


June 2024

Submission in response to the Statutory Review of Online Safety Act 2021 (Issues Paper)



Our Watch

Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Acknowledgement of Country | 3 |
| About Our Watch | 3 |
| Executive Summary | 5 |
| – Key Recommendations | 6 |
| Evidence base for the primary prevention of violence against women | 7 |
| Technology facilitated gender-based violence | 8 |
| The reproduction of the gendered drivers of violence through digital technologies and in online settings | 9 |
| Responses to the consultation questions | 12 |
| – Question 16. What more could be done to promote the safety of Australians online, including through research, educational resources and awareness raising? | 12 |
| – Question 29 - Should the Act address risks raised by specific technologies or remain technology neutral? How would the introduction of a statutory duty of care or Safety by Design obligations change your response? | 14 |
| References | 16 |

Acknowledgement of Country

Our Watch acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land across Australia on which we work and live. We pay respects to Elders past and present and recognise the continuing connection Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have to land, culture, knowledge, and language for over 65,000 years.

As a non-Aboriginal organisation, Our Watch understands that violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children is a whole of community issue. As highlighted in Our Watch's national resource *Changing the picture*, there is an intersection between racism, sexism and violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

Our Watch has an ongoing commitment to the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children, who continue to experience violence at significantly higher rates than non-Aboriginal women. We acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who continue to lead the work of sharing knowledge with non-Aboriginal people and relentlessly advocate for an equitable, violence-free future in Australia.

About Our Watch

Our Watch is a national leader in the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia. We are an independent, not for profit organisation established by the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments in 2013. All Australian governments are members of Our Watch, including the Commonwealth Government.

Our vision is an Australia where women and their children live free from all forms of violence. We aim to drive nation-wide change in the culture, behaviours, attitudes, institutions, systems and social structures that drive violence against women. Guided by our ground-breaking national evidenced-based frameworks, *Change the story (2nd ed 2021)*¹, *Changing the picture (2018)*² and *Changing the landscape (2022)*,³ we work at all levels of our society to address the deeply entrenched, underlying drivers of violence against women. We work with governments, practitioners, and the community to address these drivers of violence in all settings where people live, learn, work, and socialise.

Our Watch is currently funded by the Commonwealth Government to explore and expand prevention practice and evidence in new and emerging settings, including digital settings. A literature review and consultations are underway and will inform this process.

The Line

The Line campaign delivered by Our Watch is one example of how primary prevention can effectively utilise technology to encourage behaviour change. The Line is a long-term campaign designed to increase young people's knowledge of what constitutes healthy and respectful relationships and to equip young people with skills and tools to challenge norms, attitudes and behaviours that drive violence against women. The campaign also talks about technology facilitated gender-based violence ^{4[08.J]}. The campaign harnesses technology to ensure key primary prevention messages reach young people on the social platforms where they are already active and engaged, and where they are otherwise likely to find harmful content that perpetuates the gendered drivers of violence. This approach aligns with the evolving landscape of technology use and establishes a foundation for the long-term reduction in the prevalence of violence against women.

Executive Summary

Our Watch welcomes the opportunity to provide this submission in response to the Statutory Review of the Online Safety Act 2021 (Cth) Issues Paper. In line with Our Watch's expertise and evidenced-based frameworks, this submission addresses consultation questions 16 and 29 from the Issues Paper, grounding responses in the primary prevention of violence against women and their children. Our Watch acknowledges the important role of the e-safety commissioner (e-safety) in promoting online safety. In addition to the regulatory functions performed under the Online Safety Act, Our Watch commends e-safety's focus on prevention through research, education programs and awareness raising.

Digital settings are important settings for primary prevention initiatives; however, they are primarily seen as spaces where harm occurs. The current focus of many online initiatives is on raising awareness about technology facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV), promoting online safety and supporting victims. While these are important, in order to prevent TFGBV from occurring in the first place, solutions need to look beyond an online safety paradigm and address what drives gendered violence both online and offline. There is less evidence about what drives TFGBV than other forms of violence however emerging evidence suggests the drivers are linked to gender inequality and discrimination. The forms and dynamics of TFGBV may be different to other forms of gendered violence but TFGBV is often an extension of existing gender-based violence behaviours, occurring online.⁵ *Change the story* outlines the social context of gender and other inequalities, and the reinforcing factors which lead to high rates of gendered violence including TFGBV. While more research is required in this area, this understanding has implications for decisions around the types of programs and initiatives funded to prevent TFGBV.

Digital and online settings are places where the expressions of gender inequality shown to be most consistently associated with higher levels of men's violence against women are reproduced and perpetuated. This includes the condoning of violence against women, rigid gender stereotyping and male peer relations and cultures of masculinity that emphasise aggression, dominance and control. These expressions of the gendered drivers of violence can be seen, for example, in online misogynistic content on social media, anti-feminist techno-social communities and in online pornography. The internet, and digital and social media play a significant role in influencing and reinforcing community norms. As a result, efforts to prevent online harm should incorporate primary prevention strategies that address online expressions of the gendered drivers of violence. There is considerable scope for primary prevention practice in digital settings to be expanded. As a result, this submission outlines a range of opportunities to address the underlying drivers of violence, reducing the prevalence of violence in the long term, both online and offline.

Opportunities for primary prevention in digital and online settings include, for example:

- Online campaigns and programs that directly engage with and address the gendered drivers.
- Supporting online influencers, organisations, and communities to engage in promoting gender equality and preventing violence against women.
- Cultivating critical pornography literacy by delivering initiatives that counteract peer pressure to engage with or valorise certain types of porn.¹

This submission encourages a whole-of-setting approach to primary prevention in digital and online settings, meaning that actions to prevent violence are wholistic and include policy, practice and structural change. There is an important role for governments to play in implementing policy and legislative change to support the effectiveness of primary prevention work in digital and online settings, including by regulating technology developers (both software and hardware).

Our Watch welcomes the opportunity to provide further advice or assistance in relation to the issues outlined in this submission. Please contact Director of Government Relations, Policy and Evidence, Amanda Alford at amanda.alford@ourwatch.org.au.

Key Recommendations

Our Watch recommends the Australian Government:

1. Include online and digital primary prevention initiatives as part of strategies to reduce online harm and prevent technology facilitated gender-based violence.
2. Continue to invest in research to build knowledge in how the gendered drivers of violence against women are expressed in digital and online contexts, among different cohorts, and which prevention strategies contribute to positive behaviour change.
3. Ensure organisations funded to develop digital primary prevention initiatives are provided with capacity building and training support in monitoring and evaluation so they can contribute to a collective evidence base and develop best practice.
4. Promote knowledge sharing, evidence building and capacity building by establishing a central repository for research and evaluation containing data and insights relating to digital and online primary prevention initiatives.
5. Integrate a stronger gender lens in Safety by Design processes to consider the disproportionate harmful impacts certain technologies can have on women, particularly in the context of violence.
6. Develop a national strategy for new and emerging technologies to promote responsible innovation and minimise harms caused by specific technologies.

¹ Further examples are provided in the body of the submission.

7. Consider applying Safety by Design processes to the development of government digital systems, especially those that rely on digital communications and access for key services that can be used to perpetuate and enable violence.

Evidence base for the primary prevention of violence against women

It is important that strategies to prevent violence against women, both online and offline, and through technology are grounded in the evidence base for what drives this violence. Our Watch's framework *Change the story* outlines a national evidence-based approach to primary prevention of violence against women. *Change the story* identifies gender inequality as setting the social context in which violence against women occurs and makes clear that the drivers of this violence are gendered. A primary prevention approach aims to stop violence against women from occurring in the first place by addressing the underlying social conditions that produce and drive this violence.

The factors *Change the story* terms as the 'gendered drivers' of violence arise from gender-discriminatory institutional, social, and economic structures, social and cultural norms, and organisational, community, family and relationship practices that together create environments in which women and men are not considered equal, and violence against women is both more likely to occur, and more likely to be tolerated and even condoned.

The gendered drivers of violence against women are:

- Driver 1: Condoning of violence against women.
- Driver 2: Men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence in public and private life.
- Driver 3: Rigid gender stereotyping and dominant forms of masculinity.
- Driver 4: Male peer relations and cultures of masculinity that emphasise aggression, dominance and control.⁶

Change the story also identifies four reinforcing factors. These factors each play a role in influencing the occurrence or dynamics of violence against women:

- Reinforcing Factor 1: Condoning of violence in general.
- Reinforcing Factor 2: Experience of, and exposure to, violence.
- Reinforcing Factor 3: Factors that weaken prosocial behaviour.
- Reinforcing Factor 4: Backlash and resistance to prevention and gender equality.⁷

Change the story outlines eight essential actions and four supporting actions that correspond to addressing the gendered drivers of violence against women, the social context of gender and other inequalities, and the reinforcing factors.⁸

The intersectional approach embedded throughout *Change the story* recognises that violence and gender inequality exist in relation to multiple and intersecting systems of sexism, racism, colonialism, classism, heteronormativity, cisnormativity, homo-, bi- and

transphobia, ableism and ageism, and their corresponding systems of power and privilege. An effective primary approach addresses these intersecting systems of structured inequality.

Technology facilitated gender-based violence

Technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) is a subset of technology-facilitated abuse. TFGBV captures all forms of violence and abuse that occur online or through other digital technologies that are rooted in harmful gender norms, discrimination, modes of oppression and unequal structures.⁹ Research indicates that women are generally more likely than men to experience technology-facilitated abuse from an intimate partner, a higher frequency of incidents, greater emotional and psychological impacts, as well as experiencing co-occurring abuse from the same perpetrator.¹⁰

The prevalence of technology facilitated violence is alarming:

- 1 in 2 (51%) people of all genders reporting they have been the victim of at least one experience of technology-facilitated abuse in their lifetime.¹¹
- 1 in 3 (32.6%) women have experienced monitoring or controlling behaviours.¹²
- 1 in 3 (28.9%) women experiencing sexual and image-based abuse.¹³
- 1 in 7 people reporting having engaged in workplace technology-facilitated sexual harassment.¹⁴
- 9 in 10 dating platform users with disability had experiencing some form of online dating app facilitated sexual violence.¹⁵
- Over one quarter (27%) of domestic violence cases involving technology-facilitated abuse of children.¹⁶

It is important for TFGBV to be understood as an extension of existing gender-based violence behaviours that are occurring online, rather than an entirely unique set of behaviours.

While technology offers new means, and new settings, to exert power and control over victim-survivors, research has shown that many of the behaviours exhibited by people using technology to abuse partners or ex-partners were similar to 'traditional' methods of coercive control in face-to-face exchanges.¹⁷ It is also less likely to occur in isolation from face-to-face strategies and behaviours with victim-survivors commonly experiencing a combination of technology-facilitated and face-to-face psychological, physical, sexual and/or financial abuse¹⁸. Because TFGBV is a recently emerging form of violence, there is less evidence about what drives TFGBV than other forms of violence however emerging evidence suggests the drivers are likely to be similar or at least broadly overlapping. While the forms and dynamics of TFGBV may be different to other forms of gendered violence, the abuse behaviour is linked to the social context of gender and other inequalities, including the expressions of gender inequality termed gendered drivers outlined in Change the story.¹⁹ For example, a recent study found that sexist and gender discriminatory attitudes and beliefs were two of the strongest predictors of engaging in workplace

technology-facilitated sexual harassment.²⁰ This has implications for efforts to prevent TFGBV. In order to stop it before it starts solutions need to look beyond an online safety paradigm and address the expressions of the gendered drivers of violence both online and offline.

The reproduction of the gendered drivers of violence through digital technologies and in online settings

Individual behavioural change (to stop people using violence) is one aim of primary prevention activity, but behavioural change cannot be achieved prior to, or in isolation from, broader and deeper change in the underlying drivers of violence. These drivers (outlined in more detail above) are embedded within relationships, families, communities, organisations, institutions and society as a whole, including in online settings. In addition to being settings where harm and abuse can occur, online settings are places where gender inequality, the gendered drivers and the reinforcing factors associated with violence against women are reproduced and perpetuated. Online expressions of the gendered drivers vary depending on the setting or type of technology (software or hardware).

Social media, influencers and online misogynistic content

Social media platforms can amplify misogynistic, gender essentialist and anti-feminist content through recommender algorithms. This can include, for example, content that condones violence against women through perpetuating rape myths and content that reinforces rigid gender stereotypes through promoting beliefs, lifestyles and identities associated with dominant forms of masculinity that emphasise aggression, dominance and control (expressions of *Change the story* Gendered Drivers 1, 3 & 4).

For example, a recent international study found that recommender algorithms used by social media platforms are rapidly amplifying harmful content.²¹ This can have the effect of fostering a skewed perception about the universality of harmful ideologies and opinions. The study found that young men are fed misogynistic content without actively searching for it within 23 minutes of setting up social media accounts.²² Many online social and digital news media companies rely on engagement driven and content agnostic business models²³. These organisations can promote inflammatory or divisive content to boost engagement levels and may implicitly or explicitly value and promote male peer cultures that are based on harmful forms of masculinity, and that emphasise sexism, homophobia and disrespect toward women.

The proliferation of online misogynistic content and popularity of problematic influencers (such as Andrew Tate), reinforces the need for prevention initiatives and resources that drive changes in norms and behaviours to disrupt and divert people away from harmful algorithms, including by promoting healthy male role models.²⁴ There is scope for technology developers (both software and hardware) to accept greater accountability for reducing the prevalence of harmful content and fostering prosocial voices and interactions.

Technosocial spaces and the 'manosphere'

Social media and other online forums can host harmful online communities that centre anti-feminist and misogynistic ideas and promote male peer relations and cultures of masculinity that emphasise aggression, dominance and control (expression of *Change the story* Gendered Driver 4).

