Complaint from the public results in network of child sexual abuse websites being brought down

Hotline.ie, the Irish Internet Hotline, has collaborated with the Australian Communications and Media Authority to disable a network of websites that provided access to child sexual abuse material.

"The successful outcome is an example of how the public can take real action against suspected illegal images on the Internet and how hotlines, law enforcement and the internet industry can work swiftly together and prevent the distribution of child abuse material online", said Chris Chapman, ACMA Chairman.

The action was initiated by an anonymous report from a member of the Irish public who used the "Report Illegal Content" form on the Internet Service Providers Association of Ireland's Hotline.ie website. Hotline.ie analysts confirmed the images were illegal under Irish law and found that the site was part of a network of related sites. All contained illegal images of children being sexually abused.

The Irish Internet Hotline ascertained the sites were registered in Australia and referred the details to ACMA, which in consultation with the Australian Federal Police, made contact with the Australian domain name registrar Melbourne IT. Melbourne IT determined that the sites breached its terms and conditions of domain name registration and quickly took action to prevent the domain names in question from directing to the offending sites.

Hotline.ie's relationship with the Australian Communications and Media Authority's Internet Hotline comes from membership of the International Association of Internet Hotlines (INHOPE) which now comprises 33 hotlines covering 29 countries. INHOPE's mission is to eliminate child abuse material from the Internet and to protect young people from harmful and illegal uses of the Internet. Hotline.ie and INHOPE are part funded by the European Union's Safer Internet *plus* Programme.

"The global nature of the internet means that international co-operation is essential for dealing with problematic material. This excellent outcome underlies the invaluable role played by internet hotlines such as ACMA's in responding to illegal material online and the value of collaboration between these bodies and industry", said Mr Chapman.

"The internet is so vast that neither the internet industry nor law enforcement can be expected to know the whereabouts of illegal content unless it is brought to their attention. Internet hotlines provide this facility and this outcome is an example of the success that can be achieved through international collaboration involving industry and regulatory bodies", said Paul Durrant, General Manager of the Internet Service Providers Association of Ireland's Hotline.ie service.

[ENDS]   (Editorial notes – on next page)

Editorial notes.

- Hotline.ie (www.hotline.ie) provides a confidential online service whereby the Irish public may anonymously report suspected illegal material, especially child pornography, which they encounter on the Internet. If hotline.ie assesses the material to be probably illegal under Irish law the location of the illegal material is then traced. If found to be hosted or distributed form Ireland An Garda Síochána and the relevant ISPAI member are notified, so the material can be removed from public Internet access and law enforcement investigation may be initiated. If it is found to be from a source outside Ireland, details of the illegal content are forwarded to the INHOPE hotline in the appropriate country so similar action can be taken. Where the source country does not have an INHOPE member Hotline the report is sent to An Garda Síochána for transmission through police channels.

- ISPAI runs the Hotline.ie service under agreement with the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and An Garda Síochána with oversight from the Office for Internet Safety (role of former Internet Advisory Board, www.iab.ie).

- The ISPAI is the industry association of companies providing Internet access, email or hosting services to the public and businesses.

- Current ISPAI membership: Irish Domains; Vodafone; eircom.net; EuroKom; Irish Broadband; HEAnet; Bitbuzz; Blacknight Solutions; Myhost.ie; Perlico; Meteor; Strencom; O2; Hosting Ireland; Smart Telecom; Satellite Broadband, NTL/Chorus; UTV Internet; Verizon Business; BT Ireland; Google and Clearwire.

- Hotline.ie (http://www.hotline.ie) is a project co-funded by the European Union, through the Safer Internet *plus* Programme (http://ec.europa.eu/saferinternet).

- The Australian Communications and Media Authority runs the Internet Hotline for Australia. ACMA investigates complaints about online content and can take action in relation to offensive and illegal online content (known as 'prohibited content'). If prohibited content is hosted in, or provided from Australia, ACMA will direct the content provider to remove or restrict access to the content. If the content is not hosted in Australia and is prohibited, ACMA will notify the content to the suppliers of approved filters in accordance with the Australian Internet Industry Association's code of practice. Illegal material such as child sexual abuse images, is referred to the appropriate law enforcement agency or, where possible, to the INHOPE member hotline operating in the territory where the content is hosted. Further information about ACMA's responsibilities for online content is available at the ACMA website at http://www.acma.gov.au/hotline.

- INHOPE, the International Association of Internet Hotlines, was established under the European Commission's Safer Internet Programme. INHOPE member hotlines exchange reports about online child sexual abuse material and other illegal online content to expedite the investigation of such material by the competent law enforcement body in the countries in which the material associated with each report is hosted. INHOPE members also exchange technical information and hotline management expertise to help ensure timely, accurate and ethical handling of the reports about illegal material. The network handles around 10,000 reports of illegal online content every month. Information about INHOPE can be found at http://www.inhope.org/.

- For further information contact ISPAI Hotline.ie at 01-2945280