

## Outcomes of the VGT Conference 2 - 3 December 2010, Sydney, Australia

### “Global Child Protection in Tomorrow's Virtual World”



The Virtual Global Taskforce (VGT) 2010 Conference was the first of its kind to be held on Australian soil. The conference was unique from any previous conference held by the VGT as it provided a session facilitated by Geoffrey Robertson QC that highlighted through role play an operational scenario with the theme of improving international collaboration in the protection of children globally.

This section of the conference showcased a number of industry experts discussing the very real circumstances associated to the online exploitation of children. Testimonials received by delegates emphasised the individuality of such a session which many of the 23 participating countries had never witnessed.

The vision of the conference was very clear, to bring together over 200 delegates from all spectrums including law enforcement, non-government organisations, academia and industry to discuss the challenges faced with a crime type which has no boundaries due to the evolution of the internet.

The success of the conference was possible from the high calibre of speakers to the interaction from the audiences. Relationships have been formed amongst countries who can now collectively work together more efficiently to prevent and combat this crime type.

The Australian Federal Police as Chair of the VGT would like to acknowledge all those involved in conducting the 2010 conference and will continue to work closely with its VGT partners to build stronger alliances to combat internet facilitated child exploitation.

"This includes expanding the VGT membership with organisations outside of law enforcement. Collaboration is the key and all children, no matter where they are in the world, have the right to be happy, safe and enjoy their experiences in both the real and virtual world and the VGT acknowledges that law enforcement agencies can not do this alone".

"Over the next 12 months and beyond, the VGT will work with the 96 countries that do not currently have child protection laws, as required by the United Nations Convention, to assist in the development of appropriate legislation to continue to protect children from exploitation".

We will work towards developing an effective method for the exchange of information and evidence with overseas partners, including sharing international hash set values given to identify every child abuse image seized. We will continue to break down the digital divide in the fight against online crime against children".

VGT Chair Assistant Commissioner Neil Gaughan December 2010.

**For copies of selected presentations from the VGT Conference, please email [vgtsecretariat@afp.gov.au](mailto:vgtsecretariat@afp.gov.au).**

## Outcomes - Day One Thursday 2 December 2010

### ***Commissioner's Welcome Message***



We all share a common belief that the internet must be a safe place for children, that those who seek to exploit them online must be held to account and that those children who are at risk need to be found and removed from harm.

Our experiences of the past decade have taught us that the pace of change is unlikely to slow down. Tomorrow's virtual world will bear little resemblance to the virtual world of today.

Already the convergence of the internet and mobile technology is a part of daily life. And the AFP believes that the trend towards social networking through the integration of mobile phones, computers, portable devices like i-pads and other emerging technologies will continue to have a significant impact on the way young people interact with the world.

As part of the Virtual Global Taskforce we support both formal and informal agreements between law enforcement agencies that facilitate cooperation and the growing body of knowledge that helps to identify, dismantle and prosecute networks preying on children.

The AFP's work with the VGT is an extension of our commitment to combating this type of activity through every avenue available to us.

The biennial Virtual Global Taskforce Conference provides a unique opportunity for members to focus on the innovative approaches being used in different parts of the world to combat child sexual abuse.

There are representatives here from law enforcement, academia and technology industries this week with a common goal. We all share a commitment to combating online crime on a global scale and developing the types of partnerships that are needed to do so effectively.

The AFP will continue to support a range of global efforts to dismantle the networks which facilitate the abuse of children and the distribution of child exploitation material.

This is an edited extract of Commissioner Negus' address to the conference.

### ***Minister for Home Affairs and Justice The Hon Brendan O'Connor MP***



The Virtual Global Taskforce has two key objectives.

The first is to make the internet a safer place by identifying, locating and safeguarding children at risk.

The second is to support law enforcement agencies and others in bringing perpetrators to account for their actions.

Offenders are no longer bound to computer desks or computer cables. Wireless technology has opened up a new environment which is more fluid, less restricted and, in some ways, harder to police.

But this cannot be done by one agency alone, and cannot be resolved within one jurisdiction or a single country.



It requires a collaborative and concerted effort by governments, police, private citizens, public companies and non government organisations. We must work in partnership to identify areas of risk to investigate reports of abuse to educate our communities about how to stay safe online and to prosecute those who abuse our children.

The Virtual Global Taskforce is part of this effort. It is a key international driver in improving the way in which we combat child abuse and a valuable resource for the international community.

