

2018/19 Additional Estimates Opening Statement

19 February 2019

Julie Inman Grant eSafety Commissioner

Thank you, Chair and committee members, for the opportunity to make an opening statement.

The eSafety Office continues to administer the world's first and only legislated cyberbullying complaints scheme, through which we have responded to over 1,100 complaints from young Australians seeking help. We know that getting the content down quickly minimises the harm to that child. Since Parliament expanded our remit to cover all Australians in 2017, we have also helped more than 800 Australian adults experiencing serious cyber abuse, using our informal powers to provide assistance and guidance. Two-thirds of these victims are women.

We also continue to successfully administer the only government scheme to combat image-based abuse. To date, the Office has received 693 reports, involving over 1,700 URLs, and some very detailed investigations, and we have been successful in having images reported to us removed in over 80% of cases on more than 140 platforms located overseas.

The third leg of our investigative division, the Cyberreport team, investigated more than 7,000 cases of online child sexual abuse material, working closely with law enforcement and international partners to get these images and videos removed from the internet. While the vast majority of these were reported to our INHOPE partners for take down in under 7 days, if the CSAM depicts information that could lead to identification of either a victim or perpetrator, we make an immediate report to the Australian Federal Police. Last year, we referred 358 URLs hosting such content to the Australian Federal Police.

We are proud of our ability to provide Australians in need with a place to go when things go wrong online at safety.gov.au and we had a significant lift in traffic to our website with 8 million page views and 2.1 million users as of the end of January. We know that an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure and this is why we are striving for greater awareness of our award-winning education material. While we provide services to help Australians when things go wrong online, we want to minimise the risks and prevent the harms from occurring in the first place. This is why it was gratifying that the Briggs Review validated our holistic approach to online safety and re-affirmed eSafety's national leadership role in coordination, education and regulation in this space.

Our research indicates that, by necessity, online safety education needs to be a lifelong journey – cradle to grave, if you will. Our recent parent survey indicated that 42% of two-year olds have been given access to an Internet enabled device and 94% of parents reporting their children are online by the age of 4. This is where the parental conversations and active engagement in our children's lives need to begin. And, through our iParent Portal and Screen Smart Parent Tool, we give parents the tools and strategies to do this. We will be putting the additional \$2.5 million for early childhood education funding to good use in helping us develop even more tailored resources for parents of tots but also to develop and support training for the early childhood sector.

The Office is moving towards a national leadership role in online safety education, with a sharper focus on setting quality standards for schools by revamping our certification scheme for outside trainers, by providing best practice guidance to schools in conjunction with the Education Departments, and ensuring services are delivered where demand is not being met. Our partnership with the education sector is growing from strength to strength and part of this work has

involved delivering pre-service teacher training to 9,500 teachers as well as providing professional development training to almost 6,000 teachers. Of course, we have provided them with creative and engaging educational tools like the Lost Summer video game and more recently, the YES Project materials that helps them build digital leadership and online safety support skills in the classroom. Beyond that we have directly reached more than 400,000 students through our Virtual Classroom programs and school presentations.

Our prevention efforts extend beyond children to other vulnerable sections of the population. At the other end of the age spectrum, we have developed 46 different courses to help improve the digital literacy and online safety of older Australians. These courses have been accessed by over 97,000 users.

Our eSafetyWomen program has trained over 7,300 frontline workers to better equip them to deal with technology-facilitated abuse in family and domestic violence situations. Just this past week, the Government announced tech trials funding to help us scope some important interventions in the fight against domestic violence and technology facilitated abuse. We also released ground breaking research on the barriers facing women from culturally and linguistically diverse communities who are experiencing DV and TFA and have rolled out guides in 12 different languages to help these women find pathways for support.

This month we also released a new app, Your Online Journey, in partnership with PM&C to assist elders in Aboriginal communities to understand the online risks and support them to manage these issues with their young people. This seeks to build on the online assets we have built for and with the Indigenous community, including Be Deadly Online, but we are also laying the ground work for further research and partnerships with the Indigenous community and as we develop criteria and guidelines for the new grant program, our focus will most definitely being on partnering with NGOs working in these communities as well as with other organisations engaged with a range of other at-risk communities.

In closing, I'm happy to tell you more about our recent success with Safer Internet Day in promoting what we call the 4 Rs of the digital age – respect, responsibility, reasoning & resilience . 500 Australian organisations joined us in spreading the message, helping us reach almost 10 million Australians.

We look forward to the year ahead, as we continue to deliver these important services and resources to help improve the online safety of vulnerable Australians. I now look forward to any questions you may have for me and my team.