Deterrence strategies for online child sexual abuse and exploitation:
A global and national review with recommendations

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Acknowledgments

ICMEC Australia

The International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (ICMEC) Australia is at the forefront of combatting online child sexual exploitation by collaborating with technology and law to create a world where no child experiences exploitation and abuse. ICMEC Australia aims to prevent and proactively respond to these crimes, envisioning an internet space that cannot be used to harm children. This requires calling for collective responsibility and encouraging industry to share resources as they work towards this common goal.

Our Brief

"Conduct research and analysis to support ICMEC Australia's understanding of what works to deter online child sexual abuse and exploitation, and identify opportunities for strategic action within the Australian context."

Disclaimer

The views and conclusions presented in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of ICMEC Australia.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The digital world is rapidly expanding, with technology evolving at a pace that can be difficult to keep up with. As a result, more children than ever are gaining access to online spaces that many adults are unfamiliar with or do not fully understand. This growing gap in digital literacy between generations creates new challenges, as children navigate complex online environments that offer both opportunities and significant risks. It underscores the importance of ensuring that adults, caregivers, and educators develop a stronger awareness of these digital landscapes so they can better support and protect young people as they explore this ever-changing online world. In 2019, the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) published a report finding 'one in three global internet users was a child'.[1] Technology offers significant benefits for the development of children and adolescents, but the online world also poses harmful risks to them more than ever.

Online child sexual exploitation and abuse (OCSEA) has been around since the invention of the internet and technological advances enabling this behaviour. However, it is in recent years that major improvements in legislation, support networks, and organisations in trying to combat this growing issue have been seen. To protect children from harmful online environments, there must be effective safeguards, frameworks, and support systems in place. These measures should not only prioritise the safety and well-being of children but also create pathways for individuals with offending tendencies to seek help without stigma. Providing supportive and preventative interventions for people experiencing these urges is an important component of reducing harm and preventing exploitation before it occurs.

International human rights instruments emphasise the responsibility of states to protect children from all forms of sexual harm.[2] The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), particularly Article 34, obliges states to "protect the child from all forms of exploitation and sexual abuse" including preventing "the exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials".[3] The Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (OPSC) expands on these protections by addressing multiple forms of sexual exploitation and explicitly referencing child pornography.[4] Article 2(c) of the OPSC defines child pornography as "any representation of whatever means, of a child engaged in real or simulated explicitly sexual activities or any representation of the sexual parts of a child for primarily sexual purposes," offering one of the broadest definitions among international legal instruments.[5]

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[1] Khoury, Z., & Qursha, S. (2020). REGIONAL OVERVIEW: SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA (pp. 25–27). ECPAT.

[2] United Nations. (1989). Convention on the Rights of the Child. OHCHR; United Nations.

[3] Convention on the Rights of the Child - Human rights at your fingertips | Australian Human Rights Commission. (2025). Humanrights.gov.au.

[4] Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (2000, May 25). UNITED NATIONS of HUMAN RIGHTS.

[5] Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (2000, May 25). UNITED NATIONS of HUMAN RIGHTS.

It is overwhelmingly agreed by the international community that the most vulnerable members of society should be protected at all costs. In 2016, the Global Alliance released 'Preventing and tackling child sexual exploitation and abuse' (CSEA), a framework designed to guide national responses to this issue.[6] The document provides countries with clear guidance on how to meet their commitments: assessing current strategies, identifying legislation and support system gaps, prioritising areas that require urgent action, and ultimately strengthening international cooperation and shared understanding. The framework is not prescriptive, instead its purpose is to outline essential capabilities needed for effective child protection. It highlights examples of good practice from countries that have already implemented strong protective measures and directs governments toward organisations that can offer further assistance. The Global Alliance supports nations in building, improving, or exemplifying the systems necessary to prevent child sexual exploitation and abuse and to ensure safer environments for all children.

Throughout this research report, we will examine global offender-based deterrence and prevention methods across a range of regions, analysing the gaps that exist within current systems, the progress being made, and potential evidence-based recommendations for further improvement. This comparative approach allows us to understand how different nations respond to online child sexual abuse and exploitation (OCSEA), and where international efforts may still fall short. In addition to the global overview, the report includes a detailed, state-by-state analysis of Australia's offender-focused deterrence strategies. This section explores the legislative frameworks, intervention programs, law-enforcement capabilities, and preventative initiatives currently implemented across all Australian states and territories. By examining these jurisdictions individually, we identify both strengths and inconsistencies in Australia's national approach, offering insights into where coordinated reforms or enhanced support systems may be required. Combined, these analyses aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of how offender deterrence is evolving worldwide, the challenges that persist, and the steps necessary to strengthen long-term protection for children in digital spaces.

1.1 What is OCSEA?

There is no internationally agreed-upon definition of OCSEA, but for this report, OCSEA can be defined as a form of sexual violence against children, referring to many different forms of exploitation and abuse of a sexual nature that have been connected to the online environment at some point.[7] Information and communication used to sexually exploit, with the result of causing images or other materials to be used to exploit or lead to the sexual exploitation of a child, also comes under OCSEA. These materials can be 'produced, bought, sold, possessed, distributed, or transmitted' to groom children in often covert ways, making it hard to detect

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[6] Preventing and Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (CSEA): A Model National Response (pp. 13–15). (2016). We Protect Global Alliance.

[7] Regional Plan of Action for the Protection of Children from All Forms of Online Exploitation and Abuse in ASEAN 2021-2025 - Supplement to the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence Against Children

when it is shared in encrypted chatrooms.[8] Often these materials are created or taken through coercion or threats by the offender, deception of identity on behalf of the offender, or through peer-to-peer sharing as 'self-generated' materials.[9]

Importantly, underpinning the term OCSEA is the fundamental concept of child sexual exploitation material (or 'CSEM'), which is any content that presents a child in a sexual context. It includes content that sexualises and takes unfair advantage of a child, as well as content that shows sexual activity by a child. Child sexual abuse material (or 'CSAM') shows a sexual assault against a child and can be considered a subset of child sexual exploitation material. The United Nations Children's Fund (2021) paper on ending online child sexual exploitation and abuse made a direct reference to child sexual abuse as:

> "the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to; or for which the child is not developmentally prepared and cannot give consent…resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power"[10]

CSAM therefore should be used with the definition of child sexual abuse as it is logically defined as any content, real or simulated, that presents a child in a sexual context and for sexual purposes.[11] Child sexual abuse takes an online dimension where the acts of sexual abuse are photographed or videoed/audio-recorded, then uploaded and made available online for personal use or sharing with others. Each singular viewing or sharing of the material constitutes a new violation of OCSEA.[12] Additionally, an increasingly common crime in this space, the live-streaming of OCSEA, refers to circumstances where offenders control the events and transfer of funds for the online interaction via digital platforms.[13] Similarly, within this realm of associated offences is the term 'child pornography', still under the umbrella of OCSEA offences and defined almost identically to the above definition of CSEM according to article 2(c) of the OPSC.[14] It can therefore become confusing where associated offences under OCSEA can be defined differently across the globe but nevertheless refer to the same conduct by the offender. Despite the confusion, a country having any definition of OCSEA, CSEM, or child pornography can help prosecute or identify appropriate actions to take.

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[8] Ibid.

[9] Regional Plan of Action for the Protection of Children from All Forms of Online Exploitation and Abuse in ASEAN 2021-2025 - Supplement to the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence Against Children.

[10] United Nations Children's Fund (2021) Ending online child sexual exploitation and abuse: Lessons learned and promising practices in low- and middle-income countries, UNICEF, New York

[11] eSafety Commissioner. (2022). Child sexual abuse online ESafety Commissioner.

[12] United Nations Children's Fund (2021) Ending online child sexual exploitation and abuse: Lessons learned and promising practices in low- and middle-income countries, UNICEF, New York

[13] Regional Plan of Action for the Protection of Children from All Forms of Online Exploitation and Abuse in ASEAN 2021-2025 - Supplement to the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence Against Children

[14] Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography Art 2(c).

Critically, data and information associated with OCSEA crimes are quite often categorised and stored by law enforcement as not entirely different from offline offences.[15] Logically, this is because online offences can become offline offences, but as the 2015 Lanzarote Committee noted, online information and communication does not result in an in-person meeting but may nevertheless result in serious harm to the child as if it were in person.[16]

However, OCSEA can and has been positioned as a cybercrime in which technology plays a significant role across a broad spectrum of activities in an ever-digitalised society.[17] Researchers and industry professionals use 'cyber-dependent', 'cyber-enabled', and 'cyber-assisted' as terms to describe different forms of cybercrime. At one end of the spectrum are 'cyber-assisted' crimes, where the internet is used in the organisation and implementation of criminal activity, but would still take place if the internet weren't there.[18] For example, this means the potential offender uses social media to locate a child who might be sexually assaulted offline. At the opposite end are 'cyber-dependent' crimes existing because of the internet.[19] For example, the production of AI-generated images of young children as a manipulation tool, allowing offenders to create synthetic child sexual abuse materials. This isn't possible without technology and the internet to share these materials. Differentiating between cyber-assisted crime and cyber-enabled crime becomes difficult as the boundaries of cybercrime and traditional forms of crime are not so clear-cut and become increasingly blurred due to increased hyper-connectivity in today's highly digitised and networked world. The distinction, however, becomes relevant when considering jurisdiction and determining what offence to prosecute.

1.2 The Nature of Offending

When considering the 'nature' of OCSEA offending, this means to consider the specific environments or social dynamics enabling offending that make detection and the implementation of disruption practices harder. There is a stigma attached to those with sexual attractions to children, with a presumption that they will eventually sexually offend.[20] This stigma also explains why individuals are dissuaded from seeking help due to the societal judgment they will inevitably receive, regardless of their proactive approach to these risky and problematic thoughts. Phillips and Willis (2025) assure that it is possible to have sexual thoughts without acting on them, though they acknowledge the lack of studies done to map the success of those who manage the attraction without acting.[21] In Phillips and Willis's (2025) study, they found that individuals attracted to children but do not act on their attractions do so

[15]ECPAT International. (2020). REGIONAL OVERVIEW: SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA 2020.

[16] Lanzarote Committee - Opinion on Article 23 of the Lanzarote Convention and its explanatory note (2016)

[17] Quayle, E. (2020). Prevention, disruption and deterrence of online child sexual exploitation and abuse. ERA Forum, 21.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Lawrence, A. L., & Willis, G. M. (2021). Understanding and challenging stigma associated with sexual interest in children: A systematic review. International Journal of Sexual Health, 33(2), 144–162.

[21] Phillipps, M. E. R., & Willis, G. M. (2025). 'I have no desire to hurt a child': prosocial navigation of sexual attraction to children. Psychiatry, Psychology and Law, 1–18.

due to deeply held moral values regarding child safety and a desire to protect.[22] However, some participants did not actively commit due to a perceived risk of jail or degree or punishment that made the act 'not worth it', which still paints a distinct narrative from the majority of participants who self-deterred for internal reasons.

Pivotal to the sustaining of this nature of adult offending and suggested by Phillips and Willis's study, the dark net and existence of online forums not only impedes progress in detecting OCSEA, but also actively enables the environment for it to occur.[23] Some online forums draw in large international memberships where information, advice, and contacts are shared. This is problematic where self-deterrence or primary deterrence initiatives rely on the social and personal guilt and shame associated with committing OCSEA; these persuasive psychological impacts cannot occur where offenders enter a community they feel safe, supported, and validated by.[24]

The Australian Capital Territory's Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse found that children who sexually abuse other children are an ongoing and largely under-represented aspect of offender representations.[25] Literature distinguishes between 'sexually-reactive' children from children with harmful sexual behaviours. Academic Toni Cavanagh Johnson found 'sexually-reactive' behaviour to be a response to their overstimulating environmental cues and how it is reminiscent of past abuse.[26] By contrast, 'sexually-reactive' children have lived in environments where they have 'not been shielded from adult or adolescent activity'.[27]

Importantly, the work done in this 'peer-on-peer' offending space highlights how any therapeutic or intervention strategies aimed at children committing these harmful sexual behaviours must be justified by the reasons 'why' the child is engaging in these practices.[28] Peer-on-peer offending refers to situations where a child is responsible for inflicting abuse upon another child and is largely under-recognised in comparison to adult offenses.[29] Accordingly, campaigns placing a greater focus on exploitation by adults create a blind spot for child offenders who are mislabelled as 'experimenting' or 'cyber-bullying' rather than abusing. This complicated dynamic leads to isolation of the victim, who may know the offender and is unsure how to categorise the harm done to them; the offence then goes unreported.

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[22] Ibid.
[23] Australian Institute of Criminology. (2024, November 12). Drivers and deterrents of child sexual offending: Analysis of offender interactions on the darknet Drivers and deterrents of child sexual offending. Australian Institute of Criminology.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Australian Capital Territory Government. (2017). Children with harmful sexual behaviours VOLUME 10.
[26] Adapted from the Child at Risk Assessment Unit. (2000). Age-Appropriate Sexual Play and Behaviour in Children. Canberra: Australian Capital Territory Government Community Care. 5-11
[27] Ibid.
[28] Australian Capital Territory Government. (2017). Children with harmful sexual behaviours VOLUME 10.
[29] eSafety Commissioner. (2022). Child sexual abuse online | eSafety Commissioner. ESafety Commissioner.

1.3 OCSEA statistics and prevalence

Studies conducted by the WeProtect Global Alliance identified that the National Centre for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) analysed 32 million reports of CSAM in 2022.[30] The report expands on research conducted by the Internet Watch Foundation, which states that the proliferation of 'self-generated' CSAM has increased by 360% between 2020 and 2022 among 7-10 year olds.[31] These statistics, when connected with regional rates of CSEA and OCSEA, demonstrate the prevalence of OCSEA crime and the online abuse of minors as a pervasive issue requiring a global response. Additionally, OCSEA crime constitutes a form of transnational cybercrime, which faces unique challenges in developing regulatory regimes and coordinating deterrence responses.[32]

Detection, intervention, and deterrence of OCSEA crime are severely limited by the highly underreported, complex, and covert nature of OCSEA. This underreported nature can be attributed to several factors, such as a societal stigma related to reporting, lack of trust in authority figures or systems, or a lack of education among children and parents to identify harmful online situations.[33] Reporting developed by Child Helpline International identified these feelings of shame and guilt as the primary barrier to reporting, contributing to the underreported nature of OCSEA crime.[34] In their 2023 report, these feelings of shame and guilt caused by social stigma prevented 56% of children from reporting experiences of online abuse. Within the same sample size, 44% of children expressed a limited understanding of the forms of OCSEA, and this limited ability to recognise online abuse or solicitation directly impacted their confidence in seeking help.[35]

1.4 Deterrence in this space

Differentiating between the terms 'prevention' and 'deterrence' within the context of OCSEA is essential for analysing program success or achieving of purpose. When studies evaluate 'prevention' strategies generally, this entails proactively stopping the harm before it occurs by addressing the root causes and 'risk factors' giving rise to offending. Prevention focuses on limiting the vulnerability of victims and reducing offender opportunity. By contrast, deterrence should aim to discourage the offender from committing the harm by emphasising and

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[30] Ruhani, Elliot, & Australian eSafety Youth Council. (2023). Global Threat Assessment 2023.

