

Protecting Australians Online



Key points

Keeping Australians safe – both online and offline – is a top priority of the Coalition Government.

Australians expect to engage online without fear of abuse, humiliation or exposure to harmful and illegal content. Yet we know that almost half of young Australians, particularly young girls, report nasty or hurtful treatment online, and 3 in 10 women report suffering online abuse or harassment. Tragically, this can lead to mental health issues, self-harm and, in severe cases, suicide.

That's why our Government has stood up to the big social media companies and led the world in creating a safer online environment for kids, women and families.

We established the world's first eSafety Commissioner to protect children from bullying and harmful content. We later expanded our laws to support adults, with the world's first scheme to force social media companies to remove intimate images shared without consent.

Since then, we have led global action to make social media companies more accountable over terrorist and violent content online. The Morrison Government has also passed the tough new Online Safety Act, which includes a world-first scheme to take down adult cyber abuse, and introduced new laws to unmask anonymous trolls.

Our principle is simple – the same rules and laws that apply in the real world should also apply in the digital world. The online world should not be a lawless space.

Australia is leading the world in online safety but technology and online predators adapt quickly. We cannot afford to let our guard down.

A re-elected Coalition Government will continue to protect you and your family online by:

- Delivering a \$23 million eSafety schools package to raise awareness of eSafety support across every school in Australia, provide training programs for teachers and ensure schools have the resources and tools they need to keep kids safe online.
- Giving parents more power to protect their kids online by requiring tech companies to install
 enhanced parental controls on smartphone and tablet devices that are easier to find and
 activate (particularly when first setting up a device), and harder for kids to bypass including
 website blockers and filters, app store permissions, screen time limits and parental access. If
 industry doesn't act within 12 months, we will regulate to force them.
- Making it easier for Australians to report online harms by providing \$10 million to the
 eSafety Commissioner to further expand coordination with other regulatory and law
 enforcement agencies, ensuring victims "tell-us-once" and are supported into the right
 service, so they spend more time on recovering and less time stuck in bureaucracy.
- Legislating tough new anti-trolling laws which Labor has opposed to make social media companies more accountable for defamatory comments from anonymous posters.

- Legislating new online privacy laws to better protect Australians' data and personal information, including ensuring social media companies act in the best interests of children.
- Strengthening Australia's classification scheme by tightening requirements and improving labelling on content of community concern, such as that which sexualises children, depicts suicide and violence against women, and simulates gambling in videogames (like "loot boxes") so families can make more informed choices.
- Investing \$16.6 million to support women and children experiencing technologyfacilitated abuse by establishing a new eSafety telephone service staffed by a team of specialist experts, because over 99 per cent of women escaping domestic violence also experience this type of abuse.
- Earmarking \$2 million under our expanded Online Safety Grants program for projects that support women and girls in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities.
- Introducing stronger laws to combat harmful disinformation and misinformation online by giving the media regulator stronger information-gathering and enforcement powers.
- Listening to the voices and ideas of young Australians through our new **Online Safety Youth**Advisory Council.
- Continuing to **lead global efforts on online safety**, working through the G20 to ensure there is global action to regulate and hold social media companies to account.

With Australians spending more time online to connect with friends and family, learn and be entertained, **Australia cannot afford the weak leadership of Labor.**

Labor has not delivered a single significant online safety reform.

Labor has no backbone when it comes to standing up to the big social media and tech giants.

Labor did nothing about online safety when it was last in government. Their only policy was to have an inoperable and ineffective nation-wide internet filter that was eventually abandoned after five years and millions of dollars were wasted.

Since then Labor hasn't outlined any substantive plans for the future, and has taken "each-way bets" to undermine the Coalition every time we have taken on the social media companies.

Labor senators have refused to back our tough new anti-trolling laws, and senior Labor figures have been highly critical of the Coalition's other actions to regulate the tech giants: from cracking down on illegal piracy online, to giving our security agencies access to the encrypted messages of criminals and terrorists.

Only the Coalition can be trusted to stand up to the big tech giants to ensure they protect Australian families online.

In uncertain times, Australia can't risk Labor.

Our Plan

While the Government has taken significant action to improve online safety, the digital world and online predators are evolving rapidly and our policies need to keep pace.

