



Australian Government

Attorney-General's Department

Child sexual exploitation laws

The sexual abuse of children is abhorrent. The sexual exploitation of children is a devastating and widespread form of criminal activity and the Australian Government is committed to taking all necessary action to protect children in Australia, and internationally, from these crimes.

All states and territories have laws against the sexual abuse of children. The Commonwealth also has laws against internet sexual offences, child pornography, and sexual offences committed by Australians while they are overseas ('child sex tourism').

Changes to Commonwealth legislation

The Australian Government has strengthened laws against sexual exploitation. The changes ensure that our laws are comprehensive and that Australia leads the way in protecting children everywhere from abuse.

We have a duty to ensure that with overseas travel commonplace, and the internet making information about destinations more accessible, that Commonwealth laws provide a significant deterrent to abuse and a sound basis for prosecuting offenders.

Equally, rapidly changing technologies and the anonymity that the Internet provides have resulted in unprecedented opportunities for child sex offenders. Our laws need to keep pace with the speed of technological change.

Extending child sex tourism offences

Australians who travel overseas to sexually abuse children will now be subject to increased penalties of up to 20 years imprisonment. Australians in positions of trust (such as through aid or teaching work), or those who take advantage of a child's mental impairment,

or who engage in a sexual relationship with a child over a period of time overseas, will be subject to even higher penalties of 25 years imprisonment.

For the first time, police will be able to intervene before a child is harmed, and before they leave Australia. People who groom or procure a child to engage in sexual activity overseas, or prepare or plan child sex tourism, will now be committing an offence. People who commit these offences will be subject to up to 15 years imprisonment.

Strengthening laws against online child sexual exploitation

Penalties are being increased for people who use the internet or a mobile phone to deal with child pornography or child abuse material, from 10 to 15 years imprisonment. People who are part of an online child pornography network will face up to 25 years imprisonment.

It will also now be illegal for adults to use the internet or a mobile phone to communicate indecently with a child, or to use those for sexual activity with a child (e.g. via a webcam).

New offences for using a postal service for child sexual exploitation

New postal offences for child pornography or abuse material or for grooming, procuring or sending indecent material to a child, will ensure that offenders will be subject to the same maximum penalties no matter how they engage in the offending (that is, either online or through the post).

Federal and State Police actively monitor and prosecute child sex offenders. If you have information about possible criminal activity, please call 1800 333 000.