

Joint Committee on Law Enforcement
Law enforcement capabilities in relation to child exploitation
Attorney-General's Department

Hearing date: 15 November 2022

Hansard page: 25

Helen Polley asked the following question:

Ms Kilpatrick: I can assist you somewhat. I think it's useful to start with the premise of the National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse being that child sexual abuse is preventable. Sometimes in the face of the stats we can lose sight of the fact that it is based on that premise. The national strategy aims, I think, to shift the conversation or shift the work of governments way from the strictly tertiary end—what might be considered a law enforcement response once a crime has taken place—and move it towards primary prevention and secondary intervention.

There are two particular programs under the strategy that I would bring to your attention which go towards offending. One is a measure to set up a national prevention service for people who have thoughts and concerns about their own behaviour towards children but perhaps haven't yet offended. The royal commission made a recommendation that Australia set up a service similar to a UK model called Stop It Now, which is an anonymised help-seeking service where you are able ring up and discuss what might be concerning you about your behaviour, or what may be concerning you about somebody else's behaviour and get some advice about where you might be able to seek help for those thoughts and feelings. It's moving that towards early intervention or prevention. The second one is—

CHAIR: Before you move off that, if you don't mind, could you give us some evidence about the use of that service? Even if you've got to take it on notice, we'd like to have a brief on the service, how successful it's been and whether it needs to be modified.

Ms Kilpatrick: I will point out that the service we're setting up in Australia is yet to be established. We're going through a period at the moment of working out international best practice, including the Stop It Now model, how that translates to the Australian context and what would work best for us. We're doing that in really close partnership with states and territories and with police and colleagues. We can certainly look to provide you with some evidence around why the royal commission found some of these might work.

The response to the question is as follows:

Under the *National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse's* First National Action Plan Measure 21, the National Office for Child Safety (National Office) within the Attorney-General's Department – in close consultation with the States and Territories – is responsible for leading the implementation of a national offending prevention service for adults who have sexual thoughts about children or young people.

The service will be designed to be contacted by those who are concerned about their own thoughts and feelings, and those who are concerned about someone else. Its primary aim will be to intervene before a person commits a child sexual abuse-related offence, reducing harm to children and diverting people away from prospective offending behaviour.

The service directly responds to *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse* (Royal Commission) recommendation 6.2, which suggested Australia introduce an offending prevention program similar to the UK's *Stop it Now!* service. *Stop it Now!* includes a public facing anonymous helpline, website and online chat function.

A 2014 evaluation of *Stop it Now!* UK and Ireland and *Stop it Now!* Netherlands found:

"The research showed clear demand for these confidential Helplines providing information, advice, support and guidance to a range of people concerned about preventing child sexual abuse. It also showed that the Helplines can provide cost effective, quality advice and support to protect children directly, and to prompt behaviour change in adults and strengthen protective factors which can reduce the risk of offending."

The Royal Commission found there is a subset of child sexual abuse offenders or people who are at risk of committing such offences, who are aware of their sexual thoughts towards children and young people and want assistance to not offend. The Royal Commission further found there was support for this type of service from a range of different stakeholders including:

- victims and survivors and their advocates
- psychologists with significant experience treating those who have and have not acted on their sexual attraction to children
- other national helpline providers, who reported receiving calls from people worried about themselves and people worried about another, and who did not have the expertise to help either group adequately and had limited referral options.

In addition to *Stop it Now!* in the UK and Ireland, similar services have been established internationally in other like-minded countries, including *Stop it Now!* in the US, *Safe to Talk* in New Zealand and *Talking for Change* in Canada. We understand from discussions with some of these services that demand for these services is high and concerns primarily relate to meeting demand.

The National Office is conducting consultations to inform the design and delivery of the new national service. The National Office has met with international stakeholders to learn from experiences overseas, and have also met with domestic stakeholders to understand how a service needs to be adapted for the Australian context. International and domestic stakeholders include government agencies, clinicians, service providers and academics, and members or advocates of relevant priority groups including First Nations people, people with disability, culturally and linguistically diverse people and LGBTQIA+ communities. The intention is to ensure the service is accessible, effective, culturally safe, trauma-informed and non-stigmatising. The National Office has also been working closely with Commonwealth, state and territory law enforcement agencies to ensure the service is equipped to receive referrals from police and can comply with mandatory reporting and other legislative obligations where required.

The National Office is aware that in 2020, Jesuit Social Services and the University of Melbourne received a non-ongoing Westpac 'Safer Children, Safer Communities' grant of \$900,000 over three years to develop a pilot *Stop It Now!* program in Australia. The Head of the National Office sits on the pilot's advisory group, and will ensure that any relevant learnings from the time-limited pilot will be utilised for the roll out of the new national service. Further information on the pilot is included in eSafety's response to the question at Hansard Page No. 20-21, 15 November 2022.

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Hansard page: 27-28

David Shoebridge asked the following question:

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: I'm asking about the draft codes that were released by the industry for a formal consultation process that started 1 September and which, going forward, may well form the backbone of the Australian response to this. Has anybody from the child abuse or family violence section, the Cybercrime and Cross Border Data Branch or the International and Security Cooperation Division within the Attorney-General's Department engaged with the draft codes?

Ms Inverarity: I think what Mr Nott just said is that we had been consulted and provided comments, but we may need to take on notice the dates.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: I think Mr Nott said 'an earlier iteration' actually. That's what I heard.

Ms Inverarity: Drafts.

Mr Nott: Yes—of the drafts. We were consulted on the draft versions.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: The ones that went out on 1 September 2022?

Ms Inverarity: I understand we saw drafts of what eventually became the versions that we now—

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: Drafts of the drafts?

Ms Inverarity: Yes—sorry.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: My question is quite simple, and it's getting confusing, Ms Inverarity. I'm asking specifically about the 1 September—

CHAIR: Can I just remind you, Senator—to help us all get the information we're seeking—to ask the question and allow the witness to answer. I think that would be helpful.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: It helps if you address my question, which was about the draft process.

Ms Inverarity: Apologies. I think we were thinking of the final version of the drafts that were released, and we had been consulted in their development. If you would like us to take on notice the details of the consultation, we can get back to you.

The response to the question is as follows:

On 18 October 2022, the Attorney-General's Department made a submission as part of the public consultation process on the draft Consolidated Industry Codes of Practice for the Online Industry, Phase 1 (class 1A and class 1B material), led by the Digital Industry Group Inc. (DIGI) on behalf of associations representing digital industry. The department's submission was developed in consultation with the Australian Federal Police and the Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation.