



Committee Secretary
Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Via email: le.committee@aph.gov.au

Dear Secretariat,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to assist the Joint Committee's inquiry into child exploitation.

Our submission provides detail on how TikTok works to keep our community safe, including with specific reference to our efforts to identify, prevent and report child exploitation material. In addition, we have detailed our processes for engaging with law enforcement in Australia.

At TikTok, safety is a top priority and we know there is no finish line when it comes to our work to keep our community safe. We have zero tolerance for behaviours or content that is exploitative or dangerous.

We hope the information provided in this submission supports the Committee in their understanding of our platform, our policies, products and practices as they relate to the safety and wellbeing of young people.

Sincerely,

Ella Woods-Joyce
Acting Director of Public Policy
TikTok Australia and New Zealand



TikTok Safety Features and Settings

At TikTok, we have designed our platform, features and processes with the safety of minors front of mind. To protect our users and creators, we constantly work to evolve the safeguards we have in place, and are particularly mindful of the need to protect the wellbeing of our younger users from the scourge of child exploitation.

The general safety tools and functions we use to keep our community safe, including from child exploitation, include:

- **User Reporting:** We have built reporting functionality into our app and our desktop webpages, which allow users to report potentially violative content for review and, where appropriate, removal;
- **Creator controls:** We have created tools for our creators including those who host livestreams where hosts are able to create personalised keyword ban lists, appoint community moderators, mute or block other users, and set audience controls to prevent younger users from accessing the content;
- **Messaging Settings for Minors:** Direct messaging is restricted to users aged 16 and older, meaning that the messaging function is disabled for users between 13 - 15 with no option to activate messaging. For 16 - 17 year old users, the messaging feature is set to private by default, and messages received from non-friends are shown in a separate inbox. Within the messaging feature, we have also enabled pop-up prompts to encourage reporting of bad users;
- **Minor Safety Prompts:** Teen users are sent in-app prompts to encourage making their posts private;
- **Livestreams and gifting:** The livestream feature is restricted to users aged 18 and over, including the ability to host, gift and access monetisation features;
- **Restricted mode:** All users are able to turn on this function, which limits exposure to content that may not be suitable for everyone;
- **Privacy and safety settings:** All users are able to decide who sees their content, who can comment and who can message them as part of a range of in-app settings. Users are also in control of how others can interact with their videos, including whether it can be dueted, stitched or downloaded. And they can choose to block others, as well as delete and/or report comments;
- **Screen Time Management:** To help users manage their digital well-being, we offer a Screen Time Management feature that helps users to decide how much time they'd like to spend on the app each day. With this feature turned on, they will need to enter a passcode to continue using TikTok past the time limit set;



- **Family Pairing:** This tool allows a parent or guardian to link their TikTok account with their teens and set controls including screentime management, placing a teen in Restricted Mode, limiting who can comment on their teen's videos, restrict who can send messages to older teens (16 & 17), and turn off the search feature completely;
- **Content Control:** We know that some content might be uniquely uncomfortable for some individuals, so to manage this, people of all ages have the ability to block content with specific hashtags from their feed. For example, if someone prefers only a plant-based diet, they can elect to block videos with #cheeseburger from their feeds.

We continually work to improve our tools and settings with safety and user experience in mind. And in the past year, TikTok Australia has been undertaking a high profile, targeted safety campaign, both on and off platform, to help educate our community, as well as parents and carers about the types of tools we have to support user safety.

Minor Safety Design Features

TikTok is a platform for people aged 13 and above. We work hard to ensure our community meets the age requirements, that they are the age they have declared, and that we are providing an age-appropriate in-app experience.

We maintain a robust team of moderators who review potentially underage accounts that are detected through a variety of mechanisms, such as user reports and human moderation. Our latest Community Guidelines Enforcement Report shows that we removed nearly 20 million accounts in the third quarter of 2022, because we suspected they were being used by someone under our age requirements.

We also believe it's important to ensure even stronger proactive protections to help keep teens safe, and we've continually introduced changes to support [age-appropriate experiences](#) on our platform.

Our recommendation system is designed with both trust and safety in mind. For content that may not be comfortable for all ages, we reduce discoverability by redirecting search results, making videos ineligible for recommendation in the For You feed, and proactively blocking overtly mature content that does not violate our Community Guidelines from people under 18-years-old.

We have developed and continue to improve our content level detection, which will help prevent overtly mature themes from reaching audiences aged between 13-17. Customisable content tools have also launched to further empower



viewers with ways to customise their viewing experience enabling people to automatically filter out videos with words or hashtags they don't want to see from their For You or Following feeds.

Late last year, we further [strengthened our enforcement](#) of sexually suggestive content. Through a range of sophisticated and ever improving systems (described throughout the submission below), this work is a top priority for TikTok to help us keep our community safe.

TikTok's policies

To combat the insidious nature of child sexual abuse and exploitation, TikTok takes a zero-tolerance approach to predatory behaviour and the dissemination of child sexual abuse material (CSAM), as well as other content that puts the safety of minors potentially at risk.

