

Joint Select Committee on  
**Social Media and  
Australian Society**



28 June 2024

**Ms Kate Thwaites MP**  
**The Chair**  
**Joint Select Committee on Social Media and Australian Society Inquiry**

**PO Box 6100**  
**Parliament House**  
**Canberra ACT 2601**

Dear Ms Thwaites,

Destiny Rescue welcomes the opportunity to submit to the Joint Select Committee on Social Media and Australian Society inquiry.

Destiny Rescue Limited is an Australian-based international NGO with more than 20 years' experience in countering child trafficking across five regions. Our expertise and case work also focuses on the online sexual exploitation of children (OSEC), where Australian perpetrators are often involved in offending against overseas victims. We recently celebrated our 15,900th rescue of an individual from human trafficking and child sexual exploitation.

Efforts to combat OSEC need to focus on the detection and removal of abusive content and the implementation of effective measures to protect children from exploitation and abuse online. Social media platforms play a significant role in the distribution and proliferation of child sexual abuse material (CSAM), with recent years seeing platforms become pipelines for the rapid spread and increased scale of the problem.

Destiny Rescue's efforts and insights addressing this issue, in line with the Committee's Terms of Reference, are enclosed.

Yours sincerely,



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul'.

**Paul Mergard**  
CEO Destiny Rescue Australia

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# Executive Summary

**Destiny Rescue is an Australian-based NGO with over 20 years' experience in countering child sexual exploitation, including the online sexual exploitation of children (OSEC), across five regions.**

**Social media platforms play a significant role in the distribution and proliferation of child sexual abuse material (CSAM). Social media has provided offenders with increased opportunities to access, possess and trade CSAM anonymously and at scale. The growing access for children to social media has seen a growth in at-risk online behaviour as well as self-generated content through online-grooming techniques.**

**The increasing prevalence of online child sexual abuse, including live streaming, is a serious and growing concern that requires the ongoing urgent attention from law enforcement, technology companies and society as a whole. Efforts to combat this issue need to focus on detection, removal of CSAM and the implementation of effective measures to protect children from exploitation and abuse online.**

## **(a) Age assurance**

Destiny Rescue notes that eSafety<sup>1</sup> has analysed options for a mandatory age assurance mechanism, and has identified that "... *There will be an ongoing need for research as the nature of the online environment and the risks to children continue to evolve.*"<sup>2</sup>

Destiny Rescue wishes to provide insights from our international operations to assist Australian policy makers to develop best practice age assurance approaches.

Social media is a prolific channel for the promotion and dissemination of CSAM. Destiny Rescue believes that

age restrictions, effectively enforced, are necessary to combat this rapidly growing trend.

## **(e) Child sexual abuse material on social media**

Social media plays a significant role in facilitating child sexual abuse and exploitation, providing anonymity to predators, easy access to children as well as being a platform for dissemination of CSAM. Destiny Rescue is particularly concerned with child sexual abuse material being disseminated over social media.

Three key indicators of global OSEC have been developed by Childlight and recently released (*Into the light Index*). See Appendix A.

*Destiny Rescue supports the government in strengthening policies and actions to remove CSAM from online platforms, both here and overseas.*

## **(f) Other related matters**

Overseas-based CSAM victims of Australia-based perpetrators do not currently have clear legal pathways to seek civil remedies (including compensation and restitution) from the perpetrator.

## **Recommendations**

**Recommendation 1: Collaboration:** That there be increased collaboration between civil society, government/law enforcement and business on the specific compliance measures in the Platforms Code.

**Recommendation 2: Civil Remedies:** That the Australian Government legislate to provide legal pathways to enable CSAM victims (including those in overseas jurisdictions) to seek civil remedies from Australia-based perpetrators, including compensation and restitution.



## Destiny Rescue Background

### **Destiny Rescue**

**Destiny Rescue is an international non-profit organisation whose mission is to rescue children from sexual exploitation (including online exploitation) and help them stay free.**

**Founded in 2001, Destiny Rescue has rescued increasing numbers of victims each year since 2011 – and has now rescued over 15,900 survivors.**

Destiny Rescue focuses on the child sex trafficking aspect of modern slavery. Destiny Rescue works with governments and partner NGOs and collaborates with local law enforcement agencies to assist in removing children from harm and supporting their recovery and reintegration.

Currently operating in five regions across Asia, Africa and Latin America, Destiny Rescue partners with law enforcement, governments, civil society organisations and NGOs that bring local expertise and cultural understanding to the fight against exploitation.

Our [Annual Report 2023](#) provides further background on Destiny Rescue's activities.

### *Counter-OSEC-Program - Thailand*

Destiny Rescue operates a Counter-OSEC-Program (the Program) in Thailand. The Program comprises a resilient network of empowered partners capable of sustaining and advancing the fight against OSEC and safeguarding children in a trauma-informed way. The Program leverages the use of global databases through a networked approach which enables identification of more child victims of online sexual exploitation (including CSAM).

