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MINISTER FOR COMMUNICATIONS
MINISTER FOR THE ARTS
MINISTER ASSISTING THE PRIME MINISTER FOR DIGITAL GOVERNMENT
MANAGER OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS IN THE SENATE

MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday, 8 October 2015

Protecting Australian children online

Australian children, parents and guardians have a place to report serious online bullying following the official launch of the Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner.

Since opening its doors in July, the office has established a cyberbullying complaints system, backed by legislation, to quickly remove online material that is harmful to children from social media sites.

Social media partners Ask.fm, Flickr, Twitter, Yahoo!7 Answers, Yahoo!7 Groups, Facebook, Google+, Instagram and YouTube are now all scheme participants and have taken down offensive material within 12 hours of a request from the Commissioner.

The new scheme is a great example of how government and industry can work together to keep children safe online. To date, the process has been efficient and cooperative with no need for legislative sanctions to be used.

Young Australians are avid internet users, with over one million children and young people accessing social media sites maintained by the social media scheme partners in just one month. However, while the platforms provide opportunities for social interaction, they can become forums for serious bullying and harassment.

Research has shown that one in five Australian children experience cyberbullying each year. The Office has been established to tackle this issue head on and assist children when they have nowhere else to turn.

Since opening in July the office has:

- referred over 600 children to Kids Helpline, assisting seriously at risk children and young people to access the support and counselling they need
- resolved more than 40 complaints about serious cyberbullying
- completed over 2,000 investigations into illegal online content
- connected with over 5,200 students across Australia through its virtual classrooms, which teach children about online safety issues including cyberbullying, and
- developed Voluntary Certification Guidelines, allowing the office to certify eligible providers of school-based online safety programs and resources for children.

The establishment of the Office of the eSafety Commissioner delivers on the Government's election commitment to improve online safety for children.

For more information visit: www.esafety.gov.au

Media contact: Luisa Anderson | 0417 309 812 | Luisa.anderson@communications.gov.au