At a high level, all content on TikTok must comply with our [Community Guidelines](#) and our [Terms of Service](#). Our Community Guidelines have specific regard to minor safety, including the sexual exploitation of minors, grooming behaviours, nudity and sexual activity involving minors, all of which would violate our policies and be subject to our enforcement practices.

Breaches of these and other minor safety policies can result in a range of enforcement actions including content removal (for less serious violations) and/or account bans. We also report child sexual abuse material (CSAM) and supporting evidence to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) and to any additional relevant legal authorities.

At TikTok, we utilise a combination of human moderation and technology to enforce our policy against child sexual exploitation and abuse (CSEA). Our strategies are developed to both prevent and interrupt child sexual exploitation on our platform, and we deploy an array of tools and strategies across features and user interaction points to combat child sexual exploitation and abuse from all fronts.

Importantly, taking action against sexually exploitative behaviour (grooming or sexual harassment) is prioritised by our trust and safety teams.

Our people and partnerships

To ensure our policies are enforced, we invest heavily in a robust Trust and Safety department, with locations in Australia and across the world operating 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across dozens of languages.



We have more than 40,000 safety professionals who are working to develop and enforce our policies and build processes and technologies to detect, remove or restrict violative content at scale. Supporting them to interpret and apply our policies are teams composed of multi-disciplinary experts in the area of child sexual abuse, criminal investigations, child development and psychology, and pioneering engineers who continuously develop technology and tools to detect harm and promote safety.

As well as these in-house experts, we work closely with trusted third parties to ensure we are ahead of emerging risks for young people.

In addition to NCMEC, TikTok also works with the Internet Watch Foundation and we are a member of the Family Online Safety Institute (FOSI) whose work encompasses public policy, industry best practice, and good digital parenting.

We are also active members of the Tech Coalition, a global technology alliance comprised of the leading technology companies working together to protect children from online sexual exploitation and abuse, whose work includes: working across industry to both accelerate the adoption of existing technologies and invest in the development of new technologies; engagement of third-party stakeholders to collaborate and take collective action to combat CSEA; driving adoption of a voluntary industry transparency reporting framework; facilitating high-impact information, expertise, and knowledge sharing; and funding independent research in furtherance of our collective goal. TikTok also became an industry partner of INHOPE in 2022 to fight against CSAM.

Technology

Computer Vision Detection

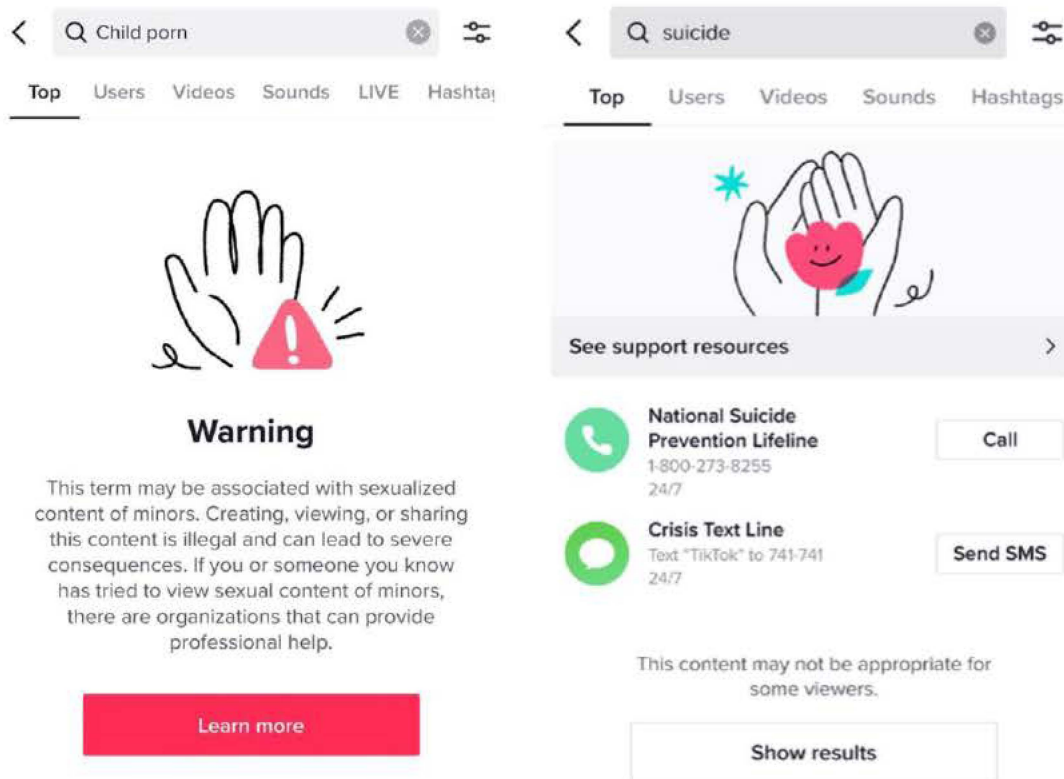
Currently, when a livestream, video or image is uploaded to the TikTok platform, the content is run through our [automated moderation process](#) where our systems work to detect and remove violations of our Community Guidelines, including Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM). Approximately 98.5% of proactively detected violations of all minor safety policies (not exclusive to CSAM) are removed before they're reported by users and 93.9% have zero views, meaning none of our community saw the content before it was removed. Our latest transparency report can be found via our [Community Guidelines Enforcement Report](#). These statistics demonstrate the high level of sophistication and accuracy of our systems, but also underscore our motivation to continually improve.



