



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **FAMS SOUNDS ALARM ON HIDDEN RISKS OF YOUTH SOCIAL MEDIA BAN**

The NSW peak body for family and children's services has warned that the Federal Government's proposed youth social media ban could unintentionally drive young people to hide their online activities, discourage them from seeking help, and increase the risks from online threats.

Fams is urging the government to instead implement a proactive, evidence-based solution to improve safety and provide opportunities for early intervention.

"We are concerned that rather than protecting youth online, the proposed social media ban could actually increase the risks faced by some young people," said Lauren Stracey, Acting CEO of Fams.

"During adolescence, young people are shaping their moral compass and may make decisions to avoid punishment or maintain being seen as 'good' by others, especially care givers. Young people who find ways to circumvent the ban may therefore be less likely to seek help when online issues arise, making them more vulnerable to online predators such as online scams as well as child exploitation and grooming."

Stracey stressed that social media is not inherently harmful but presents both risks and benefits, and that any solutions must be realistic and include engagement with youth as well as families and the community.

"There is currently no established evidence or research showing that banning social media for those under 16 improves youth safety or mental health," Stracey said.

"Young people know what works best for them. Policy responses must involve their voices and those of their families in meaningful ways, ensuring they are integral to the design of any response."

"Instead of imposing bans, we must focus on developing inclusive, evidence-based policies that place the majority of responsibility on government and industry stakeholders, rather than further burdening families. Accountability and user safety must be at the forefront."

Fams remains committed to advocating for policies that support the well-being of children, young people and families while creating a safe and constructive online environment.

Media contact: Lauren Stracey at [lauren@fams.asn.au](mailto:lauren@fams.asn.au) or on 0412 610 997



## **About Fams**

Fams is the peak body in New South Wales that supports the early intervention and prevention sector. This sector provides critical services for children, young people, families, and communities.

Fams works collaboratively with Government, Policy and decision-makers, non-government organisations, academic organisations, peak bodies, family and community services sector, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and organisations working with diverse communities. We advocate for improved policies and resources for children, young people, families, communities and services.

The below principles are modelled in all aspects of planning, service delivery, management and administration:

- Children and families should be safe.
- Children and families receive services that are flexible and responsive to their needs.
- Children and families can access services embedded in their community.
- Children and family's growth and development is enhanced by research supported practice.
- Children and family's social, cultural, racial and linguistic identities are affirmed and strengthened.
- Children and families work together with services in relationships based on trust and respect.