

## NEWSFEED



Committee publication, which provides practical guidelines for Members on issues encountered by them in their correspondence and records, including their status. The Procedure Committee recommended that expansion of these guidelines to address communications made by Members using electronic devices would be advantageous.

The second recommendation is focused entirely on the use of electronic devices by Members in the Chamber, Federation Chamber and committees and proposes that the House adopts a resolution which:

- permits Members' use of electronic devices in the Chamber, Federation Chamber and committees, provided that use of any device should avoid interference or distraction to other Members, either visually or audibly, and should not interfere with proceedings – in particular, phone calls are not permitted and devices should be operated in silent mode;
- devices are not permitted to record the proceedings (either by audio or visual means);
- communication on social media regarding private meetings of committees or in camera hearings will be considered a potential breach of privilege;
- use of devices should be as unobtrusive as possible and should be directly related to the Members' parliamentary duties; and
- notes that communication via electronic devices, whether in the Chamber or not, is unlikely to be covered by parliamentary privilege; and reflections on the Chair by Members made on social media may be treated as matters of order just as any such reflections made inside or outside the Chamber.

The committee received five submissions to the inquiry along with informal feedback from Members. The full report can be found at [www.aph.gov.au/proc](http://www.aph.gov.au/proc) ■

## LINKS

[www.aph.gov.au/proc](http://www.aph.gov.au/proc)

[Procedure.Committee.Reps@aph.gov.au](mailto:Procedure.Committee.Reps@aph.gov.au)

(02) 6277 4670

## AFP and telecommunications targeting online crime

The Australian Federal Police (AFP) says that criminals are constantly looking for opportunities to exploit technology in order to commit crime.



BLOCKING OUT: Online crime.

Should agencies be able to obtain assistance from the telecommunications industry when upholding Australian law in the fight against online crime?

The House Standing Committee on Infrastructure and Communications is currently investigating the use of subsection 313(3) of the Telecommunications Act 1997, which provides Commonwealth, state and territory agencies with the ability to block access to certain websites.

The AFP uses section 313 to block websites which contain the most severe child sexual abuse and exploitation material. When a user attempts to access one of these sites, they are blocked with a page that provides certain information, including reasons for the block and contact details for any dispute.

Other Commonwealth agencies have also used section 313 to prevent the continuing operation of online services in breach, or potentially in breach, of Australian law, such as online fraud.

Committee Chairman, Jane Prentice (Ryan, Qld), said the committee's inquiry is focusing solely on the use of the subsection for the purpose of disrupting illegal online services.

"The committee is looking at which government agencies can make requests

under the subsection, and what level of authority they should have to make such requests," said Ms Prentice.

"Importantly, we are also focusing on the characteristics of illegal or potentially illegal services that should be subject to such requests, and the most appropriate transparency and accountability measures that should accompany such requests."

Acting Deputy Commissioner Close Operations Support and AFP Assistant Commissioner, Kevin Zuccato, said that online crime is not like traditional crime.

"If I am investigating cocaine importations, I am looking at South America and leveraging off my colleagues in the US. If I am looking at heroin, I am in Asia... but with this type of activity, it could be anybody, anywhere. In a lot of instances, that can be a very sophisticated operation coming out of Russia or it can be a rudimentary set-up coming out of some kid's home in Cooma," Assistant Commissioner Zuccato said.

In its submission to the inquiry, the AFP said that an appropriately senior level of accountability and oversight when using the subsection should be in place, in order to maintain public confidence that blocking powers are being used proportionately and appropriately. ■

## LINKS

[www.aph.gov.au/pjcis](http://www.aph.gov.au/pjcis)

[pjcis@aph.gov.au](mailto:pjcis@aph.gov.au)

(02) 6277 2360