



Intergenerational perspectives on social media safety

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The Young and Resilient Research Centre acknowledges the Darug, Tharawal (also historically referred to as Dharawal), Gandangarra and Wiradjuri peoples as the traditional custodians of the land on which Western Sydney University carries out its work. We also acknowledge all First Nations peoples' continuing connection to land, water and sky, and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging. We recognise that respect for traditional knowledge and wisdom must be at the heart of building safe and inclusive digital futures.

Acknowledgements

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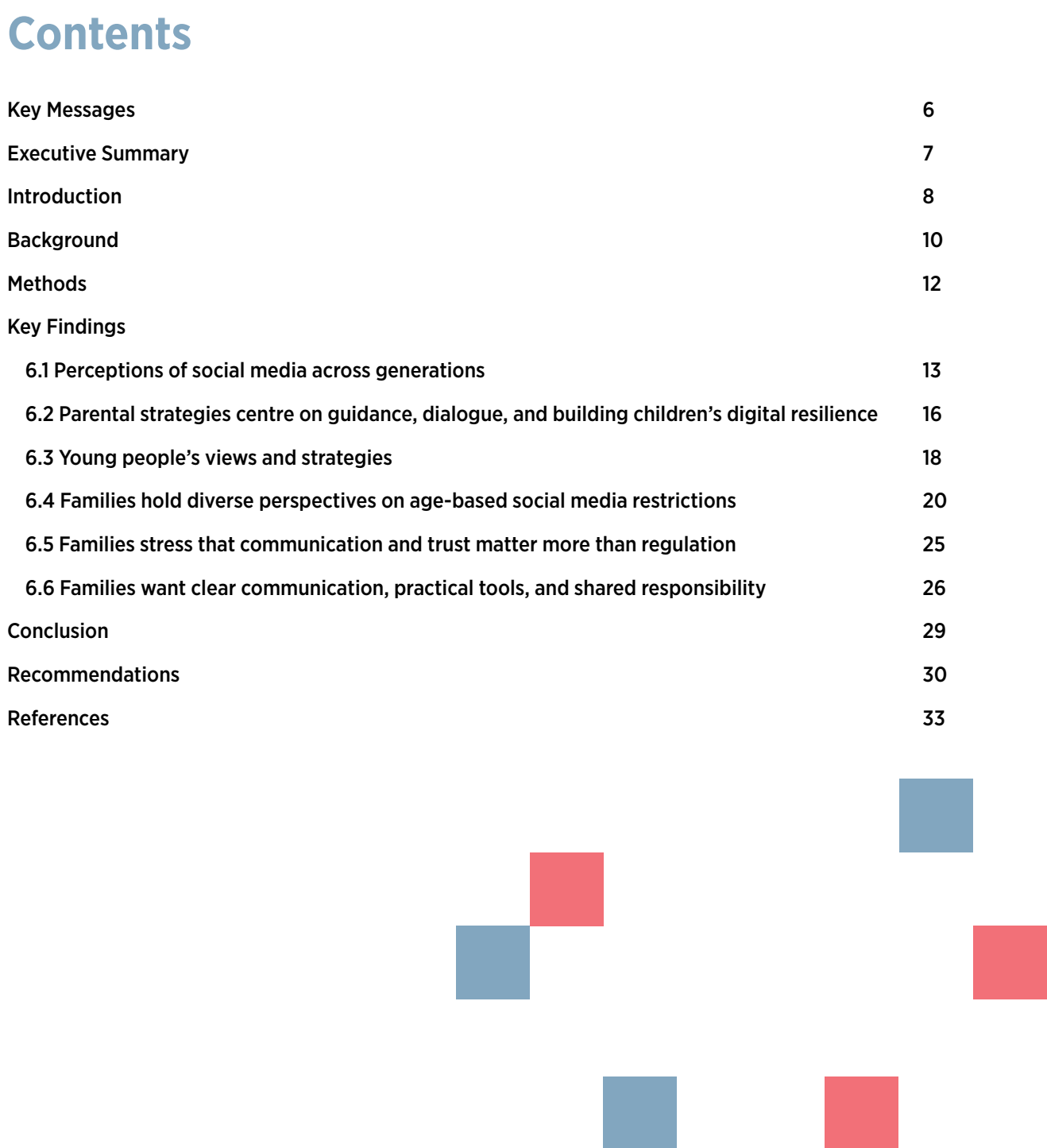
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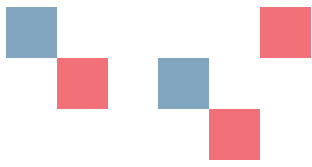
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1. Key Messages



1

Parents and young people often identify similar online harms and benefits, but their perspectives on which matter most and how to respond can vary.