The proliferation of digital technologies, increased access to the internet and growing usage of social media have created new avenues and access for child sexual exploitation online. Australia is home for 20.8m social media users.<sup>3</sup> The use of virtual private networks (VPN's) has allowed some users to avoid geo-restrictions to access global content.<sup>4</sup> Future legislative changes relating to data retention, online privacy and/or internet surveillance may impact VPN usage.<sup>5</sup>

**OSEC is a transnational crime that disrupts Australia's international aid and development program commitments to gender equality and good governance.**

## Social media platforms industry code

The Online Safety Act 2021 (especially Part 9) (the OSA) provides for online industry associations to develop, with the approval of eSafety, industry codes that apply to the online activities of participants in the respective sections of the industry.

Destiny Rescue commends eSafety for prioritising, as the first phase of development, industry-developed codes to prevent access to child sexual exploitation material.<sup>6</sup>

The Platforms Code took effect from 16 December 2023 and will be reviewed in 2 years.

It applies to the major global social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok, X and Snapchat.

Platforms which breach a compliance measure in the Platforms Code will be subject to enforcement action by eSafety, under the OSA.

## Meaning of CSEM and the sub-set of CSAM

**CSEM** The Codes define child sexual exploitation material (CSEM) as follows:

### Class 1 material that:

- includes or contains the promotion or provision of instruction in paedophile activity;
- includes or contains descriptions or depictions of child sexual abuse or any other exploitative or offensive descriptions or depictions involving a person who is, or appears to be, a child under 18 years; or
- describes or depicts in a way that is likely to cause offence to a reasonable adult, a person who is, or appears to be, a child under 18 (whether or not the person is engaged in sexual activity).

**Note: Exploitative** means appearing to purposefully debase or abuse for the enjoyment of others, and lacking moral, artistic or other values. **Offensive** means that which causes outrage or extreme disgust. **Sexual activity** means matters pertaining to sexual acts, but not limited to sexual intercourse.<sup>7</sup>

## Comments

CSEM covers a wide range of materials including those depicted in relation to:

- grooming – where an adult manipulates a child for sexual or sexualised activity;
- sextortion – where an adult blackmails a child who has already shared sexual content into sending money, or more sexual images or movies; and
- livestreaming – where an adult livestreams sexual or sexualised activity or conversations with a child online.<sup>8</sup>

## CSAM (as a sub-set of CSEM)

The Codes define child sexual abuse material (CSAM), which can be considered a sub-set of CSEM, as follows:

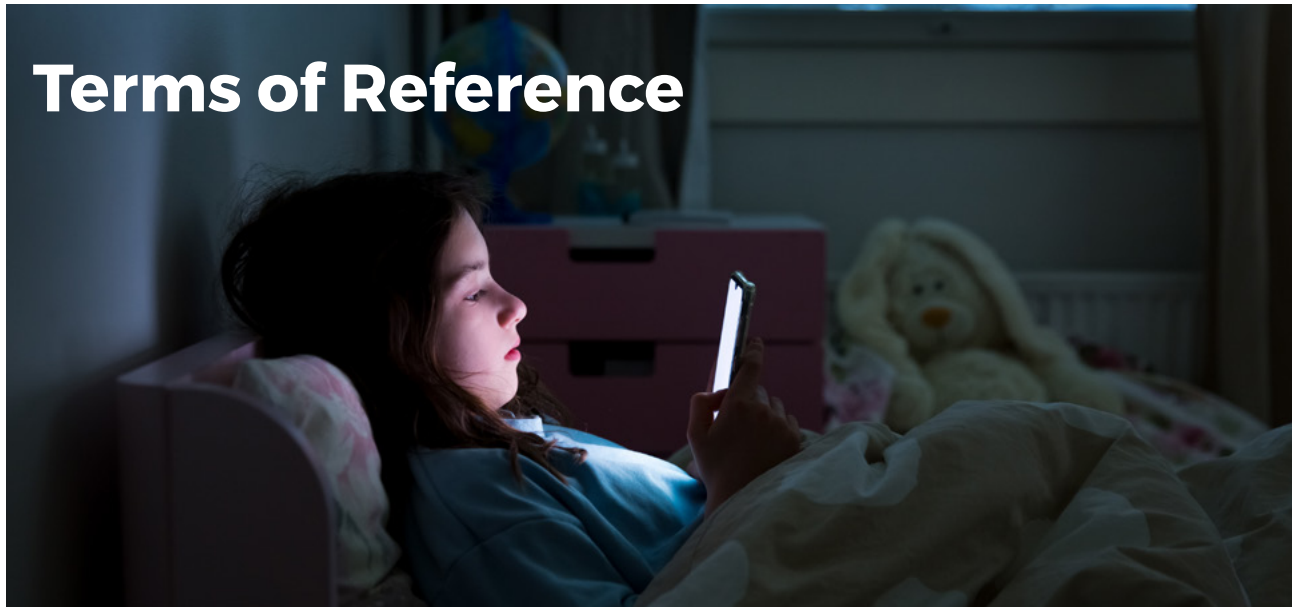
**CSAM** is CSEM ‘... to the extent that it is comprised of visual depictions of child sexual abuse’<sup>9</sup>

## Structure of this submission

This submission provides comments on the terms of reference (a),(e) and (f) of the inquiry as follows:

- (a) the use of age verification to protect Australian children from social media;
- (e) other issues in relation to harmful or illegal content disseminated over social media, including ... child sexual abuse ... material; and
- (f) any related matters.

