# eSafety
# strategy
## 2019–2022

Australian Government | eSafety Commissioner

# Our purpose

To help safeguard Australians at risk from online harms and to promote safer, more positive online experiences.

# Commissioner's introduction



## The establishment of Australia's eSafety Commissioner was a world first.

The Office of the eSafety Commissioner (eSafety) is still the only government agency solely committed to keeping citizens safer online. We are leading the way in providing support, resources and outreach programs to help Australians have positive and empowering online experiences.

I am proud to say that in just four years, we have reached millions of Australians with our information and training and provided relief to thousands of victims of online abuse.

Online safety progress requires continued perseverance and new ways of thinking — we know that for long-term cultural change we need a sound strategy and clear accountability. This is recognised by eSafety's hard-working and dedicated staff, whose wealth of experience has been central to our success to-date. Together, we have worked to define our mission, vision and values and create a dynamic strategic planning framework for 2019–2022.

Prevention through awareness-raising, education and best practice guidance is eSafety's overarching goal. So our programs and resources are based on robust evidence of online risks and the most effective protections. But at the heart of eSafety's success is our regulatory authority to rapidly remove cyberbullying, image-based abuse and illegal content online. These early intervention and harm remediation measures provide vital support for Australians.

There is no question that combating the online abuses we see every day is one of the most pressing societal challenges of our time. It is difficult because the online world is not static, and the policy and regulatory measures designed to protect our citizens have to keep pace with continually changing technology. Community expectations about what should be done to address online risks are also changing, and this is reflected in eSafety's expanding responsibilities and organisational growth.

We understand that it is critical for eSafety to remain responsive, flexible and innovative as we deal with rapidly evolving online issues. We also need to stay future-focused, so we can anticipate the misuse of emerging technologies, shift the responsibility for safety back on technology platforms, continue to disrupt the trade in illegal content and collaborate strategically in local and global opportunities.

The challenges of regulating the internet to make it safer are numerous and ever-changing but by no means insurmountable. eSafety will strive to remain a step ahead, leading the way to the more positive online world we all want and deserve.

*Julie Inman Grant — eSafety Commissioner*

# Who is the eSafety Commissioner?

**eSafety** is Australia's national independent regulator for online safety.

Our purpose is to help safeguard Australians at risk from online harms and to promote safer, more positive online experiences.

eSafety leads and coordinates online safety efforts across Commonwealth departments, authorities and agencies, and we engage with key online safety stakeholders internationally, to amplify our impact across borders. The activities of the eSafety Commissioner are governed by the *Enhancing Online Safety Act 2015* but our remit has been extensively broadened since our establishment four years ago.

**Julie Inman Grant is the eSafety Commissioner.**

## eSafety Mission, Vision and Values

**MISSION:** To safeguard Australians at risk from online harms.

**VISION:** Australians are supported to engage safely online.

**VALUES:** Our values support a collaborative and empowering culture to deliver compassionate citizen services with regulatory and investigative enforcement actions that are transparent, considered and fair.

**Empowering**

**Compassionate**

**Considered**

**Fair**

**Transparent**

**Collaborative**

# What we do & how we do it

To achieve our Mission and Vision, eSafety focuses on six areas, each underpinned by a strategic goal and implemented through a range of well-tested tactics and activities.

