MEDIA RELEASE

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$10 million boost to vital eSafety support

The Morrison Government is further boosting its work to keep Australians safe online, today announcing an additional $10 million in funding for Australia's world-leading eSafety Commissioner (eSafety).

This comes as new research from eSafety confirms the importance of online safety support for Australian families. The *COVID-19 impact on Australian adults' online activities and attitudes* report found there has been a significant increase in online activity, with 56 per cent of respondents using the internet a lot more for one or more tasks.

The research found the overwhelming majority of adults in Australia view the internet as a 'good thing' personally (86 per cent), for their household (85 per cent) and for Australian society (79 per cent). However, more time spent online increases the risks of online harms, with almost four in 10 respondents reporting negative experiences online during the first few months of the pandemic.

Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts, the Hon Paul Fletcher MP, said research from eSafety shows that Australians have embraced a rapid digitisation of workplaces, schools and households during COVID-19, which underpins the need for a continued focus on online safety.

"These last few months have seen many Australian families spending more time online to work, study and socialise as we've practiced social distancing. The research shows that even as restrictions ease and we return to COVID safe school and work environments, many Australians will maintain their new digital habits and people will continue to rely on the internet more than ever before to stay connected," Minister Fletcher said.

"Unfortunately, some people choose to use the internet for harm instead of good. In recent months, we've seen more people reporting negative experiences online and people turning to eSafety for guidance more often with website page views across eSafety.gov.au more than doubling, and image-based abuse reports up 200 per cent.

"This funding will help eSafety continue the important work it does educating people – from young children all the way up to older Australians – equipping them with practical tips on how to stay safe online."

"It will also boost eSafety's investigations and support teams across the image-based abuse and cyberbullying functions, so that there is help available to Australians when things go wrong online."

The report also found that during COVID-19 parents were twice as likely as adults who are not parents to rely on the internet for key activities - and three times as likely to find using the internet stressful. This reflects the central role the internet plays in households with young families and demand for additional support.

"eSafety does a remarkable job developing world-leading educational resources for parents. I'm very pleased that the funding announced today will, amongst other things, mean eSafety can continue to deliver its successful Early Years program, which helps young children navigate the web safely from their earliest interactions online," Minister Fletcher said.

Read the full *COVID-19 impact on Australian adults' online activities and attitudes* report here: www.esafety.gov.au/research

For all the latest online safety information and resources visit: www.esafety.gov.au

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