# Terms of Reference



## (a) - The use of age verification to protect Australian children from social media

### Policy framework

Platforms have their own criteria for minimum age requirements for users. The majority require users to be over 13 years of age before they can register.

The minimum age is a requirement of US law (the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act, 1998), which prevents the collection and the storage of personal information from children under 13 years of age.<sup>10</sup>

Age verification for social media platforms is a complex issue with many potential benefits and implementation challenges. Age verification seeks to address concerns around the negative impacts of social media use, including importantly the protection of children from online risks. Exposure to inappropriate content too early can be harmful to childhood development, however implementation faces significant practical and ethical challenges.<sup>11</sup>

In Australia, eSafety has published a *Roadmap for age verification* (the *Roadmap*),<sup>12</sup> including a *Background*

*Report and Appendix*. The Roadmap sets out 6 Principles as the framework for analysis of age assurance methodologies and solutions.<sup>13</sup>

### Those Principles include:

1. Take a proportionate approach based on risk and harm
2. Respect and promote human rights
3. Propose a holistic response that recognises the roles of different stakeholders and supports those most-at-risk
4. Ensure any technical measures minimise data and preserve privacy
5. Consider the broader domestic and international regulatory context
6. Consider what is feasible now and anticipate future environments.

Destiny Rescue supports these Principles. We believe a multi-faceted approach is required, at both a national and global level.

### Technical Measures

Destiny Rescue wishes to highlight issues relating to technical measures to moderate age verification. When age verification is in place, layers to detect and protect need to be enforced. This includes both consent



from a parent, and the platform verification/gateway. In addition to this, ongoing usage should detect age appropriateness via the platform technology itself.

For example, an underage platform user posting photos should be detected through the platform's image detection as underage, in instances where the two initial verification points have failed.

Issues continually evolve as technology advances, and age verification becomes more complex to moderate.

### Gaps in the evidence

Destiny Rescue notes that eSafety has analysed options for a mandatory age assurance mechanism, and has identified that:

*"... There will be an ongoing need for research as the nature of the online environment and the risks to children continue to evolve."*<sup>14</sup>

Destiny Rescue wishes to provide insights from our international operations to assist Australian policy makers develop best practice age assurance approaches.

One potential evidence gap is the actual number of children below 13 years who currently have accounts on the platforms.

### Definitions

To provide clarity for the debate around this issue, the Roadmap sets out a very helpful explanation of the differences between the terms: *age assurance*, *age verification* and *age estimation*,<sup>15</sup> as follows:

**Age assurance** is an umbrella term which includes both age verification and age estimation solutions. The word 'assurance' refers to the varying levels of certainty different solutions offer in establishing an age or age range.

**Age verification** measures determine a person's age to a high level of accuracy, whereas age estimation technologies provide an approximate

age to allow or deny access to age-restricted online content or services. An example of age verification is the use of physical or digital government identity documents to establish a person's age.

**Age estimation** can involve the use of biometric data, such as a facial scan or voice recording, to infer a person's age or age range.

### Latest developments

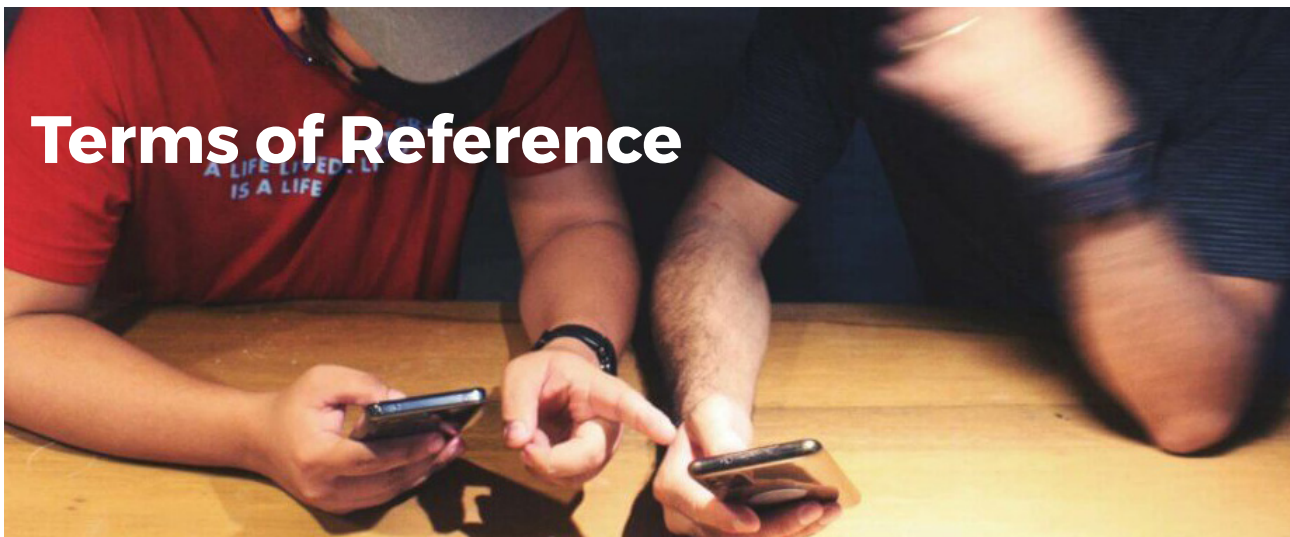
Destiny Rescue commends the Federal Government for announcing an age assurance social media trial, with \$6.5m of funding announced in the FY24-25 Federal Budget.

