



## Social Media Companies Must Step Up to Protect Vulnerable People from Harm

**1 October 2024**

Yesterday, International Justice Mission (IJM) Australia presented evidence to the Joint Select Committee on Social Media and Australian Society about the need for social media companies to take stronger action to counter violent crimes that are facilitated on their platforms.

IJM Australia CEO David Braga stated, “Despite this harmful content being illegal, social media companies are not doing everything in their power to detect and block livestreamed child sexual abuse, or to prevent fraudulent job ads that result in the trafficking of migrant workers into scam compounds.”

In the 2023-24 financial year, the Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation recorded average of 160 reports of online child abuse per day – a 45 per cent increase on the previous year.

“When it comes to protecting children from online sexual exploitation and abuse, the onus should be on social media companies to ensure that their technical design, business model and algorithms do not facilitate this crime.”

“AI tools currently exist to proactively detect and block or report new child sexual abuse material, including in livestreamed video on everyday social platforms where online sexual exploitation of children is occurring, such as Microsoft Skype and Facebook Messenger.”

“These are the types of tools that big social media must urgently implement across their products to safeguard children from online sexual exploitation and abuse to make their products incompatible with child sexual abuse material,” Mr Braga said.

IJM survivors from around South East Asia consistently report being part of romance cryptocurrency investment scams. According to the National Anti-Scam Centre, Australians lost \$210.2 million to romance scams in 2022<sup>1</sup> and \$201.1 million to romance scams in 2023<sup>2</sup>.

Whilst scam job recruitment ads on social media effectively lure migrant workers to apply for jobs online, which result in them being trafficked and enslaved in scam compounds run by transnational crime syndicates, the same social media platforms are effectively facilitating the scamming of Australians by coerced workers offshore.

“It seems reasonable that the largest social media companies in the world should be capable of identifying scams at an earlier stage to prevent Australians being scammed of their money, and to prevent fake job ads from being posted on their platforms, which lure migrant jobseekers into forced criminality.”

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.accc.gov.au/system/files/Targeting%20scams%202022.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.accc.gov.au/system/files/targeting-scams-report-activity-2023.pdf>