

4.1 2023–24 PORTFOLIO BUDGET STATEMENTS

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- This update is still current as at the time of drafting this brief, as the 2023-24 Mid-year Economic Fiscal Outlook is not expected to be announced by Government before the October Senate estimates.
- The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) had 4 measures included in the 2023–24 Portfolio Budget Statements (PBS):
 - Regulatory Powers to Combat Misinformation and Disinformation (Program 1.2 Departmental) – for managing the spread of mis and dis-information online. The ACMA has been given new information gathering and record-keeping powers and is empowered to register an enforceable industry code and make a standard. The ACMA was provided \$7.882m departmental operational funding over 4 years from 2023–24, with \$1.870m ongoing departmental operational funding from 2027–28. [REDACTED]
 - Fighting Scams (Program 1.2 Departmental) – supporting the ACMA to launch and maintain an Australian SMS sender ID registry, adding a new layer of protection for Australian consumers against scammers. The measure provides \$8.500m departmental operational funding and \$2.000m equity injection over 4 years from 2023–24, with \$2.081m ongoing departmental operational funding from 2027–28. [REDACTED]
 - Minimising Online Gambling Harms (Program 1.2 Departmental) – additional funding to cover the anticipated revisions to the National Self-Exclusion Register (NSER) contract arrangements with IXUP Ltd. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Budget Paper No. 2 also included in this measure the ACMA receiving increased powers to enforce a ban on the use of credit cards for online gambling in Australia, with funding yet to be agreed.
 - Online Safety (Program 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 Departmental) – enabling the eSafety Commissioner (eSafety) to continue to deliver its statutory obligations in line with existing service level standards, increase investment in online safety education and training, and increase its investigation capacity to takedown harmful and illegal content. The measure provides \$124.837m departmental operational funding and \$7.238m Departmental Capital Budget (DCB) over 4 years from 2023–24, with \$31.837m ongoing departmental operational funding and \$1.837m ongoing DCB from 2027–28. [REDACTED]

KEY ISSUES

Departmental Funding in Budget and the Forward Estimates

- A breakdown of funding between the ACMA and eSafety across the forward estimates is provided in the table below:

Departmental Appropriations	2022–23 \$m	2023–24 \$m	2024–25 \$m	2025–26 \$m	2026–27 \$m
ACMA					
Appropriation Bill 1 - Operating	87.358	99.984	100.118	101.209	100.940
Appropriation Bill 1 - Capital	7.863	15.390	14.414	11.372	8.847
Appropriation Bill 2 - Equity Injection	0.000	2.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
ACMA Total	95.221	117.374	114.532	112.581	109.787
eSafety					
Appropriation Bill 1 - Operating	41.223	37.239	39.257	40.342	35.619
Appropriation Bill 1 - Capital	0.239	0.101	0.103	0.103	0.103
eSafety Total	41.462	37.340	39.360	40.445	35.722
Total Departmental Appropriation	136.683	154.714	153.892	153.026	145.509

- The ACMA, including eSafety, will receive a departmental appropriation of \$154.714m in 2023–24, including \$15.491m DCB and \$2.000m equity injection.

Funding changes from 2022–23 to 2023–24

- Departmental funding (including DCB and equity injection) for the ACMA and eSafety increased from \$136.683m in 2022–23 to \$154.714m in 2023–24 due to:
 - 4 budget measures announced in the 2023–24 Budget:
 - regulatory powers to combat Misinformation and Disinformation – \$2.264m operational funding
 - Fighting Scams – \$2.313m operational funding and \$2.000m equity injection
 - Minimising Online Gambling Harms – not for publication due to commercial sensitivity
 - Online Safety – \$30.465m operational funding and \$1.777m DCB.

- year-on-year adjustments related to prior Budget measures:
 - ACMA – Spectrum Management – increase of \$1.834m operational funding and \$5.675m DCB
 - Responsible Investment to Grow our Regions – decrease of \$0.184m operational funding and \$0.058m DCB
 - Media Sector Reforms (Australian Content and Television Research) – decrease of \$2.052m operational funding
 - Consumer Safeguards – decrease of \$0.456m operational funding
 - NSER – decrease of \$1.873m operational funding and \$0.080m DCB
 - eSafety – Women’s Safety (first phase to the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022–2032) – increase of \$0.640m operational funding and decrease of \$0.140m DCB
 - eSafety – National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse – decrease of \$0.247m operational funding.
- offset by reductions through:
 - Media Sector Support (News Media Bargaining Code) – decrease of \$0.619m operational funding
 - eSafety – Termination of additional eSafety base funding announced in the previous budgets – decrease of \$21.704m operational funding
 - eSafety – Women’s Safety (transitional strategy announced in the 2021–22 Budget) – decrease of \$6.651m operational funding.
- the continuing impact of efficiency dividends, indexation, and other adjustments – increase of \$2.867m operational funding and \$0.215m DCB.