Destiny Rescue notes that Meta has recently announced that if Facebook users attempt to edit their date of birth from below 18 to above 18, they will be asked to verify their age by either choosing to upload a video selfie or by submitting an ID.

An earlier trial in Australia, for Instagram, required that in addition to providing ID, new options for Australian end-users included asking others to vouch for their age or taking a video selfie to be shared with Yoti, the facial age estimation capability.<sup>16</sup> This optional approach offers age verification or age estimation, at the choice of the end-user.

One potential problem with photo ID's will be the possible use by young people of AI photo-ageing technology to produce a photo of themselves at an older age.

Destiny Rescue is aware that social media is a prolific channel for promotion and dissemination of CSAM. Destiny Rescue believes that age restrictions, if effectively enforced, are necessary to combat this rapidly growing issue.



## **(e) - Other issues in relation to harmful or illegal content disseminated over social media, including ... child sexual abuse ... material.**

### *Child Sexual Abuse Material*

The online sexual exploitation of children includes various offence types. This includes the production, dissemination, and possession of child sexual exploitation material (CSEM), including online grooming, “sexting”, “sextortion”, commercial sexual exploitation of children and the live streaming of child sexual abuse.<sup>17</sup>

Of particular concern is the fact that 82% of known CSAM in 2021 portrayed children under 13.<sup>18</sup> An additional challenge for those working to address OSEC is to determine how the viewing of CSAM is linked to involvement in the production and sharing of such material or its use in the grooming of children for sexual abuse or committing of further sexual assaults on children (contact offending).

Most CSAM is held online. It is, therefore, important to understand how offenders inhabit and use the internet to groom children for sexual exploitation purposes.<sup>19</sup>

Destiny Rescue is particularly concerned with child sexual abuse material being disseminated over

social media. Social media plays a significant role in facilitating child sexual abuse and exploitation, providing anonymity to predators, easy access to children as well as being a platform for dissemination of CSAM.

Destiny Rescue applauds eSafety for recently producing a set of materials dealing specifically with child sexual abuse online.<sup>20</sup> These valuable materials are for the information of health, social and community sector workers as well as parents, carers and educators. The materials include key definitions relevant to the issue of harmful child sexual abuse material being disseminated over social media.

Destiny Rescue supports the government in strengthening policies and actions to remove CSAM from online platforms, both here and overseas. Evidence is available on the incidence of Internet use by children aged 12 – 17, who were subjected to sexual exploitation and abuse on selected social media platforms in several overseas countries. *See Appendix B.*

### *Rescue of children*

In relation to child exploitation and abuse material hosted in Australia, eSafety has the power to direct platforms to remove CSAM (ie to issue Removal Notices under the OSA). eSafety has also set in place procedures to ensure that it will only direct offending platforms to



remove the CSAM if the potential rescue of a vulnerable child in Australia by the Australian police will not be compromised.<sup>21</sup> Destiny Rescue agrees that this is an appropriate procedure.

In several countries in the Asia Pacific (and other regions) where we assist local law enforcement on cases, Destiny Rescue's experience is that many of the victims of contact offending have also been subject to child sexual abuse online.

Destiny Rescue is aware of evidence that many Australian-based offenders are viewing CSAM originating from countries in South-East Asia.

*One example is set out below.*

## The Girl Behind the Green Gate

5-year-old Chelsea (pictured right) was recently rescued from sexual exploitation in the Philippines.

Her rescue was the result of painstaking work by a Destiny Rescue agent ('Caleb') in collaboration with the National Bureau of Investigations (NBI) of the Philippines. In this particular case, the criminal, who'd been on the NBI's radar for years, had no less than eight "different international law enforcement agencies... hunting that suspect."

The offender had a significant number of fake online profiles, and was selling CSEM to paedophiles all over the world, including the UK and Australia.

You can read about this story here:

[The Girl Behind the Green Gate](#)



UK National Crime Authority Agents and Destiny Rescue OSEC director



### THIS CASE HAS RESULTED IN THE FOLLOWING OUTCOMES:

- 395 Australian suspects referred to the Australian Federal Police
- Multiple Australians arrested (to date)
- Additional suspects from the UK, USA and NZ
- Multiple children removed from harm (to date)
- National media coverage of this story in the Philippines and Australia