**eSafety** works in the following six areas:

**Prevention**

**Partnerships**

**Promotion**

**Programs**
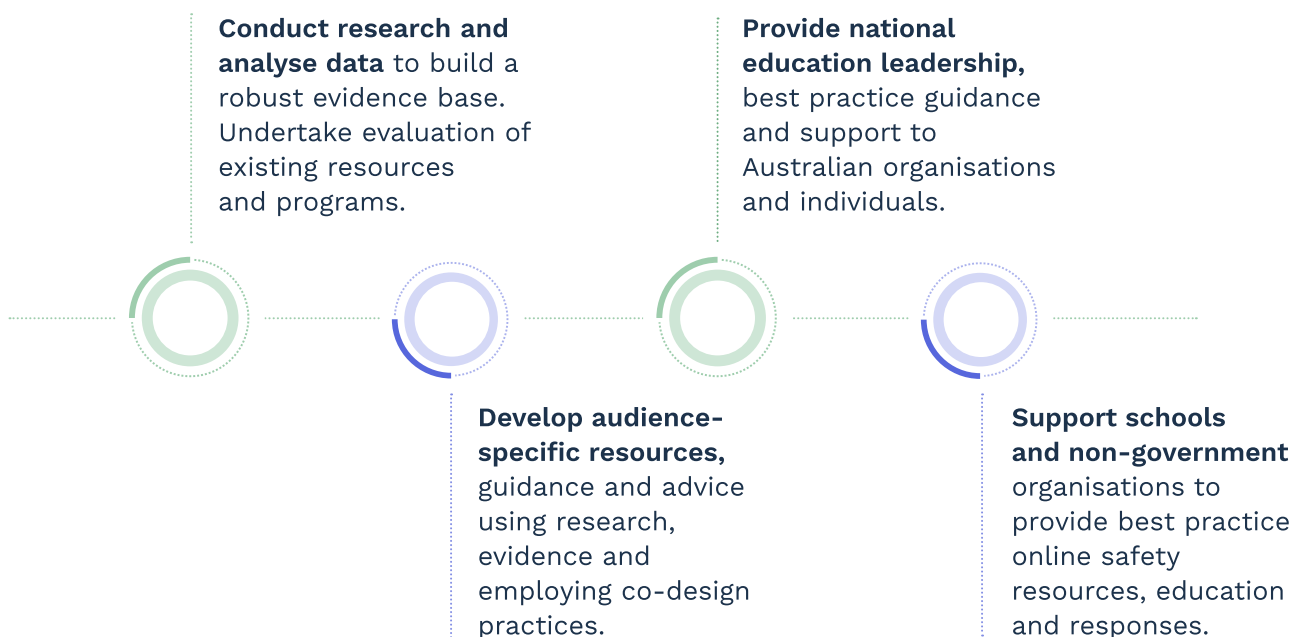
**Protection**

**Proactive Change**

# Prevention

**eSafety** focuses on prevention by informing Australians how to be safe online and where to go for help. We take a strategic approach, providing leadership, guidance and evidence-based resources to educate Australians and raise awareness about online safety.

## Strategic Goal

**eSafety** provides education leadership, coordination and best practice guidance to help Australians have safer and more positive experiences online.

## Our Prevention Tactics

**Conduct research and analyse data** to build a robust evidence base. Undertake evaluation of existing resources and programs.

**Provide national education leadership,** best practice guidance and support to Australian organisations and individuals.

**Develop audience-specific resources,** guidance and advice using research, evidence and employing co-design practices.

**Support schools and non-government** organisations to provide best practice online safety resources, education and responses.

# Partnerships

**eSafety** builds strong partnerships and provides leadership to others working in online safety, including NGOs, industry, academia, educators, other government agencies, experts and advocates. We support states and territories with best practice guidance to evaluate and teach online safety in Australian school communities.

## Strategic Goal

**eSafety** builds strong partnerships to create collaborative and coordinated approaches to online safety initiatives.

## Our Partnership Tactics

**Empower NGOs, industry, academia and advocates** to build informed communities by sharing our research, guidance and content.

**Consult and seek expertise from our key stakeholders** and audiences to inform, guide and shape the development of our work.

**Support researchers and academics** to further build the evidence base and our collective expertise in online safety.

**Collaborate with governments, NGOs and multi-stakeholder organisations** around the world to tackle a range of online harms and make the online world safer.

# Promotion

**eSafety** uses media and marketing strategies to raise awareness about online safety issues, including how to report abuse and where to seek help. We actively engage with the media and use marketing tools such as social media and email campaigns to reach the general public and targeted audiences, as well as coordinating national and global awareness initiatives.

## Strategic Goal

**eSafety** uses multiple channels to raise awareness about online safety and where to seek help.

## Our Promotion Tactics

**Deploy digital marketing and web-based resources strategically** to promote online safety awareness and to provide access to eSafety's complaints and reporting schemes.

**Target and nurture external stakeholders** to help amplify awareness and to increase use of eSafety resources, programs and support.

**Provide online safety thought leadership** through blogs, conferences and the coordination of national and international awareness initiatives.

**Engage with mainstream, specialist and social media** to raise awareness and ensure online safety information reaches those in need of support.