Our comprehensive plan has four key objectives:

- 1. Hold big tech companies to account for keeping users safe.
- 2. Continue cracking down on online bullying, abuse and illegal activity.
- 3. Protect the data and privacy of Australians.
- 4. Empower parents and kids with the skills and tools they need to keep safe online.

We won't hesitate to take further action to keep Australians safe.

1. Learning to be e-Safe in schools

Children, parents and teachers will benefit from the Coalition's plans to launch a significant expansion of online safety resources, training and education programs for schools.

Equipping teachers and school communities with better training and resources will ensure young Australians are properly supported to deal with cyber-bullying, image-based abuse, exposure to harmful material and online predators.

It will also better support parents, the majority of whom turn to their child's school when seeking information on online safety, even though schools may not be sufficiently aware of the support available, or equipped to provide help.

This initiative will be delivered under the leadership of the eSafety Commissioner.

A re-elected Coalition Government will invest \$23 million over the next four years to improve eSafety in schools, including:

- Giving every school in Australia materials to raise awareness of the services provided by the eSafety Commissioner, so parents, teachers and students know where to turn for help.
- Additional resources and training for school children on emerging online safety and mental health issues, particularly body image concerns and digital media literacy.
- In-person **teacher training to help educators support students** and become eSafety Teacher Champions in schools.

- Roll-out of the eSafety Animal Series building on the long-term success of the 'Healthy Harold' model – to support 5 to 8 year olds to adopt better online safety habits.
- Giving every school in Australia access to a free expanded version of the eSafety
 Commissioner's successful Online Safety Toolkit, allowing them to self-assess and improve online safety capability.
- Strengthening our successful Trusted eSafety Provider Program to ensure schools engage external online safety providers that meet appropriate education standards, such as The Carly Ryan Foundation and Alannah and Madeline Foundation. We will also continue to directly support third party providers through the Online Safety Grants program.

2. Better parental controls on smartphones and tablets

Kids are spending more time online than ever before, and are increasingly doing so at a younger age. Parents and guardians play a primary role in keeping their children safe online, but many feel powerless to protect them from predators and age-inappropriate or harmful content.

The Office of the eSafety Commissioner's research shows parents – especially those whose technology skills are not as advanced as their children's – are deeply concerned about their capacity to help children manage online risks.

Many parental control settings are available on devices, and three out of every four Australian parents agree having these available is important to limit exposure to inappropriate content. However, families can find them difficult to locate, complicated to activate and easy for tech-savvy kids to bypass.

The tech companies that created these devices and services are some of the most innovative in the world. Consistent with the eSafety Commissioner's world-leading safety-by-design principles, we believe it's their responsibility to make them safe.

This commitment responds to recommendations of a parliamentary inquiry into social media and online safety. It also builds on our 2019 election commitment, being delivered under the Online Safety Act, to ensure the default privacy and safety settings of online apps, games and services marketed at children are robust and set to the most restrictive level.

A re-elected Coalition Government will ensure tech companies install enhanced parental controls and safety settings on smartphone and tablet devices that are easier to find and activate (particularly when first setting up a device), and harder for kids to bypass.

The eSafety Commissioner will work with industry players such as Apple and Samsung to have best practice controls and safety settings embedded in a binding industry code under the Online Safety Act. If industry doesn't act to protect children within 12 months, the Coalition will regulate to force them.

Our actions will aim to ensure:

- Best-practice parental control and child safety settings such as filters, website blockers, privacy and location settings, app store permissions, screen time limits and parental device access – are available, are more discoverable and can be more easily activated, particularly when setting up a new device.
- Tech companies ensure parental control and safety settings are continually improved and updated (such as through device software upgrades) to maintain the currency of best practice protection.
- Technological safeguards are in place to help prevent children from bypassing or deactivating these settings.

3. Easier reporting of online harms

The Coalition will make it easier for Australians to report online abuse and other online harms, ensuring victims get the help they need and spend more time on their recovery and less time stuck in bureaucracy.

Our parliamentary inquiry into Social Media and Online Safety heard evidence of many victims attempting to report their experience of abuse to multiple agencies, including the police. The inquiry found this can potentially re-traumatise victims and risk their mental health, not only by having to retell and relive their experiences, but also by repeatedly being told that particular agencies cannot help.