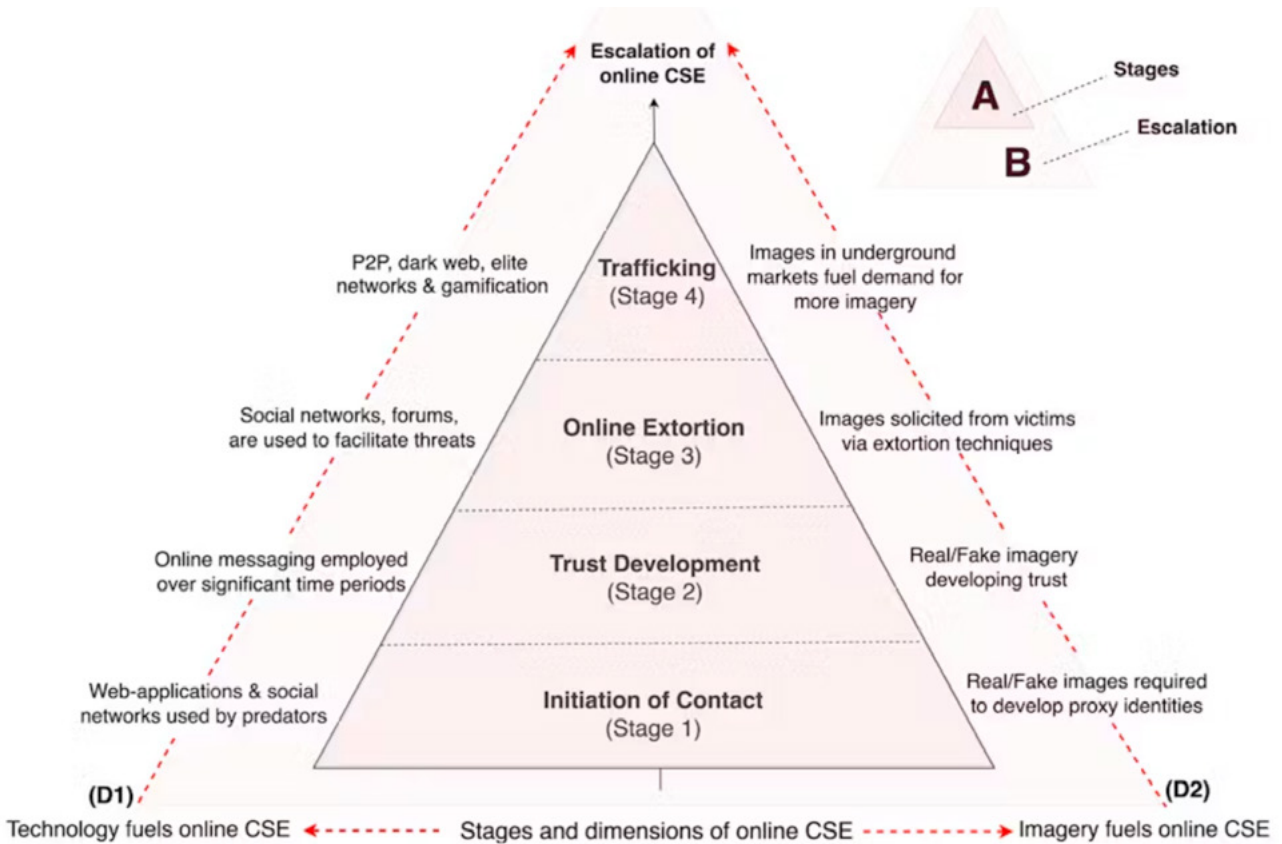


Melchor Santos arrested



*Online child exploitation - stages*

The stages of online child exploitation on social media platforms are depicted in *Figure 1* below. The critical Stage 1 is 'Initiation of contact'. If unwanted contacts of Australian children from unknown end-users can be minimised, then there is likely to be a reduction in the incidence of child sexual exploitation which, at its most grave stage, can involve trafficking (Stage 4 below).



**Figure 1. The Preliminary Technology & Imagery Dimensions Model (TIDM) of Online CSE (Depicting Only the Offenders' Side)**

Figure 1: Acknowledgement

*Online Child Sexual Exploitation: A New MIS Challenge* (2020): Dionysios S. Demetis, and Jan Kietzmann, pg 52. The development of models like TIDM can contribute to more effective strategies for prevention, detection, and prosecution of online CSE offences.



### Role of social media in grooming

**Cyber-grooming can be defined as a “... process by which a person befriends a young person online to facilitate online sexual contact and/or a physical meeting with them, with the goal of committing sexual abuse”.**<sup>22</sup>

The manipulative nature of grooming that many sexual offenders use to get close to their victims can cause ongoing thought distortions, self-identity issues, relational harm and isolation of the child.<sup>23</sup> The deception and betrayal of trust involved in grooming can deeply impact a child’s ability to form healthy relationships and attachments, with impacts often severe and long-lasting.

**Although cyber-grooming should not be considered as a linear process, five stages have been identified<sup>24</sup> that include:**

- 1. Friendship Formation** - in this stage the cyber-groomer first gathers information, such as sex, age, school grade of the intended victim and gets to know the victim;
- 2. Relationship Formation** - in order to gain the victim’s trust, the cyber-groomer starts to discuss more private topics with the victim, such as about the family, friends, school, and daily life challenges;
- 3. Risk Assessment** - at this point the cyber-groomer gathers information in order to reduce the likelihood of getting caught, which includes the location of the PC at home and parents’ work schedule;
- 4. Exclusivity** - the cyber-groomer encourages the victim to not disclose their relationship to others; and
- 5. Sexual Stages** - in this final stage, the victim is persuaded or forced to have sexual conversations online, to send sexually explicit images of themselves and/or take part in sexual activities via video chat.<sup>25</sup>

Depending on the responses of the victim, one or more stages are skipped and sometimes the order is changed.

