



Senate Estimates Opening Statement

3 March 2020

Julie Inman Grant eSafety Commissioner

Thank you Chair, and thank you committee members, for this opportunity to meet with you today and to make an opening statement.

It has been an eventful five months at eSafety since we last spoke. We have continued our efforts in the regulation and removal of serious instances of online harm, including cyberbullying, image-based abuse, child sexual abuse content and abhorrent violent material.

With regard to online child sexual abuse material, there are disturbing signs of an increase in this pernicious and harmful content. During 2019 there were almost 20,000 reports of illegal and harmful content to our Cyberreport investigative team — a doubling of the numbers for 2018. In addition, Cyberreport has received 600 reports regarding abhorrent violent material since the legislation commenced last April. More than 90 per cent of these concerned online child sexual abuse material and were dealt with through existing channels.

We have also seen significant growth in our other areas of regulatory responsibility. During calendar year 2019 there was an increase of more than 40 per cent in cyberbullying reports. There was also a trebling of reports about image-based abuse—the non-consensual sharing of intimate images and videos.

At the same time as exercising these regulatory functions, we have:

- secured important advances in the **prevention** of online harm, through our efforts in education and outreach
- ensured the **protection** of those most vulnerable to it, through *eSafety Women* and similar programs, and
- led **proactive change** to make the internet a safer space for Australians through initiatives taking global hold like **safety by design**.

The past few months have seen eSafety step up its collaboration with school and early learning educators. This includes partnering with the *ABC* and *Playschool* on a Family Tech Agreement for young children (my special thanks to Jemima and Big Ted) online safety guidance for parents of under 5's with *Early Childhood Australia* and 18 months of engagement with federal, state and territory education stakeholders on developing and releasing our *eSafety Toolkit for Schools*, a suite of more than 25 resources designed to assist school communities in creating safer online environments for their students.

Our partnerships across sectors reached new heights on Safer Internet Day 2020, including 1500 supporters across Government, education, the non-profit sector and industry with messages on “Starting the Chat” about online safety reaching an estimated 2.7 million Australians. We want to thank all the Senators who sent Safer Internet Day messages out to their states, as well.

I would be pleased to answer any further questions you might have!