[31] Mathews, B., Walsh, K., Finkelhor, D., Parvin, K., Burton, M., Nicholas, M., Napier, S., Cubitt, T., De Silva, A., Higgins, D., Scott, J. G., Noll, J., & Flynn, A. (2025). Disclosure of online child sexual victimisation: Findings from the Australian Child Maltreatment Study. Child Abuse & Neglect, 165, 107493.

[32] Quayle, E. (2020). Prevention, disruption and deterrence of online child sexual exploitation and abuse. ERA Forum, 21(3), 429–447.

[33] Mathews, B., Walsh, K., Finkelhor, D., Parvin, K., Burton, M., Nicholas, M., Napier, S., Cubitt, T., De Silva, A., Higgins, D., Scott, J. G., Noll, J., & Flynn, A. (2025). Disclosure of online child sexual victimisation: Findings from the Australian Child Maltreatment Study. Child Abuse & Neglect, 165, 107493.

[34] Allen, E., WeProtect Global Alliance, Child Helpline International, Shuster, A., Mason, H., & Erwood, S. (2023). Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (OCSEA). In Child Helpline International. Child Helpline International.

[35] Ibid.

increasing the risk or consequences of getting caught. This means targeting the offender's intentions to reduce their likelihood of offending. In practice, the distinction between the two is not so binary, and organisations often incorporate a blend of both to combat the ever-changing dynamics of online offender attacks. This report also addresses the steps taken between actioning deterrence strategies and fostering resilient prevention outcomes. Acts of 'disruption' purport to intentionally break up networks or schemes of OCSEA occurring at an organised level. This purposeful intervention is manifestly an act of deterrence and an important step in creating a global culture that becomes proactive in combating OCSEA/CSEA.

Within OCSEA discourse, 'deterrence' alludes to the implementation of initiatives that prevent individuals from engaging in the harmful or illegal sexual and abusive behaviour towards children; it is largely a motivational and psychological strategy.[36] OCSEA deterrence can be said to occur in three ways:

- *Primary*; before offensive behaviour happens e.g., public awareness and safety campaigns, in-built platform messages.
- *Secondary* intervention with those exhibiting early risky behaviours eg. helplines, therapeutic services, scare campaigns, pop-up messages.
- *Tertiary*: addressing recidivism e.g, treatment or monitoring, circles of support and accountability. Some countries have specific sex offender programs aiming to rehabilitate or correct behaviour before and after release.

What exists?

Currently, OCSEA deterrence takes a variety of different forms and often utilises multiple forms.

Legislation

Many countries have legislation that criminalises either some or all behaviours associated with OCSEA offending. The punishment for this category of offence varies across the globe. This also includes having official definitions of key terms like 'child sexual abuse material' and what materials are considered CSAM. For example, some countries consider artificial intelligence (AI) images of children outside of the scope of criminal behaviour. Sections below will reference legislation of specific countries or a result of collaborative efforts among regions/global communities to demonstrate how punitive measures or definitions become relevant in enacting deterrence.

Situational & Technological

Technological or situational deterrence initiatives are implemented by technology companies or digital application providers to make opportunities for OCSEA difficult, harder, or riskier. This can mean creating digital contact barriers, like blocking content or deleting it, so that the materials are harder to access. Technology assists by developing tools and software that detect the occurrence of payments, sharing, and creation of CSEM and CSAM. These measures

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[36] Adapted from the Child at Risk Assessment Unit. (2000). Age-Appropriate Sexual Play and Behaviour in Children. Canberra: Australian Capital Territory Government Community Care. 5-11.

discourage harmful/illegal behaviour and can give rise to legal consequences where the perpetrator is located. Automated messages for Internet users attempting to access CSAM-related material appear to be a strong contender for supporting primary deterrence strategies. Most impactful were messages warning the users' IP address may be tracked or highlighting the illegality of their search[37]; this is a cost-effective way to reduce OCSEA offences, but certainly not permanent, as it still relies on the individual self-deterring.

'LANTERN'

This is a program developed by a community of technology companies under the organisation 'Tech Coalition'. LANTERN has 30 current members from various global companies, including, but not limited to, Meta, Microsoft, Discord, Zoom, Quora, Google, Yahoo, X, Twitch, and Roblox. In recognition of child sexual abuse and exploitation as a global issue, global technology companies combined their knowledge to create LANTERN, a database that shares intelligence to partnering companies about instances or signals of OCSEA on their platforms, as offenders will often use multiple platforms to distribute abusive imagery.[38] A company detecting OCSEA on its platform can securely share the signals or threat indicators associated with the detection to LANTERN so that other companies can identify harms that might have gone unnoticed. Signals include 'hashes, URLs, usernames, accounts, and keywords/codewords' that have been associated with CSEA material or used to evade detection[39]; sharing signals prevents redistribution of materials across multiple platforms. To highlight some statistics from 2024 alone:

- 290,336 'new' signals were uploaded to LANTERN
- 102,082 accounts had action taken against them as a result of signal sharing through LANTERN.
- 135,077 CSEA-related URLs were blocked or removed using LANTERN

Moral and Self-deterrence

Support circles, support hotlines, and in-school education campaigns can all be deemed moral or self-deterrent initiatives that intentionally aim to shape individuals' perceptions of 'right' and 'wrong'. These circles of support will often encourage the offender to engage in a continuous practice of empathy and self-reflection, where they are already offending or are worried about their current thoughts of offending. The foundational narrative in these initiatives is the association of guilt, shame, and judgment in carrying out OCSEA. Further, it forces the individual to weigh future risks and internal personal consequences. Many countries actively engage in this form of deterrence, and often in subtle ways, as the initiative intends for the individuals to internally conclude that acts of OCSEA are unacceptable.

Peer/social deterrence

This deterrence strategy relies on the aforementioned societal disapproval, shame, disgust, or

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[37] Prichard, J., Wortley, R., Watters, P. A., Spiranovic, C., Hunn, C., & Krone, T. (2022). Effects of Automated Messages on Internet Users Attempting to Access "Barely Legal" Pornography. Sexual abuse : a journal of research and treatment, 34(1), 106–124.

[38] Tech Coalition. (2024). Lantern: advancing child safety through signal sharing. Tech Coalition.

[39] Ibid.

guilt in the actions of offenders. Online communities geared towards users with an interest in children give greater access to material depicting child sexual abuse, ongoing communication with like-minded individuals, belonging, and acceptance in a community that shares, verifies, and gratifies each other's sexual fantasies.[40] It would be 'highly stigmatising' to relay these thoughts outside of these online communities, but unchallenged by their peers, these behaviours are reinforced.[41]

Relevance of age in the deterrence space

Literature supports the finding that children and young people engaging in harm are in the best position to be helped professionally.[42] This is linked to a perception that the earlier a young person receives help, the more likely they are to make positive behavioural changes.[43] Many of Australia's initiatives (see below) directly engage with young children exhibiting harmful behaviour for this reason. Victim-focused deterrence/prevention strategies should work simultaneously rather than one over the other. It is not just adults who require research and funding. Young children can offend against each other too, and victim-centred campaigns might not deliver the same authority as safety campaigns conveying the harms of offending.

2.0 Research Methods

This report is designed as an exploratory/emergent study drawing on qualitative data from a variety of academic, media, policy evaluation documents, and other open-source information. It consists primarily of a literature review that compiles this information into an overview, which can be used by future researchers to reference and expand upon. The research examines case study examples that inform and provide guidance for its final recommendations.

Undertaking this research will begin with academic articles, evaluation reports, and campaign materials from relevant service providers. Using the snowballing data collecting mechanism, we are likely to locate sources and use their own references to find further information, which deepens our research. This method relates to snowball sampling, where current research participants or articles help the researcher identify future sources (Oregon University, 2010). Applying this to our search through the literature, the current literature assisted in identifying and investigating new sources across academic articles, campaign materials, and organisational reports.

To maintain the relevance of data gathered through snowball sampling, we will search for key phrases or terms in the literature, such as deterrence, deterrence strategies (Primary, Secondary, and tertiary), recidivism, child protection, child exploitation, and re-offending. Globally, the

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[40] Woodhams, J., Kloess, J. A., Jose, B., & Hamilton-Giachritsis, C. E. (2021). Characteristics and Behaviors of Anonymous Users of Dark Web Platforms Suspected of Child Sexual Offenses. Frontiers in Psychology, 12.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Sexual Assault Support Service. (2025). About Harmful Sexual behaviour. Sass.orlikelyg.au.
[43] Ibid.

meaning and usage of terms differ but still reference the same concepts. This posed a challenge to creating a comprehensive picture of global efforts, where important information was labelled incompatibly with our prior conceptions of OCSEA and the specific route this project was to take. Literature does not always clearly distinguish 'prevention' from 'deterrence,' and this requires us to 'read in' the definition through document content.

Where relevant information or resources for our project are sparse or non-existent, we are encouraged to reach out to our ICMEC Australia supervisors, who can assist in locating resources and sharing their professional networks. However, due to practical limitations and ethical requirements of including participants, we were unable to conduct formal interviews to inform the project. This inevitably contributes to the authenticity of the project as a practical indication of how easily accessible support programs are to those who need them most; this is an important consideration in accessing deterrence measures and how successful they are.

3.0 Global Deterrence Initiatives

Like most dimensions of cybercrime, OCSEA forms a transnational crime that requires a series of coordinated global responses to effectively address. Due to the immense scope of the internet, the online abuse of children is a pervasive threat that crosses geographical, jurisdictional, and sectoral boundaries, which requires a coordinated network to address. Put simply, OCSEA is a global threat to children that requires a global response. This increased promotion of collaboration amongst countries and companies conveys a promising future global strategy for combating OCSEA. Worldwide Intergovernmental bodies such as the United Nations and INTERPOL play key roles in developing international legislative instruments and deterrence programs. Meanwhile, regional frameworks such as the European Union and the African Union can utilise specialised knowledge and local connections to coordinate regional responses. Finally, not-for-profit organisations play a vital role in connecting state and private entities such as corporations or other charity organisations.

Several intergovernmental bodies and not-for-profit organisations have taken the lead in coordinating the prevention and deterrence efforts of both state and private sector entities. These key organisations that develop global networks are:
- INTERPOL
- The Internet Watch Foundation (IWF)
- ECPAT
- WeProtect Global Alliance
- ICMEC International

INTERPOL

INTERPOL is the International Criminal Police Organisation. As an intergovernmental organisation, its role is to assist law enforcement agencies across its 194 member countries to combat all forms of transnational crime. INTERPOL maintains global databases, provides operational and forensic support, analysis services, and training to its member countries. INTERPOL performs a major role in coordinating transnational OCSEA deterrence programs via the Disrupting Harm project.[44] Led by INTERPOL's Crimes Against Children Unit, the Disrupting Harm project aims to identify and rescue young victims of sexual abuse, block access to child sexual abuse material, and prevent sex offenders from travelling abroad to escape justice or abuse children.[45]

The Disrupting Harm project capitalises on the expertise and networks of INTERPOL to better understand how technology facilitates the sexual abuse and exploitation of children. Data gathered from the contributors to the project across domestic law enforcement, NGOs, and governments contributes to an assessment of the capacity of law enforcement agencies to counter online child sexual exploitation and abuse in each country.[46]

The Internet Watch Foundation

The IWF is a not-for-profit international organisation with the mission statement to protect children from OCSEA on a global scale. The IWF has operated for the past 30 years to develop technology and employ experts in identifying and removing OCSEA material to protect children worldwide. The foundation also works with domestic and international law enforcement to prosecute offenders of OCSEA crimes.

As part of their deterrence methods, the IWF hosts reporting portals across the world. As of 2025, 53 portals are available in 19 different languages, which enables the reach of the IWF to extend over 2.7 billion people.[47] Many central African countries, countries in the Caribbean, India, Indonesia, Portugal, Ukraine, and Tunisia, among others, host these IWF reporting portals, where reports can be made anonymously, which are filtered into a hotline that experts at the IWF's head office are able to analyse. They use this data to either have the CSAM removed or work with local authorities to take action against perpetrators and disrupt OCSEA crimes.

ECPAT

ECPAT is an international not-for-profit organisation that coordinates state and private sector membership to develop responses that protect children from all forms of sexual exploitation.

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[44] *INTERPOL (Disrupting Harm) 1 – Safe online*. (n.d.). https://safeonline.global/interpol-disrupting-harm-1/
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.
[47] *Reporting portals*. (n.d.). https://www.iwf.org.uk/about-us/our-international-work/reporting-portals/

This extends to both online and contact assaults against children, and includes combating trafficking, underage marriage, and prostitution.[48]

WeProtect Global Alliance

The WeProtect Global Alliance is a not-for-profit organisation that operates across the globe to connect NGOs, corporate entities, law enforcement, and governments with the ultimate goal of eradicating OCSEA across the world. The WeProtect Alliance aims to drive policy, foster international and intersectional collaboration and promote the development of technology to combat OCSEA [49] The Alliance achieves these through sharing data insights, providing model responses and organising global conferences to connect key actors in policy and deterrence arenas.
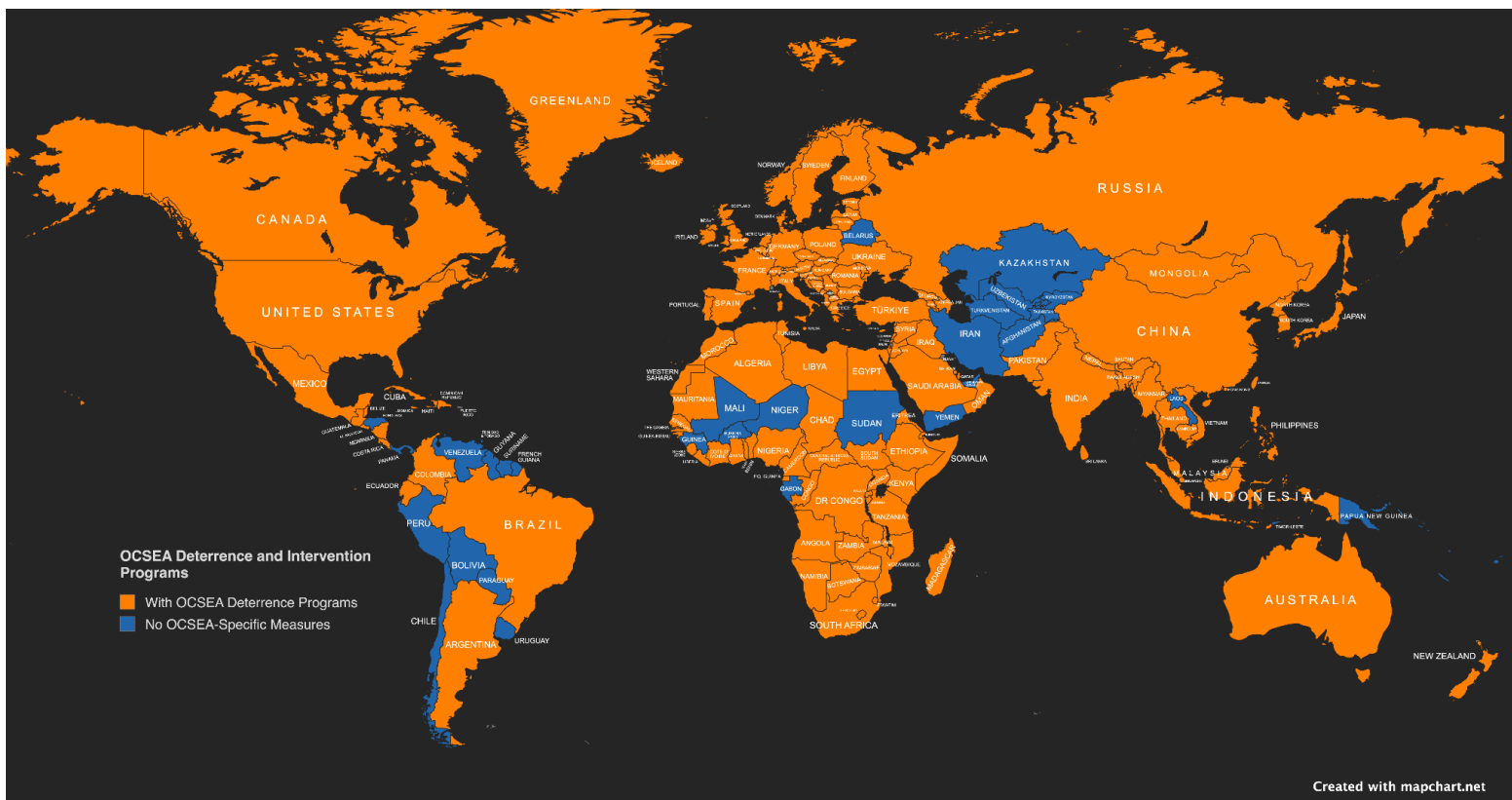
ICMEC International

ICMEC International is a not-for-profit organisation that spans across 130 countries to connect the global community with tools, training and technology in pursuit of its key goal to empower action against all forms of CSEA. With regional offices situated in Brazil, Singapore and Australia, ICMEC is able to develop specific programs responding to unique regional needs. ICMEC works to connect actors across both the governmental, not-for-profit and private corporate firms in pursuit of a common goal.

