



Australian Permanent Mission
to the United Nations
Geneva

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██████████
Officer-in-charge
Special Procedures Branch
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
Palais des Nations
1211 Geneva 10
Switzerland
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Dear ██████████

Thank you for your correspondence of 4 February 2026 conveying a Joint Communication from the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, the Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises and the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression.

Whole-of-Government Response to the Joint Communication on Technology-Facilitated Violence Against Women and Girls

The Australian Government welcomes the Joint Communication and appreciates the engagement of the mandate holders on the issue of technology-facilitated violence against women and girls. Australia takes seriously the concerns raised regarding online harassment, threats, doxxing, impersonation, deepfakes, and image-based abuse, particularly where such conduct targets women engaged in public life, advocacy, or human rights-related activities.

Australia recognises that technology-facilitated abuse constitutes a serious and evolving form of gender-based violence that disproportionately affects women and girls, with significant implications for their safety, dignity, participation, and visibility in public and civic life. Such conduct can result in profound psychological, social, and economic harm, and may have a significant negative impact on the exercise of human rights, including freedom of expression, participation in public affairs, and access to justice.

The Australian Government reaffirms its strong commitment to preventing and responding to all forms of gender-based violence, including technology-facilitated abuse, in line with its international human rights obligations. Australia adopts a comprehensive, victim-centred and rights-based approach that integrates regulatory and criminal law frameworks, prevention and education initiatives, access to support services and effective remedies, international cooperation, and the promotion of responsible business conduct by technology platforms, and remains committed to ongoing engagement with international partners and United Nations mechanisms to strengthen collective responses to this global issue.

Addressing Online Abuse and Harassment Through the Online Safety Framework

Australia's primary regulatory framework for addressing online harms is the *Online Safety Act 2021* (Cth). The Act establishes a comprehensive scheme to protect individuals from

serious online abuse and harmful content, while requiring online service providers to meet systemic obligations. The eSafety Commissioner (eSafety) Australia's independent online safety regulator plays a central role in administering this framework. eSafety is the first regulator of its kind in the world, and is at the forefront of preventing online risks, reducing the impacts of harms and building safer digital spaces.

eSafety has powers to investigate complaints, issue removal notices, enforce industry codes and standards, and take civil enforcement action where legislative thresholds are met. These powers enable timely intervention to reduce the risk of serious harm arising from online abuse, including content involving threats, harassment, image-based abuse, and certain forms of technology-enabled impersonation and deepfake material.

The Act establishes several complaint-based schemes, including the [Adult Cyber Abuse Scheme](#), the [Image-Based Abuse Scheme](#), the [Child Cyberbullying Scheme](#), and the [Online Content Scheme](#). Together, these mechanisms provide avenues for individuals to seek assistance where harmful online conduct targets a specific person and meets defined harm thresholds. Where material is assessed as meeting those thresholds, eSafety may require its removal within strict timeframes and may obtain identifying information from service providers for referral to law enforcement where appropriate.

Australia acknowledges that while these schemes provide important protections, regulatory powers are targeted and proportionate. In particular, eSafety's authority generally extends to requiring removal of specific content, rather than mandating suspension or removal of user accounts. Nonetheless, regulatory engagement often results in platforms taking additional voluntary action under their own terms of service.

Complaints Concerning Online Abuse Directed at Advocates

In relation to allegations of sustained online abuse directed at representatives of civil society organisations, including advocacy groups such as Collective Shout, Australian authorities have assessed complaints received under the *Online Safety Act 2021* in accordance with legislative requirements. Complaints are triaged through a prioritisation framework that ensures the most harmful material, including threats of violence, child sexual exploitation material, and content promoting serious criminal conduct, is addressed as a priority.

Where complaints meet statutory thresholds, regulatory action has included issuing notices to service providers, securing removal of harmful material, gathering information relevant to identifying perpetrators, and referring matters to appropriate law enforcement agencies. Where content no longer remained accessible, or did not meet legislative thresholds, regulatory action was not available, consistent with due process and legal constraints.

Throughout these processes, complainants are informed of assessment outcomes, actions taken, and available support services. Australia recognises the distress caused by sustained online harassment campaigns and continues to engage with affected individuals and organisations to manage risk and provide guidance, even where regulatory intervention is limited.

Protection Measures and Victim Support

Australia's response to technology-facilitated violence prioritises victim safety, dignity, and access to support. Individuals who report online abuse to eSafety receive practical guidance, online safety advice, and referrals to counselling and support services where appropriate. eSafety also offers targeted training, including social media self-defence programs designed to strengthen online safety capability for individuals at heightened risk due to their public profile or advocacy work.