Average Staffing Levels

- The ACMA’s notional ASL cap has increased from 525 in 2022–23 to 602 in 2023–24



Administered Funding

- The ACMA will receive an Administered appropriation of \$6.520m in 2023–24, all of which is related to eSafety programs. This comprises of:
 - \$4.020m for the Digital Literacy for Older Australians - Be Connected Program. This measure terminates 30 June 2024
 - \$2.500m for eSafety Online Safety Community Grants Program, which terminates on 30 June 2027. The funding consists of:
 - \$2.000m each year for five years from 2022–23, provided in the 2022–23 March Budget
 - \$0.500m each year for four years from 2023–24, following a Movement of Funds approved in March 2023. Refer to the 'Movement of Funds' (MoF) section below for details.


2022–23 End of Year Financial Position

- In 2022–23, the ACMA is forecasting to report a departmental break-even position.
- eSafety manages its departmental and administered expenditure separately to the ACMA, and questions on the financial position of the eSafety Special Account should be directed to eSafety.

Movement of Funds

- eSafety Online Safety Community Grants:
 - a movement of Funds was sought and approved in March 2023, which resulted in \$2.000m in administration funding moving from 2022–23 to the forward years and distributing evenly over four years from 2023–24
 - the funds being moved are to enable eSafety to withstand public scrutiny and embed high stands of probity and transparency in the program and to ensure the grant applicants have sufficient lead time in preparing the project planning and grant applications.

Special Appropriations

- The ACMA receives 2 Administered special appropriations:
 - \$24.000m for refunds related to section 77 of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act). This is used to issue refunds to customers where a licence is surrendered, and the customer seeks a refund for the outstanding licence period. 
 - \$0.300m for the reimbursement of costs of development or variation of consumer-related industry codes under the *Telecommunications Act 1997*.

Measures announced since the 2023–24 Budget

- A copy of the Budget Measures table in the ACMA's PBS chapter is provided at **Attachment A**. Details of the measures are published in Budget Paper No. 2, with extracts provided in **Attachment B**:

- Regulatory Powers to Combat Misinformation and Disinformation (payment measure – ongoing) – provides \$7.882m in departmental funding over four years from 2023–24, with approximately \$1.870m ongoing departmental operational funding from 2027–28.

- the funding is for ACMA to combat online misinformation and disinformation on global digital platforms to reduce the spread of harmful content
- the ACMA will be given new information-gathering and record-keeping powers to create transparency around efforts by digital platforms to respond to misinformation and disinformation on their services
- the ACMA will also be empowered to register an enforceable industry code and to make a standard, should industry self-regulation measures prove insufficient in addressing the threat posed by misinformation and disinformation.

- Fighting Scams (payment measure – ongoing) – provides \$10.500m in departmental funding over four years from 2023–24, including \$8.500m departmental operational funding and \$2.000m equity injection funding, with approximately \$2.081m ongoing departmental operational funding from 2027–28.

- the ACMA will establish and enforce an SMS sender ID registry to impede scammers seeking to spoof industry and government brand names in message headers.

- Minimising Online Gambling Harms (payment measure – ongoing) –

- the funding is to cover anticipated revisions to the new contract with IXUP
- the measure relates to BetStop – National Self-Exclusion Register, which allows consumers to exclude themselves from all Australian licensed wagering services
- the Government will also implement a ban on the use of credit cards for online gambling in Australia, excluding for-profit and not-for-profit charitable and other lotteries, with the ACMA's powers to be increased to enforce the ban through an amendment to the *Interactive Gambling Act 2001*.

- Online Safety (payment measure – ongoing) – provides \$132.075m in departmental funding over four years from 2023–24, including \$124.837m departmental operational funding and \$7.238m DCB funding, with approximately \$31.837m ongoing departmental operational funding and \$1.837m ongoing DCB from 2027–28

- the funding enables eSafety to continue support Australians online, including through enhanced educational, outreach and investigatory activities

BACKGROUND

- ACMA Appropriations across the forward estimates:

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ACMA					
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eSafety Total	41.462	37.340	39.360	40.445	35.722
Total Departmental Appropriation	136.683	154.714	153.892	153.026	145.509
Administered Appropriations	2022–23 \$m	2023–24 \$m	2024–25 \$m	2025–26 \$m	2026–27 \$m
ACMA					
ACMA Total	-	-	-	-	-
eSafety					
Online Safety Grants Program	2.250	-	-	-	-
Digital Literacy for Older Australians - Be Connected Program	3.964	4.020	-	-	-
National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children	0.000	2.500	2.500	2.500	2.500
eSafety Total	6.214	6.520	2.500	2.500	2.500
Total Administered Appropriation	6.214	6.520	2.500	2.500	2.500
Special Appropriations	2022–23 \$m	2023–24 \$m	2024–25 \$m	2025–26 \$m	2026–27 \$m
ACMA					
PGPA Act s.77 refunds	24.000	8.000	8.000	8.000	8.000
Telecommunications - Consumer Codes	0.300	0.300	0.300	0.300	0.300
Total Special Appropriation	24.300	8.300	8.300	8.300	8.300