Accounts that attempt to upload, obtain, distribute, promote CSAM; or otherwise entice minors for sexual exploitation, are removed from our platform, their devices are banned to prevent creation of other TikTok accounts, and importantly are reported to NCMEC.

In addition to our automated moderation process, we harness technology created by other platforms including Google's Content Safety API, YouTube's CSAI Match and Microsoft's PhotoDNA to further bolster our internal detection systems. We also partner with organizations including NCMEC and the IWF to utilise their hash databases for both images and URLs of known violative CSAM and other exploitive content to ensure their detection and removal. And we continue to invest in our internal systems and hash content identified as CSAM to be redeployed into our detection system.

In 2022 we launched text-based prevention strategies such as the CSAM and Self-Harm Search Interventions globally. We redirect users who search for known words and phrases to an educational webpage on the harms of child sexual abuse material or self-harm.





Text Signals

We utilise several techniques to address text-based violations (i.e. keyword lists), including grooming and associated predatory behaviours. We also develop and deploy natural language processing models which can detect variations associated with particular behaviours.

We continuously expand our keywords and phrases, including URLs provided to us by our partners. New trends and tactics used by bad actors are continuously incorporated into our systems to ensure we maintain pace with predators using coded signals known to be associated.

Audio Signals

Like text signals, we have also developed audio models to detect speech violations and trigger human review for content which may lack visual or text-based violations.

Predatory User Account Signals

We also review accounts with a range of potentially notable public behavioural signals and escalate them to safety specialists for further investigation.

Support for Law Enforcement Agencies

TikTok aims to provide law enforcement agencies (LEA) the support they need to protect the Australian public. We are committed to responding to law enforcement requests for user information, disclosure or preservation in a manner that respects our legal obligations with respect to user privacy. Law enforcement agency requests we receive are carefully reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Our policies and procedures govern how TikTok handles and responds to law enforcement requests and require that TikTok discloses or preserves user data only where a request is based on a valid legal process or in emergency circumstances. Further details are available in our [Law Enforcement Guidelines](#).

In emergency situations, TikTok will disclose user information through a fast tracked, emergency process when we have reason to believe, in good faith, that the disclosure of information is necessary to prevent the imminent risk of death or serious physical injury to any person.

TikTok regularly provides training to law enforcement to ensure an up to date understanding of our legal requirements for data disclosures, preservation, emergency requests and any other additional support. We regularly receive feedback from law enforcement on the form and content of our NCMEC reports.



This is shared internally to incorporate improvements where possible, in compliance with the legal constraints of the jurisdictions in which we operate.

TikTok's Law Enforcement Outreach team seeks to maintain strong relationships with Australian LEAs and associated organisations, including the Australian Centre for Countering Child Exploitation (ACCCE). Our Outreach team is responsible for ensuring Australian LEAs are familiar with our Law Enforcement Guidelines and provides guidance during the submission of legally valid preservation and data disclosure requests as required. We proactively reach out to Law Enforcement Agencies to discuss emerging trends and key concerns, and share these insights with our Trust and Safety team to enhance the safety of our platform.

Reports made to NCMEC by TikTok are received and triaged by the ACCCE. If TikTok identifies a child at imminent risk, in addition to reporting via NCMEC, we will proactively alert Australian law enforcement, consistent with our Emergency Disclosure processes. We have established clear escalation channels with Australian Federal Police (AFP) and state law enforcement through which our Emergency Response Teams receive requests or proactively escalate emergencies involving imminent harm or the risk of death or serious physical injury to a child or person.

Our engagement and education efforts with Australian LEAs have resulted in an increase in data disclosure requests over the last 18 months. For example, we saw a drastic increase in reporting over the course of a year as a result of our additional engagement, from 1 request in the first half of 2021, to 87 requests in the first half of 2022. Further data on our law enforcement requests is available in our [transparency centre](#).

Throughout 2022 in Australia, we proactively engaged with technology focussed policing and child safety forums including the Australia Home Affairs Digital Industry Event, the Digital Platforms Conference hosted by the Queensland Police Service, and the Australian Institute of Criminology led Online Sexual Exploitation of Children Forum.

This type of engagement, cooperation and collaboration is critical in our collective efforts, between ourselves and law enforcement, to combat child exploitation in all its forms.