In a qualitative interview study, cyber-grooming victims reported losing self-esteem after the cyber-grooming victimisation.<sup>26</sup>

### Global databases of known CSAM

There are several globally recognised child protection organisations operating to combat child exploitation and abuse. These include the National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), and Interpol. NCMEC maintains a database of CSAM images (still and video) that have been formally verified as CSAM. The Platforms Code refers to these globally documented images as known CSAM, which is defined as follows:

**Known CSAM means material consisting of images (either still images or video images) that has been verified as child sexual abuse material and has been recorded on a database managed by a recognised child protection organisation that:**

- (i) is designed to facilitate the identification of CSAM online; and
- (ii) which an industry participant is permitted to use for the purpose of utilising technological means to proactively detect such material on its service.<sup>27</sup>

Global databases, such as NCMEC, utilise hash-matching technologies to provide a unique identifier to each known CSAM image. Known CSAM images are then effectively aggregated into ‘hash lists’.

See a depiction of the hashing methodology in *Figure 2: Indexing CSAM Flowchart.*

Destiny Rescue is trained and certified to index and analyse CSAM. Destiny Rescue OSEC Agents are certified as Interpol Content Assessors, holding the relevant skills to classify exploitative images for the inclusion in Interpol, NCMEC and other cybertip provider portals.

**Exploitation models**

Destiny Rescue is encountering cases where technology providers/ platforms are being used by perpetrators to commit the crime of OSEC in all five regions in which we operate. Technology has not only enhanced and facilitated traditional forms of sexual exploitation of children, but it has also spawned rapidly evolving new forms and variations of this crime type.

The previous simple exploitation model has now evolved into a more sophisticated model, under which the victim is exploited multiple times via multiple platforms by the Primary Distributor of the CSAM. The Primary Distributor may make this material directly available to a group of end-users/offenders on a particular platform. The Primary Distributor may also make this material available to Secondary Distributors who then redistribute the material to their separate groups of users/offenders, possibly on a further range of different platforms. This re-victimises the initial victim multiple times, see this set out in *Figure 3.*<sup>28</sup>

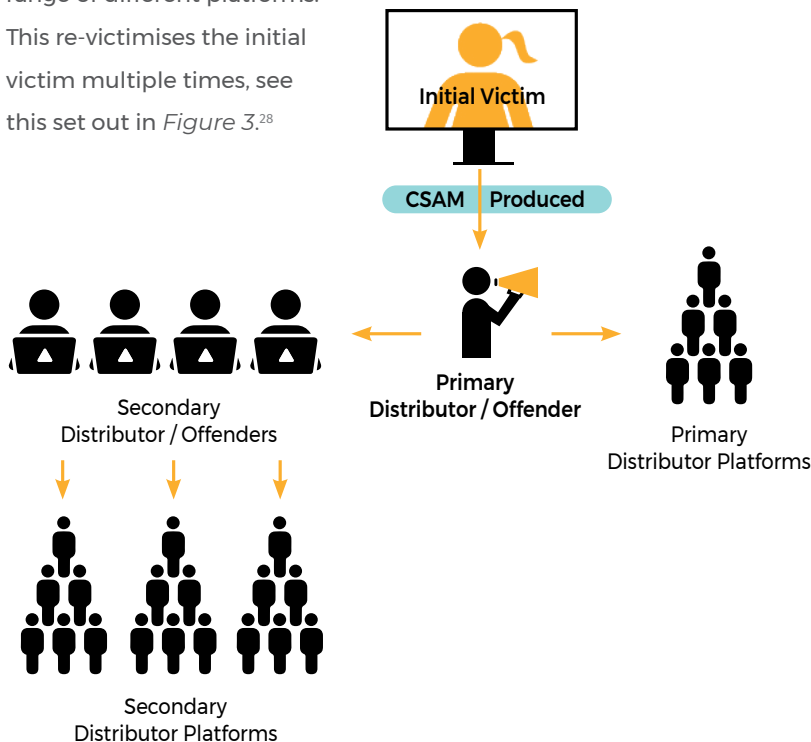
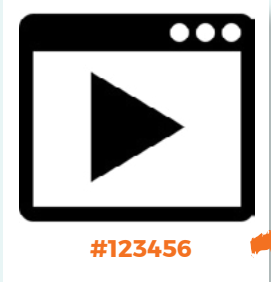


Figure 3: Exploitation Model

Indexing and recording child abuse content in source countries




**#123456**

Giving a CSAM video a serial number.

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Indexed material is sent to global tip-off bodies in NCMEC and Interpol

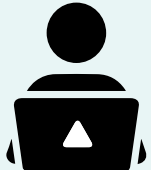


**NCMEC INTERPOL**

The serial number **#123456** is recorded and compared against internet traffic in Australia.

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Tip-off agencies send referrals to Australia regarding persons who are accessing this material



When an Australian views, downloads or accesses **#123456** the AFP are notified of the consumer's IP address and other relevant details resulting in more Australians being detected and held to account.

Figure 2: Indexing CSAM Flowchart



### Comment

The absence of a requirement for a major platform to report CSAM to a global cybertip agency, such as NCMEC, can best be illustrated by a case study in Thailand.

### Thailand social media example

'Line', Thailand's most used social and messaging platform, is used by 70% of the population (approximately 50 million users).

The platform is currently non-compliant with international cyber tip reporting guidelines and does not report exploitative content to NCMEC. This leaves a substantial amount of CSAM (particularly involving Thai children) beyond the reach of conventional global reporting mechanisms.

