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Global tech companies and Netsafe developing NZ's Online Safety Code of Practice

Netsafe has gained commitment from some of the world's most prominent technology companies to explore an Online Safety Code of Practice.

"This initiative represents an opportunity for New Zealand to establish a world-leading online safety code of practice to ensure a safer internet experience for the community," said Martin Cocker, Netsafe CEO.

Netsafe is leading the development of the Code and have been working on it since the start of the year. It is expected that the code will be in place by early 2022 - subject to local stakeholder and public consultation processes.

"If successful, the Code will see technology companies commit to ensuring their products and services are delivered in a way that makes the safety of New Zealand internet users of paramount importance," added Cocker.

"Everyday, billions of people will turn to Google for help in moments big and small. It's our responsibility to protect their privacy and security in every product we make. We're looking forward to continuing our work with Netsafe to help Kiwis stay safe and secure online," says Ross Young, Head of Government Affairs and Public Policy, Google NZ.

More details about the Code were released today at a press conference in Auckland attended by technology journalists. It will be followed by a workshop at Netsafe HQ with probable signatories to further discuss and develop the code. Google, Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, and Twitch are represented at the workshop.

"Protecting people from harm without undermining freedom of expression or the benefits of the open internet is a complex challenge. While we have strict policies against harmful content, we agree that more is needed to be done across the industry to ensure that we're approaching online safety in a transparent way. We welcome Netsafe's approach and are committed to working with them and the broader industry on this Code to address harmful content online," said Mia Garlick, Director of Public Policy, Facebook Australia, New Zealand & Pacific Islands.

As Netsafe's research shows one in five adults and twice as many young people received a digital communication that negatively impacted them, and with Netsafe continuing to record the highest ever number of harmful digital communication reports in its history, the Code is an important milestone for the country.

"Harmful experiences, directly and indirectly, cause physical, financial, and psychological harm, decrease user confidence, and undermine investment in the digital economy and society," Cocker added.

"The safety of our community is a top priority for TikTok and we work everyday to ensure our policies, processes and technologies are in place to help protect all users, and our teenage users in particular. TikTok is committed to engaging closely with Netsafe to develop the Online Safety Code of Practice in New Zealand which will enhance safety measures online and help ensure TikTok continues to be a safe and positive space for all Kiwis," said Brent Thomas, Director of Public Policy, TikTok Australia and New Zealand.

Under the Harmful Digital Communications Act, Netsafe has a statutory responsibility to establish and maintain relationships with domestic and foreign service providers and online content hosts. Steering the OSCOP into reality is another way Netsafe delivers on its commitment to help keep Aotearoa safer online.

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About Netsafe

Netsafe is an independent non-profit organisation with an unrelenting focus on online safety. We keep people of all ages safe online by providing free support, advice, and education. Visit netsafe.org.nz for useful resources or call 0508 NETSAFE for help with an online incident.

About Netsafety Week

Netsafety Week is being held this week until 30 July. This is the first time New Zealand has held its online safety week, and it has been designed to *Make Aotearoa Safer Online*. Inspiring positive change and share advice to help the community stay safe online have been the primary objectives of Netsafe's awareness week. For more information, visit netsafe.org.nz/netsafetyweek.