

**Government response to the report of the Petitions Committee:  
*Petition of Holly Brooker: Mandate Internet Service Providers to  
block rape, bestiality, and slavery porn***

**Presented to the House of Representatives**

**In accordance with Standing Order 252**

## **Government response to the report of the Petitions Committee: *Petition of Holly Brooker: Mandate Internet Service Providers to block rape, bestiality and slavery porn***

### **Introduction**

- 1 The Government has considered the Petitions Committee's (the Committee's) report on the Petition of Holly Brooker: *Mandate internet service providers to block rape, bestiality, and slavery porn* (the Petition).
- 2 The Petition requested that the House of Representatives require internet service providers (ISPs) to filter 'rape porn, child sex abuse material, bestiality, and slavery porn'.
- 3 The Government welcomes the Committee's report and thanks it for considering and compiling the report and recommendations. The Government also thanks the petitioner for raising their concerns around access to objectionable content.
- 4 The Government responds to the Committee's report in accordance with Standing Order 252.

### **Recommendations and Minister's response**

*Recommendation 1: 'the Government review section 3(2) of the Films, Videos, and Publications Classification Act 1993 [Classification Act] to investigate whether the meaning of "objectionable" can be amended to make it easier to classify rape-related objectionable content'.*

- 5 The current definition adequately provides for the classification of rape-related content under section 3(2) of the Classification Act and does not require a review at this time.
- 6 The current definition of objectionable covers publications that promote or support, or tend to promote or support, the use of violence or coercion to compel a person to participate in or submit to sexual conduct. This definition captures content promoting rape, such as recordings of real-world sexual assault, while excluding non-promotional depictions, such as commercial adult content that may not reach the "promote or support" threshold depending on the content and context. The classification of this content is a matter of expert judgement by the Classification Office. It is important that the context of the content remains part of the consideration as to whether it is illegal or not.

*Recommendation 2: "the Government consider whether it would be possible to offer ISPs voluntary filtering of objectionable content depicting bestiality or rape."*

- 7 ISPs that are interested in offering filtering for bestiality and rape-related content are not required to have direction from the Government or the Department in order to do so.

- 8 The Department of Internal Affairs (the Department) operates the Digital Child Exploitation Filter System (DCEFS). The DCEFS is supported by a large volume of quality data. It operates on a block list of URLs known to contain child sexual exploitation material (CSEM). It is a voluntary filter that the Government considers works well, with 95% of New Zealanders protected from inadvertently accessing known CSEM. The Department completes regular reviews and updates of the DCEFS to reduce accessibility to CSEM content. For example, the DCEFS underwent a significant update in 2024 to implement the Internet Watch Foundation block list. This means that significantly more CSEM is being filtered.
- 9 There are significant issues with the Government taking on responsibility for maintaining a filter for illegal content other than CSEM. Part of the reason that the DCEFS is effective is because it is limited to CSEM content that is definitely illegal and widely considered unacceptable. Expanding the scope of the filter to other content could undermine the trust built by the Department with ISPs and the public. Government filtering needs to be limited to material known to be illegal (classified 'objectionable' or CSEM). If the material is not known to be illegal there is considerable risk of unintentionally blocking legal material, limiting freedom of expression and access to information. Filtering systems must be supported by high-volume, accurate data to ensure that they are effective in preventing access to illegal content. The amount of classified rape and bestiality content is not sufficient to support an effective filtering system.
- 10 Objectionable content is abhorrent, extremely harmful, and illegal. It should not be available to New Zealanders. The Government takes steps to criminalise the distribution of this content and in some instances prevent access to it. For example:
  - a) Detecting, investigating, and prosecuting individuals who produce, distribute or possess CSEM. The Department does this with the support of New Zealand's Customs and Police, alongside a range of international partners.
  - b) Providing avenues for people to report illegal content for investigations.
  - c) Issuing take down notices to sites that are hosting objectionable material.
  - d) Working with platforms to encourage people seeking CSEM to seek help.
  - e) Providing resources for parents, educators, and young people on a range of topics including grooming, sextortion, and child sexual exploitation.
- 11 Keeping New Zealanders, especially children, safe from extremely harmful content is most effective when everyone plays their part. This includes online service providers to remove this content from their services as well as parents and responsible adults who can take steps to ensure that the devices children use to access the internet are safe.
- 12 The Government is encouraged by the continued innovation of technology as a tool to counter extremely harmful content. Some of the most effective blocking services can be applied directly to the devices children may use. Many of these can be stricter and more effective than government-run filtering can be.

- 13 The Minister will not give specific consideration to offering ISPs voluntary filtering of objectionable content depicting bestiality or rape at this time. However, the Government has initiated work to consider online safety for children and young people.

### **Conclusion**

- 14 The Government acknowledges the petitioner's concerns around online access to objectionable content. This content is so abhorrent it should not be made available to the public.
- 15 Children need to be protected from exposure to this content, and the government, parents, adults and online services can all take steps to protect young people.
- 16 The Government is satisfied the current meaning of "objectionable" under section 3(2) of the Classification Act appropriately covers rape-related content. Making changes to this well-established legal definition for expanded filtering purposes carries significant risks, particularly when alternative methods exist to reduce children's exposure to illegal content.
- 17 The Government is undertaking and supporting work to consider online safety more generally for children and young people. The scope of this work is an appropriate opportunity to consider the role of government, industry, community and parents in responding to the risk of harm to children from exposure to illegal material.