Complaints handling processes are trauma-informed and designed to minimise re-victimisation. The requirement that complainants first report content to platforms before regulatory escalation reflects statutory safeguards but can result in delays. To mitigate this, Australia continues to improve guidance, streamline engagement with platforms, and prioritise high-risk cases.

Australia also recognises the importance of confidentiality and data protection. Digital evidence collected through regulatory processes is stored securely in accordance with [national security and privacy standards](#), and information sharing occurs strictly under legislative authority.

Criminal Law and Access to Justice

Australia's Commonwealth, state, and territory criminal laws operate together to address technology-facilitated abuse, including reprisals linked to public or human-rights-related activities. At the Commonwealth level, the [Criminal Code Act 1995](#) (Cth) includes offences relating to online harassment, threats of serious harm, misuse of carriage services, image-based abuse, and, following recent reforms, doxxing and deepfake sexual material.

These criminal offences complement regulatory action by enabling law enforcement investigation and prosecution of serious conduct. eSafety maintains close operational relationships with federal, state, and territory law enforcement agencies and refers matters suspected to be criminal in nature for investigation where appropriate.

Australia has also strengthened access to civil remedies. Since June 2025, a new statutory tort for serious invasions of privacy under the [Privacy Act 1988](#) (Cth) allows individuals to seek redress for intentional or reckless misuse of personal information, including certain forms of doxxing. Reforms to discrimination law have further reduced barriers to justice by limiting adverse costs risks in federal unlawful discrimination proceedings.

Workplace and Public-Life Protections

Australia recognises that technology-facilitated abuse often intersects with workplace harassment and undermines women's participation in professional and public life. Legislative reforms introduced through the [Anti-Discrimination and Human Rights Legislation Amendment \(Respect@Work\) Act 2022](#) have imposed a positive duty on employers to take reasonable and proportionate measures to prevent sexual harassment and related unlawful conduct, including online and technology-facilitated forms.

eSafety, in partnership with Safe Work Australia, have developed [guidance and resources](#) to assist workplaces in preventing and responding to online abuse affecting workers, including

public-facing professionals and advocates. These measures reinforce employers' responsibilities to provide safe physical and digital work environments.

Prevention, Education, and Safety by Design

Prevention is a core pillar of Australia's approach. Through the [National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032](#), the Government supports initiatives that address the underlying drivers of gender-based violence, including harmful norms and behaviours.

The eSafety Commissioner's [Safety by Design](#) initiative encourages technology providers to anticipate misuse, engineer out abuse vectors, and embed safety considerations into product design. This approach shifts responsibility away from users and towards platforms, reinforcing systemic accountability.

Australia has also taken regulatory action against emerging forms of harm, including so-called "nudify" services that enable the generation of non-consensual intimate imagery. Regulatory engagement has resulted in several such services withdrawing from the Australian market, demonstrating the Government's commitment to proactive harm prevention.

Responsible Business Conduct and Human Rights Due Diligence

Australia expects businesses operating in or from Australia to act responsibly, including by complying with all relevant laws and considering the human rights impacts of their operations. As a supporter of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and an adherent to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises on Responsible Business Conduct, Australia is committed to promoting responsible business conduct and recognises that businesses can play an important role in combating gender-based violence and eliminating discrimination.

The [Australian National Contact Point for Responsible Business Conduct](#) (AusNCP) provides a dispute resolution mechanism for complaints about multinational enterprises operating in or from Australia, whose conduct is alleged to be inconsistent with the OECD Guidelines. This includes complaints relating to alleged adverse impacts on human rights. The AusNCP also promotes the uptake of the OECD Guidelines, including its due diligence guidance and standards.

International Cooperation

Australia recognises that technology-facilitated violence is a global challenge requiring coordinated international action. Australia engages actively with international partners, including through global regulatory networks, multilateral initiatives addressing online gender-based abuse, and cross-border cooperation to address illegal online content. Through these efforts, Australia contributes to the development of shared standards, rapid response mechanisms, and collective strategies to reduce online harms and protect those most at risk.

Australia remains firmly committed to preventing and responding to technology-facilitated violence against women and girls as a core component of its broader efforts to address gender-based violence. The Government will continue to review and strengthen its legal,

policy, and regulatory approaches in recognition of the evolving nature of harms in the digital environment, consistent with international human rights standards, and with the objective of promoting safer, more inclusive online environments in which women and girls can participate freely, visibly, and without fear of abuse or intimidation. Australia values constructive engagement with the mandate holders and welcomes continued exchange of information and good practice to support collective international efforts in this area.

Yours sincerely

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H.E. Ms Clare Walsh
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Australia
to the United Nations and to the Conference of Disarmament in Geneva