Our new commitment builds on the existing work of the eSafety Commissioner to raise awareness and improve coordination with police, education providers and other Commonwealth agencies to provide better help to victims.

A re-elected Coalition Government will provide \$10 million over the next three years to the eSafety Commissioner to further expand coordination with other regulatory and law enforcement agencies, ensuring victims 'tell-us-once' and are supported into the right service.

This will make it easier for victims to find the help they need, regardless of whether they are reporting online abuse, threats, defamation, child exploitation or breaches of privacy.

4. Strong action on online trolling

The Coalition has drafted important new laws to protect Australians online that build on the safeguards we have delivered under the Online Safety Act.

The Social Media (Anti-Trolling) Bill will provide some of the strongest powers in the world when it comes to tackling damaging comments from anonymous online trolls and holding global social media giants to account.

The reforms ensure social media companies are considered publishers and can be held liable for defamatory comments on their platforms. They can potentially avoid this liability if they provide information that ensures a victim can identify and start defamation proceedings against the troll. This will allow ordinary Australians to expose online cowards and remove harmful defamatory comments, or else hold social media companies liable for publishing the content.

The laws also enable the Attorney-General to back victims, in certain circumstances, in court proceedings that have been taken by ordinary Australians against a social media company.

A re-elected Coalition Government will **make it an immediate priority to legislate the Social Media (Anti-Trolling) Bill** to hold social media companies more accountable for harmful defamatory comments made by anonymous posters online.

5. Protecting the privacy of Australians online

The Online Privacy Bill will strengthen privacy laws and penalties to ensure social media companies don't misuse Australians' data.

The legislation will require social media companies to develop a binding Online Privacy Code setting out how they will comply with obligations under the Privacy Act, including to ensure privacy policies are clear, simple and understandable.

Companies will also need to meet new obligations, such as age assurance and giving primary consideration to the best interest of the child when handling children's personal information

A **re-elected Coalition Government will legislate the Online Privacy Bill** to better protect Australians' data and personal information.

6. Investing in a safer future for women

The Morrison Government has committed \$1.3 billion in the 2022-23 Budget to women's safety initiatives and actions across prevention, early intervention, response and recovery, building on the \$1.1 billion in the 2021-22 Budget. This brings the total invested by our Government in women's safety to more than \$3.5 billion since 2013.

An important part of this fight is against technology-facilitated abuse. This type of abuse is widespread – 99 per cent of women who experience domestic violence also experience technology-facilitated abuse.

Perpetrators are exploiting new technology and services that can be difficult for victim-survivors to detect. Technology-facilitated abuse can cause increased levels of fear and trauma, a sense of entrapment, and also a fear of or disengagement from technology.

A re-elected Coalition Government will provide further support to help women defend against technology-facilitated abuse, including:

- \$16.6 million to the eSafety Commissioner to establish a new telephone service to provide support for women and children experiencing technology-facilitated abuse, partnering with domestic and family violence support services.
- \$10 million to deliver community grants for online safety education and support projects for non-government organisations.
- \$5 million to extend the eSafety Commissioner's online safety communications campaign to increase awareness across Australia, in particular among women, of the protections available under the Government's new online safety laws.
- \$4.1 million to deliver national training for law enforcement across Australia to effectively identify and support victim-survivors of all forms of family, domestic and sexual violence including technology-facilitated abuse.

7. Supporting multicultural communities

Research by the eSafety Commissioner shows that in addition to women and children, some individuals and communities are more at-risk of being targeted and seriously harmed online. This includes people from different racial, cultural and religious backgrounds.

The strong powers we have provided the eSafety Commissioner through the Online Safety Act ensures these cohorts are better protected and supported in dealing with online abuse and harm, but we know that tailored measures are often required to effectively reach diverse communities. This is why the eSafety Commissioner has translated eSafety resources into 27 languages and is working directly with experts and leaders in these communities.

A re-elected Coalition Government will:

- Earmark \$2 million of our expanded Online Safety Grants program specifically for projects that support women and girls in CALD communities.
- Ensure the new eSafety resources for schools and students are translated into languages other than English.
- Support the eSafety Commissioner to continue working with experts and leaders in multicultural communities to ensure they are getting the tailored support they need.

8. Strengthening the classification system to protect kids

Australians and their families rely on classification ratings to inform their entertainment choices, including films, television shows and videogames, and they expect classification advice to accurately reflect community standards.