The Manosphere is a word “used to describe a loose network of blogs, forums and online communities.... bonded by a central belief that feminine values dominate society, that this fact is suppressed by feminists and ‘political correctness,’ and that men must fight back against an overarching, misandrist culture to protect their very existence”.²⁵ The Manosphere is often a place where antifeminist and racist networks meet, where women experience significant sexism and abuse, and where men’s violence against women can be condoned, glorified and celebrated. In these technosocial spaces, researchers express the view that technology is enabling an “amplification of male hegemony and new articulations of aggrieved manhood”.²⁶ For example, online blogs, podcasts, forums and other social media platforms have become a place for organised and coordinated backlash and resistance to prevention and gender equality (Reinforcing Factor 4).²⁷ Researchers have highlighted how members of the Manosphere have been involved in campaigns of coordinated online harassment and abuse and have also connected these to ‘offline’ harm.²⁸ The radicalisation of young men into extremist groups through online forums and social media platforms is already happening in Australia and beyond.²⁹ The evidence suggests that efforts to address and respond to backlash must engage with online platforms, to consider their impacts on attitudes and practices of gender, and how they may adversely impact prevention efforts and affect women.³⁰

Online pornography

Evidence indicates that pornography reinforces the underlying drivers of violence against women, is regularly accessed by young people, and is impacting on their attitudes, behaviours, and experiences. As a result, the influence of pornography is increasingly problematic and the concern of communities, regulators and government.

Evidence identifies frequent depictions of violence against women in pornography³¹ and stereotypical representations of men and women in pornography, where women are portrayed as submissive and men as dominant or aggressive.³² Further, research suggests greater pornography use is associated with less progressive attitudes about gender roles,³³ a belief that women are sex objects,³⁴ rape myth acceptance,³⁵ men’s use of sexually aggressive behaviour³⁶ and strong attachment to traditional male ideology and roles.³⁷ Since the advent of online porn, some research suggests that the increased availability and accessibility that the internet offers has meant a marked increase in the dissemination of representations that are degrading to women and violent, all of which is seen to have negative impacts on male sexuality and men’s attitudes and sexual behaviours towards women.³⁸

Evidence indicates that pornography reinforces the underlying drivers of violence against women, is regularly accessed by young people, and is impacting on their attitudes, behaviours, and experiences. Our Watch’s research [Pornography, young people, and preventing violence against women](#) found that young people, and young men in particular,

are seeking out porn as a source of education about sex and sexual relationships years before having their first sexual relationship, meaning that pornography can be highly influential in shaping their perceptions of sex and sexual relationships.³⁹ As violence is often portrayed as consensual or pleasurable to women, young men are not recognising the behaviour as problematic or violent. The research highlighted that young people's views about pornography are connected to their attitudes towards women and violence and found consistent relationships between use, attitudes towards pornography and the gendered drivers of violence.

Driver 1: Rigid gender roles and stereotyped constructions of masculinity and femininity

Pornography commonly depicts stereotypical representations of men and women. Men are often portrayed as aggressive, dominant and controlling⁴⁰ and women are often portrayed as submissive, eager and willing to comply with the wants and demands of men.⁴¹ Women are routinely objectified in pornography and are not portrayed as important or valuable in their own right—any pleasure women derive is secondary or irrelevant.⁴²

Pornography suggests that women deserve to be treated as subservient, and as objects for male sexual gratification—this can cast women as targets for exploitation. Research has found links between the use of pornography and support for rigid gender roles—including male dominance⁴³ and female sexual objectification.⁴⁴

Driver 2: Men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence in public and private life

Pornography routinely prioritises the preferences of male characters and depicts men dominating women. This sends a message that women have a lower social value and are less worthy of respect—messages that can contribute to the belief that women are legitimate targets for violence.

Our Watch's research shows young people who watched pornography on a more regular basis were more likely to believe that women should learn to obey men, and that things tend to be better when men are in charge.⁴⁵

Driver 3: Condoning of violence against women

The bulk of evidence identifies frequent depictions of violence in pornography.⁴⁶ Significantly, both the physical aggression in pornography (such as hitting, slapping, choking and gagging) and the verbal aggression (such as name-calling) are almost always directed towards women. Female characters are often depicted as enjoying being subject to aggression—which can make the violence in pornography difficult for viewers to recognise. Pornography's portrayals normalise violence against women—but even more troubling, they suggest that violence against women is sexy.

Pornography consumption has been found to be associated with both verbal and physical sexual aggression.⁴⁷ Research has found that men who are very frequent pornography users have sexual aggression levels that are much higher than their counterparts who do not consume pornography very frequently.⁴⁸

Driver 4: Male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women

Pornography can reinforce aggressive and disrespectful male peer relations in two key ways. Watching pornography—including aggressive and degrading pornography—in a group can be a form of bonding between young men.⁴⁹ Pornography also depicts disrespectful and aggressive male peer relations, for example, in scenes where groups of men are having sex with one woman and treat her aggressively, or as an object for their shared pleasure.

Our Watch research indicates that young men who more frequently consumed pornography were more likely to believe there is no harm in men making jokes about women in front of their friends.⁵⁰

Responses to the consultation questions

Question 16. What more could be done to promote the safety of Australians online, including through research, educational resources and awareness raising?

Our Watch acknowledges the important role of the e-safety commissioner (e-safety) in promoting online safety. In addition to the regulatory functions performed under the Online Safety Act, Our Watch commends e-safety's focus on prevention through research, education programs and awareness raising.