3.1 Global Maps

To divide the work of developing a global map that charted OCSEA deterrence methods, our group split the world into broad geographic regions. Our first map demonstrates a "yes/no" overview of the world, where states were colour-coded to indicate whether they had any OCSEA responses or were lacking them. Our second map indicates the common kinds of deterrence responses to OCSEA material, which we broadly classified into 10 different types of global region responses. Assigning each classification a colour helped in visualising the landscape of OCSEA deterrence methods across the globe.

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[48] *Our secretariat - ECPAT*. (2025, November 26). ECPAT. https://ecpat.org/about-us/
[49]Harrison, M. (2025, June 4). *About the alliance - WeProtect Global Alliance*. WeProtect Global Alliance. https://www.weprotect.org/about-us/

OCSEA Deterrence and Intervention Programs

■ With OCSEA Deterrence Programs
■ No OCSEA-Specific Measures

This first map included states where we could not find any open-source information as "lacking" OCSEA deterrence methods, which must be accounted for when examining the data. While the method of developing 10 categories of OCSEA deterrence methods assisted in our initial charting and visualising, it also resulted in an unfortunate simplification of global responses. Due to the cross-boundary nature of OCSEA and proliferation of CSAM, both domestic and international responses are employed in the same jurisdiction. Additionally, a single jurisdiction will often employ multiple kinds of intervention strategies that target different groups (such as supporting victims, educating children about safe online behaviours, providing therapy to potential offenders, etc) for education, deterrence, punishment, or rehabilitation.
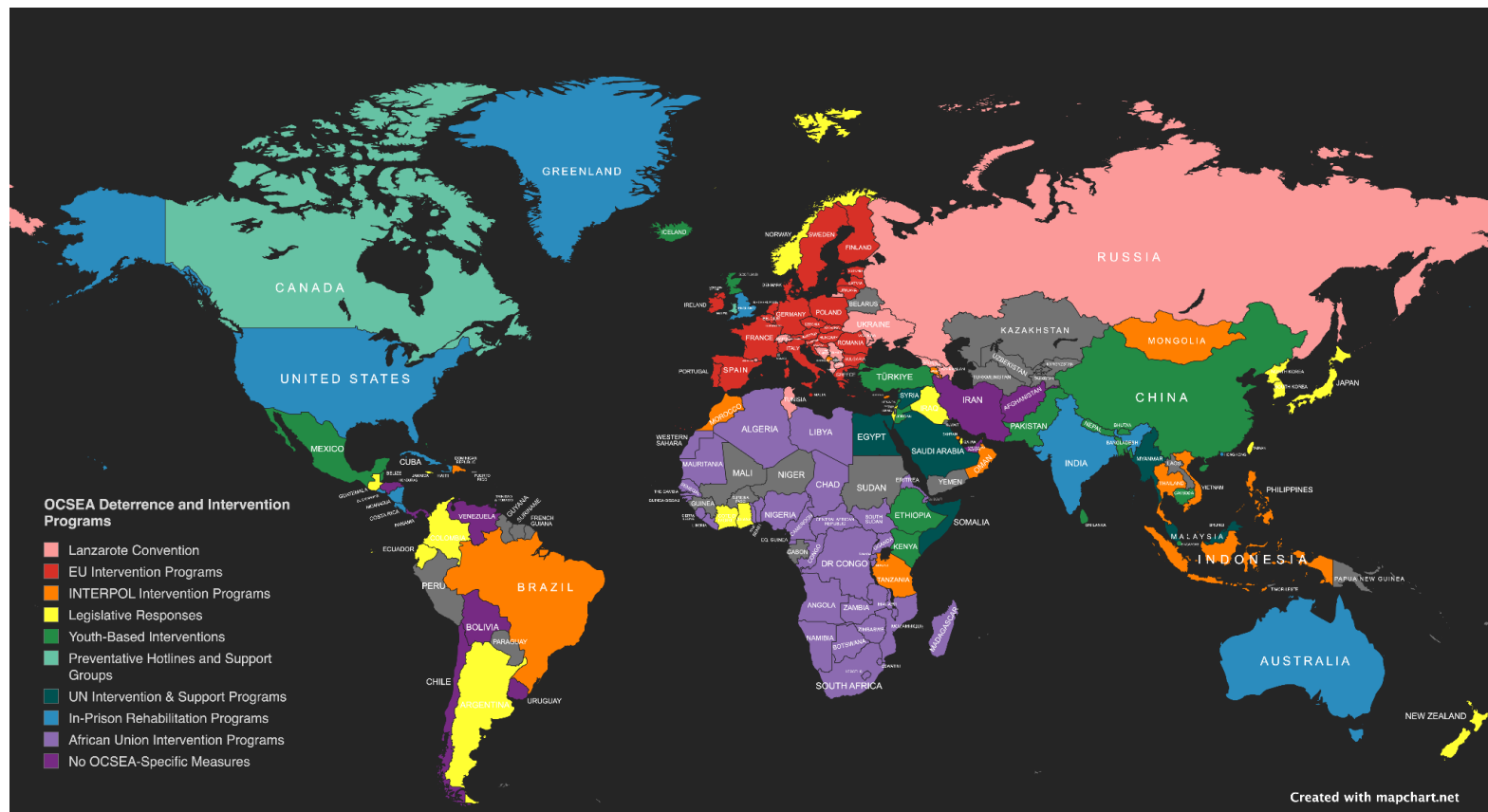
This combination of responses at the domestic and international levels is necessary to respond to transboundary crime. These issues are pertinent in OCSEA crime, which requires similar coordinated international responses to other kinds of internet-facilitated crime. Intergovernmental organisations (IGOs) such as the European Union, African Union, and South Asian Initiative to End Violence Against Children (SAIEVAC), along with other international bodies such as INTERPOL and the United Nations, play a vital role in coordinating deterrence responses.

The categories listed on the global map are:

Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse - Lanzarote Convention

The Convention (Lanzarote Convention) is an international treaty adopted by the majority of the EU, other states in Eastern Europe, and the Mediterranean. The Convention requires all signatory states to enact domestic legislation that criminalises all forms of child sexual abuse and exploitation. This extends to criminalising all forms of OCSEA and contact offending. As an international instrument, the Convention requires domestic legislation to be enacted unless additional bilateral or multilateral treaties or the select states' monist or dualist ratification rules grant the Lanzarote Convention enforceability.

The Convention functions as a deterrence initiative by increasing both the perceived and actual risk of catching the commission of OCSEA crimes. The Convention also strengthens the

consequences for potential offenders, which continues to deter the commission of OCSEA crimes.

EU Intervention Programs

Intervention programs conducted by the European Union span all its member states as one of many transnational responses. The EU has developed several responses to develop OCSEA deterrence methods, ranging from international law instruments, non-governmental bodies, and support or therapeutic programs. One such organisation is the Internet Watch Foundation, which provides research in OCSEA crime and operates a hotline where concerned parties may report their own or others' behaviours related to actual or potential OCSEA material.

INTERPOL Intervention Programs

INTERPOL plays a vital role in preventing the commission of transnational crime. The organisation coordinates domestic enforcement mechanisms and provides sample programs that states may use to develop domestic OCSEA deterrence responses. Among the programs INTERPOL operates is the Disrupting Harm initiative, which spans across Europe, South-East Asia, and some countries in South America, the Caribbean and Africa. The South Asian Initiative to End Violence Against Children (SAIEVAC) is another regional program that INTERPOL has assisted in the development of; aiming to protect children from all forms of violence, including trafficking, corporal punishment and all forms of CSA.

Similar to the Convention and a majority of other international responses, most programs operated by INTERPOL aim to increase the protection of children and reduce harm by preventing them from being exposed to predatory individuals on the internet or in contact spaces. INTERPOL deters the commission of crime by increasing the punishments and likelihood of being caught, rather than providing therapeutic programs or pre-offending-based interventions.

Legislative responses

The category of legislative responses refers to domestic laws enforced in specific states that criminalise the possession, dissemination or production of OCSEA material as a method of deterrence. Domestic legislation is common in many states, which are highlighted under alternative categories on the global map graphic, as domestic legislation often complements or is the precursor to other initiatives, such as in-prison rehabilitation programs, maintaining sex-offender registers or restorative justice programs to tackle issues associated with peer-to-peer offending.

Notable countries include Japan, Norway and England with its 'Online Safety Bill 2022' among many others, which incorporate elements of international treaties such as the Lanzarote Convention into domestic legislation.

Educating Children and Youths

These intervention strategies aim to deter OCSEA crime by educating young people about harmful online behaviours, consent, and other elements of internet literacy and safety. These

interventions also assist in deterrence of self-generated OCSEA and pornographic material made by minors of themselves or others by educating them on important topics. By providing education to children, these deterrence efforts aim to teach children how to protect themselves and to respect their peers which deters peer-to-peer offending.

Preventative Hotlines and Support Services

Countries categorised under this banner put significant effort into developing intervention programs for potential offenders via therapeutic programs or maintaining reporting hotlines which victims, carers or potential offenders may access to disrupt OCSEA crimes. Though categorised the same here, reporting hotlines and helplines are distinct, as they are targeted to different stakeholders across the scene. Reporting hotlines such as the Reporting Portals operated by the IWF aim to provide places where victims or concerned parties may report OCSEA crimes. These portals differ from programs such as the "What's OK?" anonymous supportline in Australia and others across the world, which aim to interrupt crime by providing therapy to potential offenders or adults concerned about their sexual ideations towards children.

UN Intervention Programs

While not a deterrence method targeting OCSEA, the UN's Convention of the Rights of the Child contributes to the OCSEA deterrence landscape via Article 19 and Article 34 which identify the protection of children from all forms of sexual abuse and exploitation as a fundamental right the state must protect. The UN also undertakes and shares research across all member states, contributing to the transnational networks required to fight transboundary crime.

In-prison rehabilitation programs

In-prison rehabilitation programs are not an effective method of pre-offending deterrence, as their nature requires a conviction to have been made so that a known offender can access treatment and support. Instead, these programs are aimed to reduce recidivism or, when an offender has committed online CSA crimes, to intervene before a contact offence can be committed.

African Union Intervention Programs

Similar to the EU, highlighting the African Union as its own category of OCSEA deterrence responses shows a regional response framework that responds to OCSEA crime as a layer on top of domestic programs and responses. Many countries that are part of the African Union also have domestic responses and participate with INTERPOL through the "Disrupting Harm" initiative.

No OCSEA-Specific Measures

When a state is designated with "No OCSEA-Specific Measures," it is not to indicate that the state has no information at all on the issue. This classification indicates where a state has developed laws, protocols or other programs which relate generally to criminalise CSEA, but do not account for the online elements of OCSEA deterrence or punishment. Categorised under

this banner is a wide range of legislative responses, rehabilitation programs, education campaigns and other general initiatives that aim to combat CSEA and contact offending.

Countries that are left grey on the world map either have no responses of any kind, or did not have any programs listed via open-source information. Of the 186 countries shown on the map (not including microstates), only 25 fell into this final, silent category of no response/no information. The majority of these countries and states were in eastern Europe (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Belarus), South America (Peru, Paraguay and Suriname) and on the African continent (Yemen, Sudan and Mali), among scattered others.

3.2 European Union

The ChildLight Global Safety Initiative estimated that in 2025, 19.6% of children in Western Europe have experienced online solicitation by an adult, while the region overall also hosts 60% of online globally accessed CSAM sites and content.[50] In response to these disturbing trends, the European Union has developed a range of non-governmental organisations, international legal instruments, and intergovernmental programs to target OCSEA crime. Notable countries with programs in the field of offender-based deterrence and intervention include the Netherlands, Scotland, Germany and the United Kingdom. The regional programs of the EU develop deterrence, prevention and intervention strategies that member states can adopt alongside domestic responses, while the listed states have developed additional treatment mechanisms.

Programs across the EU include the HELP4U Campaign, the GRACE Platform and the Police2Peer offender deterrence campaign. These programs aim to target a range of stakeholders relating to the issues of OCSEA crime by tailoring individual campaigns so that they may be accessed by potential offenders of any age, victims and society at large. Programs coordinated by the EU further aim to coordinate regional networks and institutions such as EUROPOL and the Council of Europe, leveraging geographic and historical connections between states to ensure a consistent response across jurisdictions, addressing the transnational nature of OCSEA crime.

In addition to the design of EU-led programs to layer with domestic responses, EU programs are intended to mesh with the activities of NGO and charity organisations such as the Lucy Faithfull Foundation and the Internet Watch Foundation. Of these groups, the Lucy Faithfull Foundation is particularly active in the United Kingdom, operating across England and Wales alongside other regional programs such as the Core SOTP and the Stop It Now! campaign. The IWF operates across the world from its office in the United Kingdom, with reporting portals throughout Africa and the Caribbean and numerous education and deterrence campaigns operating throughout the EU and UK. Among these is the highly evocative "the Knock" campaign that ran in the UK since 2015 and the currently running #NoSuchThing campaign

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[50] Childlight - Childlight. (n.d.). Childlight. https://www.childlight.org/into-the-light/executive-summary.

that seeks to change terminology in media and reporting, removing the concept of "child pornography" as children cannot consent to the creation of sexual abuse materials.

HELP4U - EUROPOL, the EU & CENTRIC

The HELP4U reporting portal is an online educational campaign targeted toward children and young people who may be experiencing online sexual abuse.[51] At the heart of the HELP4U campaign's design is a child-centric approach, with age-appropriate language, graphics and clear options to reduce the overwhelming or stressful feelings a child may associate with seeking help. The HELP4U site provides both information that children and parents may use to educate themselves and a reporting hotline where children who are experiencing online or offline abuse may report their situation. The child-friendly and accessible design of the HELP4U campaign removes common barriers to accessibility faced by children and victims of online sexual abuse and exploitation.

As of 2025, 13 countries across the European Union joined the HELP4U network after its pilot program in Ireland, the Netherlands, Slovenia and Germany proved successful.[52] The HELP4U campaign is projected to expand through the EU states in 2026, with ambitions to develop a global network that provides children and teenagers with trusted, accessible and safe information to recognise online abuse and protect themselves.

GRACE Program - EUROPOL & CENTRIC

The "GRACE" program (or Global Response Against Child Exploitation) was a research and intervention program conducted from 2020-2023 by the data analysis and security firm CENTRIC. The program evaluated different machine learning tools to identify which was best equipped to identify CSAM online and analyse the immense amounts of data generated by CSAM content alerts.[53] The study was funded in its entirety by the EU to equip EUROPOL and the domestic law enforcement agencies (LEAs) of member states with the technology to detect, analyse and act upon CSAM warnings.

Following the project's conclusion in 2023, the GRACE platform was developed using the insights gained from the 2020-2023 study. It was adopted by EUROPOL and, as of April 2024, eight of the EU's member states as their LEAs chief machine learning analysis mechanism of identifying and acting against online CSAM.[54]

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[51] H4U. (n.d.). https://www.help4u-project.eu/.
[52] "Help4U: A Lifeline for Young People Facing Online Sexual Abuse | Europol," 2025.
[53] GRACE | CENTRIC. (2020). https://centric-research.co.uk/projects/grace
[54] Ibid.

Police2Peer - EUROPOL & CENTRIC

The Police2Peer campaign targets potential offenders by generating closed files which mimic CSAM content but instead issue warnings of the criminal nature of viewing CSAM online.[55] International and domestic law enforcement agencies partner with the data analysis firm CENTRIC to develop these mimic files which are disseminated in the same spaces as expected CSAM content. When downloaded, the "warning files" trigger an alert in police databases. Law enforcement agencies at both domestic and international levels are able to share information to address triggers of OCSEA crime, using the networks of international support and cooperation developed by EUROPOL and INTERPOL.

As a deterrence method, the Police2Peer program aims to reduce offending behaviour by increasing both the perceived and actual risks of being caught, as well as demonstrating the unacceptable nature of viewing CSAM online. Through proactive policing that subverts existing peer-to-peer CSAM sharing networks, the risks of being caught offending outweigh the potential benefits or self-gratification.[56] Additionally, the Police2Peer program directs any who open the "warning files" to resources notifying potential offenders of the criminal nature of their activities and provides methods to seek help in their local jurisdiction.

The Lanzarote Convention

In addition to these programs, the European Union has developed a series of international legal instruments which provide an overarching legal framework criminalising all forms of CSEA. Chief among these is the Lanzarote Convention, which expands definitions of CSEA crime to include online offences in addition to developing a guiding framework that member states and signatories are required to utilise when responding to CSEA.[57]

The Convention aims to address a variety of perspectives and needs, including governments, victims, NGOs/charities and offenders by providing guidelines of punishment, intervention, deterrence and rehabilitation. For example, Article 7 introduces concepts of preventative intervention and deterrence, requiring governments to provide help to any potential offenders that seek to change their behaviour.[58] The accessibility of such programs are affirmed in Article 15 and 16, which provides some general principles for signatory states to employ when providing intervention/rehabilitation programs to an offender or accused in such a way that it does not compromise other fundamental rights (such as the right to a fair trial).[59] The Convention intends to coordinate cross-sector and international efforts under its regime by providing a directive to collaborate local and international activities.[60]

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[55] Police2Peer – Targeting file sharing of child sexual abuse material | Europol. (n.d.). Europol. https://www.europol.europa.eu/partners-collaboration/police2peer
[56] Quayle, E. (2020). Prevention, disruption and deterrence of online child sexual exploitation and abuse. ERA Forum, 21(3), 429–447.
[57] Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (CETS No. 201) (2007), Article 23.
[58] Lanzarote Convention (2007), Article 7.
[59] Lanzarote Convention (2007), Article 15-16
[60] Lanzarote Convention (2007), Article 10.

The Netherlands

In 2013 the Netherlands conducted a 10-week sting operation utilising "Sweetie", the computerised persona of a 10-year old Filipino girl. This project coordinated international law enforcement via EUROPOL, domestic law enforcement throughout the Netherlands, and the charity sector as the Dutch organisation Terre de Hommes spearheaded the project.[61] Over the 10 weeks, researchers adopted the persona created by "Sweetie" while interacting with online chatrooms such as reddit, skype and other social media platforms to identify perpetrators of OCSEA. Once the operation was concluded, Terre de Hommes provided its findings and technology to Dutch law enforcement, demonstrating how cross-sector collaboration positively impacts the deterrence of OCSEA.

Germany

Following the international need for offender-based deterrence with changes in technology, the German "Prevention Project Dunkelfeld" (PPD) seeks to re-categorise OCSEA as a form of mental disorder that can be deterred through a combination of social and psychological intervention. The project began in 2005 and continues to operate, pursuing the goal of treating adults who seek treatment to address their sexual attraction or thoughts about children and adolescents. The program provides confidential treatment to individuals, aiming to reduce the use of CSAM images and video, and to intervene before a contact offence or further OCSEA can be committed.[62] Evaluation of the Project in 2024 showed the impacts of behavioural therapy as an intervention strategy to offenders; the severity of CSAM content that offenders consumed decreased across 45.2% of program participants, however other key metrics such as the recidivism rates and long-term offending trends were not substantially affected by the program.[63]

3.3 The United Kingdom

The United Kingdom has developed a range of programs that coordinate law enforcement, the private sector and NGOs in the execution of OCSEA deterrence and offender rehabilitation programs. A mixture of methods comprises these deterrence programs including public awareness campaigns such as the highly successful "The Knock" campaign, in-prison rehabilitation programs including the iSTOP and Core SOTP and legislative support via the Online Safety Bill 2022. Several NGO and charity organisations are also active in the scene of OCSEA deterrence; however, the Lucy Faithfull foundation is among the key actors; conducting evaluations of deterrence & rehabilitation programs, supporting the Stop it Now! Campaign and operate an open-source database of primary, secondary and tertiary deterrence programs that are accessible across the UK.

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[61] Crawford, A. (2013, November 5). Computer-generated "Sweetie" catches online predators. BBC News.

[62] Beier, K. M., Nentzl, J., Von Heyden, M., Fishere, M., & Amelung, T. (2024). Preventing child sexual abuse and the use of child sexual abuse materials: Following up on the German Prevention Project Dunkelfeld. Journal of Prevention, 45(6), 881–900.

[63] Ibid.

By coordinating with the law enforcement and criminal justice sector, the Core SOTP program is provided to offenders in prison and other corrective services to address all forms of CSEA offending. During its 2000-2012 runtime throughout England and Wales, the program provided a method of tertiary deterrence, aiming to reduce recidivism and intervene before contact offending can be commissioned when the offender has been convicted of an OCSEA offence. The combination of treatment methods and programs intended to reduce sexual reoffending amongst participants by identifying and addressing known criminogenic needs.[64] The program utilised various therapeutic techniques including cognitive behavioural therapy.[65] However, during its 2017 review, the Core SOTP was criticised for a lack of statistically significant outcomes with unclear reasons for the lack of measurable success, similar to the criticisms of Germany's Preventative Project Dunkelfeld. For instance, reoffending among participants in the Core SOTP program demonstrated the continues commission of at least one image-related CSA offence during the follow-up period when compared with the offenders who had received no treatment (4.4% compared with 2.9 %).[66]

Throughout the UK, the Lucy Faithfull Foundation is an active participant in the develop media campaigns, working alongside other key NGOs such as the Stop it Now! campaign and the Internet Watch Foundation. These collaborations of the NGO sector have resulted in several well-known offender-based deterrence campaigns that aim to raise awareness of the criminal nature associated to viewing CSAM online. The Foundation's "The Knock" campaign aired across the UK in 2018, receiving widespread attention and increasing the number of calls to the LFF offender deterrence helpline from 5 calls/month to 12/month between 2017-2018 following the campaign's launch.[67] In conjunction with their helpline and media campaigns, the Foundation partners with domestic law enforcement to direct offenders to seek help and access therapy, learning modules and a plethora of other resources to change their behaviour.

The LFF also operates the Inform and Inform Plus programs. These programs target people who have been arrested, cautioned, or convicted in connection with indecent images of children. Inform and Inform Plus function as both a group and an individual therapeutic program, similarly to an alcoholics anonymous group therapy program. The Foundation also provides a large database of global and national information, methods and educational resources for primary, secondary and tertiary prevention methods.

Continuing in the NGO sphere of offender-focused deterrence, the Internet Watch Foundation intends to continue developing its *reThink Chatbot,* an automated device that detects potential offenders and refers them to support through the Lucy Faithfull Foundation.[68] By redirecting potential offenders to self-help programmes, this project will not only reduce the demand for

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[64] Mews, A., Di Bella, L., Purver, M., & Ministry of Justice. (2017). Impact evaluation of the prison-based Core Sex Offender Treatment Programme. In Ministry of Justice Analytical Series.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Mews, A., Di Bella, L., Purver, M., & Ministry of Justice. (2017). Impact evaluation of the prison-based Core Sex Offender Treatment Programme. In Ministry of Justice Analytical Series.
[67] Walsh, M., Denis, D., Findlater, D., & THE LUCY FAITHFULL FOUNDATION. (2023). Deterring online child sexual abuse and exploitation: lessons from seven years of campaigning.
[68] ReThink Chatbot | IWF. (n.d.). https://www.iwf.org.uk/our-technology/chatbot/

CSAM online but also protect children from being victims of OCSEA. The chatbot has been active on Pornhub UK since the end of 2022, with plans for the Internet Watch Foundation to expand the rethink chatbot's scope across multiple domains and platforms.[69]

These kinds of interventions have left offenders feeling like "they could change" and assisted in developing skills of victim empathy and self-regulation. These positive individual outcomes demonstrate the potential of offender-focused deterrence strategies.

3.4 South America

South America has extremely limited research on the prevention and deterrence methods of online child abuse and exploitation, largely due to restricted resources, limited budgets and obviously reduced digital access. A study conducted by the Department of Social Inclusion and Equity of the Organisation of American States and the American Institute for Children and Adolescents found that only 4 out of 10 households in South America have access to the internet and that all South American countries have at least some level of online child protection in place. These protections include the right to information, the right to protection from inappropriate content, the right to reservation of information, the right to image and dignity, and the right to non-interference with privacy.[70] While this is an important step forward, many South American countries still have significant gaps in their legislation, ultimately making access to child sexual exploitation materials easier for offenders and reducing the likelihood of meaningful consequences.

One of the major initiatives promoted across South America and many other regions is the INSPIRE framework, which is designed to end violence against children and adolescents through seven evidence-based strategies.

I - Implementation and enforcement of laws
N - norms and values
S - safe environment
P - parent and caregiver support
I - income and economic strengthening
R - response and support services
E - education and life skills

Each of these strategies has specific objectives and justifications that contribute to sustainable online violence prevention efforts in childhood. While INSPIRE is primarily a victim-based prevention approach,[71] it also contributes to predator deterrence by reinforcing protective measures and reducing opportunities for offenders to access or harm children.

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[69] Ibid.
[70] Fry, Dr. D., Padilla, K., Germanio, A., Lu, M., Ivatury, S., & Vindrola, S. (2021). Violence against children in Latin America and the Caribbean 2015-2021 (pp. 122–125).
[71] INSPIRE: Seven strategies for Ending Violence Against Children. (2018). Paho.org.

A major avenue for improvement across South America has been their efforts for law reform. Although, as mentioned, every country in the region has laws addressing online child abuse and exploitation, many continue to lack provisions that are essential for effective enforcement. For example, Guatemala, Honduras and Venezuela do not currently have clear legal definitions of child pornography.[72] This lack of clarity creates significant loopholes, makes the nature of offences harder to identify and ultimately increases the ease with which offenders can access, produce and distribute child abuse and exploitation material.

From the 25th to the 28th of November 2008, Brazil hosted the Third World Congress against sexual exploitation of children and adolescents in Rio De Janeiro, which resulted in the Rio De Janeiro Pact. This pact is a commitment, though not a formal legal agreement, to strengthen protections against online child exploitation. Organised by ECPAT the initiative highlighted the rapidly growing threat of online child abuse and encouraged countries to modernise their legislation.[73] The pact's action plan essentially calls for:
- Clear, internationally aligned definitions of child pornography;
- Universal criminalisation of producing, distributing, commercialising, or possessing child abuse material (including virtual images and "fake children");
- Criminalisation of accessing or viewing such materials, including repeated or deliberate visits to websites hosting illegal content;
- Strengthened laws against online grooming and the misuse of digital technologies; legislative requirements for ISPs, mobile phone companies, search engines, and other providers to report and remove illegal content;
- And the development of indicators to monitor progress and strengthen legal responses.

As a result of the pact, Brazil has taken significant national steps, including the development of a Digital Protection Bill, which was approved and released in August 2025. The Bill aims to strengthen online protections for children. Key provisions include:[74]
- Prohibiting self-declaration for age verification;
- Requiring age-verification mechanisms at every access point for inappropriate content;
- Mandating that service providers ensure age-appropriate user experiences;
- And requiring that accounts belonging to minors up to age 16 be linked to a parent's account.

Unfortunately, in some South American countries, agencies and law enforcement view calls to strengthen online child abuse prevention and deterrence measures as almost unnecessary, largely because public access to the internet is already extremely limited. For example, in Cuba, individuals must apply for internet access through the Ministry of Information Technology and

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[72] Protecting Children from Cybercrime Legislative Responses in Latin America to Fight Child Pornography, Online Grooming, and Cyberbullying through Information and Communication Technologies. (2015).
[73] The Rio de Janeiro Declaration and Call for Action to Prevent and Stop Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents (pp. 1–6). (2008).
[74] Licks Attorneys - Brazil's House of Representatives approves Bill to protect minors in the digital environment. (2025). Lickslegal.com.

Communications; however, these applications are rarely approved.[75] The Cuban government restricts internet access for several reasons, including limited funding, strict government controls and high operational costs.[76] As a result, most Cuban citizens do not own laptops, computers or smartphones. Even for those who are granted access to work-related access or state-controlled necessity, restrictions on internet use are extensive. The Cuban government has blocked all illicit websites, and the government's monitoring of all online activity is widespread. [77]

As mentioned, many South American countries lack adequate legislation to ensure the effective deterrence and prevention of child sexual abuse and exploitation. This is often due to limited resources, insufficient funding and cultural differences. Only 55 per cent of South American countries have a clear legal definition of child pornography,[78] creating major loopholes for offenders, inherently contributing to the inconsistencies within the justice system.

In Guatemala, for example, the legal definition of child pornography is particularly vague. Under the Penal Code (decree 17-73, article 194), the law penalises the production of pornographic material that includes real or simulated images or voices of one or more minors (or individuals with mental disabilities) in "pornographic or erotic acts".[79] This definition is unclear because it relies on broad, undefined terms and does not explicitly cover modern forms of child sexual exploitation material, such as virtual, digitally created or non-photographic content, leaving significant gaps in protection. As a result, offenders can exploit these ambiguities to avoid prosecution.

The United Nations recommends that all countries set the legal age of protection at under 18 years for crimes related to child pornography.[80] However, many South American countries only consider persons younger than 12 as children, meaning that victims between 12 and 18 are legally treated as adolescents. This effectively reduces the perceived seriousness of the crimes committed against them. This legal decision is largely influenced by a country's cultural norms.

One of the most significant yet still very under-recognised initiatives identified in my research is Colombia's Safer Internet Center, developed by Red Papaz and implemented in 2003 to address the rapidly growing problem of online child abuse in the country. Red Papaz launched this initiative in response to alarming data showing that 92 per cent of child abuse reports in Colombia were related to online sexual abuse and cyberbullying as of 2020.[81] Recognising the

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[75] Biddle, Ellery, Rationing the Digital: The Politics and Policy of Internet Use in Cuba Today (July 10, 2013). Internet Monitor Special Report Series No. 1, Berkman Center Research Publication No. 2013-15.
[76] Cuba: Freedom on the Net 2022 Country Report. (2022). Freedom House.
[77] Licks Attorneys - Brazil's House of Representatives approves Bill to protect minors in the digital environment. (2025). Lickslegal.com.
[78] Protecting Children from Cybercrime Legislative Responses in Latin America to Fight Child Pornography, Online Grooming, and Cyberbullying through Information and Communication Technologies. (2015).
[79] ONLINE CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION Guidelines for the Adoption of National Legislation in Latin America. (2016).
[80] United Nations. (2022). Children. United Nations. https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/children
[81] Red PaPaz breaks new ground in Latin America - WeProtect Global Alliance. (2024, October 11). WeProtect Global Alliance.

urgency of the issue, they established the Safer Internet Center as a project designed to create a comprehensive ecosystem involving government institutions, law enforcement, civil society, parents, educators and even potential aggressors.

While the primary focus has been on education, specifically informing key stakeholders on how to prevent children from being exposed to online abuse and exploitation, Red Papaz also announced plans to create a helpline targeted at potential aggressors based on international prevention models to reduce harmful behaviour. Unfortunately, as of 2025, my research did not uncover any evidence that this helpline has been implemented. However, their other measures, such as establishing a hotline to support law enforcement by processing and reporting cases of CSAM represent an important step forward by processing and reporting cases of CSAM, represent an important risk associated with committing these crimes.

Colombia has also developed a prison-based reoffending deterrence initiative known as the prison intervention program for social adaptation (Programa de Intervención Penitenciaria para Adaptación Social - PIPAS). Managed by the Colombian Institute of Family Welfare (ICBF) and the Ministry of Health, PIPAS was introduced in 2016 across 17 prisons nationwide and created by the National University of Colombia specifically for the individuals convicted of sexual offences who are preparing for release.[82] The program addresses core psychological and social challenges, such as unemployment, lack of education and stigma that often contribute to reoffending. Its main purpose is to support offenders in developing stable, healthy and sustainable social and economic lives to reduce the likelihood of future offences. While PIPAS is not a primary deterrence strategy for online child sexual offenders, it nonetheless functions as an important secondary deterrence method aimed at preventing reoffending after release.[83]

Even though many South American countries remain far behind the rest of the world in adopting international initiatives and offender deterrence programs to combat online child sexual abuse and exploitation, as well as the fact that they continue to struggle with limited legislative measures, causing major gaps and loopholes, there is still meaningful progress being made. As seen in Colombia, initiatives such as the Safer Internet Centre and the Programa de Intervención Penitenciaria para Adaptación Social - PIPAS demonstrate that structured prevention and rehabilitation efforts are possible. These developments set an important precedent, offering surrounding countries models they can observe and hopefully adopt in the future.

Unfortunately, many South American nations still lack the resources, budget, specialised personnel and institutional capacity needed to implement similar programs at scale. Cultural norms and long-standing social attitudes toward childhood, sexuality and authority also play a major role, often slowing legislative reform and weakening community-level recognition of these crimes. As a result, progress remains uneven across the region, underscoring the urgent

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[82] Multisectoral Response and Capacity Assessment (MRC) Colombia (p. 19). (2022).

[83] Introductory Handbook on The Prevention of Recidivism and the Social Reintegration of Offenders (pp. 5–8). (2018).

need for greater investment, international cooperation and culturally informed strategies to strengthen offender deterrence and child protection.

3.5 North America

Within the North American region, OCSEA offender-focused programs are either highly developed or centred around victim support and harsh punitive measures for offending. Research in this region continuously pointed to the political nature of funding or supporting offender-focused initiatives when facing other serious competing interests. Despite a general lack of offender-focused initiatives across this region, some key countries have been emphasised.

Mexico

Mexico treats OCSEA as a serious criminal offence, framing its responses as child-focused protection strategies and encouraging reporting. Its stance appears to be firmly punitive towards offenders, emphasising the need for offender accountability and rehabilitation where necessary, because OCSEA is a violation of children's fundamental rights. In 2002, the Policía cibernética, or cyber-crime police, comprised of 168 specialists who were responsible for monitoring and identifying illegal activities on the internet, including child pornography.[84]

ECPAT's research report gave weight to the lack of services available for victims and poor reporting and health care initiatives rather than investigating peer-on-peer offending, despite acknowledging it occurs within the nation.[85] Some participants in ECPAT's case study into Mexican survivors of online and in-person child sexual abuse found many victims HAD opened up to professionals or teachers, but were revictimised, blamed, or told to seek help elsewhere.[86] This is a challenging environment whereby children's safety is intended to be of utmost importance, but acknowledging abuse can often be taboo. It is therefore unsurprising that any initiatives (where they even exist) focused on OCSEA or CSEA offender services/programs would be largely inaccessible or difficult to find through open-source research.

With reference to the Criminal Code of Mexico, article 202 indicates the 'crime of pornography of persons under the age of 18'. Accordingly, whoever 'prints, video records, photographs, films or describes acts of body exhibitionism or lascivious or sexual, real or simulated, involving one or more persons under eighteen years of age or one or several people who have no capacity to understand the meaning of the event or one or several people who do not have the capacity to resist, will be imposed with a penalty of seven to twelve years of imprisonment and from eight hundred to two thousand days fine, as well as confiscation of objects, instruments and products of crime'.[87] Further, the same section refers an offender to psychiatric

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[84] Dos Santos Lemos Fernandes, S. (2015). Protecting Children from Cybercrime: Legislative Responses in Latin America to Fight Child Pornography, Online Grooming, and Cyberbullying through Information and Communication Technologies. 2015: Washington, D.C: The World Bank.
[85] ECPAT International and EDIAC/ECPAT México. (2021). Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Online: Survivors' Perspectives in Mexico. WeProtect Global Alliance.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Código Penal Federal (2017) (Mexico) s 202.

treatment where they have stored, bought CSAM for reasons other than trade or distribution.[88] This inherently means using the material for personal reasons is a separate offence to producing or buying the material, though the punishment for this separate offence is 1-5 years imprisonment.

America

The international movement 'Stop It Now' was founded in 1992 within the United States (US) by Frances Henry, a survivor of child sexual abuse.[89] As previously stated, Stop It Now was the first initiative that encouraged intervention before the abuse was disclosed or suspected; the shift to thinking about preventative actions was unfamiliar at the time. Primarily, this program was about offering confidential support and obtaining information that would aid adults about potential abuse or where they were personally concerned about their sexual thoughts or behaviour. Currently, these same services are offered in the US with the addition of confidential helplines available nationwide for individuals concerned about their thoughts or behaviour. They have also run various educational campaigns to encourage discussion about child sexual abuse.

Also originating in the (US) and through collaboration with the UK's Home Office, the Microsoft tool codenamed 'Project Artemis' uses artificial intelligence (AI) to detect child grooming conversations in online chat spaces.[90] This service is now available to other companies to use in their own chat boxes. Some scholars have become sceptical of how AI in this area might misidentify suspicious conversations, which can have unjust consequences like contacting law enforcement and breaching the privacy rights of children.[91] Despite these concerns, it should be concluded that AI detection is the preliminary step and can be assisted with human intervention to 'check' the claim, but the potential for a false positive does not outweigh the benefit of detecting a problematic chat.

Additionally, powered by Thorn (organisation developing technology to overcome OCSEA), 'NoFiltr' is an initiative aiming to encourage open dialogue about harmful behaviours and having young people safely navigate sexual exploration and 'risky encounters' on the internet.[92] On this web-page, young people can seek and give advice about scenarios in which they feel worried about an encounter online and what to do next; this is all about making the conversation happen rather than try to tell young people to stay offline or refrain from sexual exploration. In promoting safe conversations about OCSEA, 'Help Wanted' is another US-based program that provides an online course for those attracted to younger children, with a stated goal of keeping children safe and helping individuals commit to strengthening their

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[88] Código Penal Federal (2017) (Mexico) s 202 bis.
[89] Stop It Now UK. (2025, August 22). History of the international Stop It Now movement - Stop It Now. Stop It Now.
[90] Ghassempour, M. M. (2025). Privacy challenges of Artemis project: A tool to combat online child abuse. Socio-Spatial Studies, 9(1), 75–86.
[91] Ibid.
[92] NoFiltr. (2025, October 29). About Us - NoFiltr. NoFiltr. https://nofiltr.org/about/

wellbeing.[93]

Important for the American context is highlighting the role of the National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) and the outreach this organisation has beyond the nation itself. In 1998, NCMEC developed the CyberTipline to allow members of the public and electronic service providers (ESPs) to report instances or suspected cases of child exploitation.[94] To demonstrate the pivotal role of NCMEC in this space, any US-based ESP is required by US law to report instances of 'child pornography' on their system as soon as they become aware of it. A case study from 2018 showed how the reporting mechanism through the CyberTipline alerted law enforcement to the reported individual via NCMEC's capacity to trace the provided phone number to social media accounts as part of the investigation. This type of initiative is premised on the idea of making OCSEA offending harder to commit, where the offender is likely to be reported and located. Also developed by NCMEC, 'Take It Down' is an anonymous tool used to prevent sexual images and videos from being shared and uploaded across platforms; this is available to the entire global community, not just Americans.[95]

Canada

The Canadian Centre for Child Protection (CCCP) is responsible for initiating many programs nationwide and additionally collaborating with other global nations in managing OCSEA. In 2017, the CCCPs survivor survey report found 67% of CSAM survivors said the distribution of their images impacted them differently than the hands-on abuse they suffered, as the distribution never ends and images are permanent. Unsurprisingly, then, the national focus has been supporting victims but inevitably has the effect of limiting the proliferation of CSAM and actioning offenders' deterrence by making it harder to distribute and access materials.

Project Arachnid (launched in 2017) by the CCCP detects images and videos based on digital fingerprints of the illegal content to reduce the distribution of CSAM.[96] The CCCP reports that this automated crawler reduces the availability of material and issues a notice to the hosting provider to order for its removal. By 2019, 13.3 million images were identified and referred for analyst review, and 4.7 million notices were then sent to providers[97]; these statistics have presumably increased.

Key to offender deterrence programs is the 'Sexual Behaviours Clinic' in which those out on probation or parole for a sexual offence, or those who are concerned about their sexual interest, can receive support.[98] This service is only available to those aged over 18 and is equipped by

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[93] HelpWanted. (2020). Help Wanted Prevention Intervention. Help Wanted. https://www.helpwantedprevention.org/
[94] NCMEC. (n.d.). Child Sexual Abuse Material. National Center for Missing & Exploited Children.
[95] NCMEC. (n.d.-b). Take It Down. Take It Down. https://takeitdown.ncmec.org/
[96] Project Arachnid. (n.d.). A world leader in reducing the availability of child sexual abuse material. Projectarachnid.ca.
[97] Quayle, E. (2020). Prevention, disruption and deterrence of online child sexual exploitation and abuse. ERA Forum, 21.
[98] The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. (2018). Sexual Behaviours Clinic. CAMH. https://www.camh.ca/en/patients-and-families/programs-and-services/sexual-behaviours-clinic

using a multidisciplinary approach to treatment. The focus for patients or individuals might be preventing relapse or helping them develop healthy lifestyle choices and learn how to self-regulate. Part of this program is an additional initiative that can be entered into via the sexual behaviours clinic, or self-referred; it is called 'talking for change'. Support is provided through an anonymous helpline or chatboxes on the program's website for those concerned about their usage of CSAM or potential to act on thoughts in the future.[99]

Jamaica

Interestingly, Jamaican legislation suggests an individual may be charged where communications suggest an intention to meet in person but nothing explicitly about where the communication is only online.[100] It does however, define the crime of distributing child pornography with an associated 15 years imprisonment.[101] The national model takes a clear focus on the rehabilitation of offenders, including child sex offenders. After the initial sentencing, the offender is evaluated to determine a personalised plan comprising of psychological support, behaviour therapy or spiritual/religious engagement to target behaviour and emotional issues linked to the sexual offences.[102] This is not directly associated with OCSEA offending but nevertheless applies to the rehabilitation of offenders following the commission of OCSEA acts.

3.6 Africa

In many African countries, resources and policies addressing online child abuse and exploitation are severely limited due to constraints in funding, infrastructure and law enforcement capacity. While internet usage in Africa remains one of the lowest globally, with only four out of ten people having access to the internet as of December 2021, rates are increasing rapidly.[103] However, this rapid growth brings heightened risks of online child abuse and exploitation. It was reported that 11 per cent of children ages 12-17 received online sexual abuse, with the most common form of abuse was being offered money and/or gifts for sexual images and videos, and 2 out of 10 children received unwanted sexual images.[104] Unfortunately, law enforcement agencies across many African countries are struggling to keep pace with these fast-evolving online threats, leaving significant gaps in detection, response, and prevention. As of 2021, several countries still lacked comprehensive cybersecurity laws, and many also had not yet criminalised offences such as online grooming and sexual extortion. This legislative gap leaves children more vulnerable and reduces the likelihood of proper consequences for offenders.[105] According to the African Child Policy Forum (ACPF) and

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99 Talking For Change. (n.d.). Talking to create real change. Talking for Change. https://talkingforchange.ca/
100 The Sexual Offences Act, 2009 s 9 (Jamaica).
101 The Child Pornography (Prevention) Act s 3 (Jamaica).
102 Department of Correctional Services. (2025, January 23). Sex Offender Registry - Department of Correctional Services (DCS). Department of Correctional Services (DCS).
103 Galal, S. (2024, February 21). Internet Penetration in Africa 2020. Statista.
104 Twesigye , R., & Kardefelt-Winther, D. (2023). ONLINE RISK AND HARM FOR CHILDREN IN EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA (p. 5).
105 ChildFund Alliance. (2024, May 30). Online exploitation and abuse of children in Africa on the rise - ChildFund Alliance. ChildFund Alliance -. https://childfundalliance.org/blog/2024/05/30/online-exploitation-and-abuse-of-children-in-africa-on-the-rise/

ChildFund Alliance, online child sexual exploitation and abuse encompasses a wide range of activities, including:

- Production, distribution and possession of child sexual abuse material
- Online grooming
- Sexting and sexual extortion
- Revenge pornography
- Commercial sexual exploitation
- Online child prostitution
- Live streaming of sexual abuse

Unfortunately, numerous underlying factors contribute to the large number of African countries lacking adequate OCSEA laws and protections. Deeply rooted cultural norms, customs and practices, some of which include child marriage, female genital mutilation and the harmful superstition that HIV and AIDS can be cured by having sex with a virgin girl, all play a significant role. These practices can normalise the exploitation of children, leading some communities and even institutions to overlook the seriousness of online abuse, as the victims are often viewed as a marginalised group with little social protection.