While the classification framework has largely served Australians well, it needs to be modernised to keep pace with content being produced today and tomorrow, to better inform and protect children and other viewers from potentially harmful content.

The Government will work with the states and territories and other key stakeholders (including experts in child well-being) to make priority updates to the classification guidelines to better reflect and respond to community expectations.

A re-elected Coalition Government will work to update the classification guidelines to place new requirements on content of concern to the community, including:

- Content that sexualises children or depicts them in an exploitative or offensive way, including aligning the guidelines with the Criminal Code in relation to child abuse material.
- Introducing minimum classifications and clear labelling requirements for computer games with gambling-like content such as loot boxes, to restrict children's access.
- Updating the guidelines to clearly and consistently address concerning and disturbing content such as depictions of suicide and violence against women.

9. Fighting fake news

While the internet has provided Australians with more information than ever before, it has also dispersed harmful misinformation and disinformation, particularly on social media.

These are significant and ongoing issues that can affect health, safety and even national security, as Australians have seen with the spread of misinformation during the COVID-19 pandemic, and more recently with Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The Government Response to the ACCC's Digital Platforms Inquiry Final Report indicated that we would ask the major digital platforms to develop a voluntary code of conduct for disinformation and news quality. The *Australian Code of Practice on Disinformation and Misinformation* was developed by industry with oversight by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) and started in February 2021.

While an important first step, misinformation continues to spread and social media companies are not applying their own terms and conditions consistently.

A re-elected Coalition Government will introduce new laws to provide the ACMA with stronger enforcement and information-gathering powers to hold big tech companies to account for harmful disinformation and misinformation online.

10. Listening to young Australians

In an Australian first, the Coalition is establishing an Online Safety Youth Advisory Council to hear directly from young Australians on the challenges and solutions to online safety issues.

Young people know better than anyone about the positive and negative impacts of the online world, and what needs to change.

The eSafety Commissioner is coordinating the Council, and announced the formation of a group of 24 young people in April this year.

This measure builds on the Morrison Government's significant support to protect and support the mental health of young Australians, including expansion of headspace services.

A re-elected Coalition Government will work with our new Online Safety Youth Advisory Council on the challenges and solutions to the major online safety issues affecting young Australians, such as bullying and harassment, mental health, privacy, the impact of algorithms and unwanted contact from strangers.

11. Leading global efforts on online safety

Under our Government, Australia has been a leading international voice on online safety and holding digital service providers to account.

This includes the Osaka G20 Summit in 2019 where, following the Christchurch terrorist attack, the Prime Minister secured G20 agreement to hold social media companies more accountable for preventing, detecting and removing terrorist and violent extremist content.

At the Rome G20 Summit in 2021, the Prime Minister advocated for world leaders to take further action to hold social media companies to account and improve efforts to counter online abuse, violence and terrorism. This important work is underway as we approach the 2022 G20 Summit in Indonesia.

A re-elected Coalition Government will continue advocating through the G20 to ensure digital service providers keep their users safe and take proactive steps to prevent their services being used for illegal and harmful purposes.

Our Record

Our Government has been at the global forefront of online safety policy and regulation.

While everyone plays a part in online safety – industry, parents and individuals – we recognise the critical role of government in creating and modernising laws to ensure big tech companies prioritise the safety of their users over their profits.

World's first eSafety Commissioner

In 2015, our Government established a world-first eSafety Commissioner to remove cyberbullying material aimed at children.

- To date, eSafety has helped with around 4,000 complaints about child cyber-bullying.
- The scheme is becoming more important, with cyberbullying reports increasing by 35 per cent during 2021 as more children spend more time online.
- The Online Safety Act has expanded the cyberbullying take-down scheme to force tech
 companies to remove harmful content on the full suite of services where children now
 spend time including social media, online gaming chats, websites and direct
 messaging platforms and reduces the period for platforms to remove content from 48
 hours to 24 hours.
- We continue to expand the Commissioner's remit: eSafety has responded to more than 96,000 instances of image-based abuse, child cyber-bullying, adult abuse and inappropriate online content.
- The Commissioner's Trusted eSafety Provider Program has delivered more than 7,700 online safety education sessions, reaching over 770,000 students, parents and educators in 2020-21.
- Over 12,000 domestic and family violence frontline workers have participated in face-to-face workshops, and 1.1 million senior Australians have participated in the eSafety Commissioner's Be Connected Program.
- We are providing eSafety with record funding of more than \$140 million.