2023–24 PBS EXTRACT – ACMA BUDGET MEASURES ANNOUNCED SINCE the 2022-23 OCTOBER BUDGET

	Program	2022-23 \$'000	2023-24 \$'000	2024-25 \$'000	2025-26 \$'000	2026-27 \$'000
Payment measures						
Fighting Scams ^(a)	1.2					
Departmental payments		-	4,313	2,043	2,063	2,081
Total		-	4,313	2,043	2,063	2,081
Minimising Online Gambling Harms ^(b)	1.2					
Departmental payments		-	nfp	nfp	nfp	nfp
Total		-	nfp	nfp	nfp	nfp
Online Safety ^(c)	1.1, 1.2,					
Departmental payments	1.3	-	32,242	32,868	33,291	33,674
Total		-	32,242	32,868	33,291	33,674
Regulatory Powers to Combat Misinformation and Disinformation	1.2					
Departmental payments		-	2,264	1,894	1,854	1,870
Total		-	2,264	1,894	1,854	1,870
Total Payment measures						
Departmental		-	38,819	36,805	37,208	37,625
Total		-	38,819	36,805	37,208	37,625

Prepared on a Government Financial Statistics (Underlying Cash) basis. Figures displayed as a negative (-) represent a decrease in funds and a positive (+) represent an increase in funds.

- a) The lead entity for this measure is the Department of the Treasury. The full measure description and package details appear in the Budget Paper No. 2 under the Treasury portfolio. This measure includes \$2.0 million in equity injections funding in 2023-24.
- b) The financial implications for this measure are not for publication (nfp) due to commercial sensitivities and not included in totals.
- c) Includes capital funding of \$1.8 million ongoing from 2023-24.

ACMA MEASURES EXTRACTED FROM 2023–24 BUDGET PAPER NO.2

Fighting Scams

Payments (\$m)	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
Australian Competition and Consumer Commission	-	18.5	23.6	15.9	-
Australian Securities and Investments Commission	-	4.8	4.2	4.2	4.4
Australian Communications and Media Authority	-	4.3	2.0	2.1	2.1
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts	-	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1
Total – Payments	-	27.8	29.9	22.3	6.6
Related receipts (\$m)					
<i>Australian Securities and Investments Commission</i>	-	-	4.8	4.2	4.2

The Government will provide \$86.5 million over 4 years from 2023–24 to combat scams and online fraud. Funding includes:

- \$58.0 million over 3 years from 2023–24 to establish the National Anti-Scam Centre within the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission to improve scam data sharing across government and the private sector and to establish public-private sector Fusion Cells to target specific scam issues
- \$17.6 million over 4 years from 2023–24 (and \$4.4 million per year ongoing) for the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) to identify and take down phishing websites and other websites which promote investment scams, to be cost recovered through levies under ASIC's industry funding model
- \$10.9 million over 4 years from 2023–24 (and \$2.2 million per year ongoing) to the Australian Communications and Media Authority and the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts to establish and enforce an SMS sender ID registry to impede scammers seeking to spoof industry and government brand names in message headers.

Partial funding for this measure will be held in the Contingency Reserve pending further development of ICT system requirements for the National Anti-Scam Centre.

This measure builds on the 2022-23 October Budget measure titled *Fighting Online Scams*.

Minimising Online Gambling Harms

Payments (\$m)	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
Australian Communications and Media Authority	-	nfp	nfp	nfp	nfp

The Government will provide funding to continue to support the National Self-exclusion Register (BetStop), with the financial implications not for publication (nfp) due to commercial sensitivities.

The Government will also implement a ban on the use of credit cards for online gambling in Australia, excluding for-profit and not-for-profit charitable and other lotteries, with the Australian Communications and Media Authority's powers to be increased to enforce the ban through an amendment to the *Interactive Gambling Act 2001*.

Online Safety

Payments (\$m)	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
Australian Communications and Media Authority	-	32.2	32.9	33.3	33.7
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts	-	-	-	-	-
Total – Payments	-	32.2	32.9	33.3	33.7

The Government will provide an additional \$134.1 million over 4 years (and \$33.7 million per year ongoing, in addition to the existing base funding of \$10.3 million per year ongoing) for the Office of the eSafety Commissioner to continue to support Australians online, including through enhanced educational, outreach and investigatory activities.

The cost of this measure will be partially met from within the existing resourcing of the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts.

Regulatory Powers to Combat Misinformation and Disinformation

Payments (\$m)	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
Australian Communications and Media Authority	-	2.3	1.9	1.9	1.9
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts	-2.3	-	-	-	-
Total – Payments	-2.3	2.3	1.9	1.9	1.9

The Government will provide \$7.9 million over 4 years from 2023–24 for the Australian Communications and Media Authority to combat online misinformation and disinformation on global digital platforms to reduce the spread of harmful content.

The costs of this measure will be partially offset by redirecting residual unallocated funding from the 2021–22 Budget measure titled *Supporting Regional Australia* and the 2020–21 Budget measure titled *National Bushfire Recovery Fund*, which is available due to lower utilisation of funds than was budgeted for through these programs.