



# Shielding Your Digital Self

Understanding Online Privacy Rights and the Harmful Digital Communications Act 2015



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# Overview

- About Netsafe
- Some common online privacy myths
- Privacy and the Harmful Digital Communications Act
- Some hints and tips to enhance your online privacy



# Netsafe's online safety role

- Independent, non-profit online safety NGO with 25 years' experience
- 'Approved Agency' under the Harmful Digital Communications Act 2015
- 7 day a week helpline, handling 25,000+ reports per year
- Trusted flagger status with online content hosts for content moderation
- Provides education on online safety



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# Some Common Online Privacy Myths

**MYTH:** Privacy is a lost cause in the digital age

**REALITY:** While the digital landscape presents privacy challenges there are tools, technologies, and legal protections available to help you safeguard your privacy online. With awareness, education, and proactive measures, you can assert greater control over your digital privacy





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## Some Common Online Privacy Myths

**MYTH:** I consented to sharing my data, so I have no privacy rights

**REALITY:** You still have the right to control how your data is collected, used, and shared online. Understand website privacy policies, learn how to update cookie preferences or delete them for example.





# Some Common Online Privacy Myths

**MYTH:** I have nothing to hide, so I don't need to worry about privacy

**REALITY:** Privacy isn't about hiding illegal or unethical activities; it's about protecting your personal autonomy, preventing identity theft, maintaining confidentiality in communications, and preserving your right to control your own information



# Some Common Online Privacy Myths

**MYTH:** Using privacy-enhancing tools makes you suspicious

**REALITY:** Using privacy-enhancing tools like VPNs, encrypted messaging apps, and ad blockers doesn't make you suspicious; it makes you proactive about protecting your privacy. These tools are legitimate means of safeguarding your personal information and online activities from prying eyes







# The Harmful Digital Communications Act 2015



# Purpose of the HDCA (s3)

(a) to deter, prevent, and mitigate harm caused to individuals by digital communications; and

(b) to provide victims of harmful digital communications with a quick and efficient means of redress



# The Thresholds for the Act

**1**

Digital communication

One of the ten  
communications principles  
has been breached

**2**

**3**

The digital communication  
has caused or is likely to  
cause serious emotional  
distress to an individual

A digital communication should not disclose sensitive personal facts about an individual

**1**

**7**

A digital communication should not contain a matter that is published in breach of confidence

