

Submission:

Online Safety Amendment (Digital Duty of Care) Bill 2026

Full Stop Australia

Full Stop Australia acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia, and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to them, their cultures and their Elders past and present.

1. About Full Stop Australia

Full Stop Australia (Full Stop) is a nationally focused not-for-profit organisation, which has been working in the field of sexual, domestic and family violence since 1974.

What we do:

- Provide expert and confidential telephone, online and face-to-face specialist trauma counselling to people of all genders across Australia who have experienced sexual, domestic, or family violence, and specialist help for their supporters
- Deliver best practice training and professional services to support frontline workers, government, and the corporate and not-for-profit sectors
- Advocate to governments and in the media for laws and systems that better respond to, and ultimately prevent, gender-based violence

Our advocacy draws on the expertise of our trauma-specialist counsellors and the lived expertise of our clients and survivor-advocates. We are committed to centring the voices of victim-survivors in our work.

This Submission

Full Stop is a member of the Working with Women Alliance (WwWA) and we support the joint submission regarding the Bill by Wesnet and the WwWA. This submission has drawn on and supports key points and recommendations made in that submission.

2. Key Issues

Support for the Digital Duty of Care

Full Stop supports the introduction of a Digital Duty of Care. We believe that a systems-based duty is an important response to the harms that are produced and amplified by the systems and design choices of online service providers.

We believe that the current model proposed by the Bill could be strengthened by paying more specific, detailed attention to addressing gender based violence (GBV) as a specific framework of harm that is particularly impacting women, trans and gender diverse people (especially those from marginalised communities).

Gender Based Violence is a Framework for online harm

Full Stop Australia's experience as a specialist sexual assault and domestic and family violence service shows the serious and differing gendered harms experienced by many women, people of diverse genders and non-binary people. We note that trans women in particular are often the subject of intense and serious gendered violence.

Gender based violence is a key experience in the online environment and the deliberate, specific, and harmful ways GBV is weaponised online against children and adults must be specifically

addressed in the legislation. So much of the online harms that the Exposure Draft seeks to attend to are within the framework of gender based violence, yet the bill does not set out GBV as a specific, overarching harm and nor does it require providers to assess, address and respond to this as a specific risk. The Bill would be significantly improved by addressing this.

The Seriousness of GBV Harms

Many of the clients we support across our Helplines have experienced technology facilitated abuse, often, but not always in concert with domestic violence or sexual assault.

Online gender based violence that we have identified, particularly through our work with victim survivors in our counselling services include:

- technology enabled stalking, harassment, and monitoring by known people, strangers, intimate partners, and former intimate partners
- sexual abuse via online platforms including image based abuse such as sharing of explicit images without consent, creating and distributing AI generated deep fake explicit material (including audio and visual material) and exploitation of information/ messages to create material about individuals
- abuse of platforms such as dating apps to share explicit and unwelcome images, harmful and abusive content and harassment that explicitly uses gender based violence
- abuse of a range of platforms to exploit, harass, or abuse vulnerable individuals and grooming activities to attempt to set up opportunities for abuse in real life

Our counsellors tell us about the significant and long lasting impact of gender based violence online on the people who seek our help and how this particular setting can be weaponsised in ways that leave victim survivors isolated, distressed and vulnerable.

Many of our clients are people who have experienced domestic, family, and sexual violence in a number of contexts and the online harm can be devastating as it impacts their safety in ways that are pervasive and unregulated.

Few people we support feel comfortable seeking redress and this type of harm is often used to coerce, control and abuse people over a long period. People describe 'omnipresent harm' long after a relationship has ended.

Those who do seek to pursue concerns via online platforms frequently report that they are met with processes that are not trauma-informed and at times, can feel to victim survivors like they minimise their experiences and fail to understand the serious impact on safety and wellbeing.