# Programs

eSafety's programs and services support a wide range of Australians, but particularly those who are most susceptible to online harm. These include women experiencing domestic violence and older Australians with low digital literacy. Our targeted initiatives are based on latest research, best practice and regular evaluation, to ensure they help diverse communities enjoy safe, digitally-enabled lives.

## Strategic Goal

**eSafety** delivers robust, tailored programs with an increased focus on harm reduction in vulnerable communities.

## Our Program Tactics

**Develop diversity and vulnerability strategy** to guide future program development.

**Assess, expand and continually improve** successful programs.

**Design interventions to support vulnerable populations** based on targeted research and community engagement.

**Evaluate** the reach and impact of our programs.

# Protection

eSafety protects Australians from online harms through its reporting, investigations and notification schemes. eSafety conducts investigations, gathers intelligence and works with partners to take down illegal online content, including child sexual abuse material (CSAM). We operate civil regulatory schemes to facilitate the rapid removal of intimate images as well as serious cyberbullying material targeted at a child. We also administer a notification scheme relating to abhorrent violent material (AVM).

## Strategic Goal

eSafety protects those experiencing online harms by assisting in the take down of harmful content and championing their online rights: to be free from bullying and harassment, exploitation and abuse. We combat violent and extremist content that challenges societal norms, standards and values.

## Our Protection Tactics

**Support and protect Australians with the rapid removal of harmful content** by providing compassionate citizen services across all eSafety regulatory schemes.

**Assist Australians who have experienced image-based abuse** by removing the content online and through a range of enforceable actions.

**Play a role through the Abhorrent Violent Material scheme** to limit the ability for online platforms and services to be exploited and weaponised by perpetrators of violence.

**Minimise harm to young Australians** through the rapid removal of serious cyberbullying material and work with victims, parents and school communities to drive behavioural change.

**Challenge the availability of child sexual abuse imagery** around the globe, limiting the trauma of survivors and removing material violating the rights of children.

# Proactive change

Technology progresses rapidly, sometimes outpacing policy, so eSafety anticipates how new technologies might be used — or misused — and works towards systemic change. We collaborate with other online safety stakeholders internationally to strengthen our impact across borders and to more effectively shape global policies and approaches.

## Strategic Goal

**eSafety** draws on its expertise, complaint trends and research to drive long-term, systemic change for measurable impact and improvements online.

## Our Proactive Change Tactics

**Work across sectors, including directly with industry,** to develop principles for making platforms safer at the outset through initiatives like Safety by Design.