Additionally, many countries lack clear legal definitions for key terms, such as child pornography, which obstructs public awareness, weakens legal responses and creates loopholes within existing legislation. Internet service providers in many African nations also have no legal obligations to report suspected child sexual abuse material, further reducing detection and hindering law enforcement efforts.

To help address this growing issue, the ACPF and ChildFund Alliance have put forward several recommendations directed at the African Union, the African Committee on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, regional economic communities, national governments and civil society organisations. These recommendations include;

- Raising public awareness amongst policy makers, practitioners, children, families and the public
- Adopt new laws and policies that strengthen existing ones
- Implement and enforce old or new laws and policies
- Strengthen cross-sectoral, cross-regional and cross-country collaboration
- Build the capacities of professionals such as police officers, prosecutors, judges and magistrates, lawyers, courtroom staff and social workers.
- Harness tech innovations and solutions to boost children's online security and deter perpetrators.
- Invest in new research, data and evidence gathering.

Collectively, these recommendations support an offender-based deterrence approach by expanding and enforcing legal frameworks, increasing accountability and reducing the ease with which offenders can operate. By improving detection, strengthening penalties and

enhancing coordination across sectors and borders, these measures work to limit offenders' opportunities while creating a more hostile environment for online child abuse and exploitation.

In West Africa, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime launched an initiative called "The Safer Children Online Campaign", mainly in Ghana and Senegal. This campaign was launched to help these countries push for law enforcement to make a change, its main initiatives are:[106]

- Raising awareness among parents, teachers, and children about online risks
- Encourage reporting of online child sexual exploitation cases via safe and anonymous channels such as hotlines and online forums
- Promote safe online practices and responsible internet use
- Advocate for the enforcement of existing laws against online child sexual abuse and exploitation

In 2019, the end violence partnership invested $7 million to develop a research project aimed at creating a better understanding and spreading awareness of online child sexual abuse and exploitation across 13 countries in Eastern and Southern Africa and Southeast Asia. They received support from ECPAT, INTERPOL, and UNICEF to help their research.[107]

The project highlighted OCSEA risks and major legal gaps in eastern and southern Africa and found that more children than expected were being heavily exposed or at risk of OCSEA without any parental awareness. The challenges they mainly faced during the report and have tried to spread awareness on were:

- Limited pubic awareness
- Weak legislation and enforcement
- Inadequate resources and capacity in law enforcement units
- High staff turnover and insufficient investigation equipment
- Legal definitions of CSAM and online grooming are incomplete or unclear

While these gaps have been highlighted previously by the ACPF and ChildFund Alliance, the repeated emphasis across multiple reports reinforces the urgency of the issue and makes it clear that African law enforcement continues to face significant challenges in combating OCSEA. This consistency in findings will hopefully encourage governments, regional bodies, and partner organisations to prioritise meaningful reforms, allocate greater resources, and strengthen coordinated responses to better protect children online and hold offenders accountable.

Unfortunately, due to factors such as deeply rooted cultural norms and severe resource limitations, as mentioned in our research did not identify any specific offender-based

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[106] United Nations. (n.d.). Safer Children online launch EN. United Nations : UNOC West and Central Africa. https://www.unodc.org/westandcentralafrica/en/westandcentralafrica/stories/2023/safer-children-online-launch-en.html

[107] Twesigye , R., & Kardefelt-Winther, D. (2023). ONLINE RISK AND HARM FOR CHILDREN IN EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA (p. 5).

deterrence methods currently in place within African countries. It is likely to be some time before such approaches are widely adopted. Mainly due to the fact that many African nations have only recently begun developing and implementing initiatives to combat OCSEA, they continue to face major challenges, and the primary focus for most organisations remains addressing the significant gaps in legislation.

Achieving this first foundational step of establishing clear, comprehensive and enforceable laws will greatly strengthen each country's ability to respond to online child sexual exploitation and abuse by formally criminalising key offences and closing legislative loopholes. Nations across Africa will be better equipped to restrict offenders' ability to access, distribute, download, possess or engage with child sexual abuse material. This alone would represent a major advancement and an important milestone in improving child protection across the continent.

3.7 Asia (encompassing the Middle East)

Some Asian and Middle Eastern countries have opened Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) Reporting Portals in their jurisdictions to offer the service of reporting online child sexual abuse imagery, where this type of reporting may not be available. These countries include: Cyprus, Tunisia, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Mongolia, Malaysia, and Indonesia.[108]

Similarly, many countries within Asia and the Middle East are involved in the 'Disrupting Harm initiative' organised by Safe Online; Safe Online has raised funds to support ECPAT International, INTERPOL, and UNICEF Office of Research - Innocenti, to undergo new research. These nations being investigated further include: Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand. By the end of 2025, Armenia, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Jordan, Morocco, Pakistan, and Tunisia will have research completed too.[109] The purpose is to use the expertise of these global agencies and equip a multi-sectoral approach to combating harms against children. The nation-based research will inform policy-making by considering how local conditions affect the rolling out of initiatives.[110]

The South Asian Initiative to End Violence Against Children (SAIEVAC) is a body of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), which is an inter-governmental body dedicated to emphasising the importance of collective self-reliance in the economic, technological, social, and cultural development of member countries.[111] These countries include Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Afghanistan, and are expected to cooperate and share information amongst each other in pursuit of this common goal of ending violence against children. The SAIEVAC aims to prevent child exploitation in its broadest forms, such as child marriages, abuse and exploitation, child labour,

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[108] Internet Watch Foundation. (2019). Reporting Portals. Iwf.org.uk.
[109] Global Platform for Child Exploitation Policy. (2025). Disrupting Harm. Globalchildexploitationpolicy.org.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Teekah, E. (1998, July 20). South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) | History, Initiatives, Observers, & Facts. Encyclopedia Britannica.

corporal punishment, and trafficking.[112] Though these focuses are largely premised on physical acts of exploitation and abuse, the SAIVAC 'workplan' setting out the goals for 2010-2015 for member states indicated a consideration of the online dimension of offending and how to implement deterrence practices through telecommunications. By 2015, all states should have enforced a Code of Conduct on telecommunications services (internet providers, mobile phone companies, internet cafes) that prevents or interrupts child exploitation. This is a somewhat vague requirement.

Notable countries
India
India has emerged as one of the largest internet users in the world and ranks second to China for social media usage.[113] A 2022 study by McAfee found Indian children had the highest exposure to online risks and are among the youngest to reach mobile maturity.[114] All cities in India have dedicated cybercrime cells, and the government has set up two mechanisms for self-reporting online child sexual abuse. However, a study by the Population Foundation of India revealed the awareness of these helplines to be limited.[115] National NGO, Aarambh India, works to educate children, teachers, and parents about internet safety to encourage open dialogue and reporting of CSEM.[116] Arpan is India's largest NGO focused on preventing CSA and has recently launched a public campaign called '#ProtectedByPOCSO', delivering a message that CSA is a punishable offence: to 'Stop right now or get caught'.[117]

Indonesia
In 2022, at least 2% of Indonesian children aged 12-17 were subjected to online sexual exploitation and abuse, including blackmailing children to engage in sexual activities, sharing their sexual images without permission and coercing them to engage in sexual activities through promises of money or gifts.[118] This number is likely much higher due to underreporting. An organisation called 'Rumah Faye' is child-focused, but encourages reporting and speaking to peers, parents and teachers about wrongs occurring online and potentially where perpetrators might be encouraged to come clean.[119]

Hong Kong

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[112] South Asia Initiative to End Violence Against Children. (n.d.). South Asia Iniiative to End Violence Against Chidlren – For the Children of SAARC. SAIEVAC. https://saievac.org/

[113] United Nations Children's Fund (2021) Ending online child sexual exploitation and abuse: Lessons learned and promising practices in low- and middle-income countries, UNICEF, New York

[114] Ibid.

[115] Population Foundation of India. (2023). POLICY BRIEF ONLINE CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE -AN EMERGING CONCERN IN INDIA Understanding Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (OCSEA).

[116] Aarambh India. (2014, September 11). why we do what we do: programs. Aarambh India.

[117] CSR. (2024, November 15). Corporate Social Responsibility - CSR In India. CSR Times.

[118] Disrupting Harm. (2022). PROTECTING CHILDREN IN INDONESIA FROM ONLINE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE: THE WAY FORWARD.

[119] Andriani, P. C. (2023, November 16). Protection for Children Victims of Exploitation - Rumah Faye. Rumah Faye.

The Young and Resilient Research Centre partnered with Save the Children Hong Kong with funding from the Tech Coalition Safe Online Fund to tackle online child exploitation and abuse by providing solutions for the tech industry.[120] The collaboration seeks to understand how children respond to instances of online grooming and solicitation and encourages active participation by leading global tech and social media companies to respond to these behaviours. The focus here is clearly on prevention and the built-in platform safety mechanisms provided by the technology industry.

Philippines

The ASEAN region has the most globally documented cases of child sexual abuse 'live-streams'.[121] The International Justice Mission works with the Philippines government to strengthen the justice system, increase local collaboration and provide networks of support to reduce environments where OCSEA is fostered.[122] Highlighted in the organisation brochure is 'Rosie's Story', where Rosie and her sisters were forced by their mother to perform sexual acts streamed to a live audience whilst their dad worked hard to afford food for his family of 8. IJM was able to track financial transactions associated with the livestreams. When an IJM-supported operation came to rescue the girls, they were not relieved. They felt guilty for breaking up the family; this is the inherent nature of online exploitation and the troubling dynamics it imposes upon the victim and offender.

4.0 Australia

The 2025 'Behind the Screen: Transparency Report' from the eSafety Commissioner highlighted Australian children aged 8-12's usage of social media and other messaging services. This report concluded 84% of children had used social media (or another messaging service) despite being under the age of 13.[123] Further, 76% had used a social media service by age 8, with 40% having their own account and 28% accessing social media without an account.[124]

Australian studies suggest child sexual abuse by adults is declining which may be a result of positive and impactful prevention/intervention efforts.[125] However, this same study noted child sexual abuse has increased amongst adolescents. Thus, whilst further decline in adult offending

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[120] Western Sydney University. (2024). New funding to end online exploitation of children. Westernsydney.edu.au.

[121] Regional Plan of Action for the Protection of Children from All Forms of Online Exploitation and Abuse in ASEAN 2021-2025 - Supplement to the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence Against Children

[122] International Justice Mission Philipinnes. (2024). Together we can protect the safety and freedom of our children. Ijm.org.ph.

[123] eSafety Commissioner. (2025). Children and social media | eSafety Commissioner. ESafety Commissioner. https://www.esafety.gov.au/research/children-and-social-media

[124] Ibid.

[125] Mathews, B., Finkelhor, D., Pacella, R., Scott, J. G., Higgins, D. J., Meinck, F., Erskine, H. E., Thomas, H. J., Lawrence, D., Malacova, E., Haslam, D. M., & Collin-Vézina, D. (2024). Child sexual abuse by different classes and types of perpetrator: Prevalence and trends from an Australian national survey. Child Abuse & Neglect, 147, 106562.

should be pursued, the targeted prevention of youth offending should be prioritised.[126] According to the 'Worried About Sex and Pornography Project (WASSAP), roughly 50% of all CSA is conducted by young people.[127]

In 2024, the Australian Child Maltreatment Study investigated the prevalence of online sexual abuse and exploitation of young people finding[128]:
- 17.7% had experienced online sexual solicitation by an adult.
- 7.6% had a sexual image of themselves shared without their consent.
- 15% had a sexual image of themselves shared without their consent before the age of 13
- 25% experienced online sexual solicitation by an adult before the age of 13.

Note these statistics only indicate offences that have been reported and thus can be reflected. Due to pervasive stigmas regarding victim embarrassment and shame stemming from OCSEA, these statistics will always be difficult to provide a truthful indication of offending.

4.1 Current initiatives (Australia-wide) + Map

Similar to the above 'global' map of deterrence measures, the below map visualises the existing (or accessible) deterrence services for offenders of online child sexual exploitation and abuse. Encouragingly, each Australian state had some form of offender deterrence program or initiative in place, ranging from early intervention to rehabilitative practices following a breach; these individual programs will be described in the later sections.
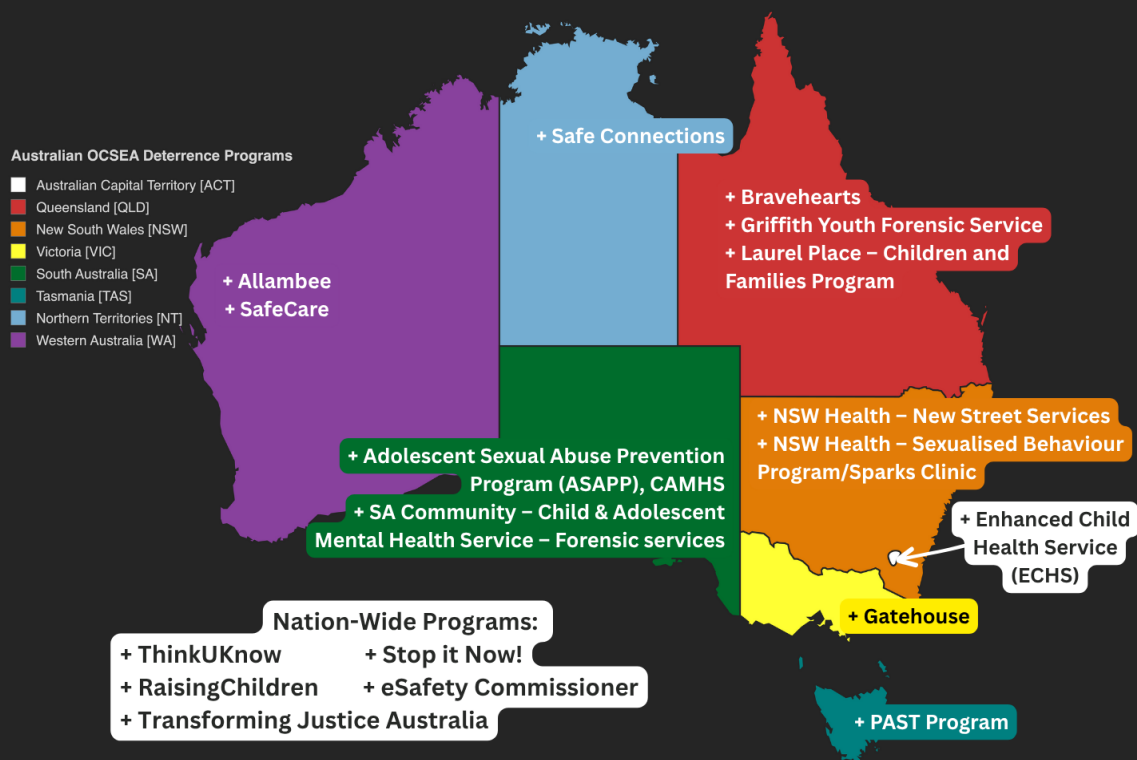
These efforts often appear focused on children or young offenders; as noted in the introductory section of the report, this can be linked to age as a factor supporting the success of intervention. Behaviour of children in these contexts is termed 'harmful sexual behaviour', referring to a range of behaviours falling outside the expected range of sexual behaviours for that young child's/person's age or level of development.[129] This can be behaviour harmful to them or to others.