Sadly, the abuse of children is not uncommon. Some estimated 30,000 children were abused or neglected in this country last year.

But thankfully we are seeing success. Since August 2005, the AFP has charged 609 offenders with 837 online child sex offences. And in the past twelve months, ninety-five offenders have been charged with 151 online child sex offences.

As part of our ongoing efforts to stop cyber abuse and to minimise the impacts of crimes such as online sexual exploitation, the Federal Government has committed more than \$125 million to cyber safety.

This week will give members of the VGT a chance to address these issues in an innovative, creative and thought-provoking way.

This is an edited extract of the Minister for Home Affairs and Justice Speech.

### ***Mr Jim Gamble, QPM, Association of Chief Police Officer's Lead for Child Protection and Abuse Investigation***



How do we police public spaces to make sure our children and our communities are comfortable that predators know there are consequences for their actions?

Operation Pin, as an initiative was developed by the VGT as a result of online child sex offenders having no fear of consequence. The VGT set up a website purporting to host child abuse images and visitors attempting to download these images were notified that they had committed an offence and that their details may have been captured and passed on to relevant authorities.

When predators entered the website they were no longer competent but the relevant authorities were. When the site was launched, a number of questions were asked; for example where is the site found, how long has it been there and how long will it remain. The response was tactical and the VGT set the boundaries. Operation Pin introduced the mind set that police were in this environment and there would be consequences to predators for viewing these images.

By law enforcement populating the online environment as we have, with the partnerships we have fostered, this increases the likelihood of consequences, so lessons have been learnt, one of the key being that partnership must exist beyond law enforcement, as they no doubt assist and aid in the final outcome of policing in this online world.

In 2003 the VGT was created, and since then the membership has modestly expanded. However to make a critical difference in the future partnerships they must be broadened and it must include the non-government organisations, child advocacies and industry. Everyone needs to learn to listen to the children and our youth. The child understands this environment in the way we do not. As a result the VGT must get real with these partnerships and not sit in isolation. The need to reflect on the institutions that form the VGT and determine what this crime is really about can not be underestimated. The ultimate crime is about child abuse regardless of whether it is online, in the home or the subject of trafficking.

Predators spend their active career hunting for our children. Do we want to deal with the symptoms of this or the root cause? The root cause is better partnerships across the management of offenders within our communities. To ensure locally we do it better than we have before.

"We have to focus on children, we need to protect our children and the best way was highlighted by the Minister for Home Affairs and Justice this morning through Education. Let us not just focus on the offenders but give our children an opportunity by empowering them with the right information in the right time and the right place. That's what makes the difference".

The commitment to child safety should never be forgotten or underestimated.

### ***Improving International Collaboration in Protecting Children Globally - Hypothetical facilitated by Mr Geoffrey Robertson QC***



The real issues which are constantly faced in managing the online child sex exploitation and contact offending environment where raised during the session.

An inappropriate website potentially hosting online child abuse material; the judiciary's role in insufficient evidence to potentially prosecute; international Internet Service Providers' roles in providing information as part of an operation; the privacy of victims; the rehabilitation of victims; risks law enforcement must manage in such operations; civil libertarian issues compelling the rights of the individual noting operational and the protection of the child against the alleged perpetrator/s; law enforcement working across the globe to reach operational outcomes.

How now are these addressed? Conversely the issues brought together opinions from law enforcement; the judiciary; national carriers; internet service providers; media and the Australian Government with respect to commonwealth legislative frameworks. In doing so it provided an opportunity to cut through the mire of potential meetings, interdepartmental committees and working groups to highlight first hand how difficult and frustrating each respective organisation's frameworks can sometimes hinder the ultimately end result of the protection of children.

Greater collaboration with all agencies is paramount and reemphasised through this controlled learning exercise of the hypothetical. This is an evolving process in which education of children to increase awareness is the first line of defence, followed by and complimentary to, relevant agencies continuing to collaborate and cooperate with the protection of children online at the forefront of all ongoing deliberations. Only then can this strategy truly make a difference.

### ***Supporting International Collaboration & Beyond: Child Exploitation Tracking System***



Microsoft remains committed to the development of the Child Exploitation Tracking System. The importance of frameworks and good governance through a strong Strategic Plan once formalised will ensure a model that is developed that effectively assesses and governs potential deployments of this tool into the future.

Sustainability of such a platform in order to facilitate such international collaboration and cooperation needs to be continuously assessed against new



technologies. Australia's development in this space is being monitored by relevant agencies. Once launched this initiative will be the first deployment of its type, using variant technologies and partnering with a non law enforcement agency.

