



HONOURABLE TIMOTHY MASIU, MP
MINISTER FOR INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

MINISTER'S PRESS STATEMENT Safer Internet Day 2023

Thank you all.

Today we once again celebrate the occasion of Safer Internet Day. The Marape / Rosso Government through my ministry of Information and Communication Technology together with the Department of Information

and Communications Technology (DICT) and the National Information and Communications Technology Authority (NICTA) acknowledge the importance of this day.

Today is the 20th year of Safer Internet Day and for PNG however the internet is seen as new technology and while many see it as a blessing many also see it as a negative intrusion into our society given it has open up the world to the country and with it comes the positives and the negatives. I recently returned from a global conference on Internet Governance in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and it is very obvious safer internet must be every governments priority and every individuals effort to stamp out abuse of internet.

We acknowledge that the Covid 19 Pandemic has clearly demonstrated the power of technology providing Billions of people with significant opportunities in various areas and plays a key role in advancing development goals.

We also acknowledge that the increase on the use of Internet has led to increased misinformation, disinformation, hate speech, cyber - attacks and immoral use of the internet amongst other negatives.

That is why recognizing the Safer Internet Day annually is important and reminds us that we must make use of this technology for positive development and one to enhance better our living and a good society. It is the day to also remind people not to abuse the use of internet.

There is a global effort to minimise abuse and Papua New Guinea is part of this global effort. My department and NICTA are collaborating with international partners as part of our effort to make ensure a safer internet. Safer Internet Day aims to create both a safer and a better internet, where everyone is empowered to use technology responsibly, respectfully, critically and creatively. The campaign aims to reach out to children and young people, parents and carers, teachers, educators and social workers, as well as the industry, decision makers and politicians, to encourage everyone to play their part in creating a better internet.

By celebrating the positive power of the internet, the Safer Internet Day slogan of "Together for a better internet" encourages everyone to join the movement, to participate and to make the most of the internet's potential to bring people together.

My department and NICTA established the National Cyber Security Policy 2021. Its policy focus areas include cyber awareness wherein Government, in partnership with stakeholder and through PNGCERT, the policy seeks to increase and maximise awareness on cyber safety and cyber hygiene, to combat threats including child online safety amongst other things.

As also articulated in the PNG Digital Transformation Policy and law which Parliament passed last year, cyber safety and privacy are key priorities amongst other things in realising a safer, secure, digital environment.

The take-up of digital services can be promoted by providing a safe, secure digital environment. Though a Cabinet decision, the Department of ICT is operating the Social Media Management Desk which seeks to handle misinformation, and policy initiatives to manage cyber safety.

In partnership with NICTA, the desk's functions will be expanded to complement efforts in managing cyber safety issues into the future.

It is difficult but we must do our best to manage the abuse of internet.

As a parent, I am always concerned and worried that our children can access easily bad content through the internet. We cannot afford to let this go and we as parents must educate our children to keep clear of that.

While we must bring mobile phone services to our people, we are also opening up the world to our people with the mobile phone being the carrier of internet and herein lies the challenges.

In 2017 the media released information that PNG ranked the number one in the globe with most searches of the word 'Porn' in the goggle search engine. This is embarrassing and says a lot about how we are not educating our people on the abuse of internet. This is a serious threat to the wellbeing of our society and especially children.

Since the Internet is essential for the economy and social development, the consequences of failures can directly impact society as a whole therefore we must commit to make internet safe and we policy and decision makers to bring in stringent penalties.

My Department and NICTA will continue to work with global partners for a safer internet. In country we have the Cybercrime Act – Code Act that has criminal penalties for those that use Internet for illegal purposes and the National Cybercrime Policy 2014.

This afternoon, I will speak at the Commonwealth Conference to judges and magistrates on cybercrime and abuse of the internet. The meeting is held with the view of improving and strengthening cyber governance.

On this occasion I would also like to reintroduce the "Parents Guide to being Cybersmart" a publication launched last year (2022) to provide advice to parents of children of all ages as part of engaging families on the importance of online safety.

I highly support the collaborative efforts of both local and international key stakeholders, facilitated by the NICTA, in promoting responsible and safe internet use through the PNG Safer Internet Committee (PNGSIC) for the benefit of our communities.

Happy Safer Internet Day and God bless Papua New Guinea!

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Member for South Bougainville