The internet, and digital and social media play a significant role in influencing and reinforcing community norms and attitudes. As a result, online technologies have a crucial role to play in addressing the gendered drivers of violence against women. Many initiatives to date have focused on early intervention – to keep people safe in online environments – and response – to support victims of technology facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV). In addition to these critical initiatives, there is an opportunity to develop primary prevention strategies that will reduce the prevalence of violence in the long term.

Examples of online prevention initiatives include:

- The [eSafetywomen](#) initiative which has developed a range of resources and programs to prevent and respond to online harm;
- The e-Safety Commission's [Preventing Tech-based Abuse of Women Grants Program](#), which has funded a range of prevention activities; and
- The Line campaign delivered by Our Watch which effectively utilises technology to encourage behaviour change.

Digital settings provide unique opportunities to promote gender equality and engage in prevention work, however these opportunities are often overlooked as they are primarily seen as spaces where harm occurs.⁵¹ As a result, there is considerable scope for primary prevention practice in digital settings to be expanded. This aligns with the [National Plan to End Violence Against Women 2022-2032](#) which includes 'Harness technology in the

prevention of violence against women and children' as one of seven areas of action in the Prevention Domain.

Opportunities for primary prevention in digital and online settings include:

- Online campaigns and programs that directly engage with and address the gendered drivers, including programs that build audience understanding of sexist and gendered norms, attitudes and behaviours, and their skills to address these through 'bystander actions'.
- Supporting online influencers, organisations, and communities to engage in promoting gender equality and preventing violence against women, including by developing evidence-based frameworks and guidelines for the design and implementation of online primary prevention programs in a safe, ethical and impactful way.
- Cultivating critical pornography literacy by delivering initiatives that counteract peer pressure to engage with, or valorise certain types of porn, including information and practical tools and resources specifically for young people, and making these accessible to young people, for example through online information and education forums.
- Online media and digital literacy programs, particularly those supporting young people to critically engage with media and popular culture regarding representations of women, men, and gender relations.
- Engaging parents, including through online parenting communities, to promote gender equality in parenting practices, provide resources to challenge gendered norms, and enhance digital literacy to guide children's technology use.
- Focusing on men and boys across the life course with nuanced, co-designed content that equips them with critical thinking skills to reject misogynistic influencers and content, particularly in the online "manosphere" and incel culture.
- Integrating consent and healthy relationship messaging into online dating platforms, collaborating with providers to develop targeted campaigns and resources for diverse age groups and encourage user safety and well-being policies.
- Creating guidelines, training and support systems to equip primary prevention practitioners to manage the unique challenges of online work, including self-care strategies, moderation best practices, responding to backlash, and referring disclosures appropriately.
- Promoting quality assurance through the development of an evaluation framework for primary prevention initiatives that measures impact and outcomes associated with change in the gendered drivers.
- Establish cross-sector communities of practice that facilitate collaboration between domestic, family and sexual practitioners, tech companies, academic institutions, researchers, and lived experience experts.
- Leveraging technology companies to target audiences that are already engaged, supporting the development of initiatives to mitigate backlash, and harnessing the positive potential of digital spaces for accessible, community-led prevention while mitigating risks.

In addition, evidence and primary prevention practice in digital settings is limited. The work Our Watch is undertaking will contribute to identifying gaps, potential opportunities and building the evidence base. However, given the rate of innovation in how digital settings

are being used there is a clear need for rigorous evaluations of existing interventions to understand what works in this space. There are opportunities to partner with tech companies to support evaluation of online initiatives and the sharing of data to build the knowledge base on what works for online prevention.

Recommendations

Our Watch recommends the Australian Government:

1. Include online and digital primary prevention initiatives as part of strategies to reduce online harm and prevent technology facilitated gender-based violence.
2. Continue to invest in research to further build knowledge in how the gendered drivers of violence against women are expressed in digital and online contexts, among different cohorts, and which prevention strategies contribute to positive behaviour change.
3. Ensure any organisations funded to develop digital primary prevention initiatives are provided with capacity building and training support in monitoring and evaluation so they can contribute to a collective evidence base and develop best practice.
4. Promote knowledge sharing, evidence building, capacity building by establishing a central repository for research and evaluation containing data and insights relating to digital and online primary prevention initiatives.

Question 29 - Should the Act address risks raised by specific technologies or remain technology neutral? How would the introduction of a statutory duty of care or Safety by Design obligations change your response?

Our Watch is broadly supportive of regulation including strengthened and enforceable Basic Online Safety Expectations and industry codes that support the prevention of harm (including gendered violence).

