



PARLIAMENTARY JOINT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY

Surveillance Legislation Amendment (Identify and Disrupt) Bill 2020

*Further information from the Carly Ryan Foundation following the public hearing on
10 March 2021*

The Scale of Online Child Sexual Exploitation

Since its establishment in 1998, NCMEC's CyberTipline has received over 65 million reports of child abuse material.¹ Each report can contain hundreds or thousands of images, videos and files. In its most recent year of reporting, the CyberTipline received over 18.4 million reports of US-hosted child abuse material.² In 2019, these reports resulted in over 69 million images, videos and files suspected of being related to child abuse material, and tipped over 52 million files in the *first nine months* of 2020.³ The majority of these reports are due to US-based ESPs proactively searching and removing child abuse material from their platforms before users are exposed to the content.⁴ Despite this small grace, it nevertheless demonstrates the global demand for child abuse material, and the vulnerability of law enforcement to the technology industry's ability in reporting instances of that material on their platforms.⁵

¹ 'Child Sexual Abuse Material', *National Center for Missing and Exploited Children* (NCMEC) (Web Page), <<https://www.missingkids.org/theissues/csam#bythenumbers>>.

² 'Annual Report', *National Center for Missing and Exploited Children* (Web page) <<https://www.missingkids.org/footer/about/annual-report>>.

³ 'NCMEC letter to EU Parliament Members', *National Center for Missing and Exploited Children* (Web Page, 17 November 2020) <<https://www.missingkids.org/content/dam/missingkids/pdfs/NCMEC%20letter%20to%20EU%20Parliament%20Members.pdf>>.

⁴ NCMEC states that 95% of reports are made by an email, chat or messaging service. See *ibid*.

⁵ See Facebook's acknowledgement that the ability to take action on 'child nudity and sexual exploitation of children' content was reduced during the first and second quarter of 2020 due to workforce capacity following the COVID-19 pandemic, at a time when there was increased demand for child abuse material: 'Community Standards Enforcement Report', *Facebook* (Web Page, November 2020) <<https://transparency.facebook.com/community-standards-enforcement#child-nudity-and-sexual-exploitation>> and Interpol noting that "It has been noticed that Darknet offenders have highlighted apparent decreases in platform response times on several social media platforms in removing publicly available CSEA material.": Interpol, 'Threats and Trends: Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse - COVID-19 Impact', (Report, September 2020), 8.

In 2018, the Child Protection Triage Unit based at the Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation (ACCCE) received almost 18,000 reports of child sexual exploitation. Each report can contain hundreds or thousands of images and videos. The Australian Federal Police's Annual Report makes note of the increasing trend in child exploitation offences, with an increase of more than 80 per cent in the number of charges and individuals charged by the AFP with child exploitation offences.⁶

This reflects a further sobering admission from the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions, acknowledging a significant increase in the number of referrals for Commonwealth child sex offences and that "offending increasingly occurs entirely on-line".⁷

Impacts of COVID-19

The impact of COVID-19, resulting in an increased amount of offenders working from home or not working at all, was noted by a number of law enforcement agencies. NCMEC experienced a 98.66% increase in online enticement reports between January - September 2020 versus the same time period in 2019, with a 63.31% increase in CyberTipline reports.⁸ Interpol also noted that "Several member countries have seen increases in reporting by the public of online CSEAM offences as well as increases in online activity relating to CSEAM."⁹

Europol also saw an extra surge in online distribution of CSAM, with record high reporting coming from referrals from the public and industry, and "Member states also reported an increase in the number of blocked attempts to access websites featuring CSAM during their lockdowns".¹⁰

Measuring the OCSE trade

NCMEC refers to online child sexual exploitation as a 'multi-billion dollar industry', although it is difficult to place a quantifiable measure. For example, a study from the Australian Institute of Criminology noted that 2,714 financial transactions sent to known facilitators of live-streamed child sexual abuse (CSA) in the Philippines amounted to \$1.32million.¹¹ The Philippines in particular is known to be a global hotspot of live-streamed CSA due to its hyper connectivity and English language proficiency, with poverty a significant factor. A recent report from the International

⁶ Australian Federal Police Annual Report 19:20 (Report, 16 September 2020) 2-3 <<https://www.afp.gov.au/sites/default/files/PDF/Reports/02112020-afp-annual-report-2019-20.pdf>>.

⁷ Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions Annual Report 19:20 (Report, 25 September 2020) 31 <<https://www.cdpp.gov.au/sites/default/files/Annual%20Report%202019-20.pdf>>.

⁸ <https://www.missingkids.org/blog/2020/covid-19-and-missing-and-exploited-children>

⁹ Interpol, 'Threats and Trends: Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse - COVID-19 Impact', (Report, September 2020), 9.

¹⁰ Europol, 'Internet Organised Crime Threat Assessment', (Report, 2020) 36.

¹¹ 'Australians who view live streaming of child sexual abuse: An analysis of financial transactions', Australian Institute of Criminology, (Webpage) <https://www.aic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/ti589_australians_who_view_live_streaming_of_child_sexual_abuse.pdf>

Justice Mission noted that the rate of ISP addresses used for OCSE each year has more than tripled between 2014 and 2017.¹²

The WePROTECT Global Alliance also noted “(o)ne academic study placed the lifetime economic cost of sexual abuse of children in the US at approximately US\$9.3 billion, including the costs associated with government spending and productivity losses.”¹³

¹² ‘Estimating the Prevalence of Internet-based CSE and OSEC in the Philippines’, International Justice Mission (2020) <https://www.ijm.org/documents/studies/Final_OSEC-Public-Summary_05_20_2020.pdf>

¹³ WePROTECT Global Alliance, *Global Threat Assessment 2019: Working together to end the sexual exploitation of children online* (Report, 2019) 40 <<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5630f48de4b00a75476ecf0a/t/5deecb0fc4c5ef23016423cf/1575930642519/FINAL+-+Global+Threat+Assessment.pdf>>, citing EJ Letourneau et al, ‘The economic burden of child sexual abuse in the United States’ (2018) *Child Abuse Negl.* 79, 413-22.