

Jasmine Russell



November 13, 2021

Director, Online Safety Reform and Research Section  
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications



*(submitted by email)*

Dear Director,

**RE: Draft Online Safety (Basic Online Safety Expectations) Determination 2021**

To whom it may concern

I work in IT as a infrastructure cloud security engineer. My background includes small startups, SaaS, ERP, e-commerce and large international cloud services companies.

I am writing to express my concern with the proposed changes to the Online Safety Act 2021. It will interfere with IT professionals ability to run and develop systems for personal use. Information technology is evolving at a tremendous pace, both in functionality but also the policies and operational requirements needed to properly secure and operate to current best practice.

I believe the threat of \$110,000 (500 penalty units) and requirement for individuals and small startups to comply with reporting obligations and industry codes of conduct written for the likes of Google or Twitter, will have a chilling effect on digital innovation and IT entrepreneurship in Australia. For context, Atlassian, one of Australia's most successful IT startups was initially funded with a \$10,000 credit card by two University students in 2002, under the proposed Online Safety legislation, failure maintain appropriate policies for harm minimisation risks a civil penalty of 500 penalty Units.

We must foster the pursuit of technical excellence and innovation if Australia is to compete in a global digital economy. The CEO of Australia's next IT start-up success story, is likely currently a university student or software developer who spends their weekends deploying new platforms and integrating new technologies that they will road test on their friends and family.

At the end on March 2020 as IT departments struggled to support a 100% work from home IT network, many in my field used personal deployments to evaluate services and systems before deploying them as part of their job. This sort of weekend tinkering is common in IT professionals, allowing collaboration with peers or personal interest development that delivers a deep technical understanding of systems. A try before you buy approach.

As the world looked on in horror at news of Zoom bombings, independently myself and two close friends stood up our own video chat services for social use, partly to work around the overload on Skype, WebEx and Zoom but also because we each needed to understand what alternatives were available. Over the coming weeks the novelty of Friday afternoon drinks on video would wear off, Zoom would admit to and then promptly fix weak cryptography, not quite implemented end-to-end encryption and confess that a lack of geo-fencing had seen video sessions terminated on cryptographic key servers in China. While none of the video chat systems we build remain, the technical depth in authenticating and securing those platforms' lives on.

These small systems should not be exempt from the obligation to protect users from online harms, as IT professionals we seek to ensure our systems are robust, secure and fit for purpose, this is

typically what drives us to tinker and deploy systems in our own time.

I ask that personal use and private systems not used for commercial purposes be exempted from the heavy reporting requirements that would interfere with IT technical staff working to improve not only their own understanding but all the systems they work with both privately and as part of their career.

There is significant work to be done to secure and protect Australians' online lives; one that has grown with the move to remote work and learning. What would not have helped in March last year is tens of thousands of IT workers needing to register each of those chat, video or collaboration services as will be required under these proposed changes. While accountability is important, the risk to the community from IT workers undertaking professional development is miniscule compared to other corners of the internet.

Yours sincerely,

Jasmine Russell