



Australian Government
Department of Home Affairs

Submission to the Inquiry into Age Verification for Online Wagering and Online Pornography

House of Representatives Standing Committee on
Social Policy and Legal Affairs

The Department of Home Affairs (Home Affairs) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs Inquiry into age verification for online wagering and online pornography.

Home Affairs has lead agency responsibility for the National Identity Security Strategy, which provides a framework for inter-governmental cooperation to strengthen Australia's personal identification processes. Maintaining effective identity security is important given one in four Australians will be a victim of identity crime at some point in their lives, with an estimated annual direct cost of more than \$2 billion to the economy.

Home Affairs notes the Inquiry's Terms of Reference have particular regard to *policies and practices (including technical and privacy requirements) that relate to, and enable improved age verification requirements*. Home Affairs also notes that the *focus of this inquiry is not the legitimate use of online wagering and online pornography*.

In this context, Home Affairs provides relevant national guidelines and technical services that can assist with age verification.

The National Identity Proofing Guidelines, available from the Home Affairs website and developed with State and Territory government, contains recommended processes and requirements for identity proofing. They are designed for use primarily by those Commonwealth, and state and territory government agencies which issue documents and credentials that are most commonly used as evidence of a person's identity. Non-government organisations may choose to use these Guidelines as a better practice reference. Home Affairs encourages the adoption and use of these guidelines across the Australian economy.

Home Affairs provides a suite of identity matching services to help organisations verify the identity of customers. The services are provided through a partnership between the Australian Government, state and territory governments, under the 2017 Intergovernmental Agreement on Identity Matching Services.

These services includes the Document Verification Service, which makes it harder for people to use fake identity documents, which could otherwise be used to circumvent age verification processes. The Document Verification Service checks whether the personal information on an identity document matches the original record. Importantly this includes verification of the date of birth on Australian passports, driver licences and birth certificates. The Document Verification Service conducted about 48 million transactions in 2018-19 and has been available to government agencies for over 10 years, and to the private sector since 2014.

In addition, Home Affairs is developing a Face Verification Service which matches a person's photo against images used on one of their evidence of identity documents to help verify their identity. The Face Verification Service complements the Document Verification Service by preventing the use of stolen as well as fake identity information. This could assist in age verification, for example by preventing a minor from using their parent's driver licence to circumvent age verification controls.

The Face Verification Service is not yet fully operational. Whilst it is intended to be made available to private sector organisations in future, this will be subject to the passage of the Identity-matching Services Bill 2019 which is currently before Parliament. The use of driver licence images through the Face Verification Service is also subject to the agreement of the states and territories.

Private sector organisations can only use the Document Verification Service - and will only be able to use the Face Verification Service - to check a person's identity with their consent, and only where this is permitted by the *Privacy Act 1988*.

Whilst they are primarily designed to prevent identity crime, Home Affairs would support the increased use of the Document and Face Verification Services across the Australian economy to strengthen age verification processes.