The e-Safety Commission's Safety by Design initiative encourages technology companies to minimise online harms before they occur and embed safety into the culture and leadership of an organisation.⁵² This aligns with best-practice whole-of-setting approaches to prevention that aim to achieve change across all levels of the of the socio-ecological model within a sector. A whole-of-setting/sector approach to prevention means that efforts to address the gendered drivers must include structural, systems and institutional change within the setting that will support and increase the effectiveness of work in particular settings.⁵³ Governments have access to policy, regulatory and legislative levers that can support the aims of prevention activity within digital settings by compelling or incentivising technology developers to play their role in preventing violence against women both online and offline.

The rapidly changing environment poses significant challenges to policy makers. The various forms of TFGDV are expanding and diversifying with new and emerging developments and sophistication in digital technologies. The rapid proliferation of these

technologies presents a significant risk for victim-survivors as it is not easy to identify and respond to the full spectrum of potential threats. Even technologies that may be considered 'neutral' in terms of their propensity for harm can be weaponised by perpetrators, for example, 'smart fridges' and 'robot vacuums'. This presents challenges for policy makers and regulators. Drafting legislation to address technology-specific risks can be difficult in this context. As a result, it may be useful for governments to consider the Australian Human Rights Commission's recommendation to develop a national strategy for new and emerging technologies. This would promote responsible innovation through effective regulation that upholds human rights in the development and use of new technologies.⁵⁴ By setting clear government policy on funding, regulation and education, such a strategy can build community trust that protections are in place to address risks or harm and help identify common values and norms across governments.⁵⁵

In the context of TFGBV, there is scope to provide greater support to technology companies in adopting a gendered lens when implementing Safety by Design to address risks raised by specific technologies. This could be achieved by establishing stronger connections between technology companies, data privacy specialists and the domestic, family and sexual violence sector (DFSV). Safety by Design processes would be strengthened by providing tech companies with opportunities to learn the technical expertise of the DFSV sector such as common perpetrator tactics and the dynamics of coercive control. Similarly, the domestic, family and sexual violence sector would benefit from understanding technologies to better support their clients (for example in risk management and impact assessments) and advocate for change. In addition to taking steps to prevent direct harm caused using technology, given the significant power and capacity of technology developers to influence community norms and values, technology developers also have a role to play in addressing online expressions of the gendered drivers to prevent all forms violence against women both online and offline.

Recommendation

Our Watch recommends the Australian Government:

5. Integrate a stronger gender lens in Safety by Design processes to consider the disproportionate harmful impacts certain technologies can have on women, particularly in the context of violence.
6. Develop a national strategy for new and emerging technologies to promote responsible innovation and minimise harms caused by specific technologies.
7. Consider applying Safety by Design processes to the development of government digital systems, especially those that rely on digital communications and access for key services that can be used to perpetuate and enable violence.

References

- 1 Our Watch. (2021). *Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women in Australia* (2nd ed.). Melbourne, Australia: Our Watch.
- 2 Our Watch (2018). *Changing the picture: A national resource to support the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children*. Melbourne, Australia: Our Watch.
- 3 Our Watch, & Women with Disabilities Victoria. (2022). *Changing the landscape: A national resource to prevent violence against women and girls with disabilities*. Melbourne, Australia: Our Watch.
- 4 Our Watch. *The Line Campaign Summary: Case Study*. [internal document]
- 5 Centre for Elimination of Violence Against Women. (2024). *Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence: Insights from across the Indo Pacific* [Video]; eSafety Commissioner. (2023). *Technology-facilitated abuse: family, domestic and sexual violence literature scan*. Canberra: Australian Government.
- 6 Our Watch. (2021). *Change the story*. pp. 36-45
- 7 Our Watch. (2021). *Change the story*. p.70.
- 8 Our Watch. (2021). *Change the story*. pp. 59-65.
- 9 eSafety Commissioner. (2023). *Technology-facilitated abuse: family, domestic and sexual violence literature scan*. Canberra: Australian Government.
- 10 eSafety Commissioner. (2023). *Technology-facilitated abuse: family, domestic and sexual violence literature scan*. Canberra: Australian Government; Powell, A., Flynn, A., & Hinds, S. (2022). *Technology-facilitated abuse: National survey of Australian adults' experiences* (Research report, 12/2022). ANROWS.
- 11 Powell, A., Flynn, A., & Hinds, S. (2022). *Technology-facilitated abuse: National survey of Australian adults' experiences* (Research report, 12/2022). ANROWS.
- 12 Powell, A., Flynn, A., & Hinds, S. (2022).
- 13 Powell, A., Flynn, A., & Hinds, S. (2022).
- 14 Flynn, A., Powell, A., & Wheildon, L. (2024). *Workplace technology-facilitated sexual harassment: Perpetration, responses and prevention* (Research report, 03/2024). ANROWS.
- 15 Wolbers, H., & Boxall, H (2024). *Online dating app facilitated sexual violence victimisation among people with disability*, Australian Institute of Criminology, Australian Government.
- 16 eSafety Commissioner. (2020). *Children and technology-facilitated abuse in domestic and family violence situations*, Canberra: Australian Government.
- 17 Fiolet R, Brown C, Wellington M, Bentley K and Hegarty K. (2021). *Exploring the impact of technology-facilitated abuse and its relationship with domestic violence: a qualitative study on experts' perceptions*. *Global Qualitative Nursing Research*. Vol. 8.
- 18 MacDonald, J, Truong, M, Willoughby, M, & March, E (2023) *Technology-facilitated coercive control practice guide*, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Australian Government.
- 19 See, e.g., E-Safety Commissioner (Website). Accessed 24 June 2024. <https://www.esafety.gov.au/key-topics/gendered-violence>