**Employ sophisticated investigative strategies** to disrupt the proliferation of child sexual abuse material.

**Identify emerging issues**, technologies and trends to ensure agility in responding to developments and in anticipating potential misuse.
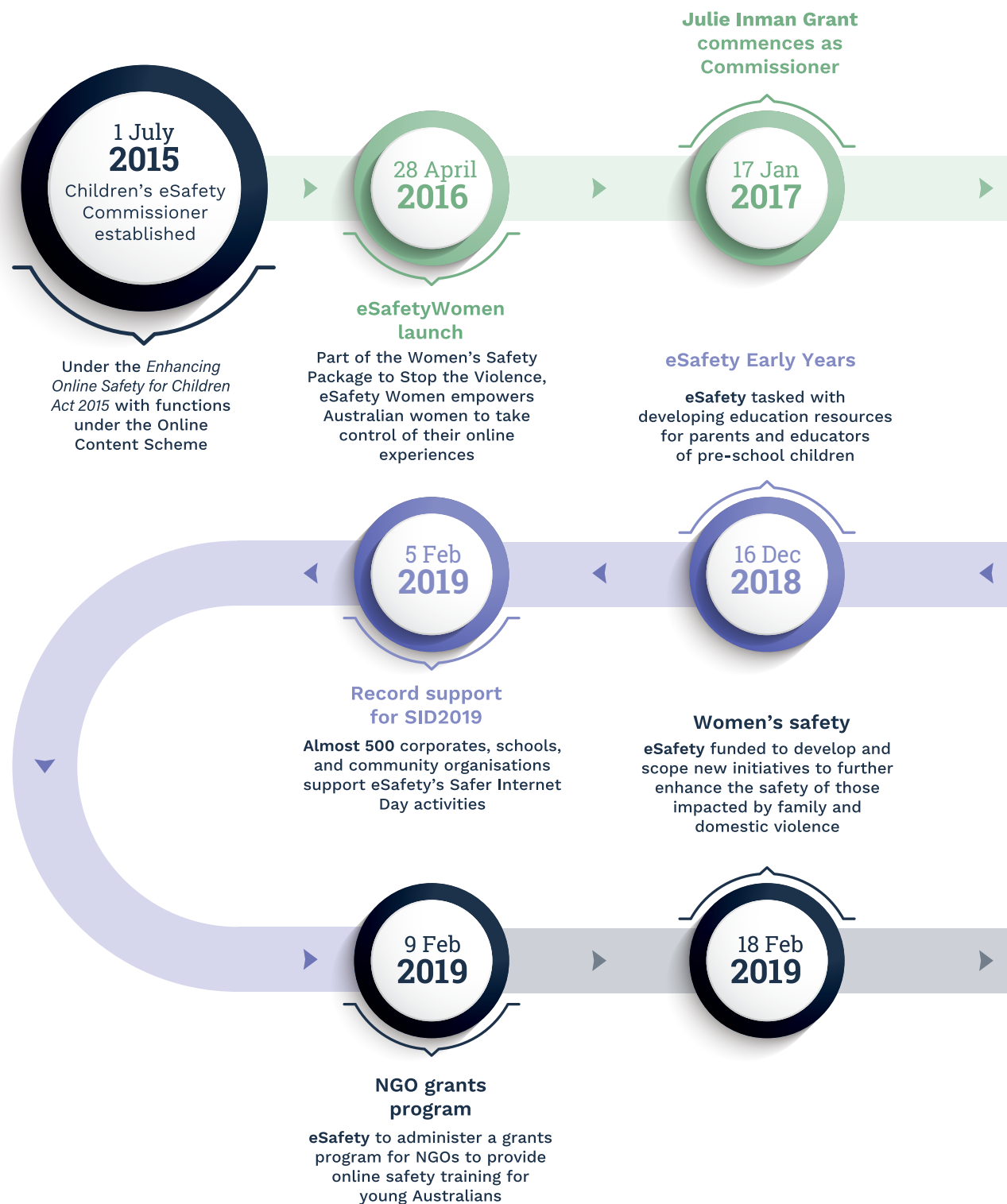
**Invest in technologies,** tools and partnerships to scale our reach and enhance our impact on the global stage.
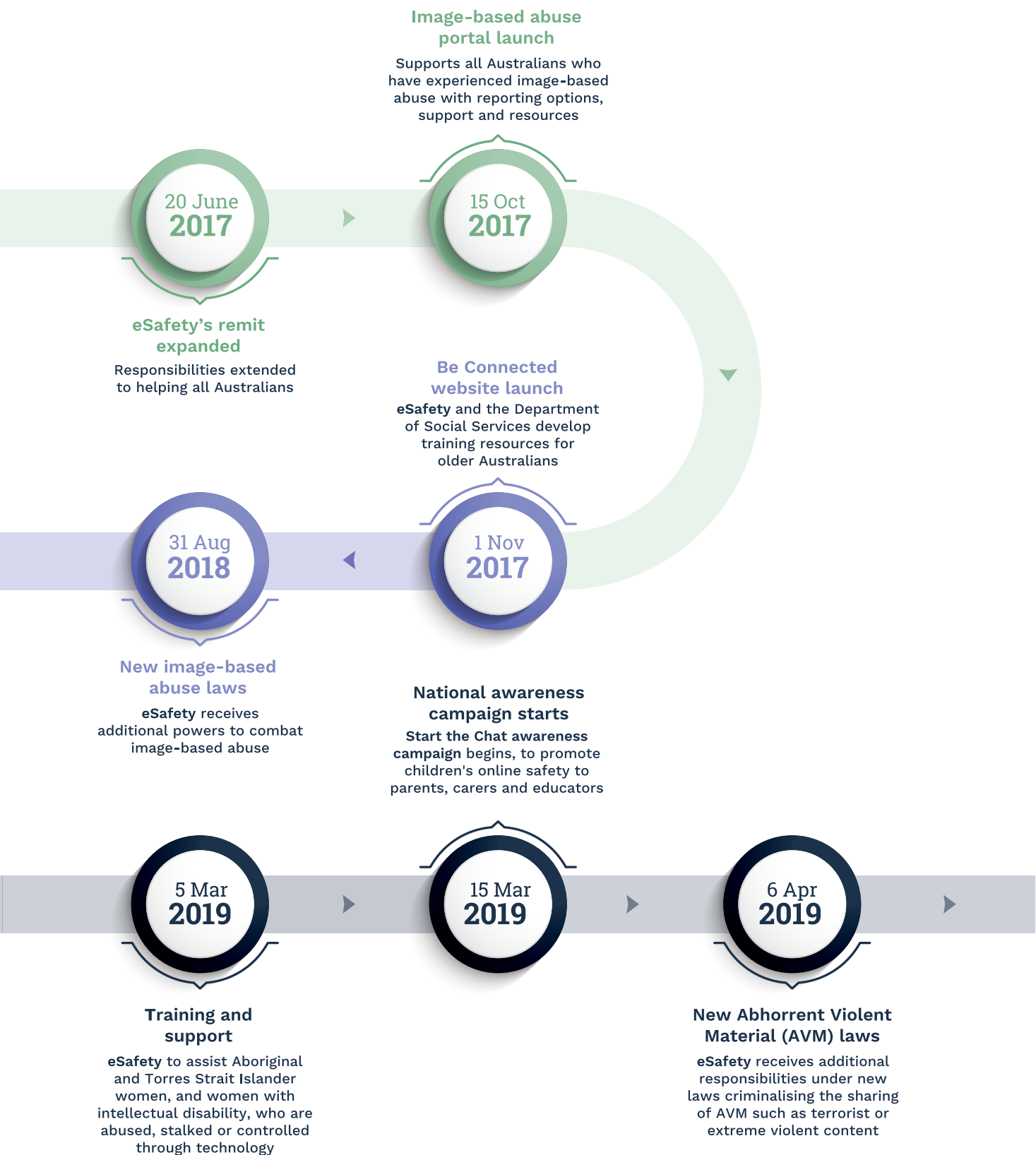
**Develop evidence-based policy positions** and interventions about emerging issues. Contribute to public debate, law reform and global thought leadership.

