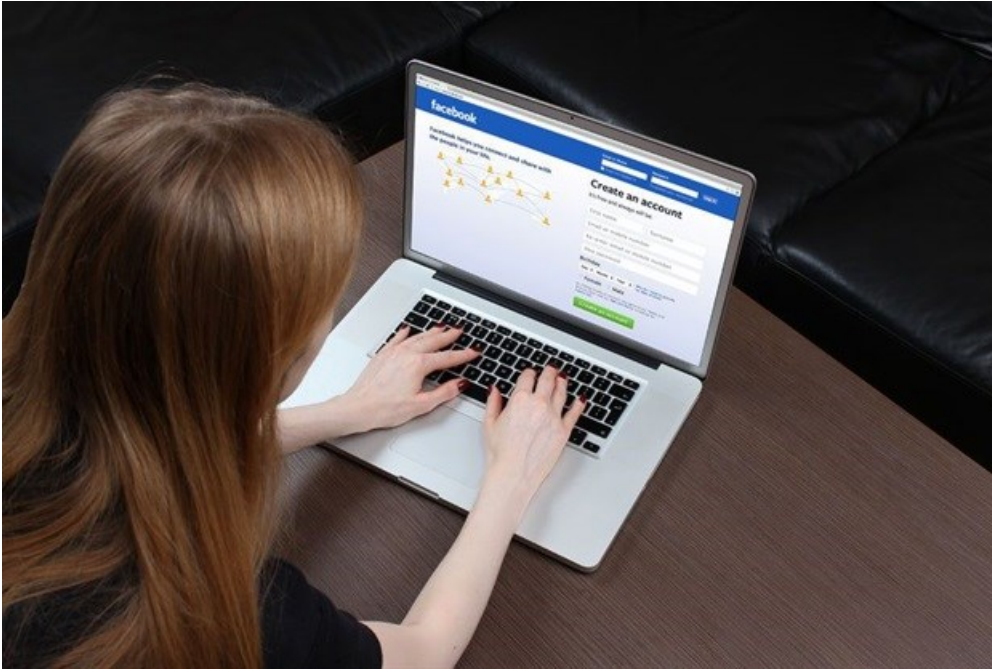# Facebook urges users to send nude pics to combat revenge porn

SYDNEY - Facebook is trying to combat "revenge porn" by encouraging users in Australia to submit their nude photos to a pilot project designed to prevent intimate images from being shared without consent.

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Adults who have shared nude or sexually explicit photos with someone online, and who are worried about unauthorised distribution, can report images to the Australian government's eSafety Commission.

They then securely send the photos to themselves via Messenger, a process that allows Facebook to "hash" them, creating a unique digital fingerprint.

The identifier is used to block any further distribution on Facebook, Instagram and Messenger as a pre-emptive strike against revenge porn, a common method of abuse and exploitation online.

"We're using image-matching technology to prevent non-consensual intimate images from being shared," said Antigone Davis, Facebook's head of global safety.

A Facebook spokesman said Britain, Canada and the United States are also expected to take part in the project.

Australia's eSafety commissioner Julie Inman Grant told AFP the initiative empowers people to protect themselves against the unauthorised spread of intimate images.

"It removes control and power from the perpetrator who is ostensibly trying to amplify the humiliation of the victim amongst friends, family and colleagues," she said.

If successful, the Facebook trial should be extended to other online platforms, Inman Grant added.

"The precedent already exists for the sharing of child exploitation images and countering violent extremism online, and by extending to image-based abuse we are taking the burden off the victims to report to multiple online platforms."

Australia is among world leaders in efforts to combat revenge porn.

Its eSafety Commission launched an online portal last month, allowing victims to report cases where their photos have been shared on the internet without consent. The government agency then works with websites and search engines to have them removed.

A recent survey by the commission showed one in five Australian women aged 18-45 suffered image-based abuse, with Facebook and its Messenger app accounting for 53 percent of revenge porn, followed by Snapchat at 11 percent then Instagram at four percent.

Research by Melbourne's Monash University and RMIT University earlier this year found people were falling prey to abusive behaviour on a "mass scale", and that men and women were equally likely to be targeted.

RMIT legal studies lecturer Anastasia Powell said it was "positive" to see collaboration between social media companies and government -- a vital part of any strategy to tackle revenge porn.

"It requires a combination of legal reform, as well as policy, as well as additional services from victims, as well as these sort of responses from social media companies," she told AFP.

"There's very little consistency between laws internationally and police cooperation and processes to make sure that countries can work together, to make sure that images can be taken down, or to pursue a criminal response."

But with a proliferation of "predatory" third-party companies operating online, people need reassurance that a mechanism for sending sensitive photos to Facebook was secure, Powell added.

"It is really important to give that confidence that this is being dealt with appropriately and that images are being handled by reliable sources."

Source: AFP