

Tackling online harms

Media release

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The Hon Anthony Albanese MP

Prime Minister of Australia



Senator the
Hon Katy
Gallagher

Minister
for
Finance

Minister
for
Women

Minister for
the Public
Service



The Hon Amanda Rishworth MP

Minister for Social Services



The Hon Mark Dreyfus QC MP

Attorney-General



The Hon Michelle Rowland MP

Minister for Communications

Listen

Ending men's violence against women and tackling misogyny and the harm it creates requires concerted action from all levels of government and all parts of society and we are building on investments already made in this space.

To build on our prevention efforts, the Albanese Government will introduce a suite of online measures to address easy access to

pornography for children and young people and tackle extreme online misogyny, which is fuelling harmful attitudes towards women.

The Albanese Government will provide resourcing to conduct a pilot of age assurance technology to protect children from harmful content, like pornography and other age-restricted online services.

The new pilot, to be funded in the May Budget, is part of a suite of interventions aimed at curbing easy access to damaging material by children and young people, and tackling extreme misogyny online.

The pilot will identify available age assurance products to protect children from online harm, and test their efficacy, including in relation to privacy and security.

The outcomes will inform the existing work of Australia's eSafety Commissioner under the Online Safety Act – including through the development of industry codes or standards – to reduce children's exposure to age-inappropriate material.

The Albanese Government will introduce legislation to ban the creation and non-consensual distribution of deepfake pornography. Digitally created and altered sexually explicit material is a damaging form of abuse against women and girls that can inflict deep harm on victims.

The reforms will make clear that creating and sharing sexually explicit material without consent, using technology like artificial intelligence will be subject to serious criminal penalties.

In addition, a new phase of the successful Stop it at the Start campaign will launch in mid-June and run until May next year. This new phase will specifically include a counter-influencing campaign in online spaces where violent and misogynistic content thrives, to directly challenge the material in the spaces it's being viewed.

The campaign is intended to counter the corrosive influence of online content targeted at young adults that condones violence against women. It will raise awareness about a proliferation of misogynistic influencers and content, and encourage conversations within families about the damaging impact of the material.

The new phase of Stop It at the Start builds on the investment already made by our Government to fund a three-year trial to explore what works best to counteract the harmful impacts of social media messaging targeting young men and boys.

Research shows 25 per cent of teenage boys in Australia look up to social media personalities who perpetuate harmful gender stereotypes. Social media algorithms can undermine gender equality by pushing misogynistic content that normalises sexist attitudes in young people.

There is also growing concern around the role of violent online pornography in normalising gendered violence within the Australian community.

In response to these concerns, the Government is undertaking long overdue classification reforms with states and territories which will examine options to reduce exposure to violent pornography, informed by engagement with experts and best available evidence about harms.

The Government will also bring forward legislation in early August to outlaw the release of private information online with an intent to cause harm (known as doxxing), and overhaul the Privacy Act to give all Australians and particularly women who are experiencing domestic and family violence greater control and transparency over their personal information.

The Albanese Government has already acted to keep women safe online, including by quadrupling ongoing base funding for the eSafety Commissioner in last year's budget.

The Government has also initiated a review of the Online Safety Act a year ahead of schedule to ensure our laws are keeping up with emerging online threats and harms.

But we need to do more to ensure our laws and regulations are fit for purpose in a digital age.

Quotes attributable to Prime Minister Anthony Albanese:

“There should be zero tolerance for harmful content that glorifies violence against Australian women. Young adults should not be coached in disrespect or misogyny by online influencers.

"I understand parents want to protect their kids from harmful material online. Social platforms have important social responsibilities and we need them to step up. Taken together, these reforms will give Australian families some of the tools they need to navigate the complexity of the digital world."

Quotes attributable to Minister for Communications, Michelle Rowland

"The reality is that digital platforms are influencing our culture and social lives. They have a responsibility to do more to meet community standards.

"The Government will progress its age assurance pilot to address access to age inappropriate content, including online pornography and other age-restricted services.

"Taking steps to prevent access for minors to age-inappropriate content like pornography is one tool that can help protect young minds from damaging and misogynistic behaviours.

"The pilot – coupled with work already underway to update our out-dated Classification Scheme – will inform how Governments at all levels can work collaboratively to address these harms."

Quotes attributable to the Minister for Social Services Amanda Rishworth:

“To end violence against women in one generation we need to raise boys and young men to approach relationships with respect.

“Often it is very hard for parents and caregivers to know what type of environments their young people are experiencing online. We need to look at how we empower young people to have those conversations with adults in their life and empower those adults to start those conversations.

“Stop It at the Start has been a hugely successful campaign helping parents and other adult influencers have conversations about respectful relationships. Launching a new phase to specifically counter negative influences particularly in online spaces where misogynistic content thrives is so important to ending this national shame of violence against women.”

Quotes attributable to the Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus:

“The increasing use of online platforms to harm people, particularly women, through the malicious release of their personal information is deeply disturbing.

“Digitally created and altered sexually explicit material is a deeply distressing form of abuse against women and girls and can cause long-lasting harm.

“These reforms will make clear that those who seek to abuse or degrade women through doxxing, deepfakes, or by abusing their privacy online, will be subject to serious criminal penalties.”

Quotes attributable to the Minister for Women, Senator Katy Gallagher:

“Women and children have the right to be safe, and the use of online tools and spaces to perpetuate violence, misogyny and sexism must be stopped.

“These important initiatives will tackle emerging threats to women and girls’ safety and participation online and will support young people, particularly young men, to have healthier and more positive relationships, attitudes and behaviours.”