Responding to Revenge Pornography: The Scope, Nature and Impact of Australian Criminal Laws

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Content of Abstract

This ground-breaking project is the first Australian empirical study to examine the prevalence, nature and impacts of the online distribution of intimate and sexually explicit digital images without consent, also known as "revenge pornography". Given the dominance of social media outlets and the instantaneous, widespread sharing power of the internet, the distribution of non-consensual intimate imagery appears to be becoming commonplace globally. While jurisdictions including Victoria, Canada, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, the Philippines, the UK and 25 states in the US have scrambled to close the justice gap by introducing a range of new justice models to address the harms of such behaviours, there is no consistency in criminal and civil laws, and many jurisdictions do not have specific offences in place to tackle this emerging problem. Significantly, emerging law reform efforts are substantially hampered by a near absence of empirical research into the prevalence, nature and impacts of revenge pornography. Innovative, interdisciplinary research is urgently needed to generate robust evidence and build a theoretical understanding of this phenomenon.

This project addresses the significant and pressing criminal justice issue of revenge pornography, with the dual-aim of generating much needed empirical data on the nature and extent of Australian adult victimisation, as well as developing recommendations for legal and policy reform. Specifically, the project aims to:

1. Examine the scope and applicability of criminal legislation in Victoria, South Australia and New South Wales;
2. Document the prevalence of revenge pornography among Australian adults; and
3. Investigate the impacts of these harms on adult victims.

This will be achieved through a mixed-method design comprising: a national survey of adult victims; stakeholder consultations (national roundtable and interviews in the three focus jurisdictions); analysis of recorded crime-statistics; and a legislative review.

This project will generate new, internationally-relevant knowledge about the nature and extent of adult revenge pornography, and will inform legal and policy reform on this emerging, contemporary harm.

Research Theme

4. Systems

Key Words

Technology
Contemporary Issues
Law and Policy Reform