Governments worldwide must universally ratify such cooperation and collaboration in the online child protection environment amongst international law enforcement agencies through existing conventions and treaties. The establishment and ratifying of a new United Nations Convention on Cyber-Crime was considered as a way forward and a key outcome on the international collaboration session.

### ***Digital Social Networking Workshop***

A balance must be struck between social networking sites being safe versus being uninhabitable.

Greater engagement and collaboration with children and youth must take place otherwise educative and protective measures will not be effective.

Greater collaboration is needed between industry, government, parents, teachers, law enforcement agencies to educate and not duplicate effort.

Further discussions with law enforcement and internet service providers to continue to work through the issues of provision of information to both prevent and combat online child sex exploitation.

### ***National and International Investigations***

How important are international partnerships in cross jurisdictional/border operations?

There is no doubt a need for cross jurisdictional cooperation not only within investigations but in the conduct of resulting prosecutions. While investigation and detection is important so too is the prosecution of such offences in order to show society's disapproval and to facilitate some form of deterrence of offenders.

The absolute importance of international partnerships can not be overlooked nor understated. These partnerships need to extend beyond police to police and encompass prosecutors and others responsible for litigation.

The ongoing focuses must be on continually working on a multilateral approach to develop understandings of issues over transnational jurisdictions.

### ***Encryption & Emerging Technologies - Impacts on Law Enforcement***

*(Law Enforcement Only)*

For further information on this workshop contact [vgtsecretariat@afp.gov.au](mailto:vgtsecretariat@afp.gov.au).

## Outcomes - Day Two Friday 3 December 2010

### ***Cultural Dimensions - UAE Approach for Child Protection: Child Protection Committee***

#### ***Major Faisal Al Shamari***



The Internet can be viewed as a double edged sword and also referred to regularly as the 'wild wild west'. Utilising academics adopting security by design at schools are just some of the preventative measures that are being utilised by the UAE. Symposiums and conferences are critical in garnishing further information and opportunities to learn and develop preventative strategies - learning from each other.

*"Children are a cornerstone and the future of our society".*

Collaboration with the UN on child protection has been key and has provided excellent feedback and ongoing collaboration in support of UAE's initiatives in addressing issues.

Legislation is one of the critical if not fundamental components for law enforcement in this space. Without legislation there is no consequence we can not deal with these issues. UAE continue to proactively address these gaps to ensure the protection of children in this space.

The UAE under government frameworks have established five (5) sub-committees to address all issues such as legislation; technology; prevention; collaboration and United Nation developments.

In 2009, 100 sex offenders visited the UAE without the UAE officials being advised prior to the travel commencing. An international sex offender register is our priority and we continue to work increasingly with industry partners to find a solution and to continue to evolve and improve within this space. The UAE as a demographic have 80% of the population made up as expatriates with statistics in 2008 suggesting that 250,000 Germans and 100,000 UK families considered the UAE as their second home.

The challenges faced by the UAE are that criminal offences are often hidden or not reported to the UAE. A way forward for the UAE is the development of biometrics as a technological solution development in particular iris scanning. With 370,000 individuals expelled from the UAE attempting to come back into our region a technological solution will be the deterrent.

Parental controls are important. 'Smart cards' and a collaboration with Microsoft is the exciting work being undertaken also as a critical parental control and preventative measure. This coupled with increasing the awareness of children through school programs highlights the multi-faceted approach taken by the UAE.

Importantly a basic tenet of societal health is that of communication within the family home and within families. It was reported in a recent survey undertaken that 86% of families believed there is a lack of communication within the family. To address this the UAE are working closely with cartoons and varied forms of animation to assist in taking the message into the home to increase such communication regarding the internet in addition to creating an awareness of both parents and children. Such initiatives address identity theft; grooming; children behaviours on-line and strategies to prevent such circumstances.

**Professor Sohail Inayatullah**  
**Tamkang University, Taiwan and University of the Sunshine**  
**Coast, Australia**



Concepts in futures thinking that examine events of the past to map the possibilities of the future, can assist law enforcement, non-government organisations and agencies committed to preventing and combating online child sex exploitation to imagine what the world could be like in 2025 with regards to child safety online.

These include methodologies such as the pillars of foresight – mapping, anticipating, timing, deepening, creating alternatives and transforming.

In essence these methodologies encourage people to think about how they view the world by looking into the past with regards to online child safety; understanding what have been the major changes in policing and child safety over a 15 year period and; what would be done differently if the knowledge one had now was available back then.

