# THE HON PAUL FLETCHER MP

Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts

## MEDIA RELEASE

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# Government and internet providers finalise protocol to block terrorist and graphic violent content

The Morrison Government has today welcomed the agreement of a new protocol between internet service providers (ISPs) and the eSafety Commissioner, which positions them to block websites hosting graphic material that depicts a terrorist act or violent crime, to stem the risk of its rapid spread as an online crisis event unfolds.

The Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts, the Hon Paul Fletcher MP, said: "Protecting Australians online is a top priority of the Morrison Government. I am pleased to see formal processes put in place to effectively safeguard our community from terrorist or extreme violent material."

The protocol was developed by the Office of the eSafety Commissioner in consultation with Communications Alliance. It delivers on one of the recommendations of the Taskforce to Combat Terrorist and Extreme Violent Material Online, which was set up after the widespread distribution of the live-streamed terrorist attacks in Christchurch in March 2019.

"In the aftermath of the devastating events in Christchurch last year, major Australian internet service providers voluntarily blocked websites hosting the video. Now we have a framework in place to enable a rapid, coordinated and decisive response to contain the rapid spread of terrorist or extreme violent material," Minister Fletcher said.

"This protocol will be activated during an online crisis event, as declared by the eSafety Commissioner, and is an important new mechanism that will help keep Australians safe online."

An online crisis event, as defined by the protocol, involves terrorist or extreme violent material being shared widely online in a manner likely to cause significant harm to the Australian community and warranting a rapid, coordinated response by industry and Government. The eSafety Commissioner will issue blocks for a period of time on a case-by-case basis to address the risk of the unfolding online crisis event.

Communications Alliance CEO, John Stanton said: "We've seen a strong sense of shared purpose between Government, the eSafety Commissioner and internet service providers to put this protocol in place. We welcome the protections it can provide customers against the risk of dangerous and extreme content being shared online."

ISPs participating in the protocol include Telstra, Foxtel, Optus, TPG, VHA and Vocus Group.

This protocol builds on the strong legislation the Government introduced last April, which requires

industry to expeditiously remove abhorrent violent content from their platform. The Government is planning on providing legislative backing to the protocol through the new Online Safety Act.

**Media contact:**

Brad Hatch | 0448 162 679 | Brad.Hatch@communications.gov.au

Rebecca Papillo | 0439 892 771 | Rebecca.Papillo@communications.gov.au