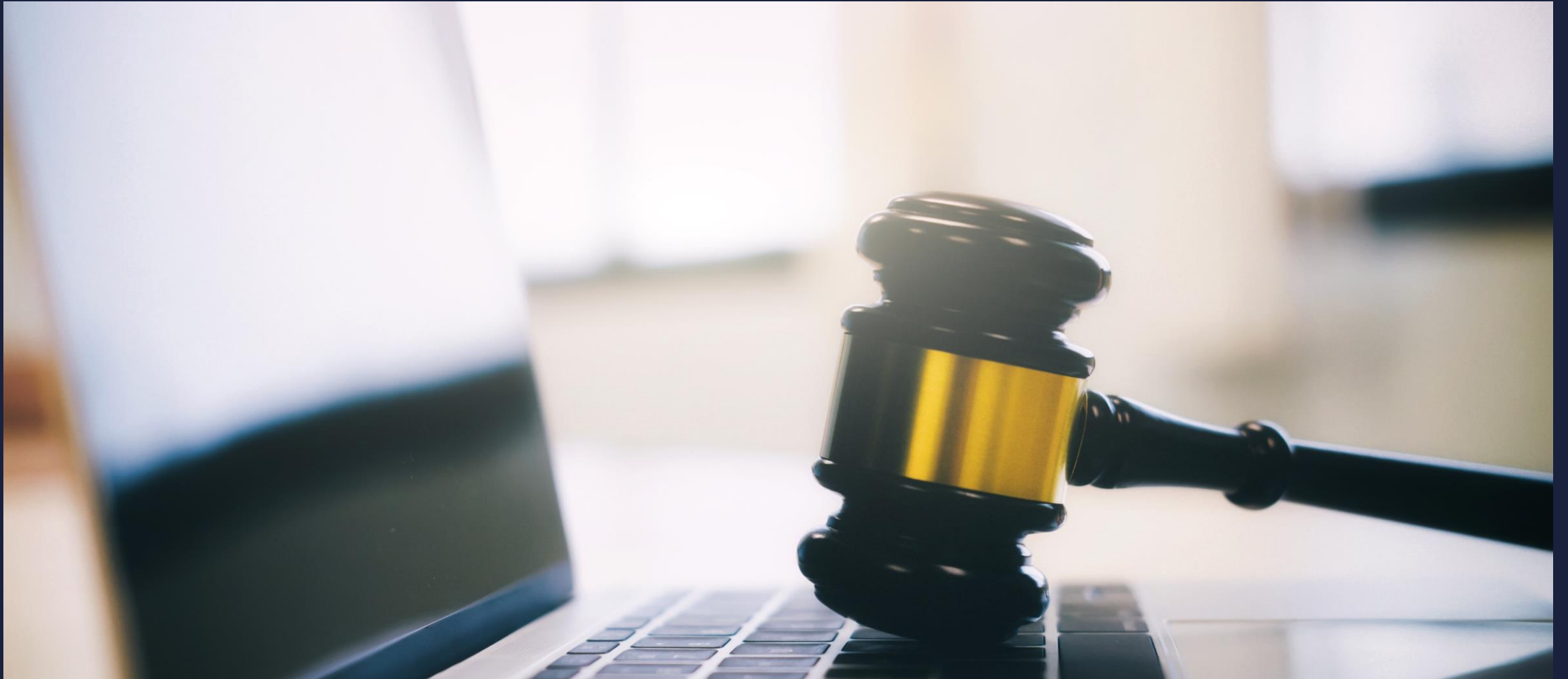
# HDCA Principles 1 and 7



# Netsafe's role under the HDCCA

- (a) to receive and assess complaints about harm caused to individuals by digital communications
- (b) to investigate complaints
- (c) to use advice, negotiation, mediation, and persuasion (as appropriate) to resolve complaints





Orders available under section 19 of the HDCCA in the District Court



# Recommendations for Improving Online Privacy

**Secure your devices:** Protect your devices with strong, unique passwords, consider using a password manager to generate and securely store complex passwords, and use features like 2FA, biometric authentication and device encryption to safeguard your data from unauthorised access

**Use secure connections:** Use privacy enhancing tools likes VPNs, avoid connecting to unsecured public Wi-Fi networks to prevent data interception

**Update software regularly:** Keep your software, operating systems, and apps up to date with the latest security patches to defend against vulnerabilities and exploits that could compromise your privacy



