

Opening Statement 3 minutes - 400 words

## **Opening**

Although it is extremely difficult to be here today before you, I am also glad that it is me here now rather than someone else further down the line. I am grateful that this Bill exists and that Safety Over Stigma can play a role.

Briefly, a fake Instagram account was set up in my name and the perpetrator posted multiple explicit images of another woman's (naked?) body. The horror experienced when realising what was unfolding was amplified by the uniformed, dismissive and victim blaming reasons received from an garda Siochana's. Additionally, the initial reluctance by Instagram to remove this account, whilst simultaneously deleting my personal account further aggravated the situation. Evidently both the response and the governing laws were inept.

## **Input**

### 1. The Objectives of the Media Commission

We welcome the establishment of a Media Commission and the acknowledgment of respect for democratic values expressed in Head 9, but think that in addition to the "rightful liberty of expression" explicit reference should also be made to the privacy and good name rights of citizens.

We also recommend that, in addition to allowing for the establishment of advisory committees, a specific Committee on Online Safety and Regulation be established.

### 1. Public Awareness Campaigns

A huge factor in my experience was the lack of public awareness to the relevant law, given the fact I was told that someone posting illicit photographs purporting to be me was not illegal when in fact it was and is.

A solution to this would be the development of a specific helpline or support network for online abuse and cybercrime in which the law and procedures to take can be explained and support can be offered. This would go a long way in creating greater public awareness and improving legal and media literacy.

Thankfully the fake page was taken down in less than 24 hours but many women privately told me that the same had happened to them and the account was not taken down for about a week. I imagine that these victims did not have the same amount of people reporting it as I did and suffered further because of that. From my experience, it should be standard that when a complaint is made about the veracity of an online account or claims that it contains illegal/harmful content that it should be subject

to an immediate takedown procedure. The material can be reviewed promptly and further reviewed if it is to be put up.

Someone pretending to be you online is both frightening and damaging. An obvious protective step would be the requirement for some form of identification or identity to be provided when setting up an account which can be traced and is verified. This could be done by requiring unique Identifiers for users signing up to accounts

### **Closing**

I started this campaign for one simple reason. I remember feeling such distress, discomfort and dismissal. I want to play a role in not only putting an end to image based sexual abuse but for there to be repercussions and accountability for the perpetrators and most importantly that victims are treated with the respect and empathy they deserve at every point, and I am simply asking each of you to do the same.

Thank you for listening to me.