



Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and
Constitutional Affairs Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Sonya Ryan
The Carly Ryan Foundation
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Stirling 5152, SA

Dear Committee Secretary,

The Carly Ryan Foundation is a non-profit, registered harm prevention charity created to promote Internet safety and prevent crime against children under the age of 18 years. The foundation supports families and the community through education, awareness, engagement, harm prevention, promotion and political advocacy.

The Carly Ryan Foundation's mission is to make the Internet safer for children and families. We have pioneered efforts to raise public awareness about the dangers of harmful Internet pornography, sexual predators, cyber bullying, and other Internet threats. We create solutions that promote shared responsibility between the public, technology and the law. We stand for a community where all people are respected and valued, for a child's innocence to be protected and for a society free from online sexual exploitation of youth.

The Carly Ryan Foundation provides our full support to the amendments proposed under the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Sexual Crimes Against Children and Community Protection Measures) Bill 2017. We continue to advocate and raise awareness with regards to the online mediums used by criminals, to groom and procure children online in order to harm them and the need to protect the community from those who seek to control and manipulate vulnerable children.

Given the serious nature of these offences we must put the interests of the Australian community first, ensuring the safety and protection of all community members. Aggravated sexual offences towards minors online are unfortunately a very common practice. Preparing to harm, subjecting children to cruel, inhumane and degrading sexual activities, preparing abduction and other preparatory acts with the intention to physically and mentally harm a young person should not be tolerated by our Government.

Children are constantly being groomed online in order to create child abuse material. Children are also being exposed to harmful pornography online. Australian children currently have unfettered access to hard-core pornography on a daily basis; considering research shows 88% of online porn contains acts of violence, rape, objectification and sexual assault, it is essentially child sexual abuse via digital images. The latest research confirms unequivocally that pornography is harmful to children. Worldwide, harmful pornography is now being framed as a Public Health Crisis by many governments, health, violence prevention and advocacy organisations.



Robust research confirms that areas of pornography's impact on children and young people are on the rise and include:

- *Poor mental health*
- *Sexism and objectification*
- *Sexual aggression and violence*
- *Child-on- child sexual abuse*
- *Shaping of sexual behaviours*

This exposure in itself provides a perfect platform for serious sex offenders to coerce children into participating in degrading sexual acts and participate in the creation of child abuse material online by attempting to normalize these inappropriate and abusive behaviors.

Current sentencing for these and other appalling crimes against children is currently completely inadequate in each state often resulting in suspended sentences or sentences delivered of only a few months. The Australian community expects our legal system to deliver justice for such inexcusable and horrendous crimes against children and those victims of crime deserve this justice given the life long suffering endured if the victim survives the offence committed against them. Often the legal process increases the trauma for the victim, therefore we must do what we can to strengthen current legislation and support innocent community members.

Our organization is victim focused, therefore embrace this Amendment as an proactive and vital update to the current legislation. The Crimes Legislation Amendment (Sexual Crimes Against Children and Community Protection Measures) Bill 2017 is a welcomed update providing practical solutions, strengthening the current legislation, increasing penalties, enforcing minimum sentences, preventing cross-examination of vulnerable persons and revoking parole orders in order to protect the Australian community.

Should you wish to discuss this matter further please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kindest regards
Sonya Ryan
Founder & CEO
SA Australian of The Year 2013

