

My Picture Matters - Help improve online child safety

November 2023

Following on from our recent online child safety postcard campaign, we are pleased to promote this related initiative to prevent and/or detect online child exploitation.

We encourage you to assist Monash University experts in curbing online child exploitation by contributing a photo to a world first [ethically-sourced and managed image bank](#) for research.

The project is an initiative of the AiLECS Lab – a collaboration between Monash University's Faculty of Information Technology and the Australian Federal Police – which develops artificial intelligence (AI) technologies that aid police and enhance community safety.

AiLECS researchers are asking persons aged 18 and above to contribute photographs of themselves as children through the [My Pictures Matter](#) crowdsourcing campaign. These pictures will be used to train AI models to recognise the presence of children in 'safe' situations, to help identify 'unsafe' situations, and potentially flag child sexual exploitation material.

AiLECS Lab Co-Director Associate Professor Campbell Wilson said, "To develop AI that can identify exploitative images, we need a huge number of children's photographs in everyday 'safe' contexts that can train and evaluate the AI models intended to combat child exploitation."

"But sourcing these images from the internet is problematic when there is no way of knowing if the children in those pictures have consented for their photographs to be uploaded or used for research."

"By obtaining photographs from adults, through informed consent, we are trying to build technologies that are ethically accountable and transparent."

The researchers have developed comprehensive strategies for the safe storage and use of this data to preserve the privacy of those depicted and processes for ensuring ongoing consent management.

The project team are not collecting any personal information from contributors other than the email addresses associated with consent for research use, and these email IDs will be stored separately from the images.

The images and related data will not include any identifying information, ensuring that images used by researchers cannot reveal any personal information about the depicted people.

People who contribute photos will also be able to get details and updates about each stage of the research if they choose to be contacted about the project. They can opt to change use permissions or revoke their research consent and withdraw images from the database at a later date.

Machine learning tools developed with the help of *My Pictures Matter* campaign will support technologies designed to:

- better protect survivors of abuse from ongoing harm;
- assist in identifying and prosecuting perpetrators; and,



- minimise repeated exposure of highly distressing content for the Australian Federal Police and other law enforcement officers.

The ultimate goal for developing AI techniques to detect and triage child sexual abuse material was to more rapidly identify victims and material not previously seen by law enforcement. The outcome will enable police to intervene faster to remove children from harm, stop perpetrators and better protect the community.

In 2021, the AFP-led Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation received more than 33,000 reports of online child exploitation, and each report can contain large volumes of images and videos of children being sexually assaulted or exploited for the gratification of offenders.

Reviewing this horrific material can be a slow process. The constant exposure can cause significant psychological distress to investigators. AiLECS Lab's initiatives will support police officers and the children they are trying to protect.

The researchers aim to have a large enough database of at least 100,000 ethically-sourced images for training the AI algorithm through the *My Pictures Matter* campaign.

Monash University, the Australian Federal Police and the Westpac Safer Children Safer Communities grant program fund AiLECS Lab's research.

To learn more about the *My Pictures Matter* campaign and submit images, please visit: <https://mypicturesmatter.org/>