# How we have grown and evolved

The Children's eSafety Commissioner was established in 2015 to promote the online safety of young Australians.

**1 July**
**2015**
Children's eSafety Commissioner established

Under the *Enhancing Online Safety for Children Act 2015* with functions under the Online Content Scheme

**28 April**
**2016**

**eSafetyWomen launch**

Part of the Women's Safety Package to Stop the Violence, eSafety Women empowers Australian women to take control of their online experiences

**Julie Inman Grant commences as Commissioner**

**17 Jan**
**2017**

**eSafety Early Years**

**eSafety** tasked with developing education resources for parents and educators of pre-school children

**5 Feb**
**2019**

**Record support for SID2019**

**Almost 500** corporates, schools, and community organisations support eSafety's Safer Internet Day activities

**16 Dec**
**2018**

**Women's safety**

**eSafety** funded to develop and scope new initiatives to further enhance the safety of those impacted by family and domestic violence

**9 Feb**
**2019**

**NGO grants program**

**eSafety** to administer a grants program for NGOs to provide online safety training for young Australians

**18 Feb**
**2019**

In 2017 Parliament expanded our remit to all Australians, changing our name to the **eSafety Commissioner.**

**Image-based abuse portal launch**

Supports all Australians who have experienced image-based abuse with reporting options, support and resources

**20 June 2017**

**15 Oct 2017**

**eSafety's remit expanded**

Responsibilities extended to helping all Australians

**Be Connected website launch**

**eSafety** and the Department of Social Services develop training resources for older Australians

**31 Aug 2018**

**1 Nov 2017**

**New image-based abuse laws**

**eSafety** receives additional powers to combat image-based abuse

**National awareness campaign starts**

**Start the Chat awareness campaign** begins, to promote children's online safety to parents, carers and educators

**5 Mar 2019**

**15 Mar 2019**

**6 Apr 2019**

**Training and support**

**eSafety** to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, and women with intellectual disability, who are abused, stalked or controlled through technology

**New Abhorrent Violent Material (AVM) laws**

**eSafety** receives additional responsibilities under new laws criminalising the sharing of AVM such as terrorist or extreme violent content

# Our key achievements over the past four years

Snapshot as at August 2019

## Education and Awareness

Reached over **475,000** students, parents and community groups through eSafety Outreach.