- ²⁰ Flynn, A., Powell, A., & Wheildon, L. (2024). Workplace technology-facilitated sexual harassment: Perpetration, responses and prevention (Research report, 03/2024). ANROWS.
- ²¹ Baker, C., Ging, D., & Andreasen, M (2024), Recommending Toxicity: The role of algorithmic recommender functions on YouTube Shorts and TikTok in promoting male supremacist influencers, DCU Anti-Bullying Centre Dublin City University.
- ²² Baker, C., Ging, D., & Andreasen, M (2024)
- ²³ Centre for Elimination of Violence Against Women. (2024). Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence: Insights from across the Indo Pacific [Video].
- ²⁴ eSafety Commissioner (2024) Being a young man online: Tensions, complexities and possibilities, Canberra: Australian Government; Who is Andrew Tate and why do young men relate to him? Research Series: What's really going on with young men? (Edition 3). January 2023. The Man Cave, Melbourne, Australia
- ²⁵ Marwick, A.E., and Caplan, R (2018) Drinking male tears: language, the manosphere, and networked harassment, *Feminist Media Studies*, 18(4), pp.543-559.
- ²⁶ Ging, D. (2019). Alphas, betas, and incels: Theorizing the masculinities of the manosphere. *Men and Masculinities*, 22(4), 638
- ²⁷ Marwick, A.E., and Caplan, R (2018)
- ²⁸ Dragiewicz, M. & Mann, R. (2016) 'Fighting Feminism-Organised Opposition to Women's Rights: Guest Editors Introduction', *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy*, 5(2): 1–5; Kalish, R. & Kimmel, M. (2010) 'Suicide by Mass Murder: Masculinity, Aggrieved Entitlement, and Rampage School Shootings', *Health Sociology Review*, 19(4): 451–464.
- ²⁹ Who is Andrew Tate and why do young men relate to him? Research Series: What's really going on with young men? (Edition 3). January 2023. The Man Cave, Melbourne, Australia.
- ³⁰ Our Watch (2019) Men in focus: unpacking masculinities and engaging men in the prevention of violence against women, Our Watch, Melbourne, Australia.
- ³¹ Klaassen, M. J. E., & Jochen, P. (2015). Gender (in)equality in internet pornography: A content analysis of popular pornographic internet videos. *Journal of Sex Research*, 52(7), 721–35; Bridges, A., Wosnitzer, R., Scharrer, E., Sun, C., & Liberman, R. (2010). Aggression and sexual behavior in bestselling pornography videos: A content analysis update. *Violence Against Women*, 16(10), 1065–85; Carrotte, E. R, Davis, A. C., Lim, M. S. C. (2020). Sexual behaviors and violence in pornography: Systematic review and narrative synthesis of video content analyses, *J Med Internet Res*, 22(5); Crabbe, M., & Flood, M. (2021): School-based education to address pornography's influence on young people: A proposed practice framework. *American Journal of Sexuality Education*, 16:1, 1–37.
- ³² Gorman, S., Monk-Turner, E., & Fish, J. (2010). Free adult internet web sites: How prevalent are degrading acts? *Gender Issues*, 27, 131–45; Klaassen, & Jochen. (2015). Gender (in)equality in internet pornography; Crabbe, M., & Flood, M. (2021). School-based education to address pornography's influence on young people.
- ³³ Brown, J. D., & L'Engle, K. L. (2009). X-rated: Sexual attitudes and behaviors associated with US early adolescents' exposure to sexually explicit media. *Communication Research*, 36, 129–51; Haggstrom-Nordin, E., Sandberg, J., Hanson, U., & Tyden, T. (2006). 'It's everywhere!' Young Swedish people's thoughts and reflections about pornography. *Scandinavian Journal of Caring Science*, 20, 386–93.
- ³⁴ Peter, J., & Valkenburg, P. M. (2009). Adolescents' exposure to sexually explicit internet material and notions of women as sex objects: Assessing causality and underlying processes. *Journal of Communication*, 59, 407–33; Peter, J., & Valkenburg, P. M. (2007). Adolescents' exposure to a sexualized media environment and their notions of women as sex objects. *Sex Roles*, 56, 381–95.
- ³⁵ Hald, G. M., Malamuth, N. M., & Yuen, C. (2010). Pornography and attitudes supporting violence against women: Revisiting the relationship in nonexperimental studies. *Aggressive Behavior*, 36, 14–20.