This reporting deficiency hinders the identification of Australia-based involvement in the OSEC crime cycle.

### Operation Accord

In a recent case (*Operation Accord*), in which Destiny Rescue partnered with the Royal Thai Police, it was revealed that organised criminal networks distributed over 100,000 child exploitation videos to 3,400 individuals through 'Line', with indicators of material being distributed to Australian-based offenders.

Enquiries revealed that none of this newly discovered CSAM content was submitted to cyber tip agencies or adequately stored and/or indexed.

Destiny Rescue has identified the need to facilitate and strengthen the connection between victims, reporting agencies and Thai law enforcement through data compatibility with NCMEC.

There is an urgent need to address the reporting gap and strengthen the monitoring and reporting capability of Thai law enforcement.

### Case Study



In December 2022, Destiny Rescue was requested to support three OSEC cases in rural Thailand.

On analysis, the offender had 102,000 pieces of CSAM material within 'Line'.

The offender's distribution network showed multiple foreign perpetrators who had purchased access to a closed group. Almost all of this content is related to local Thai children:

- **35 of the videos showed unique identifiers of the children**
- **all were assessed as current (and ongoing) victims of child sexual exploitation**
- **all were removed from harm by government social workers.**

In interviews, many of the victims reported they were also victimised directly by Western-based perpetrators (online), meaning that content had been distributed to foreign countries without the hashes flagging or being detected.

This is one snapshot of over 150 cases Destiny Rescue have collaborated on through our Counter-OSEC-program

Destiny Rescue Counter-OSEC investigators have observed that at least 5% of users are foreigners, including Australians, who are participating in abusive exchange groups within *Line*.

By addressing these issues, cyber tips relating to Australian-based offenders will increase.

#### *Collaboration with non-governmental organisations*

The Platforms Code requires platforms to collaborate with non-governmental organisations that have systems to share information to enable the platforms to detect and remove CSEM.<sup>29</sup>

#### *Comment*

This commitment is strongly supported.

Destiny Rescue is a member of the *WeProtect Global Alliance*.<sup>30</sup> As an alliance member we actively participate and collaborate to transform the global response to address the issue of online-facilitated child sexual exploitation. *WeProtect Global Alliance* is cited in the Code as an example of a non-governmental organisation to include in this collaboration. Stronger collaboration will lead to improved outcomes in responding to these rapidly evolving challenges.

**Recommendation 1: Collaboration:** That there be increased collaboration between civil society, government/law enforcement and business on the specific compliance measures in the Platforms Code.

## Terms of Reference

### (f) - OTHER MATTERS

#### **Civil remedies for overseas-based victims of online child sexual exploitation**

#### *Comment*

Overseas-based CSAM victims of Australia-based perpetrators do not currently have clear legal pathways to seek civil remedies (including compensation and

restitution) from the perpetrator. Dr Michael Salter has observed that:

*... victims and survivors of technology-facilitated child sexual exploitation by Australian offenders (whether in Australia or in the region) **currently lack adequate access to restitution, compensation and support, limiting their opportunity to recover from their exploitation and live healthy and safe lives.***  
(Emphasis added)

Dr Salter points out that, in the US, *The Amy, Vicky, and Andy Child Pornography Victim Assistance Act 2018* (the US Act) creates a systematic legal pathway for civil remedies, compensation and restitution that is specifically designed for the crime of CSAM.

Overseas-based CSAM victims of Australia-based perpetrators should not be prevented from seeking civil remedies where either prosecutors have chosen not to prosecute the perpetrator, or perpetrators have been acquitted due to a lack of the evidence necessary to establish the offence 'beyond reasonable doubt'.

Destiny Rescue notes that the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade (JSCFADT) Committee also recommended in the recent *The Pursuit of Equality report* " ... the provision of legal pathways to enable victims (including those in overseas jurisdictions) to seek civil penalties from the perpetrator, including compensation and restitution".<sup>31</sup>

#### **Recommendation 2: Civil Remedies**

That the Australian Government legislate to provide legal pathways to enable CSAM victims (including those in overseas jurisdictions) to seek civil remedies from Australia-based perpetrators, including compensation and restitution.

## Sentencing protocols

Low sentences for child sex offenders in some countries undermine the gravity of these crimes and fail to

provide adequate deterrence, with offenders receiving lenient punishments like probation even after repeat offences.<sup>32</sup>

The clandestine nature of the crime and low risk of detection or prosecution fuels perpetrator impunity, which further threatens the rule of law and civil society.

### Conclusion

Destiny Rescue has provided insights from international experience to assist Australian policy makers to develop best practice age assurance approaches.

Destiny Rescue supports the government in strengthening policies and actions to remove CSAM from online platforms, both here and overseas.

## APPENDIX A

### - Childlight - Global Index of Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Prevalence, 2023

#### *Childlight - Global Child Safety Institute* <sup>33</sup>

The Global Child Safety Institute (Childlight) recently released the *Global Index of Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Prevalence, 2023*. This is groundbreaking research in the global prevalence of online child sexual exploitation (CSE). Data is crucial for understanding the social problems we face. For many years, the true extent of CSE has remained hidden in the shadows. The research estimates that:

- 302 million children were subject to these abusive behaviours online in the past year.
- 12.6% of children were victims of non-consensual capturing and exposure to sexual images and videos in the past year.
- 12.5% of children were subject to online solicitation, for example, sexual talks and requests.
- 1 in 14 men in Australia self-reported that they engaged in forms of online child sexual abuse.

