaming.

In general, we support the proposed Standards and commend the eSafety Commissioner for proposing them. We believe that the right to protection from exploitation, violence and abuse, and the rights and best interests of children, are paramount.

¹<https://www.humanrights.unsw.edu.au/sites/default/files/documents/Identifying%20and%20understanding%20child%20sexual%20offending%20behaviour%20and%20attitudes%20among%20Australian%20men.pdf>

Jesuit Social Services acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of all the lands on which Jesuit Social Services operates and pay respect to their Elders past and present. We express our gratitude for First Nations people's love and care of people, community, land and all life.



This submission outlines our child sexual abuse prevention programs and responds to eight of the discussion questions posed in the Discussion paper (questions 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 9 and 22). We comment on the components of a question in relation to which we have an informed view, which are not all components of a given question. Being a social change organisation that works to prevent child sexual abuse, including with actual and potential perpetrators, our submission focuses on the ways we believe the Standards can and should protect children from harm, and how they can help prevent harm to children. We do not comment on matters relating to implementation of the Standards by technology service providers or other similar issues.

Our submission does not comment on issues relating to pro-terrorism materials or other matters covered by the Standards.

Stop It Now!

Stop It Now! was highlighted as part of the [National Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Strategy](#) in September 2021 to address a gap in preventative interventions for potential perpetrators which had been identified by the 2017 [Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse](#). Jesuit Social Services, in collaboration with the University of Melbourne launched the Stop It Now! scoping study in 2019, and in 2020 received philanthropic funding to pilot the program. . We are currently seeking federal funding from the National Office of Child Safety to deliver the program for an additional four years as committed to in the Strategy.

The key features of the program are an anonymous helpline, chat service, and online resources for adults worried about their own or someone else's sexual thoughts and behaviours. The helpline is staffed by highly skilled practitioners and provides an anonymous space for people to talk about their concerns and get the help needed to prevent child sexual abuse.

We work closely with professionals and victim survivors of child sexual abuse to ensure their knowledge and voices help shape the service and the response. We also advocate for systemic change and work with the wider community to build knowledge and skills to prevent child sexual abuse. We have established a national advisory group with experts in the field to help guide service developments including Bravehearts, senior law enforcement representative, National Office of Child Safety, eSafety Commission, SNAICC, University of Melbourne, and Partnerspeak.

Stop It Now! was founded in 1992 in the US by Fran Henry, a victim-survivor of child sexual abuse, and has since been successfully implemented in a number of other countries.² An evaluation undertaken by the University of Melbourne of Stop It Now! Australia preliminarily indicates that the program is having its intended effect of working with individuals concerned about their own thoughts or behaviours to

² Van Horn, J. et al. Stop It Now! A Pilot Study into the Limits and Benefits of a Free Helpline Preventing Child Sexual Abuse. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, [s. l.], v. 24, n. 8, pp. 861–867, 2015. [Weblink](#). A history of the implementation of Stop It Now! can be accessed on the international Stop It Now! website. [Weblink](#).



reduce risk factors and increase protective factors and is successfully supporting friends and family to keep children safe.³

Worried About Sex And Pornography Project - WASAPP

Contrary to conventional belief that child sexual abuse is carried out by adults, research shows that harmful sexual behaviour by children and young people accounts for one third to one half of all child sexual abuse perpetration.⁴ Despite this, there are currently no national early interventions in Australia for children and young people who are worried about their sexual thoughts or behaviours.

The Worried About Sex and Pornography Project (WASAPP) emerged in 2019 out of our advocacy for Stop It Now! Jesuit Social Services is currently undertaking an action research project in collaboration with the University of Melbourne to develop and pilot an online early intervention service for children and young people which will likely include an online service tool with a helpline (live chat and/or phone line).

We have published research with children, young people, professionals and experts in the field to help inform the service⁵. Currently, we are interviewing children and young people who have displayed harmful sexual behaviours to listen to their voices on the kinds of early intervention resources they would find helpful and engaging. These findings will be collated into a scoping study which will help guide the service development and implementation.

Child Sexual Abuse Perpetration Prevalence study

In collaboration with UNSW, we launched Australia's first child sexual abuse perpetration prevalence study which investigated the prevalence of sexual feelings and sexual offending towards children in the community⁶. The report aims to better inform prevention of child sexual abuse, by building knowledge of prevalence of the issue and related attitudes within a community sample. The largest study of its kind ever undertaken globally, measures the prevalence of risk behaviours and attitudes regarding child sexual offending among a representative sample of 1,945 Australian men aged 18 to over 65.

³ University of Melbourne preliminary feedback presented privately via PowerPoint presentation, June 2023. Complete details are forthcoming.

⁴ Boyd, C. R., & Bromfield, L. (2006). *Young people who sexually abuse: Key issues* (pp. 1–13). Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies and Hackett, S., Phillips, J., Masson, H., & Balfe, M. (2013). Individual, family and abuse characteristics of 700 British child and adolescent sexual 1rs. *Child Abuse Review*, 22(4), 232–245.

⁵ McKibbin, G., Tyler, M., Gallois, E., Spiteri-Staines, A., Humphreys, C., & Green, J. (2022). "Frantic online searches for help": design considerations for an online early intervention service addressing harmful sexual behaviour. *Journal of Sexual Aggression*, 1-13.