# Recommendations for Improving Online Privacy



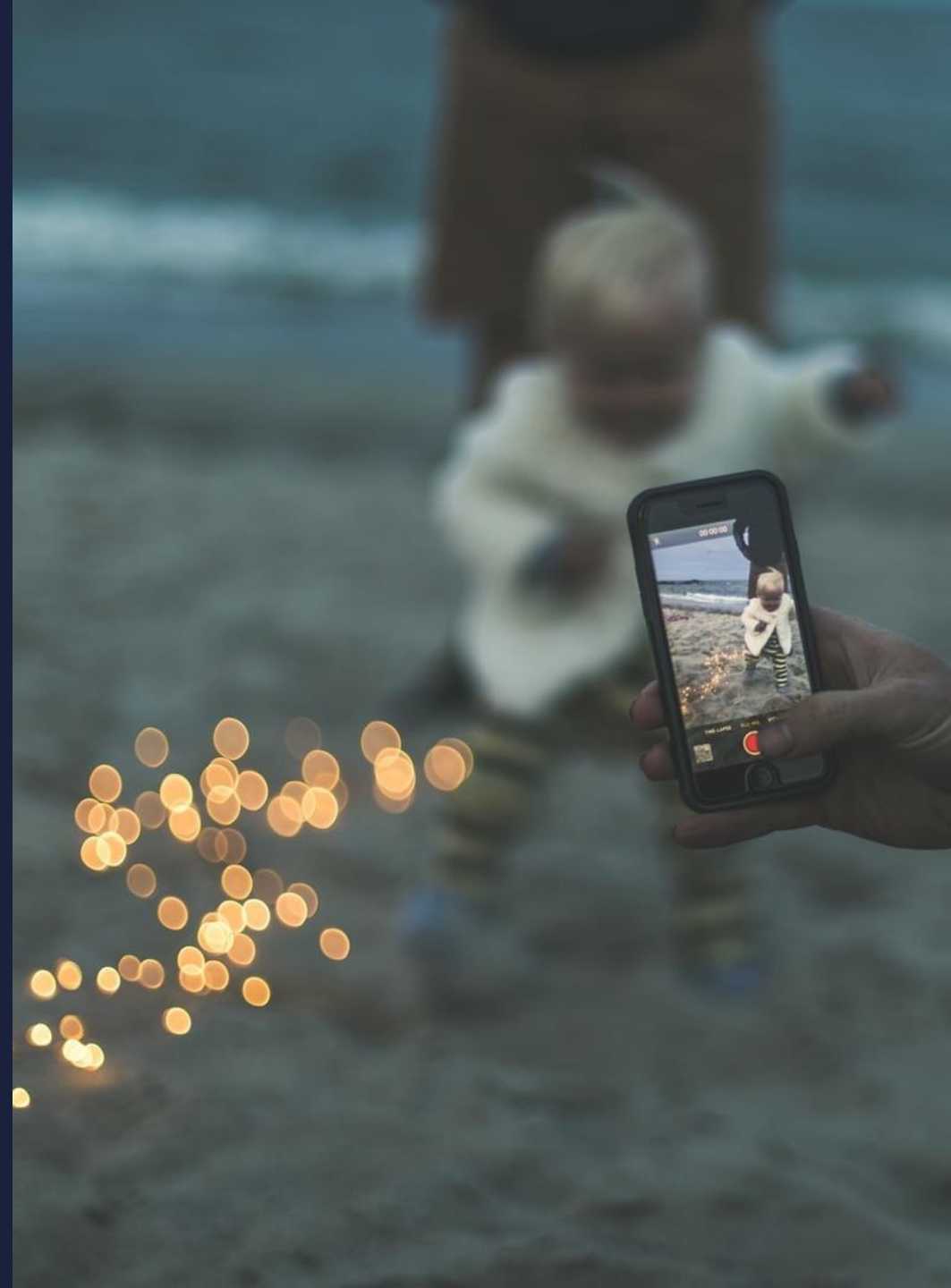
**Use Privacy Settings:** Review and adjust privacy settings on social media platforms, apps, and devices to control who can access your personal information and online activities