Zero tolerance for illegal content

If content is illegal offline, the Coalition believes it should not be tolerated online, whether it be material that incites and promotes crime or violence, or child sexual abuse material.

We have provided the eSafety Commissioner with powers to direct an online service or
platform to remove prohibited and illegal online material, such as child sexual abuse
material, and to ensure they restrict access to X18+ or R18+ material that is considered
unsuitable for children and young people under the age of 18. To date, the eSafety
Commissioner has finalised investigations into over 70,000 items of illegal and restricted
online content.

 99 percent of regulatory investigations into serious online content, such as child sexual exploitation material, are completed within 2 business days and referred to the Australian Federal Police or the global INHOPE network which fights child sexual abuse material.

Removing adult cyber abuse

In 2021, the Morrison Government passed the tough new Online Safety Act, delivering on a major election commitment. The Act came into effect in January 2022.

- The new laws enact the world's first adult cyber-abuse take down scheme.
- The scheme allows Australians to request the eSafety Commissioner to use its powers to take down serious cyber abuse material that is menacing, harassing or offensive and has the intended effect of causing serious distress or harm.
- The Act also gives the eSafety Commissioner unprecedented information-gathering and investigative powers to obtain identity information behind anonymous online accounts used to bully or abuse.

Supporting victims of image-based abuse

The Coalition has taken a strong stand against the scourge of image-based abuse, which can cause severe harm to victims (most commonly young women) or be used to blackmail.

- eSafety research shows more than 1 in 10 Australians aged 18+ have had a nude or sexual photo or video posted online or sent on without their consent the rate is much higher among girls aged 15-17 (at 15%) and young women aged 18-24 (at 24%).
- In 2017, our Government expanded the eSafety Commissioner's remit to introduce a
 world-first scheme to support victims of image-based abuse, with powers to issue orders
 to have these materials taken down, and in some cases fine the individual responsible.
- The eSafety Commissioner has responded to and acted on around 9,000 complaints of image-based abuse since the scheme was established.

Holding platforms and abusers to account

The Coalition is holding abusers and big tech to account for harm to Australians, including hefty fines and criminal penalties.

- If an order from the eSafety Commissioner under the Online Safety Act is not complied with, such as to remove an abusive social media post, an individual can be fined up to \$111,000 and a company can be fined up to \$555,000.
- We have delivered on our election promise to strengthen maximum penalties, from three
 to five years' imprisonment, for anyone found guilty of using a carriage service to
 menace, harass or cause offence under the Criminal Code Act.
- The big tech companies have been handed a clear set of safety expectations under the Online Safety Act and the eSafety Commissioner has been empowered to compel them

to report transparently on performance. The Commissioner will name and shame the platforms that are not meeting the safety expectations or fine those that refuse to transparently report.

Stopping terrorist and extreme violent content online

The shocking 2019 Christchurch terrorist attack, livestreamed on Facebook, demonstrated how social media can be weaponised to spread hate and violence. The event also uncovered major failures in the safety standards of social media providers. The Morrison Government moved quickly to pass laws to stop this from happening again.

- The laws place tough new penalties on social media services and other hosting providers that fail to report abhorrent violent conduct to the Australian Federal Police, or fail to remove it quickly.
- Severe penalties for those that breach the laws, including a fine of up to 10 per cent of the annual turnover for companies or up to three years' imprisonment for individuals.
- The eSafety Commissioner has undertaken investigations into about 2,500 instances of Abhorrent and Violent Material (AVM). The removal rate for AVM notices is 93 per cent.
- Australia was the driving force behind the 2019 Osaka G20 Leaders' Statement calling
 on social media companies to step up their efforts to prevent, detect and remove
 terrorist and violent extremist content. We have partnered with the OECD, supported by
 New Zealand and Korea, to develop a Voluntary Transparency Reporting Protocol for
 online platforms to be more transparent about the steps they are taking.

