

To those whom it concerns,

I am writing a submission for the *Restricted Access System* being implemented by the eSafety Commissioner.

I want to write primarily about the measures that must be taken against the exposure of children and adolescents to pornographic and material. I work in student wellbeing at a high school, and am familiar with many of the influences and struggles present in the lives of children. The mention of porn and sexual descriptions amongst students is so frequent and widespread across the school, that it is clear to me that the measures currently in place to protect our children have failed and our children are suffering because of it.

How much access do our children have to pornography?

The porn industry has grown exponentially with the growing access to internet. "Adult Entertainment", as it has been deceptively called, is now accessible within 3 taps on a smartphone and requires no kind of age-authentication process. Any child can lie their way through an age verification question easily.

Telstra has researched that the average time a child spends on a smartphone is 21 hours a week, not including tablets or computers with internet access. Children have these devices when they are alone in their room, at school, on the bus, and in the bathroom. They are constantly linked to the internet, potentially being exposed to harmful material without parental supervision.

A *Business Insider* article shows that a few pornography sites get more daily visits than Netflix or Twitter.¹ Its estimate that all pornography sites combined get more views than any other online platform.

Research by a security company found that 'one in 10 visitors of porn sites is under 10 years old.² These children aren't just being exposed to 'soft-core' porn as it has been labeled. They are consuming extremely degrading and violent sexual acts, perhaps even live-streamed, that have a huge impact on a developing mind.

As a teenage boy I didn't need to be searching for porn for it to find me. It showed up on the side of articles, or as suggested youtube clips. I know and sympathise with the many young people who are tempted by these exploiters on the Internet.

Why should we protect children from pornography?

The negative effects pornography has on particularly a developing brain have been well documented. However implementing tighter restrictions around sexual material has been seriously resisted, possibly due to people's addiction bias to such material, or because of the amount of money to be made in the pornography business.

The reasons for protecting children from such material are manifold. Those who resist protecting children from such material are a danger to our society and should have nothing to do with children's education or welfare. Increases of porn use in children leads to;

- Increase of child-on-child rape and sexual assault by 400%.³
- Increase in sexual harassment, threats and pressures to and by children.⁴

¹ <https://www.businessinsider.com/internet-users-access-porn-more-than-twitter-wikipedia-and-netflix-2018-9?r=AU&IR=T>

² Razvan Satinover, Hot for Security: Bitdefender, September 20, 2016,

³ 'How Violent Porn Fueled A 400% Rise in Child-On-Child Assaults in the UK', Fight the New Drug, August 22, 2019, <http://fightthenewdrug.org/how-porn-fuels-child-on-child-sex-attacks>.

⁴ Kayla Brantley, 'Teenage girls describe the brutal pressure from boy to text nude photos — and the threats and harassment if they refuse', *Daily Mail*, January 2, 2018, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-5232351/Teen-girls-pressure-boys-send-nude-photos.html>

- Increase in rates of childhood depression.⁵
- Problems in future relationships.⁶
- Objectification of young women, lack of motivation, sleep deprivation, decrease in social interaction, increase of addictive behaviour, increase in dangerous sexual acts, attribution to higher suicide rates, and lower self-esteem, without being exhaustive.⁷

Professor Freda Briggs, in a submission to the 2016 Senate Inquiry into Harm Being Done to Australian Children through Access to Pornography on the Internet, said the following;

“There is international evidence that some children become addicted to downloading pornography and rape younger children... clearly we are paying too high a price for adults’ right to view whatever they wish regardless of the consequences for young people and society.”

What preventative measures should we take to protect our children from harmful material?

To a loving parent I would ask, what preventative measure is too extreme to prevent your children from being sexually exploited?

As it stands, any device connected to the internet in Australia can access pornographic material in 3 clicks. Even simply using google images, a child can view “high-impact nudity” and sexually explicit photos.

The Australian eSafety Commissioner should make

Question 1

What elements should be part of an effective system to limit access to that kind of material?

- The internet should require an I.D. system, where internet users are required to prove their age each time they go to view explicit content online. At the moment it is far too easy for a child to lie about their age.
- The Australian Government needs to put stricter measures as to what companies such as Google are permitted to allowed to suggest to viewers on side bars and search results, and closely monitor what images Google allows on their image search engine.
- Develop software that can detect nudity on screen and block those images immediately. This software should apply for all users unless they have proven their age.
- Make pornography harder to find through search engines.
- Implement a high tax on pornographic material, similar to cigarets.
- When a user searches for pornography, have warnings and safety informations as the first results. Educate every internet user of the dangers of these sights.

Question 2

Has industry experienced any difficulty complying with the Restricted Access System Declaration 2014?

- I’m not sure. However, the finances of the porn industry should not be in consideration, considering the threat that they pose to our children.

⁵ Shane James O’Neill, ‘Mental Health, Depression, Suicide, and Pornography’, *Proven Men*, January 31, 2019, <https://www.provenmen.org/mental-health-depression-suicide-pornography-2/>

⁶ Peg Steep, ‘What Porn Can Do to Intimacy’, *Psychology Today*, July 16, 2014, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/au/blog/tech-support/201407/what-porn-can-do-intimacy>.

⁷ Fight the New Drug, <https://fightthenewdrug.org/get-the-facts/>

Question 5

What factors should be considered when assessing the effectiveness and impacts of systems, methods and approaches to limiting access or exposure to age-inappropriate material?

- As in every other aspect of government, the safety of our children needs to come first. The lengths taken to protect children are imperative.
- I understand that adults will still want access to pornographic material. If we must make a compromise, pornography should only be available through transaction and not for free, and with extreme measures to assure that children cannot access these sites.

Question 6

What systems, methods and approaches do you consider effective, reasonable and proportionate for verifying the age of users prior to limiting access age-inappropriate material?

- As I've covered, uploading a nationally recognised picture I.D. to prove an individuals age should be the very least of precautions. Just as it would be to purchase cigarets.

Question 7

Should the new RAS be prescriptive about the measures used to limit children's exposure to age-inappropriate material, or should it allow for industry to determine the most effective methods?

- Just as the Government is engaged in all areas of children's safety, so they should be in regards to the virtual, cyber sexual safety of children. The Australian Government should prescribe the bare minimum in child safety precautions needed to run a website or web service.

Question 8

Is there any additional information eSafety should consider in drafting a new Restricted Access System declaration?

- Dating websites such as *Tinder* are being used by children to see sexually explicit material and "hook-up" with one another.
- One-off I.D. verification may not be sufficient. But asking for I.D. each time an explicit website is viewed would discourage the viewing of such websites.
- Why should we consider the finances of industries which pose as a danger for our children, and unquestionable negatively effect the lives of Australians?

Thank you for taking the concerns of Australians on these matters. The future of our nation relies on how we raise and protect our children, and so an issue like this is absolutely crucial.

I look forward to hearing from you in return.

Regards,

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