

Dear Sir/Madam,

I write to provide my comments in response to the consultation concerning the review of the Online Safety Act 2021 (Cth).

I am happy for you to publish this on the internet, but I ask that the internet version does **not** include my name.

- **Financial cost:** It is extremely concerning the considerable expenditure incurred by the Commissioner, which I understand has quadrupled over the past year. This does not seem to include the extra legal expenses incurred in the recent legal proceedings against X, where they had a large number of lawyers and are likely to be paying the other sides costs. The \$40 million being spent on her office should be spent on more important things for the Australian people.
- **Failing to address cyberbullying:** I am concerned that the eSafety Commissioner has not been successful in stopping cyberbullying aimed at children. Even with an annual budget of over \$40 million dollars, I note that they have only sent out only a handful of formal notices.
- **Harming Australia's International Reputation.** We, Australians, have become an embarrassment worldwide, as a result of the eSafety Commissioners censorship activities, many non-Australians have justifiably formed a negative view of Australia as being backward and ideologically repressive. On several occasions in the past few months, eSafety's attempts at censorship have created a large amount of negative global publicity. We have begun to look like the precursor to George Orwells 1984.
- **Online Censorship:** I am extremely concerned that the eSafety Office and Commissioner poses a risk to Australian's freedom of speech. The censorship actions of the Commissioner appear to violate the established right to political communication that Courts have recognised for all Australians. This is not acceptable in a democracy. An example is the "Teddy Cook" incident which was not online hate, it was an individuals opinion, albeit supported worldwide by many. A Government and its associated offices should never be allowed to censor any individuals opinion. I follow this up below.
- **Censoring Billboard Chris** I am concerned about the Billboard Chris case, where the eSafety Commissioner sought to take down his post. Billboard Chris is an anti-child abuse campaigner who has been prescient in raising concerns about trans ideology and the threat it poses to children, particularly the harms associated with use of puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones and so-called gender affirming surgery. The attempts to censor him are therefore especially inappropriate. Along with this is the possible conflict of interest between Teddy Cook & the Commissioner herself Julie Inman Grant, covered in the below section.
- **Conflict of Interest:** I am very concerned on two counts under this section. Firstly there appears to be a prior relationship between Teddy Cook and Julie Inman Grant our eSafety

Commissioner. With only a handful of other cases having formal notices issued why did this particular post gain the commissioners full attention? Why was a take down order made? Was it entirely due to the relationship between the two named above? Or was it indeed that Julie Inman Grant has an 'axe to grind' against Elon Musk and the X Corporation, being that she was let go by X, formerly Twitter, this is my second concern within this section. She believes contrary to facts that X since Elons take over has become a perfect storm for online hate. This is very far from the truth. Maybe eSafety should fully investigate the Meta Corp, I am sure they will find what they are looking for there, hate and sexual misconduct among the top issues with Meta. I strongly believe that our eSafety Commissioner should be an Australian born individual, with no former ties to any social media companies, or large tech companies where a conflict of interest clearly exists, and therefore Julie Inman Grant should be relieved of the position forthwith.

- **Censoring the Bishop Stabbing Video:** It is very concerning about the eSafety Commissioner's attempt to censor the online video of the Wakeley Church stabbing, especially as Bishop Mar Mari Emmanuel, the victim, stated the video should stay online and visible to Australians. The stabbing, while violent, was not bloodsoaked or gory, and it is unclear why this video should be censored. It appears to be merely an attempt to censor the news. Attempts to censor the video appear to some to be aimed at shutting down conversation about these topics. I think this is illegitimate and anti-democratic. There has been no call for videos of Australian Police (especially Victorian & NSW Police) abusing Australian citizens during COVID, including strangling, kicking in the head & torso, to be removed, so why this particular video? Is it again the conflict with Elon Musk & the X Corporation?
- **Open Internet & Free Speech.** I am concerned that the eSafety Commissioner's activities threaten the principles of an 'open internet'. By monitoring and attempting to censor certain political opinions, the Commissioner is effectively engaging in viewpoint discrimination. An open internet would be one that does not involve government censorship, yet that is what the eSafety Commissioner is promoting through its online 'monitoring' and censorship. The threat of removing so called misinformation is in itself dangerous. The recent Pandemic is a huge case in point. People with opposing views to the Governments hardline were labelled as spreading misinformation. A lot of this so called misinformation has now come to light as being correct, where upon the 'the correct' Government information has been found to be incorrect. In some cases leading to death and ill Health. Yes there are peer reviewed World Wide studies that support this, yet the Australian Government still say they are correct, in-face of full facts to the contrary. Censoring this type of information should be a criminal offence and against our Human Rights as Australian Citizens. The fear of being reported to eSafety could discourage users from expressing unpopular albeit valid opinions or engaging in robust debate. This "chilling effect" could stifle the diversity of online discourse and limit the free flow of information. I strongly oppose any 'great firewall' of Australia that would inhibit full free speech and valid discussion on all topics.
- **Banning VPN's:** Virtual Private Networks are used by individuals, businesses and other organisations for the purposes of protecting their online privacy and security - or genuine

'eSafety'. As part of their recent attempts to enact a worldwide ban of video images of the stabbing of Bishop Mar Mari Emmanuel, the eSafety Commissioner argued in court that VPN's should be banned. It is highly inappropriate for the eSafety Commissioner to be trying to control the internet in this manner, just because she wants to control what people can see online.

- **Lack of Transparency:** My concern is that the eSafety Commissioner is trying to hide information about its operations and staff. This raises serious concerns about transparency and fairness - people generally have the right to stand up to natural justice. This shows hypocrisy and lack of transparency from e-safety: these are actions you would expect from a foreign intelligence agency, not a civil servant.

### Alternative Approaches to Online Safety

Several alternative approaches could be considered to promote a safer online environment:

- **Education:** Empowering users with digital literacy skills and critical thinking abilities is crucial. Education programs can teach users how to identify and counter online threats, report abuse effectively, and navigate online interactions safely.
- **Self-Regulation by Platforms:** Encouraging platforms to develop robust content moderation policies and user reporting mechanisms is essential. Platforms with a vested interest in user engagement are well-positioned to address many online safety issues. X has been actively creating such policies where upon META has not been so forthright.
- **Empowering Users:** Providing users with tools to manage their online experiences is crucial. This includes features like content filtering, blocking options, and the ability to report abuse directly to platforms.

### Additional Considerations

- **Focus on Rehabilitation:** Addressing the root causes of online negativity, such as cyberbullying, can be more effective than solely focusing on reactive measures like content removal.
- **Freedom of Expression vs. Online Safety:** Finding the right balance between protecting freedom of speech and ensuring a safe online environment is a complex challenge. Open public discourse about these competing values is necessary.

This submission urges a comprehensive review of the eSafety Commissioner's Office, considering the issues raised and exploring alternative approaches that prioritize a safe, open, and vibrant online environment for all Australians.

Given the above, the simplest solution is to repeal the Online Safety Act. The review should recommend this outcome.

Thank you for considering this response to your consultation.

Yours sincerely,

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