

NEW WEAPON IN WAR AGAINST ONLINE CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

(Embargo to 00:01 hours on Wednesday 2nd April 2008)

Leading Irish internet services providers today struck a new blow in the fight against online child pornography with the launch of the revamped Hotline.ie service. Officially launched by The Minister for Justice, Mr Brian Lenihan T.D., Hotline.ie is specifically designed for the reporting of illegal web content, particularly child pornography.

Set up nearly nine years ago by the Internet Service Providers Association of Ireland, the website www.hotline.ie relies on reports made by members of the public and has a particular focus on child pornography, although it also deals with other illegal content including financial scams, phishing, racism, and incitement to hatred.

With the current media focus on internet safety, particularly in relation to the safety of children on the internet, the relaunch of the Hotline service could not be more timely. The majority of illegal material reported to the service relates to child pornography or other child abuse and disturbingly the figures are rising. Hotline plays an important role in a process where the ultimate goal is ending the trade in the images of abused children.

Hotline.ie does not act alone. In addition to its working relationship with An Garda Síochána, it is also a member of INHOPE, an organisation of 30 similar Hotlines around the world which allows for a rapid response to illegal internet content irrespective of its global location.

At today's launch the Minister stressed that constant vigilance is necessary when it comes to dealing with the illegal use of the internet, highlighting the importance of the involvement of all ISPs. With the launch of the new Office of Internet Safety by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform here in Ireland and the advent of the Byron Report in the UK, the focus on internet

safety and the role the ISP industry has to play in combating illegal material is intensifying daily.

Most agree that any success in tackling the problem will require a co-ordinated approach in which involvement by the ISPs is essential. The Internet Service Providers Association of Ireland was established ten years ago by the leading Internet Service Providers as a self-regulatory body for the industry and it agreed at the time to establish the Hotline service as part of its commitment to internet safety. As the internet has evolved, however, Ireland has seen a boom in the number of Internet Service Providers not only large telecoms companies but also smaller organisations that offer broadband access or web hosting.

It is unfortunate, says Paul Durrant of the ISPAI, that many of these companies have chosen not to join the ISPAI and participate in the self-regulation of the industry, or financially support the ongoing fight against cybercrime.

This was a problem addressed by Minister Lenihan in his speech at today's launch and it is hoped that it will spur those companies who have so far avoided joining the ISPAI into doing so. It is essential, says Durrant, that Internet Service Providers are co-ordinated and act collectively if they want to avoid the possibility of external regulation of the industry.

Members of the public who are concerned about internet safety or who have encountered what they suspect to be illegal material on the internet are urged to log on to www.hotline.ie.

ENDS

For further information contact: Paul Durrant (email: info@ispai.ie)

WHERE: Buswells Hotel (Georgian Suite) Molesworth Street, Dublin 2.

WHEN: 1.30 p.m., Wednesday 2nd April 2008