

From concern to action: why Australia must lead on AI and child protection



On 17 July, ICMEC Australia brought together senior leaders from across government, law enforcement, technology, and child protection at Parliament House for Australia's first national roundtable on Child Safety in the Age of AI.

For the first time, child protection and AI safety have been placed firmly on the national agenda. This landmark forum brought together key decision-makers to explore how AI can be used to protect children, address technologies that pose serious risks, and drive urgent policy reform and investment in AI safety solutions.

This was more than a forum. It was a call to action.

Artificial intelligence is accelerating the threat of child sexual exploitation and abuse. New tools are enabling synthetic abuse material, deepfakes, automated grooming, and child-like AI personas. These technologies are being used to harm children, and they are advancing faster than current laws can respond.

The roundtable sent a strong signal. Australia cannot afford to wait. We must act now to ensure technology is not used to exploit or abuse children.

In response, Kate Chaney MP, supported by Zali Steggall OAM MP, introduced a Private Member's Bill to Parliament just days later. This bill makes it a criminal offence to develop, download, or train AI tools for the purpose of generating child sexual abuse material. It is a vital step in closing a dangerous legal gap and reflects the urgency and consensus that emerged from the roundtable.

Together, the introduction of the bill and the national roundtable have captured significant media attention, highlighting both the urgency of the issue and the growing appetite for reform. The public is paying attention, and momentum is building.

I sincerely thank all roundtable members for their contributions, and I would like to acknowledge the incredible work of the ICMEC Australia team in helping to bring this critical agenda to the national stage. Your collective efforts ensured that child safety in the age of AI is no longer a future concern; it is now recognised as a national priority that demands action.

Now we need the support of the broader community.

If you believe children's safety should be protected as technology evolves, I urge you to contact your local MP. Tell them you support this bill. Let them know child protection must be a national priority in the age of AI.

At ICMEC Australia, we are working towards a world where technology cannot be used to harm children.

This is a defining moment. Let's move from concern to action, together.

Colm Gannon, CEO, ICMEC Australia

The national roundtable builds on ICMEC Australia's
SaferAI for Children's Coalition's
2024 discussion paper and 2025 call to action.

This is a pivotal moment for Australia to lead globally on
child protection in the age of AI - by driving responsible
innovation and 'safety by design'.