2

Parents and young people are calling for ongoing opportunities to participate in conversations and decisions around young people's engagement with the digital environment.



3

Families describe a delicate balancing act between safeguarding children and enabling them to participate meaningfully in digital life. For some, protective measures are essential; for others, they risk undermining young people's agency and wellbeing.



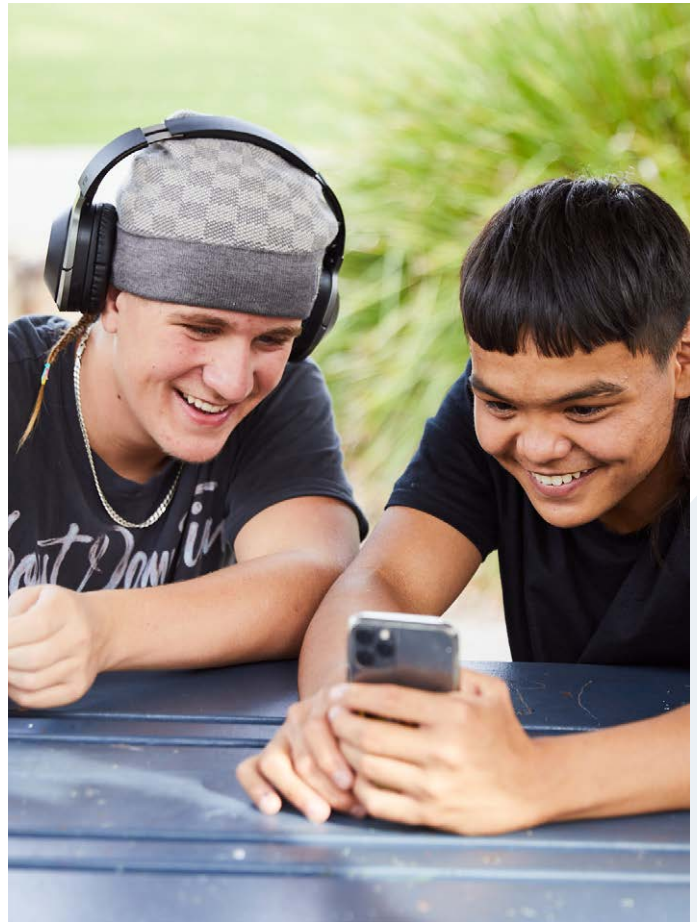
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Parents want to play a role in their children's online safety at home, but do not currently feel empowered to do so.



5

Parents seek clear, accessible communication from government and technology companies about the social media age restrictions, including their purpose, implementation timeline, which platforms they will apply to, and how age verification and privacy protection will be handled.



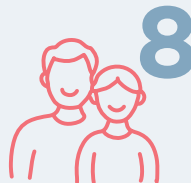
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Families need practical, consistent tools and guidance to help them manage online life, both for themselves and for their children.



7

Parents are concerned about solely shouldering the responsibility for children's online safety and want support and assistance from government, technology companies and schools to do this.



8

Young people want support to navigate social media safely and constructively. They call for education, digital literacy, and open conversations with trusted adults.



9

Both young people and parents value opportunities to share perspectives with each other and recognise that open dialogue is central to building trust and resilience in digital life.



2. Executive Summary

This report presents findings from a qualitative study with parents and young people in Australia that explores how families understand online safety and digital participation. The study examines how parents and young people identify the risks of harm and benefits of social media, the strategies they use to manage digital life at home, and what they need from governments and technology companies to feel supported, informed, and empowered.

The research pays particular attention to young people aged 13 to 16 and their parents or carers – a group whose perspectives are often missing in public debates about digital safety, despite being at the forefront of navigating social media in their everyday lives. While policy discussions have intensified in recent years, families report having little opportunity to contribute their views, leaving them feeling excluded from decision-making processes that directly shape their digital worlds.

Funded by Meta Australia and grounded in the Young and Resilient Research Centre's long-standing expertise in intergenerational research, the study draws on semi-structured interviews with 12 parents from across Australia and a participatory workshop with 15 young people aged 13 to 16 in Western Sydney. Parents included representatives of diverse family structures, such as single-parent households; First Nations and migrant families; neurodiverse households; and LGBTQIA+ parents. Insights from the parent interviews informed the design of the youth workshop, which enabled young people to critically engage with parental perspectives and articulate their own priorities for safe and supported digital participation.

Thematic analysis revealed strong intergenerational alignment around the value of social media, but notable differences in how risks of harm are perceived and managed. Parents voiced concerns about their children's exposure to harmful content; mental health impacts; technology dependence; and the challenges of setting boundaries in a fast-evolving digital environment. