

Senate Estimates Opening statement

- Thank you, Chair and committee members, for the opportunity to make an opening statement.
- Since we last met a lot has been achieved. We have:
 - Launched our pilot portal on IBA – and have had 115 complaints with 80% success rate and 50 000 visits to the portal
 - Launched our be connected website for seniors – this learning eco system has over 15,000 active users. We will continue to grow the content on this platform in 2018 with a focus on intergenerational learning between young and more mature.
 - We co-hosted our first international conference Online Safety on the Edge with NetSafe New Zealand and had almost 400 participants from across Australia and around the world, helping to cement our leadership role in online safety globally.
 - Our cyberbullying complaints have increased by 34% when compared to last year. This does not necessarily reflect an increase in bullying behaviour but rather an increase in awareness of the office. For example over the last 6 months we have raised awareness of the Office through:
 - Numerous media engagements – for example since July the office has been mentioned or quoted in 650 media items reaching a potential of 44 million Australians.
 - Our social media following, including blogs and newsletters has increased by 27% - we have a combined following of over 55,000; including several times trending #1 in Australia throughout our conference and on SID.
 - As you may know SID was launched here in Parliament House earlier this month. We had more than 240 iconic organisations behind us, reached 55,000 students through our Virtual Classroom program. We had participation from all parties up to the highest levels of government and reached more than 15 million Australians with messages about showing respect online.
- All that said we know we are just reaching the tip of the ice berg in being able to help Australians facing online abuses. We can do more and want to do more.
- 2018 started soberly with the tragic passing of Dolly Everett – while cyberbullying is not a new phenomenon this tragedy has served to reignite important national debate and highlight the fact that not enough Australians know about the Office and using our services. Our primary function is to serve as a safety net. We are the only country in the world with a govt agency solely devoted to protecting its citizen's online and the only cyberbullying scheme to correct the imbalance of power that users experiences with the social media behemoths and to have damaging content rapidly removed.
- To date we have helped more than 700 Australians but we know and want to do more. No child should feel there is nowhere to go for help. I have appeared before COAG and met with the Queensland cabinet and my message to them and all of you is that we cannot afford to duplicate resources and fractionalise efforts.
- Online abuse is a global issue but needs to be tackled here at a national level. Our research shows 1 in 5 are bullied, the bullying is the same across all states. If we are to tackle this, we need a nationally consistent approach.
- There is no question that the tenor and tone of cyberbullying is coarsening, with 30% of reports to the office now containing violence or serious threats of harm directed at a child.

- This is obviously very concerning, so this is an important conversation to be having as we need to make sure that Australians know where to go to report to enable early intervention and harm minimisation by getting the content taken down and through the provision of other support services.
- We believe that in order to help more Australians experiencing either cyberbullying or image-based abuse, increasing awareness of our services is crucial. To this end, we are committed to improving and amplifying our communications and marketing efforts.
- Thank you again for the opportunity to speak with you today. I now look forward to any questions you may have for me and my team.