



PRESS STATEMENT
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Leading mental health organisations say proposed ban won't make social media safe

Australia's leading mental health organisations have come together to promote evidence-based improvements to online safety

Australia's leading mental health organisations believe the proposed social media ban will risk cutting young people across Australia off from mental health support, exposing them to new harms and leaving many without any support.

Parents and carers are rightly worried about the impacts of social media. We are too and we agree reform is necessary. But a blanket ban is not the answer. Parents and carers deserve substantial solutions, not a false sense of security.

This is a complex issue that requires comprehensive evidence-based and co-designed reforms, if we want to truly protect and improve the mental health of young people. We also need social media platforms to step up, and take responsibility for their products and make sure that young people are not exposed to harmful content.

Research by ReachOut has found that 73 per cent of young people use social media for mental health support, and that half of young people with mental health challenges use social media as a substitute for professional support.

Additional findings from Black Dog Institute's Future Proofing Study suggest online social connectivity offers adolescents with opportunities to enhance well-being by strengthening existing relationships with their peers and reducing social anxieties, isolation and loneliness.

Social media often serves as their front door to the mental health system. Shutting this door on young people will cut them off from a free and accessible form of support - available without an appointment in an overstretched system.

Mental health organisations are calling for a range of evidence-based measures to help improve the safety of social media platforms for young people including:

1. Co-designing reform and new safety features with young people to ensure that they are likely to be effective and fit-for-purpose
2. Social media platforms put an end to 'sticky features' like infinite scroll
3. Mandating safety features and increased social media literacy programs for users under 16
4. Increasing support for parents in how to manage their children's access to social media



Joining forces to prevent mental health conditions



5. Giving users control to reset their algorithm, limiting the harmful content they are exposed to
6. Verification of mental health information

This complex issue requires a thoughtful response that recognises both the harms and the benefits of digital technology in the lives of young people.

ENDS

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Mindframe guidelines

We encourage safe reporting about mental ill-health and suicide according to the Mindframe guidelines.