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[126] Ibid.
[127] Worried About Sex and Pornography Project. (2025, October 3). The Worried About Sex and Pornography Project - Outcomes, Practice and Evidence Network. Outcomes, Practice and Evidence Network. https://outcomes.org.au/open-symposium-2025/open-symposium-2025-program/the-worried-about-sex-and-pornography-project/
[128] ACMS. (2024). The Australian Child Maltreatment Study (ACMS). The Australian Child Maltreatment Study (ACMS).
[129] Sexual Assault Support Service. (2025). About Harmful Sexual behaviour. Sass.org.au. https://www.sass.org.au/resources/problematic-or-harmful-sexual-behavioumultipler

Australian OCSEA Deterrence Programs
- Australian Capital Territory [ACT]
- Queensland [QLD]
- New South Wales [NSW]
- Victoria [VIC]
- South Australia [SA]
- Tasmania [TAS]
- Northern Territories [NT]
- Western Australia [WA]

+ Safe Connections

+ Bravehearts
+ Griffith Youth Forensic Service
+ Laurel Place – Children and Families Program

+ Allambee
+ SafeCare

+ NSW Health – New Street Services
+ NSW Health – Sexualised Behaviour Program/Sparks Clinic

+ Adolescent Sexual Abuse Prevention Program (ASAPP), CAMHS
+ SA Community – Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service – Forensic services

+ Enhanced Child Health Service (ECHS)

+ Gatehouse

Nation-Wide Programs:
+ ThinkUKnow   + Stop it Now!
+ RaisingChildren   + eSafety Commissioner
+ Transforming Justice Australia

+ PAST Program

Stop It Now! Australia

Stop it Now! Australia is an anonymous and confidential prevention program that offers support and counselling to adults who are concerned about their own, or someone else's sexual thoughts and/or behaviours towards children. The service provides multiple communication options such as hotlines and online chat forums to ensure individuals can seek help safely and privately. The program was developed following the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to child Sexual Abuse which identified a major gap in early prevention and deterrence interventions. Since then, Stop It Now! Has been recognised as an effective model and was incorporated into the National Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Strategy in 2021.[130]

ThinkUKnow Australia

ThinkUKnow Australia is an evidence-based educational program delivered in partnership with the Australian Federal Police. It provides educational sessions for children, parents and carers designed to build an understanding of online grooming, how to recognise early warning signs, what actions to take and how to stay safe in digital environments. Although it primary focus is education and empowerment of potential victims, rather than directly targeting offenders the program still acts as an indirect deterrence and prevention strategy. By acknowledging that young people can engage in harmful online behaviours, the program allows children to recognise that online grooming is wrong. This acts as a primary deterrence/prevention strategy.[131]

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[130] Stop It Now! Australia. (2021). Stop It Now! Australia. https://www.stopitnow.org.au/

[131] ThinkUKnow. (2019). ThinkUKnow. Thinkuknow.org.au. https://www.thinkuknow.org.au/

eSafety Commissioner

The eSafety Commissioner has three main deterrence strategies. The eSafety Commissioner uses the powers granted by the Online Safety Act to implement and enforce Australia's online safety laws, acting as a regulator for online service providers and a direct support for users. eSafety can require online service providers to report on how they are meeting any or all of the expectations.[132]

The Safety by Design initiative places positive statutory obligations on private companies and organisations operating within Australia or have Australian users. The Commissioner has developed a series of guides and regulatory codes that providers of online communication platforms (including social media, online gaming, chat forums and more) and the manufacturers of technology (such as laptops, phones or tablets) are required to comply with before they are allowed to sell their products or services in the jurisdiction.[133]

The eSafety Commissioner has also contributed clear structural definitions and frameworks that have shaped the development of Australia's online safety laws. This guidance has supported stronger legal protections and more consistent national standards aimed at reducing online harm.[134]

Raising Children

Raising Children is a service that offers a support and advice helpline for reporting of suspected harmful sexual behaviour amongst children. It emphasises the need for parents to proactively get help for their children who may exhibit this behaviour. Raising Children provides counselling services for not only the child but also their families and encourages parents to be more active and present in their child's life. It emphasises the importance of open, honest communication between parents and children, helping to create a safe and supportive environment where young people feel comfortable raising any concerns about their online experiences or behaviours.[135]

CSAM Deterrence Centre

The CSAM Deterrence Centre has recently proposed the implementation of pop-up warning messages as an emerging offender-focused prevention strategy. The article highlights that search engines remain one of the most common pathways used to access CSAM online, making this point of contact a critical intervention moment. Automated warning messages function as a form of secondary prevention, targeting individuals who may be at risk of offending by interrupting their online behaviour *at the exact moment* they are contemplating engaging in

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[132] eSafety Commissioner. (2024a). Learn about the Online Safety Act. ESafety Commissioner.

[133] Ibid.

[134] Australian Government. (2022, July 13). eSafety Commissioner. Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts. https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/media-technology-communications/internet/online-safety/esafety-commissioner.

[135] Raising Children. (2006). Supporting children who have engaged in harmful sexual behaviour with other children. Raising Children Network.

illegal activity. These warnings appear in response to a user's search behaviour and aim to prompt reflection, deter further escalation, and guide the individual towards safer choices or support services. Although research on the effectiveness of automated warning messages is still limited, existing findings indicate that such interventions can discourage users from viewing borderline-legal pornographic content and from sharing sexual images that may be illegal. Given these early but promising outcomes, there is increasing momentum and strong support for further development and implementation of this initiative across digital platforms.[136]

Transforming Justice Australia

Transforming Justice is a community-based restorative justice program that offers an alternative response to sexual abuse and related harm. The program works directly with victims, offenders, and their families, ensuring that all voices are acknowledged, supported, and meaningfully included in the healing process.

Its core focus is creating a safe, respectful, and structured environment where participants can openly discuss their experiences, understand the impact of harmful behaviour, and work toward accountability, repair, and long-term behavioural change.

By promoting open-mindedness, active listening, and shared responsibility, Transforming Justice aims to reduce further harm, strengthen community safety, and provide a pathway for both victims and offenders to move forward in a healthier and more constructive way.[137]

Encouragingly, each state in Australia has some form of OCSEA offender-related service or program, or at least a program that might also assist an offender seeking help for their behaviour or ideation. The focus appeared to be generally on youth offending in terms of offering support, with adult offenders being increasingly ignored the older they are.

4.2 New South Wales

New South Wales currently employs multiple offender-based deterrence methods to prevent and discourage child-related offences. While the state has several early-intervention initiatives, which remain highly beneficial, these measures still leave gaps in broader child-protection responses.

NSW Health established New Street Services in 1998 as part of its child-protection framework. This service delivers specialised, community-based care for children aged 10 to 17 who display harmful sexual behaviours, primarily focusing on those who have not been criminally prosecuted. New Street Services also incorporates culturally informed care, including

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[136] Hunn C, Watters P, Prichard J, Wortley R, Scanlan J, Spiranovic C & Krone T 2023. How to implement online warnings to prevent the use of child sexual abuse material. Trends & issues in crime and criminal justice no. 669. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology.

[137] Transforming Justice Australia - Community-based restorative justice for sexual abuse. (n.d.). Transforming Justice Australia. https://www.transformingjustice.org.au/

Aboriginal counsellors and staff trained to support Indigenous Australian communities. [138] [139]

A similar initiative is the Sexualised Behaviour Program, also known as the SPARKS Clinic, located within the Hunter New England Local Health District. This service provides clinical intervention for children under the age of 10 in the Greater Newcastle area who present with problematic or sexualised behaviours. Accessing this specialised program requires a formal referral.[140]

Another key program is Safe Wayz, which supports children under 10 displaying problematic and/or harmful sexual behaviours, as well as their families and carers. Safe Wayz accepts behaviour reports from a wide range of people connected to the child, including:[141]

- parents, families, and carers
- NSW Health staff
- schools, teachers, and early childhood centres
- GPs and other professionals

While these programs offer vital support for children, NSW still lacks state-specific programs for adults who are experiencing or exhibiting concerning sexual thoughts or behaviours. Establishing such a service would ensure that all individuals at risk, both children and adults, have accessible pathways to seek help, ultimately strengthening prevention efforts and reducing the likelihood of offences occurring.

4.3 Australian Capital Territory

As of 2025, the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) has passed new legislation that increases the legal liability of institutions for crimes of child sexual abuse, both online and in person. This means organisations can now be held legally responsible for the actions of their employees or individuals under their supervision.[142] As a result, institutions are far more inclined to report suspected child abuse of their employees rather than turning a blind eye as may have occurred in the past. Following this development, the Victorian government has proposed introducing similar legislation to close existing legal loopholes and strengthen accountability across the state.

Within the ACT, there is currently one state-specific offender-based deterrence initiative. However, similar to many other Australian jurisdictions it focuses solely on children who are or have previously displayed harmful sexual behaviour, functioning primarily as an early

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[138] New Street Services - Children and young people with problematic and harmful sexual behaviour. (n.d.). Www.health.nsw.gov.au. https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/parvan/hsb/Pages/new-street-services.aspx
[139] New Street Service Policy and Procedures, (2018).
[140] Child protection programs - Child protection and wellbeing. (2016). Nsw.gov.au. https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/parvan/childprotect/Pages/cp-programs.aspx
[141] Safe Wayz - Children and young people with problematic and harmful sexual behaviour. (2022). Www.health.nsw.gov.au. https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/parvan/hsb/Pages/support.aspx
[142] Byrne, E. (2025, October 30). New ACT law expands liability of institutions for the crimes of paedophiles. Abc.net.au; ABC News.

intervention and prevention method. Ideally, with time, the act will expand its offender deterrence strategies to include adults, ensuring there are safe confidential avenues for those at risk of offending to seek support before harm occurs.

Enhances child services (ECHS) provides support to children under the age of 12 who have displayed harmful sexual behaviour. The program offers specialised care from trained professionals who can provide information, advice and referrals. Through structured counselling, family support and targeted early intervention, ECHS helps reduce the likelihood of future harmful sexual behaviour and promotes healthier developmental outcomes.[143]

4.4 Queensland

Queensland has been successful in establishing proactive initiatives that function as early intervention and offender-based deterrence mechanisms. However, similar to many of the other Australian states, these initiatives almost exclusively target children and young people under the age of 18 who have experienced sexual harm or who are displaying harmful sexual behaviours. Despite strong early intervention frameworks, there are currently no state-specific programs or specialised support services dedicated to adults who have offended or who may be at risk of offending, leaving a significant gap in Queensland's broader offender prevention landscape.

One of Queensland's key initiatives is Bravehearts, an organisation that provides counselling and educational resources for children who have experienced child sexual abuse and for those engaging in harmful sexual behaviours. Bravehearts adopts a holistic prevention-focused approach, offering training for teachers, parents, educators and non-teaching staff to strengthen child safety practices across schools and community settings. Their annual personal safety education programs help children and their support networks understand how to recognise, prevent and respond to unsafe behaviour. This approach also creates a safe environment for children to disclose harmful sexual behaviour early, allowing parents and professionals to intervene before the behaviour escalates. While Bravehearts provides services for adult survivors, it does not offer programs for adult offenders or adults at risk of offending.[144]

A second initiative, the Griffith Youth Forensic Service (GYFS), provides specialist assessment, intervention, and support for young people who have engaged in harmful sexual behaviour or who are involved in the legal system. Operating as a university-based program funded by the Queensland Government since 2001, GYFS employs clinicians, including psychologists and medical practitioners, who travel throughout Queensland to conduct forensic

[143] Child sexual abuse: helplines and services. (n.d.). Raising Children Network. Retrieved 2025, from https://raisingchildren.net.au/grown-ups/services-support/services-families/child-sexual-abuse-helplines-and-services
[144] Bravehearts. (2024). Bravehearts | Australia's Leading Child Protection Organisation. Bravehearts. https://bravehearts.org.au/

assessments, deliver targeted treatment, and collaborate closely with community partners and justice agencies.[145]

Another program, Laurel Place, offers counselling for children and adolescents under 18 who have experienced sexual abuse or who are displaying harmful sexual behaviours. Importantly, Laurel Place also provides specialised counselling and guidance for parents, helping them understand how to support their child, respond appropriately to disclosures, and navigate available services.

Lastly, Bumblebees Therapeutic Preschool, operated by Phoenix House Queensland, delivers assessment, therapy, and education for children aged 0–5 who have been sexually abused, as well as for children aged 3–5 who are exhibiting sexualised behaviours. The program offers individual, couples, and family counselling; home visits with personalised parent coaching; targeted parenting-skills training; and support to build resilience and coping strategies. It also provides education, advice, and referral pathways for families requiring additional assistance.[146]

Overall, Queensland demonstrates a strong commitment to early intervention and child-focused prevention, offering a wide range of programs designed to identify and address harmful sexual behaviour before it escalates. However, the absence of state-specific services for adults who have offended or who are at risk of offending represents a critical gap in the state's offender-deterrence framework. Addressing this gap would strengthen Queensland's capacity to prevent reoffending, reduce long-term harm, and create a more comprehensive, lifespan-oriented approach to tackling sexual exploitation and abuse.

4.5 Victoria

Victoria, compared to several other Australian states, still has progress to make in strengthening its offender-based deterrence and prevention methods based on the current research methods. Based on the current research, there was only one state-specific service offering specialised support exclusively for Victorians that could be identified; unfortunately, these services were only for under-18s acting as an early intervention. This does not include national programs available Australia-wide but it does highlight the relative lack of targeted locally delivered deterrence initiatives within the state.

The primary Victorian initiative identified is the Gatehouse Centre, which provides counselling, advocacy and therapeutic support for children aged 0 to 17 who have experienced sexual harm or who are displaying sexually harmful behaviours. The Centre also operates as a

[145] Griffith Youth Forensic Service. (2025). Griffith.edu.au. https://www.griffith.edu.au/research/arts-education-law/criminology-institute/griffith-youth-forensic-service
[146] Laurel Place Inc. | Children and Families Program. (2024). Laurel Place. https://www.laurelplace.com.au/services/children-and-families-program

dedicated hotline staffed by specialised professionals who can guide both victims and individuals at potential risk of offending toward appropriate next steps and support services.[147]

Additionally, the Victorian child protection service runs a statewide system aimed at protecting children at risk of significant harm. While its primary focus is on victim safety, the scope of its work inherently includes children who are exhibiting early signs of harmful sexual behaviour, as it provides intervention pathways and family support that contribute to early prevention efforts.[148]

However, both of these Victorian-specific initiatives are directed exclusively towards early intervention for children and adolescents. Although early intervention is a crucial component of preventing future offending, there remains a notable gap in Victoria's response as there are no offender deterrence programs or services for individuals over the age of 18 who are offenders or who may be at risk. This limits its ability to intervene early with adults experiencing harmful thoughts or to provide a safe and non-judgmental pathway to support.

4.6 Western Australia

In Western Australia (WA), the legislation relating to child sexual abuse material and online child sexual exploitation and abuse aligns closely with international standards, including the recommendations of the United Nations.[149] WA upholds rigorous legal definitions and maintains precise statutory language to ensure there are no legislative gaps or opportunities for loopholes during prosecution. As a result, the state has effectively addressed the legal dimensions of this growing issue, enabling policymakers and support services to redirect attention toward expanding on other concern areas such as offender deterrence initiatives grounded in evidence-based theory and early intervention models.