Online safety grants

The Morrison Government's Online Safety Grants program supports non-government organisations to deliver online safety education to children, young people and their communities, or training to those who work with them. Funded projects include:

- \$714,800 for the Alannah & Madeline Foundation to develop and deliver education resources to reduce technology-facilitated harm of a sexualised nature.
- \$413,000 for First Nations Media Australia to improve online safety in remote Aboriginal communities.
- \$149,767 for the Daniel Morcombe Foundation to provide young people, as well as parents and carers, with protective information about online grooming.

Putting big tech under the microscope

The Government established a Parliamentary Inquiry in late 2021 to examine toxic material on social media platforms and the dangers this poses to the well-being of Australians.

The inquiry, led by the Liberal Member for Robertson Lucy Wicks, provided an opportunity for Australians to have their say about their experiences on social media and what needs to change. It provided further real evidence to support our tough new laws to hold the social media companies accountable for the problems their platforms are creating.

The Risk of Labor

There is a clear choice at this election.

A choice between a Coalition Government that created the world's first eSafety Commissioner, and a Labor Party that has never delivered online safety reforms.

A choice between a **Coalition Government that has stood up to the big social media companies** and forced them to remove cyber-bullying and abuse, and the **weakness of Labor, which hasn't outlined any plans to regulate the tech giants.**

A choice between a Coalition Government that has a strong and detailed plan to keep Australians safe online and Labor, with no eSafety plan.

When Labor was last in power, their only policy was an inoperable and ineffective nationwide internet filter that was eventually abandoned after five years.

Every time the Coalition has stood up to the social media companies or criminals online, Labor has taken "each-way bets" to undermine us.

- Labor Senators have said they oppose our tough new Social Media (Anti-Trolling) Bill.
- When the Coalition created new laws for security agencies to access encrypted communications of criminals and terrorists, Labor Shadow Minister Ed Husic said they were "terrible laws" – even though these laws have been critical to bringing down organised crime syndicates, including Operation Ironside, which the AFP calls its "most significant operation in policing history".
- When our Government introduced laws to prevent and block illegal film piracy on the internet, Ed Husic said "I don't like it" and it reflected "an ethos that tries to limit the liberalising force of the internet".
- When the Morrison Government introduced the Online Safety Bill into Parliament, Labor moved amendments to weaken the powers we instilled in the eSafety Commissioner.
- When Facebook responding to the Coalition's media laws took unacceptable action to shut down Australian news and community Facebook pages, like the Bureau of Meteorology and state health departments, Labor leader Albanese's first response was to blame the Government rather than Facebook.
- When our Government legislated to impose mandatory minimum sentences for child sex offences, including grooming a child online, Labor opposed the laws and tried to have them removed from the Bill.

We know the tech giants have the money and the technological capability to address many of the problems found online, but they often lack the will to act and they put their profits first.

Only the Coalition can be trusted to stand up to the big tech giants and do what is necessary to keep Australians safe online.

COALITION	LABOR
Online safety laws Passed the Online Safety Act and established the world's first eSafety Commissioner	Online safety laws Abandoned its failed nation-wide internet filter policy after five years and millions of dollars wasted
Cyber-bullying and abuse Forced social media companies to remove cyber-bullying, cyber abuse and image- based abuse	Cyber-bullying and abuse No plan to stand up to the social media companies
Anti-trolling laws Committed to legislating the Social Media (Anti-Trolling) Bill	Anti-trolling laws Opposes the Social Media (Anti-Trolling) Bill
eSafety in schools \$23 million	eSafety in schools \$6 million
Child grooming online Legislated mandatory minimum sentences	Child grooming online Opposed mandatory minimum sentences
Film piracy online Introduced laws to ensure illegal film piracy websites are blocked	Film piracy online Said the Coalition is trying to "limit the liberalising force of the internet"
Mental health Record \$6.8 billion for mental health and suicide prevention funding in the health portfolio (2022-23)	Mental health \$3.3 billion for mental health and suicide prevention in the health portfolio (2012-13)

Cost

The Coalition's Plan for Protecting Australians Online includes additional funding of \$33 million over the next four years, including:

- \$23 million for the eSafety Commissioner to expand eSafety education in schools
- \$10 million for the eSafety Commissioner to further expand coordination with other regulatory and law enforcement agencies

All other funding is already provided for within budget estimates.





For further details of The Nationals' Plan go to: www.nationals.org.au