Beyond our counselling services, we also work with victim survivor advocates and other prominent women, non-binary, and gender diverse people. Their experiences of online abuse and harassment are often shocking and disturbing. Almost always, the abuse uses a gender based violence framework to attempt to denigrate, dismiss or silence their experience, expertise, and input. While this type of violence does not always sit within our counselling services, we observe the very real impacts this has on people's wellbeing, willingness to speak out and sense of safety online.

In our consulting work, we have often connected with online service providers who want to improve safety and response to gender based violence. Our advice has assisted them to go above and beyond current requirements to improve their response.

However, a clearer legal duty is required to provide guidance and support to platforms that want to improve their process and to ensure that those platforms who do not wish to proactively engage are given clear regulatory direction to improve their practice and response.

Creating a Baseline for Protection of Adults and Children

We acknowledge the special and important protection required for children online and welcome the Bill's focus on creating safety online for children and young people under 18 years. We accept that the Bill must attend specifically to the safety of children.

However, our experience in working with victim survivors shows that adults are also experiencing serious harm from gender based violence online.

Our services work with people from 16 years and older and the experience of technology enabled gender based violence does not end at 18 years – adults are subject to this type of harm at concerning levels.

The Bill would be strengthened by creating protections for adults online as well as those set out for children.

3. Recommendations

Full Stop Australia supports the recommendations set out by Wesnet and the Working with Women's Alliance in their submission on this Bill, noting that they provide a more comprehensive response to the Bill.

In particular we would like to emphasise our support for the following recommendations from that submission as of particular priority to Full Stop Australia:

Technology-facilitated gender-based violence

1. Amend the Bill to expressly recognise gender-based violence, including technology-facilitated gender-based violence, as a foreseeable systemic risk that online services must assess and mitigate.
2. Broaden paragraph 25C(1)(c) to recognise gender-based violence, including sexual violence, as a category of serious harm, and introduce definitions of gender-based violence and technology-facilitated gender-based violence.
3. Amend clause 26A to require providers to assess how any functionality of an online service may foreseeably be used by one person to harm another, whether or not that functionality was designed or intended for that purpose.

Image-based abuse

1. Bring image-based abuse fully within the Digital Duty of Care by expressly including non-consensual intimate material, altered or synthetic intimate images, threats to distribute intimate material and sexual extortion within clause 25C.
2. Define 'fake nude material' in section 5 by reference to the definition of 'intimate image' in section 15.
3. Extend section 86B to services designed for, or predominantly used to facilitate, the non-consensual sharing of intimate images.

A baseline of protection for children and adults

1. Insert an adult equivalent of subparagraph 25B(1)(b)(ii), so that all persons in Australia are protected from harms associated with the operation of design features.
2. Move or replicate the section 25D categories within section 25C, subject to an appropriate seriousness threshold, so that adults are protected from misogynistic material and conduct.
3. Amend clause 25C to include material that promotes or normalises violent practices capable of causing serious injury or death, including strangulation, with alignment to the *Criminal Code Act 1995* where appropriate.

Systemic discrimination, intersecting and cumulative harm

1. Amend clauses 25C and 25D to expressly recognise material or conduct that attacks, dehumanises or promotes hostility towards people based on one or more protected characteristics. Retain express recognition of misogyny and hostility towards women or gender equality.
2. Amend clause 25D to expressly recognise racial and religious hostility or vilification as harmful to children, including hostility directed towards a child's ethnic, religious or migrant community.
3. Require providers to consider harm directed at a person by reference to a combination of protected characteristics, rather than assessing each characteristic in isolation.
4. Broaden the definition of harm and the risk-assessment requirements to capture persistent conduct, cumulative effects and volumetric attacks, including conduct occurring across multiple accounts or services.

Enforcement and redress

1. Provide a direct right of action for a person harmed by a provider's failure to uphold its Digital Duty of Care.
2. Develop a whole-of-government, no-wrong-door approach to online harm, supported by formal coordination and information sharing across relevant regulators.

Guidance

3. Amend clause 26E to require the Commissioner to issue a code of practice on preventing and addressing gender-based violence in online services, developed in consultation with the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commissioner, specialist services and victim-survivor advocates.