



THE HON PAUL FLETCHER MP
Minister for Communications, Urban Infrastructure, Cities and the Arts

MEDIA RELEASE

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Keeping Australians Safe Online

The Morrison Government has welcomed the passage through the Senate last night of the new Online Safety Act.

The Act provides stronger powers for the eSafety Commissioner to crack down on cyberbullying of children, toxic online abuse, harmful content and the non-consensual sharing of intimate images. It bolsters Australia's world-leading online safety framework by introducing new and strengthened schemes to assist Australians when things go wrong online.

The Act also provides the eSafety Commissioner with stronger information gathering and investigative powers to unmask anonymous accounts.

Minister for Communications, Urban Infrastructure, Cities and the Arts, the Hon Paul Fletcher MP, said online safety was a priority for the Morrison Government and passing this new Act was a key commitment at the 2019 election..

“When we established the office of the eSafety Commissioner in 2015, it was the first agency in the world dedicated to protecting citizens from online dangers such as image-based abuse and cyberbullying,” Minister Fletcher said.

“In addition to managing those threats, eSafety has played a key role, along with its international partners, in fighting the scourge of online child sexual abuse material.

“The new Act represents a step-change for eSafety, tightening its powers in existing areas, and creating a new reporting scheme that will allow our eSafety Commissioner, Julie Inman Grant, to take action to remove toxic cyber-abuse, when online platforms fail to do so.”

In concert with this Act, the Government has delivered its election commitment to strengthen penalties for online abuse and harassment by increasing the maximum penalties in the Criminal Code, including from 3 to 5 years imprisonment for those using a carriage service to menace, harass or cause offence.

The Government provided an additional \$24.7 million to the eSafety Commissioner over four years in the May 2021 Budget. This brings the Government's total commitment to keeping Australians safe online over the next four years to more than \$125 million.

The Act is expected to pass through the House shortly and will commence six months after receiving Royal Assent.

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