Western Australia has specifically targeted deterrence mechanisms only available to the WA citizens and community. However, one of WA's key strengths lies in the specialised services provided through Allambee Counselling Services, a program dedicated to supporting children and young people aged 4 to 18 who have either experienced sexual abuse or are displaying sexually inappropriate or harmful behaviours.

Allambee's services function as a critical early intervention and prevention strategy offering.
- Individual and family assessments
- Risk management and safety planning
- Crisis intervention
- Counselling (individual, family, and group)

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[147] Support After Sexual Harm (SASH) : About SASH. (2025). Rch.org.au. https://www.rch.org.au/sash/
[148] Department of Families, Fairness and Housing. (2020). Child protection. Services.dffh.vic.gov.au. https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/child-protection
[149] UN Committee issues recommendations to protect children's rights in digital environment. (2021b). OHCHR. https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2021/03/un-committee-issues-recommendations-protect-childrens-rights-digital

- Service referrals and case management
- Psychoeducation (e.g., Protective Behaviours programs)[150]

By providing these specialised interventions, Allambee plays a central role in identifying harmful behaviours early and offering therapeutic support to prevent the escalation of behaviours into criminal offending. This early intervention model not only protects vulnerable children but also contributes to long-term offender deterrence efforts by addressing risk factors before they develop further.

Another program in WA contributing to offender-focused prevention is Safe Care, a community-based treatment initiative designed specifically for men who are experiencing problematic internet use, have been charged with offences related to child exploitation material, have sexually offended against a child or are at risk of doing so. The program delivers structured therapeutic intervention and education, addressing factors associated with sexual offending. Safe Care's curriculum includes victim empathy training, exploration of personal and childhood issues, relapse prevention strategies and the development of healthy, positive sexuality. These components aim to increase insight, reduce risk and support long-term behavioural change.[151]

In addition to its direct treatment services, the program has developed the "prevention of child sexual abuse" website, which provides a publicly accessible guide designed to reduce the likelihood of adults sexually abusing children. The resource explains the key factors that contribute to child sexual victimisation, encourages individuals who may be struggling with harmful thoughts or behaviours to seek professional support and emphasises early support as a means of prevention. Importantly, the website also offers broader guidance for the community that highlights how families, professionals and the public can support both victims and individuals at risk of offending, fostering a more informed protective environment.[152]

One key legislative measure in Western Australia that functions as both an offender deterrence and prevention mechanism is the Community Protection (Offender Reporting) Act 2004 (CPOR Act). This legislation requires all registered sex offenders to report their personal details, residential information and any changes in their movements to the Western Australian police force. Under this framework, the Commissioner of Police is legally obligated to maintain a continuously updated register of all reportable offenders. As a result, offenders must consistently disclose any changes to their identity, living arrangements, employment, travel or any other relevant personal information. Failure to comply with these reporting conditions constitutes a criminal offence punished by up to five years imprisonment.[153]

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[150] Sexual Violence and Abuse | Allambee. (2025). Allambee.org.au. https://www.allambee.org.au/specialised-sexual-violence-counselling
[151] Treatment & Support for Families – SafeCare. (2025). Safecare.org.au.
[152] About | preventingchildsexualabuse.org. (2023). Preventingchildsexualabuse.org. http://preventingchildsexualabuse.org/?page_id=5.
[153] Community Protection (Offender Reporting), (2004) (testimony of Western Australia); Your Obligations as a Reportable Offender, (2004) (testimony of WA POLICE).

Although it could be argued that the CPOR Act can be intrusive and may create additional barriers for offenders attempting to reintegrate into society or overcome the stigma, the legislation ultimately operates in the interest of community protection. The ongoing monitoring required by the Act acts as a strong deterrent by reminding offenders that law enforcement scrutiny is continuous and comprehensive. This heightened level of oversight will significantly reduce opportunities for reoffending and reinforce accountability, thereby contributing to broader prevention efforts and promoting public safety.

4.7 Tasmania

Tasmania, like many other Australian states, has made progress in developing offender-based deterrence in early prevention methods, although its current initiatives remain limited. The primary program identified is the Prevention, Assessment, Support and Treatment (PAST) program, which serves as the state's main response to harmful sexual behaviour among children and young people.

The PAST program supports children and adolescents aged 17 years and under who have engaged in harmful sexual behaviour. It is delivered by the Sexual Assault Support Service (SASS) in partnership with Mission Australia, ensuring a holistic and coordinated approach that addresses the complex needs of young people and their families. The program is grounded in evidence-based and trauma-informed practice, with trained professionals providing comprehensive assessments, therapeutic support, and guidance. Where necessary, staff can also facilitate referrals to additional services to ensure each young person receives wrap-around care.[154]

The PAST program provides a range of services, including:
- Individual interventions tailored to each young person's specific needs
- Creating safety and security within the family and community environment
- Sex education and the development of healthy relationships, promoting respectful behaviour and boundaries
- A holistic approach, working closely with families, carers, and significant people in the young person's life
- A multidisciplinary model, achieved through collaboration with Mission Australia and other relevant services

While the PAST program plays an essential role in early intervention and contributes to long-term prevention, Tasmania currently lacks dedicated offender deterrence or support initiatives for adults. This gap highlights the need for future development of state-specific services that provide confidential, accessible support for adults who have offended or who may be at risk of offending. Expanding these resources would strengthen Tasmania's overall capacity to prevent online child sexual abuse and exploitation across all age groups.

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[154] FindHelpTas. (2024, July 11). PAST Program - Problem Sexualised Behaviour and Sexually Abusive Behaviour - Find Help Tas. Find Help Tas. https://www.findhelptas.org.au/program/past-program-problem-sexualised-behaviour-and-sexually-abusive-behaviour/

4.8 Northern Territory

The Northern Territory, most likely due to its smaller and spread-out population, has fewer offender-based deterrence methods compared to other Australian states and territories. However, similar to many regions discussed throughout this report, the NT has established a targeted program that focuses on early intervention for children and young people aged 8-17 who have engaged in harmful sexual behaviour.

Safe Connections is the NT's primary state-specific program addressing harmful sexual behaviour in young people. The service operates in Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs, ensuring coverage across the major population hubs of the territory. For families or individuals living outside these areas, Safe Connections offers support through phone consultations, allowing them to access specialist guidance despite geographical barriers. In addition to therapeutic support, the program delivers educational workshops and training sessions for teachers, students, carers, and organisations to build awareness, confidence, and appropriate responses to harmful sexual behaviour.[155] This initiative is valuable not only as an early intervention and prevention method but also as an important educational resource for communities across the Northern Territory. Due to the isolation and smaller population of the region, many individuals may have limited exposure to specialised services or knowledge in this field. Safe Connections helps bridge this gap by providing accessible support and delivering education to groups who may otherwise struggle to access such information, ultimately contributing to safer communities and a stronger understanding of how to address and prevent harmful sexual behaviour in young people.

4.9 South Australia

South Australia offers two key programs with similar and specialised support services for children and young people under the age of 18 who are exhibiting or have engaged in harmful sexual behaviour: Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service - Forensic Service [156] and Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service - Enfield (CAMHS).[157]

Both programs provide comprehensive, trauma-informed care led by trained professionals who support children during what is often a highly complex and confusing period in their lives. Their services include;
- Therapeutic counselling

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[155] Australian Childhood Foundation. (2025, April 3). Safe Connections. Australian Childhood Foundation. https://www.childhood.org.au/northern-territory-stories/

[156] Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service - Forensic Services | SAcommunity - Connecting Up Australia. (2022). Sacommunity.org. https://sacommunity.org/org/231034-Child_%2526_Adolescent_Mental_Health_Service_-_Forensic_Services

[157] Ibid.

- Specialised psychological support
- Access to both inpatient and outpatient psychiatric care
- Assessments and evaluations for the youth court and statutory organisations.

These two initiatives function as effective early prevention methods, helping young people address their harmful thoughts or behaviours before they escalate further. By providing a safe, confidential, and supportive environment, these programs encourage children to seek help, express their concerns openly to develop healthier coping strategies.

5.0 New Zealand

New Zealand has enacted legislation addressing OCSEA that aligns with international recommendations and policy frameworks, including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Lanzarote Convention, as they work closely with international interventions such as the Global Alliance Against Child Sexual Abuse Online to proactively and effectively combat OCSEA. By doing so, they have created strong legislation that clearly defines and addresses online child sexual abuse and exploitation.[158]

However, recent assessments have identified a gap within New Zealand's youth justice legislation. Currently, young offenders do not face consequences as serious as those applied to adults. According to Children's Minister Karen Chhour, strengthening youth accountability may help "better support them to turn their lives around." The Young Serious Offender Declaration will provide more options for the Youth Court and Police to hold serious and persistent young offenders accountable and enable more powerful interventions to improve their lives. This inherently includes peer-on-peer offending, as many cases of online child sexual abuse come from young offenders. This acts as both an offender deterrence method and a prevention strategy, as youth will see that more serious consequences can arise from these offences.[159]

The largest and only specialised offender-based deterrence method currently available in New Zealand is the *Safe to Talk* helpline, which provides 24-hour support from trained professionals to all people affected by sexual harm, including victims, perpetrators, or individuals concerned about their own thoughts and/or behaviours. They are contactable via online chat, phone, text and email, and the service is completely confidential and anonymous unless someone's immediate safety is at risk. *Safe to Talk* provides individual and specialised support by offering information, advice, referrals and counselling support.[160]

New Zealand operates an in-prison treatment program called the Kia Marama Group, which currently caters only to men. It offers specialised support services aimed at preventing

[158] Quayle, E. Prevention, disruption and deterrence of online child sexual exploitation and abuse. ERA Forum 21, 429–447 (2020). https://doi.org/10.1007/s12027-020-00625-7

[159] Chhour, H. K. (2024, June 23). Government takes action to address youth crim. e. The Beehive. https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/government-takes-action-address-youth-crime

[160] Sexual Harm. Do you want to talk? (n.d.). Safe to Talk - He Pai Ki Te Kōrero. https://www.safetotalk.nz/

reoffending among individuals who have committed sexual crimes against a child. The program runs from assessment through to post-release support and focuses on teaching offenders how to break the links between their thoughts and behaviours and overcome harmful patterns through specialised sessions with trained professionals.[161] Research on the effectiveness of this program found that participants had a reoffending rate of 8 per cent, while child sexual offenders who did not receive the Kia Marama support had a reconviction rate of 21 per cent.[162]

Collectively, these initiatives establish a strong and increasingly comprehensive framework for OCSEA offender deterrence and prevention, although ongoing refinement, particularly within the youth justice system, remains essential to closing existing gaps and ensuring protection across all age groups.

6.0 Conclusions: Recommendations & Considerations

Global directions can heavily influence and encourage national efforts where initiatives have been successful. However, this is all subject to the 'end-goal' of Australian OCSEA prevention endeavours and what can be defined as worthy of striving for. During the research process, many initiatives with strong public support for victim-centred services did not address the underlying social factors contributing to harmful sexual behaviours starting from a young age and following into adulthood for offenders.

In Australia alone, 90% of young people aged 14-17 believed sexting to commonly occurs amongst their peers.[163] A third of these young people had experienced sexting via the sharing, requesting, receiving or showing of nude images. Adolescent sexual exploration and curiosity is generally expected. Today's increasingly digitalised society cannot place blame upon young people for having their nudes, deep fakes, AI-generated images, and other sexualised material shared/distributed. It is important to place the blame elsewhere and instead encourage open conversations about internet usage, how to be safe online, and report OCSEA. This needs to be a normal aspect of internet life; this is a strong act of deterrence.

6.1 Our proposed next steps

1. *Changing the use of 'child pornography' to 'Child Abuse Material' globally*

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[161] Department of Corrections Parole Board Programmes Information (p. 6). (2024).

[162] Bakker , L., Hudson, S., Wales , D., & Riley, D. (2024). And there was light ... Evaluating the Kia Marama Treatment Programme for New Zealand Sex Offenders Against Children.

[163] Dunn C, Watters P, Prichard J, Wortley R, Scanlan J, Spiranovic C & Krone T 2023. How to implement online warnings to prevent the use of child sexual abuse material. Trends & issues in crime and criminal justice no. 669. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology.

Throughout this report, many countries legally recognised 'child pornography' as the correct framing of CSAM offences. Amongst these nations were organisations and countries disputing this term for its incorrect depiction of what is actually being conveyed in these materials.[164] The Internet Watch Foundation launched the campaign '#NoSuchThing', reminding that implicit in the term 'pornography' is consent; yet children cannot consent nor be complicit in their own abuse.[165] According to IWF, whenever the media uses 'child porn/pornography' it diminishes the crime and abuse, mutualising the experience of both victim and perpetrator. Global recognition can ensure the appropriate language and tone is used to demonstrate the severity and degree of harm being committed.[166]

2. *Australian National Program Administering OCSEA offender-focused programs*

All states in Australia have some form of prevention or deterrence mechanism in place for those exhibiting or worried about harmful sexual thoughts towards children. Simultaneously, we have many nationwide initiatives focused on deterring OCSEA. However, these efforts are positive in comparison to other global nations, but disjointed in practice. Some states are clearly better equipped than others. We therefore recommended developing a nation-wide program focused on offender deterrence services, ranging from school-aged children to adults exhibiting harmful behaviour.

This program could be furthering initiatives like StopItNow Australia from a government-expanded campaign. Workplaces across Australia should have an annual workshop with StopItNow or other similar initiatives to bring light to the existence and harm done by actioning OCSEA or searching for materials considered as 'risk-behaviours'. Having education and public awareness widespread and consistent throughout the nation inevitably leads to open communication and combating the stigma attached to speaking about OCSEA as both an offender and victim.

When compared to similar states, the provision of a national deterrence and intervention therapy program has shown significant reductions in the expenditure of government health services. Analysis of comparable programs from Europe has shown that the cost of providing offender-based preventative therapy approximates €9,600 per offender. Contrastingly, the costs of providing therapy, care, and secondary support to victims of OCSEA crime approximate to €150,000 per victim.[167]

3. *Targeting Interventions*

Moving forward, we would also like to suggest further research and weight given to

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[164] Australian Federal Police. (2025, June). International operation results in arrest of 22 men in Nigeria for sextortion | Australian Federal Police. Afp.gov.au. https://www.afp.gov.au/news-centre/media-release/international-operation-results-arrest-22-men-nigeria-sextortion

[165] There's #NoSuchThing as child pornography. (2019). There's #NoSuchThing as child pornography campaign. Iwf.org.uk. https://www.iwf.org.uk/about-us/our-campaigns/no-such-thing/

[166] Hunn C, Watters P, Prichard J, Wortley R, Scanlan J, Spiranovic C & Krone T 2023. How to implement online warnings to prevent the use of child sexual abuse material. Trends & issues in crime and criminal justice no. 669. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology.

[167] WeProtect Global Alliance. (2023). Strategy: 2023-2025.

intervention programs designed to address each offender's cognitive distortions. In the research, some offenders denied the harm done to the children or placed the blame on the child or their parents for allowing it to happen. Contrastingly, some offenders understand the harm and do not offend, though this line seemingly becomes blurry with in-person and online engagement with CSEM. Thus, future programs should be equipped to deal with the underlying cause of and continued reason for offending rather than offering mere hotlines or hubs. These hotlines and law enforcement agencies that face these individuals could create triages and direct these troubled individuals to specific services before and after the offence has occurred.

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