

# Online Safety Act (Australia)

## Good practice: Legislating to protect and address online risks and harms while creating a safer digital environment

**Relevant DFI commitment:** Promote online safety and continue to strengthen our work to combat violence online, including sexual and gender-based violence as well as child sexual exploitation, to make the Internet a safe and secure place for everyone, particularly women, children, and young people.

**Type of the initiative:** Legislation

**Stakeholder Group:** Government

**Launch/adoption:** 2022 - Now

### Goals

Australia's current online safety legislation aims to create a safer digital environment by addressing the risks and harms associated with online interactions. Its primary goal is to protect individuals, particularly vulnerable groups like children, from harmful online content, abuse, and cyberbullying. The legislation seeks to empower users with robust mechanisms for reporting and removing harmful content while holding platforms accountable for ensuring the safety of their services.

This legislative framework also aims to promote a culture of digital responsibility and respect, balancing freedom of expression with protections against abuse and exploitation. By establishing clear guidelines for compliance, the laws encourage technology companies to prioritise user safety and adopt proactive measures to mitigate risks in the evolving digital landscape.

### Description

Australia's online safety legislation comprises a comprehensive framework led by the **Online Safety Act 2021**, which provides the eSafety Commissioner with expanded powers to regulate and respond to harmful online behaviours. This Act builds on previous efforts to strengthen protections for internet users and address emerging challenges in the digital space. The legislation introduces key mechanisms to combat online harm:

1. **Rapid Removal of Harmful Content:** The Act empowers the eSafety Commissioner to issue takedown notices for cyberbullying, non-consensual sharing of intimate images, and other harmful content. Platforms must comply within 24 hours, ensuring swift action to protect affected individuals.
2. **Adult Cyber Abuse:** Recognizing the broader impact of online abuse, the legislation extends protections to adults, providing mechanisms for reporting and addressing abusive content targeted at individuals over 18 years old.
3. **Stronger Accountability for Platforms:** Social media companies, websites, and internet service providers must meet specific safety standards. These include providing clear terms of use, implementing robust moderation policies, and facilitating user-friendly complaint procedures.
4. **Support for Schools and Communities:** The legislation emphasises education and prevention, equipping schools and community organisations with resources to teach online safety and responsible digital behaviour.

The framework also includes additional powers for the eSafety Commissioner to enforce industry codes and impose penalties on non-compliant platforms. These measures ensure that companies prioritise the safety of their users and take proactive steps to minimise online risks.

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