- ³⁶ Quadara, A., El-Murr, A., & Latham, J. (2017). The effects of pornography on children and young people: An evidence scan (Research Report). Australian Institute of Family Studies.
- ³⁷ Borgogna, N. C., McDermott, R. C., Browning, B. R., Beach, J. D., & Aita, S. L. (2019). How does traditional masculinity relate to men and women's problematic pornography viewing? *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*, 80(11–12), 693–706; Peter, J., & Valkenburg, P. M. (2016). Adolescents and pornography: A review of 20 years of research. *Journal of Sex Research*, 53(4 5), 509–31.
- ³⁸ Dines, G (2010) *Pornland: How porn has hijacked our Sexuality*. Boston: Beacon Press; Walters, N (2010) *Living Dolls: The Return of Sexism*. London: Virago.
- ³⁹ Our Watch. (2020) *Pornography, young people and preventing violence against women*. Melbourne. Australia
- ⁴⁰ Gorman, Monk-Turner and Fish. (2010). Free adult internet web sites: How prevalent are degrading acts? *Gender Issues*, 27, 131-145 and Marleen J.E Klaassen and Jochen Peter. (2015). Gender (In)equality in Internet Pornography: A Content Analysis of Popular Pornographic Internet Videos. *Journal of Sex Research*, 52(7), 721-735.
- ⁴¹ Gorman, Monk-Turner and Fish (2010).
- ⁴² Klaassen and Peter (2015).
- ⁴³ D Brown and K.L L'Engle. (2009). X-rated: Sexual attitudes and behaviors associated with US early adolescents' exposure to sexually explicit media. *Communication Research*, 36, 129-151 and E Haggstrom-Nordin, J Sandberg, U Hanson and T Tyden. (2006). 'It's everywhere!' Young Swedish people's thoughts and reflections about pornography. *Scandinavian Journal of Caring Science*, 20, 386-3936.
- ⁴⁴ J Peter and P.M Valkenburg. (2009). Adolescents' exposure to sexually explicit internet material and notions of women as sex objects: Assessing causality and underlying processes. *Journal of Communication*, 59, 407-433 and J Peter and P.M Valkenburg. (2007). Adolescents' exposure to a sexualized media environment and their notions of women as sex objects. *Sex Roles*, 56, 381-395.
- ⁴⁵ Our Watch. (2020) *Pornography, young people and preventing violence against women*. Melbourne. Australia
- ⁴⁶ Ana Bridges, Robert Wosnitzer, Erica Scharrer, Chyng Sun and Rachael Liberman. (2010). Aggression and Sexual Behavior in Best-Selling Pornography Videos: A Content Analysis Update. *Violence Against Women*, 16 (10), 1065-1085.; Klaassen and Peter (2015), see note 1; Eran Shor and Kimberly Seida. (2019). "Harder and Harder"? Is Mainstream Pornography Becoming Increasingly Violent and Do Viewers Prefer Violent Content? *The Journal of Sex Research*, 56, 16-28; and Office of Film and Literature Classification. (2019). *Breaking Down Porn: A Classification Office Analysis of Commonly Viewed Pornography in NZ*.
- ⁴⁷ PJ Wright, Robert S Tokunaga and Ashley Kraus. (2016). A Meta-Analysis of Pornography Consumption and Actual Acts of Sexual Aggression in General Population Studies. *Journal of Communication*, 66, 183-205; V Vega, & N Malamuth. (2007). Predicting sexual aggression: The role of pornography in the context of general and specific risk factors. *Aggressive Behavior*, 33(2), 104-117.
- ⁴⁸ Neil M Malamuth, Tamara Addison and Mary Koss. (2000). Pornography and Sexual Aggression: Are There Reliable Effects and Can We Understand Them? *Annual Review of Sex Research*, 11, 26-91.
- ⁴⁹ C Bryant. (2009). Adolescence, pornography and harm. *Trends & Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice*, 368, 1-6.
- ⁵⁰ Our Watch. (2020) *Pornography, young people and preventing violence against women*. Melbourne. Australia
- ⁵¹ Tarpey-Brown G, Block, K, Chua, G, Sutherland, G, Davis, E, Bergman, S, Vaughan, C. (2024). *Our Watch: Literature review and program mapping of primary prevention in three identified settings*. Gender and Women's Health Unit & Disability and Health Unit, Melbourne School of Population and Global Health, University of Melbourne, Australia.

⁵² E-Safety Commissioner (Website)

⁵³ Our Watch. (2021). Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women in Australia (2nd ed.). Melbourne, Australia: Our Watch.

⁵⁴ Australian Human Rights Commission (2021). Final Report Summary: Human Rights and Technology.

⁵⁵ Global Partners Digital. (2021). National Artificial Intelligence Strategies and Human Rights: A Review