**Disable location tracking** on your devices and apps when not in use to prevent your movements from being tracked



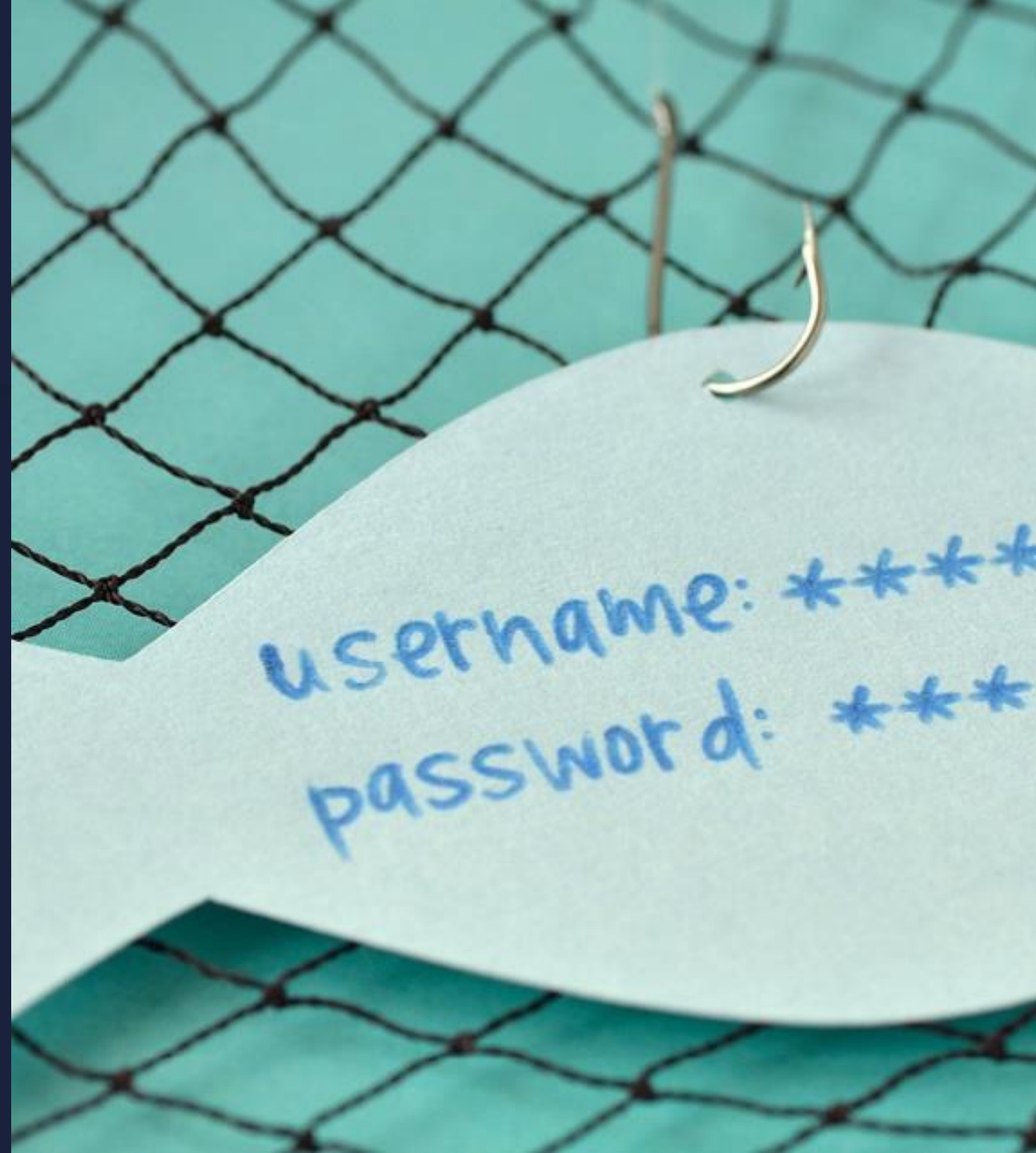
# Recommendations for Improving Online Privacy

**Be cautious with sharing information:** Exercise caution when sharing personal information online, especially on social media platforms, and avoid posting sensitive details that could be exploited by malicious actors



## Recommendations for Improving Online Privacy

**Be wary of phishing attempts:** Stay vigilant against phishing attempts, which involve deceptive emails, messages, or websites designed to trick individuals into disclosing sensitive information



# Recommendations for Improving Online Privacy

**Educate yourself:** Stay informed about online privacy risks and best practices by educating yourself and others about how to stay safe online





# Takeaways and Recommendations

- Privacy rights definitely exist in the digital age
- Use privacy-enhancing settings, tools and technologies to protect your online privacy
- Stay informed about privacy laws and regulations to assert your rights effectively
- When things go wrong there may be legal remedies under the Privacy Act and the Harmful Digital Communications Act



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