This information can then be used to create a 'vision' for the future and to assist agencies committed to this space to strategically plan and manage.

Strategies need to be based on how you think the world is changing otherwise you are dealing with the rolling ball when it is already down the hill.

Regardless of how agencies position themselves they must do so collaboratively to ensure that all who are committed best meet the needs of protection children online and not maintain a 'distant' approach to combating this crime type.

Cybercrime and protection of children online is everyone's problem. All agencies such as NGOs; Internet Service Providers.

There should not be boundaries in this crime type in 2025, with information being readily available to law enforcement providing a seamless; instant policing response with the assistance of internet service providers, non-government organisations and an ever and ongoing educative processes involving youth.

**International Legal Governance Panel Discussion - Facilitated**  
**by Monica Attard**



Operational results are dependent on legal systems and agencies that work well together. Therefore harmonisation of approaches to child protection is fundamental and increasing international ratification of relevant treaties is the first step.

With this first step coordination between the police, prosecutors and judiciaries of investigating jurisdictions is essential for operations that will successfully identify and locate suspects and children at risk while ensuring evidence is collected throughout the investigation process that is admissible and supports successful prosecutions.

This also needs to recognise that investigations are not linear, one operation will lead to another and there is now a dynamic developing where witnesses in one jurisdiction will be needed in another so on and so forth creating complex and protracted investigations globally.

Additional legal mechanisms such as the proposed amendments of the European Union Cybercrime Convention, mutual recognition of jurisdictional powers and processes and clear guidance for industry in order to better support law enforcement on a consistent basis no matter where geographically the activity is occurring, must be explored in order to enable agencies to act lawfully and quickly in the fluid operational environment that characterises online child exploitation investigations.

## ***Long Term Exposure to Child Abuse Material Workshop***

### **Research presented by the Australian Federal Police and the Italian Postal Communication and Police Service**



What are the problems and level of psychological distress experienced by police officers committed to fighting on line paedophilia and child pornography? Do such problems exist?

In particular the psychological pressure of episodic and long term exposure to child sex abuse material; perceptive and cognitive strategies most frequently adopted by officers; the most effective models of work organisations used to handle specific stress as well as the most efficient models on an operational level and; strategies on supervision of personnel in the event of extreme work-related stress.

Working with child abuse material does have an adverse effect on law enforcement officers. The two main risk factors discussed are the type of material notably, where multiple sensory inputs are involved (video worse than still images) and secondly where the workload volume is high and short time frames are required operationally to turn the information around.

The two main protective factors discussed focussed on protective cognitive processes specifically compartmentalisation and detachment/desensitisation and a supportive workplace. Supportive workplaces where peers are supportive and a source of support; processes and policies are in existences and there is leadership both formal and informal.

Recommendations were developed within this workshop suggesting that the VGT establish a working group to facilitate collaborative psychological research within the VGT framework and; for this group to develop an initial minimum set of guidelines for supporting staff who are working in this area.

## ***Prevention & Building Capability South East Asia Case Study - The Virtual Global Taskforce in Action***

The workshop explored what constitutes successful collaboration particularly within the South East Asia Region and various committed agencies.

These key pillars included a common understanding of the problem; agreed operational standards; agreed procedures and mechanisms in achieving outcomes; a minimum national capacity to implement common standards and effectively use agreed procedures and mechanisms.

The outcomes of the workshop highlighted the need for law enforcement agencies and non government organisations to collaborate more readily in victim management and overall awareness and prevention strategies.

## ***Prevention through Education***



The workshop highlighted the inadequacy of current research and the need for more effective evaluation tools to aid prevention through educational strategies.

It identified the need for education programs to target specific groups with generic messages.

It raised the issue that people need to work with technology rather than being distracted by it and through collaboration and partnerships education should be kept simple.

People need to understand the benefit of partnerships. Leveraging off the strengths of industry and educating adults is critical. By understanding partnership resources, gaps can be identified which in turn will benefit the ongoing prevention of this crime.

Cyberbullying is also an ongoing obstacle in the prevention and education of this offence. Making children and adults aware of the digital affects of cyberbullying is important. Parents need to be educated on the risk of online bullying and that support is available through the [ThinkUKnow website](#).

Young people can be easily influenced so it's important that education is provided through their peer to peer networks. Children are more likely to take advice from a peer than an adult, therefore altering the way we educate people is an important step in preventing this crime in the future.