



**Tasmania
POLICE**

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The Secretary
Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir

INQUIRY INTO CYBER-SAFETY

Thank you for your invitation to make a submission regarding the abovementioned inquiry.

To date Tasmania Police has not engaged in a comprehensive response to the issue of cyber-safety, but instead has focused on the investigation and prosecution of individual instances of offending. This has resulted in the charging of numerous persons with online offending, but anecdotally it appears very few instances have directly involved children.

The online offending involving children most often prosecuted by Tasmania Police relates to the possession and distribution of child pornography. However, in the investigations conducted by our agency there have been few substantial instances of the offending material being produced in this jurisdiction, meaning the major threat to Tasmanian children is exposure to the material rather than the exploitation involved in its production.

We have also seen several instances of children being groomed by adult offenders through the use of computer and mobile telephone technology. However, the extent of this is difficult to gauge. We do not currently conduct proactive investigations to identify potential offenders, and it is quite likely that many incidents of this nature go unreported.

Other than the above mentioned types of sexual exploitation, the types of online dangers we have seen affecting children are largely the same as those affecting all computer users. Most commonly those risks involve exposure to various types of fraud/scams, including identity fraud, although there are also other issues with *malware* that can affect people's ability to access technological services.

These issues were largely addressed in a response last year to the more general Inquiry Into Cyber-Crime conducted by the Commonwealth Parliament.

Although the issue of cyber-bullying is one that has recently received significant media attention, we do not see that as being primarily a policing issue. Where the offending conduct is sufficiently serious as to disclose a criminal offence, for example Stalking, there is of course a role for law enforcement, but in other less serious cases we see bullying as primarily being a parental and education issue. Involving police officers in less serious cases can sometimes have undesirable effects, such as creating an inflated perception of incidents, which in turn makes them more difficult to resolve.

With regard to prevention measures, Tasmania Police regularly engages with local school communities in a range of educational programs. These programs have included general information on online safety, and currently we are supporting the Tasmanian 2010 Crime Stoppers Youth Challenge, which this year targets e-safety. The youth challenge involves Tasmanian school children examining crime and community safety related issues and developing changes to address them.

Despite some involvement in prevention programs our primarily law enforcement focus in this area means that our agency is not particularly well placed to address many of the inquiry's terms of reference. Instead it is likely that most topics could be more comprehensively addressed by those who have greater involvement in the care and supervision of children.

Yours faithfully

D L Hine
ACTING COMMISSIONER OF POLICE



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