Reached over **10,400** pre-service and **11,000** practicing teachers through professional learning programs.

Trained over **9,500** frontline workers to help women experiencing technology-facilitated abuse.

Recorded over **140,000** older Australians accessing the Be Connected learning website.

Received support from nearly **500** corporates, schools and community organisations for Safer Internet Day 2019.

## Assistance and Investigation

Finalised **43,000** investigations, 70% of which concerned child sexual abuse material.

Made **8,500** child sexual abuse material reports to INHOPE and the Australian Federal Police in 2018–19.

Received over **1,400** complaints about serious cyberbullying targeted at Australian children since 2015.

Assisted more than **1,300** adults seeking support to address cyber abuse.

Worked with **14** major social media service providers to counter cyberbullying and adult cyber abuse.

Received over **1,300** reports of image-based abuse, concerning over 2,000 URLs and/or locations, since October 2017.

Achieved a **90%** removal success rate of image-based abuse material (where removal requested) as at June 2019.

Issued **8** AVM notices since April 2019.

# Looking to the future
## Strategic approaches through to 2022

## Online vulnerability

While the online world presents many opportunities and benefits for Australians, it also carries potential risks.

**eSafety's** primary focus is on individuals in crisis who need intervention and support. We give them personal assistance, helping them to deal with serious online harms.

Secondly, we focus on people who are more likely than others to be at risk of online abuse. We support these Australians with targeted resources to help them avoid harm online.

Thirdly, and more generally, we serve anyone who has an interest in online safety by providing education about how to remain safe online.

From our research and programs, we know that those at risk offline tend to be more vulnerable online too. We have also observed that online abuse is intersectional. This means there are often overlapping and interdependent social characteristics that can further entrench discrimination or disadvantage online, including gender, race, religion, sexuality and socio-economic status.

So, eSafety uses an intersectional lens to understand the environment that influences a person's ability to recognise online risks, seek help or protect themselves from harm. Our aim is to safeguard the Australians who are most likely to experience harm online, so they can benefit fully from digital participation. We will also ensure that policies, resources, programs and communications are inclusive of all communities and meet their needs.

# Disrupting child sexual abuse

**Interrupting the availability of online child sexual abuse material (CSAM) material requires intelligence and innovation.**

The conventional focus of civil organisations working to disrupt the availability of online CSAM has been on notice and takedown. This approach has two important functions: first, it constrains the availability of content, making it harder to find. Second, it helps counter some of the ongoing trauma experienced by survivors, who fear being recognised by those who have viewed their abuse material.

These are essential and worthy goals. However, the most problematic sites and hosts are resilient and agile, re-emerging quickly after takedown. Often, these sites employ hosting solutions beyond the reach of enforcement and regulatory agencies.

To achieve lasting disruption of sites hosting CSAM, different thinking is required. While maintaining our takedown efforts through the INHOPE network, eSafety is harnessing its investigative expertise to map the entities distributing material in the clear web, along with their preferred hosts, domain registrars, advertising networks and methods of generating revenue.

Each site represents a bundle of economic activity for those hosting this horrendous content. By asking 'who benefits?', we are better able to contribute to the cooperative efforts of the Australian and international agencies working to destroy the viability of these businesses.

Image used for illustrative purposes only. Stock photo, posed by model.
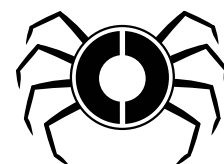
# Strategic international engagement: Project Arachnid

eSafety is helping to pilot Project Arachnid, an innovative technology platform based at the Canadian Centre for Child Protection. This is an example of strategic international engagement that progresses our work domestically but also contributes to a global response.

**Project Arachnid's** advanced technology allows it to detect CSAM far faster than humans can, though human analysis is still required to help classify the images and confirm the quality of the data.

eSafety's Cyber Report team is contributing to the international effort to build Project Arachnid's comprehensive central database of CSAM 'hashes', or digital fingerprints, to increase the capacity of the project to identify and remove CSAM from the internet.

Through our partnership with the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, eSafety's Cyber Report team will help classify images detected by the Project Arachnid web crawler. Its innovative design makes it capable of detecting content at a pace that greatly exceeds that of traditional methods to identify and address this harmful material. It is designed to reduce the availability of CSAM online, recognising that victims who have their abuse recorded and shared online live with life-long trauma and the fear the images will continue to reappear online.

# Safety by Design

Safety by Design (SbD) places the safety and rights of users at the centre of the design, development and deployment of online products and services. It aims to encourage and assist industry to take a proactive and consistent approach to user safety when developing online products and services.

**Safety by Design** requires companies to change the ethos of service design by assessing risk upfront and systematically incorporating safety protections end to end — from inception and throughout the development lifecycle.

Encouraging companies to embed user rights and safety into the content and functionality of online products and services continues to be a goal for eSafety and we are engaging with governments around the world to ensure a consistent global approach. eSafety will also work with universities to seed these rights-centric ideals into their curricula to create a new generation of engineers, computer scientists and other technology leaders who are taught to 'code with conscience'.

Meaningful change requires a pivot in approaches, and that change can take time. We are committed to working collaboratively and constructively with industry and other stakeholders to reduce and counter the risks that global citizens face online.

Safety by Design offers industry the opportunity to show leadership and commitment to making user safety a core business objective. This is what citizens deserve, and it is what we all need in order to create the online world we want.

# Technology  Future Casting

To fulfil our mandate to promote, improve, coordinate, consult and advise on all aspects of online safety, it is imperative that eSafety is able to accurately analyse existing and emerging online safety issues and trends. We aim to anticipate the impacts of technological developments on user safety, right across the digital ecosystem, instead of reacting to harms after they have occurred.

**eSafety's** proactive approach involves continually scanning the research, policy, legislative and technical landscape. It includes monitoring developments such as encryption, augmented reality, artificial intelligence, machine learning and quantum computing.

This future casting will allow us to pivot our strategies to where risks to the online safety of Australians are most likely and improvements are most required.

'We believe that advancements in technologies can be harnessed for good and they have the potential to radically transform our experiences online. However, they can also be misused to perpetuate harm.'

# Global collaboration

While laws are local, the internet is global — and eSafety's primary regulatory targets are based overseas. So, as the only online safety regulator in the world, we recognise the importance of collaborating with select international organisations that share our mission. This allows us to increase our impact, extend our influence, and lead by sharing what we have learned from our unique experience.

**INHOPE,** the International Association of Internet Hotlines, provides a global response to the borderless problem of online CSAM. eSafety's Cyber Report team was an inaugural member of **INHOPE**, and 2019 marks the 20th year of this crucial international partnership.

**INHOPE's** 45 member hotlines work together to have illegal content — primarily CSAM — removed from the internet as quickly as possible. Sharing intelligence about how this material is being facilitated, produced and distributed also allows **INHOPE** members to work more effectively with their local law enforcement agencies to combat child sexual abuse.

The eSafety Commissioner has also been working with some of the world's foremost experts in online child safety through the **Child Dignity Alliance**. This initiative has created a world-first inventory of technology solutions that detect, categorise and remove child sexual abuse imagery from the internet.

In addition, the eSafety Commissioner has joined the re-engineered **WePROTECT** Global Alliance, a potent movement that is building model national responses to end the sexual exploitation of children online.

# Education and leadership

Online safety education is the key component of eSafety's 'prevention' pillar and a powerful tool for behavioural change. eSafety adopts multiple strategies to raise awareness of online safety for young people, providing resources and training programs underpinned by strong research and unique insights from our investigative schemes.

While considerable work has been done to progress online safety education in Australia, it has been fragmented rather than comprehensive, with little in the way of national coordination and cooperation. To date, there has been no common understanding about the key elements of effective online safety education. Recognising this, eSafety is taking a strategic leadership role in the most effective online safety education interventions.

This means identifying and promoting the core components of best practice in online safety education. eSafety is developing best practice guidance underpinned by evidence and an understanding of what is required to provide education that is empowering, builds resilience and effects positive culture change, while also promoting the development of safe and appropriate online behaviours.

This role also involves working with key stakeholders to identify what additional support young people, schools and families need to create safe online environments. Our goal is to fill gaps in education provision while minimising duplication.

Our role will have a sharper focus on quality, ensuring our own programs and those of others are informed by best practice. We use mechanisms such as the Trusted eSafety Provider program and the forthcoming grants program to drive innovative, high quality initiatives that meet the diverse needs of young Australians, including those not currently well served by online safety programs.

**eSafety** anticipates how new technologies might be used – or misused – and works towards systemic change.