

For Immediate Release
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Netsafe Launches Long Awaited Service to Combat Cyberbullying

Netsafe's cyberbullying, online abuse and online harassment service launches amidst research showing over half of Kiwis are concerned about cybersafety and cybersecurity*.

From 21 November, Netsafe will receive, assess and investigate complaints of harm caused by digital communications under the Harmful Digital Communications Act. The highly anticipated free service is available to all New Zealand internet users experiencing online harassment, offering help and advice to resolve complaints.

The Harmful Digital Communications Act was passed in 2015 to provide a quick, efficient and affordable legal avenue to get help if someone is receiving serious or repeated harmful digital communications.

The launch of the service comes as new research shows 56% of Kiwis are concerned with cybersafety and cybersecurity*.

"We know people have concerns about online risks, and we've seen first hand the devastating effect online harassment and cyberbullying can have," says Martin Cocker, Chief Executive of Netsafe. "Our new service will help to minimise harm for those affected by providing a quick resolution process. We'll also continue to provide a range of services to help individuals, schools, families and businesses stay safe online."

Under the Act, Netsafe will be able to advise if there is anything that can be done to stop the abuse, work with those involved to stop it and liaise with online content hosts to remove harmful content. Netsafe will also be able to inform those involved of the likely outcome if they were to proceed to the District Court with a civil complaint.

The Act introduces criminal offences to penalise the most serious perpetrators, and makes it illegal to incite suicide regardless of whether or not the victim attempts to take their own life.

Although harmful digital communications are a serious issue, Rick Shera, Chairperson of Netsafe's Board says it's important to keep a balanced view.

"Technology advances and constant innovation has reshaped the way people behave online, primarily for good, but it has also created some challenges. The expansion of Netsafe's services beyond the education and advice we currently provide is a significant step toward ensuring everyone has a positive online experience, and we gladly accept the responsibility," says Shera.

From November 21 Netsafe will begin taking calls about cyberbullying, online abuse and harassment toll free on 0508 NETSAFE and at netsafe.org.nz

Information and guides for staying safe online can be found at netsafe.org.nz

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*Colmar Brunton Netsafe Brand Reputation Research, 2016

About Netsafe

Netsafe is an independent non-profit organisation with an unrelenting focus on online safety and security. Netsafe's purpose is to enable all New Zealand internet users to confidently access digital opportunities and prevent online harm.

Netsafe's contact centre is open 8am – 8pm Monday to Friday and 9am – 5pm on weekends. Reports can also be made at [netsafe.org.nz](https://www.netsafe.org.nz)

