

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL POLICE

Question No. 49

Senator Ludlam asked the following question at the hearing on 8 February 2010:

Child sexual abuse research:

- a) Has the Australian Federal Police (AFP) conducted any research on the proportion of child sexual abuse material that is available on live URLs as opposed to material on the dark net (file sharing; peer-to-peer channels and so on)?
- b) What is proportion of time AFP officers spend tracking down material that is available on public channels as opposed to those that are shared peer-to-peer and so on?
- c) What is the average residence time of a live URL of that sort of material? How long is it there for?

The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:

- a) The AFP has not undertaken research to determine the proportion of child sexual abuse material available on live URLs as opposed to material available via file sharing or peer to peer networks.
- b) AFP child protection operations occur flexibly on a reactive and proactive basis. Online child protection operations can cross rapidly between various online environments which makes it difficult to definitively state a proportion of time spent addressing a specific environment. For example, offenders may transition from illegal websites, to peer to peer to private instant messaging in a network to exchange child exploitation material.
- c) URLs for websites containing child exploitation material can and do change rapidly, sometimes within hours or days. The criminals behind commercial child exploitation are often outside of Australia, highly sophisticated and involved in other types of criminal activity. The content is usually stored within overseas servers, sometimes in multiple locations – the URLs which point to these servers can be easily and rapidly changed.

The AFP is aware (through the Australian Communications and Media Authority) of data from the Internet Watch Foundation in the United Kingdom indicating that eighty-one per cent of child sexual abuse image domains added to its list become inactive after 100 days.

(See http://www.iwf.org.uk/documents/20091214_iwf_annual_report_2008_pdf_version.pdf, page 8).