

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications

Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice

Additional Estimates Hearings February 2015

Communications Portfolio

Department of Communications

Question No: 7

Program 1.1

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic: Enhancing Online Safety for Children

Senator Ludwig, Joe asked:

During Supplementary Estimates in 2014, Finance flagged changes to the Enhancing Online Safety for Children program (Q F83).

1. Could you please provide a summary of these changes?
2. What is the timeframe for implementation?
3. Who is the responsible agency for actioning these changes?
4. When was the minister last briefed on this item? Was this briefing requested or initiated by the Minister or was it initiated by the department?
5. What action has the minister taken on this policy?

Answer:

1. The Government's policy to enhance online safety for children includes the following legislative measures to create a safer online environment for children:
 - Establish a Children's e-Safety Commissioner to take a national leadership role in online safety for children.
 - Implement an effective complaints system, backed by legislation that will quickly remove material that is harmful to a child from social media sites.
2. The Enhancing Online Safety for Children Bill passed both Houses of the Parliament on 5 March 2015. The new Children's e-Safety Commissioner was announced on 19 March 2015. The new complaints system is expected to commence on 1 July 2015.
3. The Department of Communications and the Australian Communications and Media Authority share responsibility for implementing the Enhancing Online Safety for Children Bill.
4. The Minister was briefed on the legislation before introduction and during passage through the Parliament in accordance with standard legislation processes.
5. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Communications oversees implementation of the policy and provides advice to the Minister. The Minister approved all aspects of the policy, and the legislation before introduction in the Parliament.