

Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts

Committee Inquiries Question on Notice

Environment and Communications

Inquiry into the Internet Search Engine Services Online Safety Code

IQ25-000179

Division/Agency: DIV - Digital Platforms Safety and Classification

Hansard Reference: Written (16 October 2025)

Topic: Digital Duty of Care

David Pocock asked:

- Can you please outline what work you have undertaken to progress the Digital Duty of Care the Labor government committed to in 2024?
- Please provide a list of all stakeholders the department has met with in relation to a Digital Duty of Care?
- What is the latest information you have regarding how many VPNs are currently being used by Australian Citizens?
- Has the department done any consultation regarding device level age verification or API access?

Answer:

- The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communication, Sport and the Arts is progressing work to design a digital duty of care framework, with careful consideration being given to the scope and intersection with the current provisions of the *Online Safety Act 2021* (the Act). This work is being progressed alongside detailed consideration of the 67 recommendations set out in the report of the 2024 statutory review of the Act (the review) and with regard to stakeholder views that were captured through the consultation phase of the review.
- The department meets regularly with stakeholders to discuss online safety policy issues. During such engagements, a range of issues have been discussed including the government's commitment to legislate a digital duty of care. In addition, the department, in its role providing secretariat support to the independent reviewer of the Online Safety Act, Ms Delia Rickard PSM, participated in the extensive stakeholder consultations which canvassed issues including a duty of care on digital platforms. The details of these consultations are listed in the final report of the review which was tabled in Parliament on 4 February 2025.
- Virtual private networks (VPNs) are legal in Australia. The department does not actively monitor or collect data on how many VPNs are being used by Australians.
- The Australian Government funded Age Assurance Technology Trial, independently conducted by the Age Check Certification Scheme, examined age assurance options across the technology stack, including device and app store level age assurance, and API access. The Trial found that the practical maturity of tech stack approaches is limited at this point in time, with innovation emerging but fragmented.

- Age assurance being conducted at the device or app store level was also raised in the course of consultation with industry on the Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Bill 2024.