McKibbin, G., Humphreys, C., Tyler, M., & Spiteri-Staines, A. (2022). Clusters of risk associated with harmful sexual behaviour onset for children and young people: opportunities for early intervention. *Journal of Sexual Aggression*, 1-12.

McKibbin, G., Green, J., Humphreys, C., & Tyler, M. (2023). Pathways to Onset of Harmful Sexual Behavior. *Victims & Offenders*, 1-39.

⁶<https://www.humanrights.unsw.edu.au/sites/default/files/documents/Identifying%20and%20understanding%20child%20sexual%20offending%20behaviour%20and%20attitudes%20among%20Australian%20men.pdf>



The report findings demonstrate that one in five Australian men reported sexual feelings towards children and/or have sexually offended against children, with one-third of those who have thoughts towards children motivated to access help. Of the 4.9% men who have both sexual feeling and have offended against children, these men were more likely to be active online including social media, encrypted apps and cryptocurrency, and more likely to consume pornography that involves violence or bestiality.

The report was launched at a symposium on 22nd November which was opened by Grace Tame, and included panel discussions with the e-safety commissioner, directors from the National Office of Child Safety (Attorney-General's department), senior law enforcement representatives, victim-survivor advocates and the CEO of the International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (ICMEC). The report received significant media coverage both nationally, and internationally.

Introduction

We know that there are vast quantities child sexual abuse material available online, with over 40,000 reports of child sexual exploitation being made to Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation (ACCCE) in 2022/23⁷. As an organisation that works to prevent child sexual abuse, we consider it vital to introduce Standards that require service providers to effectively detect, disrupt, report and remove content from the internet that harms children.

Our child sexual abuse prevention service, Stop It Now! interacts with these services and systems. Our service can be accessed online, and we publish advertisements and messaging on websites where individuals are attempting to access harmful material as a pathway for potential participants to learn about and utilise the service. Some participants have accessed child sexual abuse material online, and we recognise more needs to be done to prevent this behaviour.

We know that 'new' child sexual abuse material online can be a pathway to locating children currently being harmed. Therefore, technological services that have access to this information must actively implement ways to detect, disrupt, report and remove this content. Failure to do this constitutes a failure to protect children's rights and their best interests.

Finally, we know that repeated viewing of child sexual abuse material leads to re-victimisation of victim survivors. It is therefore essential that 'known' child sexual abuse material be detected and removed.

We support and commend the eSafety Commissioner for proposing Standards that require much more of technology service providers in actively addressing harmful material online and promoting children's safety.

⁷ <https://www.accce.gov.au/resources/research-and-statistics>

QUESTION 1

We consider the risk assessments required by the Standards to be targeted at appropriate points in a service's development journey. In particular, we consider that compliance with the Standards should be emphasised over the speedy introduction of a service. It is imperative that services meet all safety requirements prior to launching. Safety can be facilitated by good design, and the introduction of the Standards will enable technology service providers to develop services designed from the outset to promote children's safety and meet their obligations under the Standards.

QUESTION 2

In relation to adequate consideration of the importance of human rights, we consider that the obligations listed appropriately reflect the correct balance of the relevant rights, in particular those that may be in tension with one another. Namely, we consider that the right to freedom of expression and the right not to be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with privacy is well balanced against the right to protection from exploitation, violence and abuse, and the rights and best interests of children.

QUESTIONS 4, 5, 6 AND 7

We believe that the responsibility ought to be on technology service providers to remove known child sexual abuse material wherever possible, and to disrupt and deter its distribution. The recommendations made are beneficial, in particular the use of interstitial warnings.

We know that warnings which include information about the consequences of proceeding, that the behaviour is illegal, where to report illegal content, and information regarding where to access help in order to manage behaviour and prevent harm, can be effective and easily implemented⁸. Stop It Now! Australia is an example of a service that can be referenced in a warning page for seeking help. Stop It Now! currently appears on pornography websites, as well as search engines, when individuals attempt to access illegal content, to increase awareness of the harm of this behaviour and identify a pathway for seeking help in order to prevent offending. We see a significant number of website referrals via this pathway, with approximately one third of all website users referred via our pornography warning messages.

QUESTION 9

We do not have a view as to the practical barriers to the implementation of end-user reporting requirements, but consider these requirements to be extremely important and support their inclusion in the Standards. End-users should always have the ability to report a complaint within a service.

⁸ Hunn, C., Watters, P., Prichard, J., Wortley, R., Scanlan, J., Spiranovic, C., & Krone, T. (2023). How to implement online warnings to prevent the use of child sexual abuse material. *Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice*, (669), 1-14.



QUESTIONS 22

We support the systems for detecting and removing known materials such as hash matching, machine learning, artificial intelligence and other safety technologies. We consider that the Standards as currently set out balance the relevant rights appropriately, and believe that the right to protection from exploitation, violence and abuse, and the rights and best interests of children, are paramount. This is in line with the recommended Standards, which view these rights are essential.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on the draft Standards. We look forward to their full introduction.

Yours sincerely,

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