The Index comprises 3 key indicators of the extent of the global OSEC challenge, including:

- **Indicator #1:** Global Prevalence of Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (OSECA) Victimisation
- **Indicator #2:** The Prevalence of Online Perpetration
- **Indicator #3:** The Global Scale and Nature of CSAM (Child Sexual Abuse Material) Online.

These indicators are amongst the first of their kind, bringing together the publicly available data and providing a comprehensive picture of the scope and nature of the challenges in 2023.

**Destiny Rescue commends the Index to the Committee for its examination.**



## APPENDIX B – International Evidence

Evidence is available on the incidence of internet-using children who were subjected to sexual exploitation and abuse on selected social media platforms in several overseas countries.<sup>34</sup> See Figure 4 below

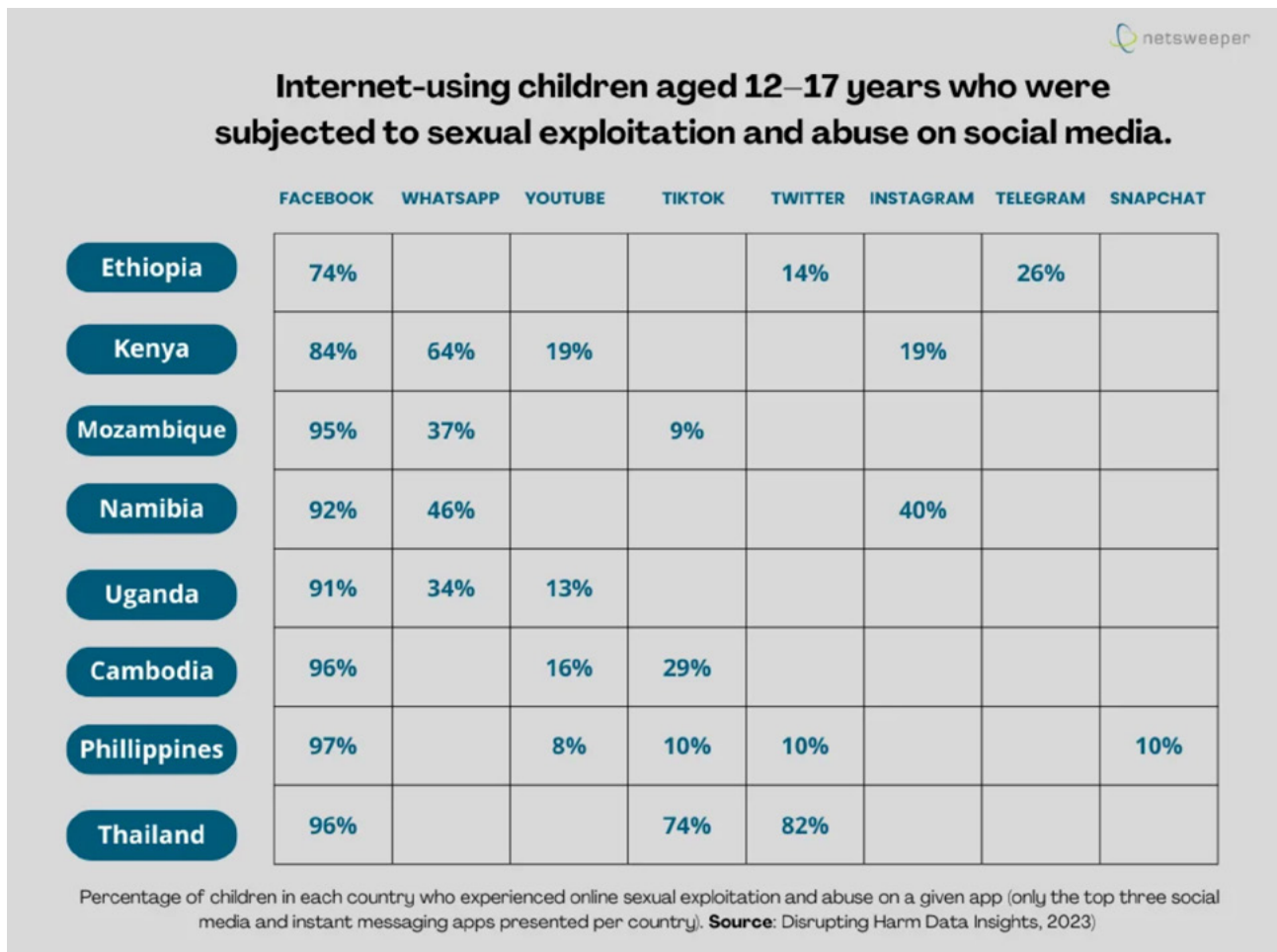


Figure 4: Incidence of internet-using children aged 12-17 years subjected to sexual exploitation and abuse on social media

## Endnotes:

1. eSafety means the eSafety Commissioner.
2. Roadmap for age verification, March 2023, pg 26.
3. Data Reportal – Global Digital Insights, Feb 2024.
4. ENTR Media – Canberra Times online, June 2024.
5. Ibid.
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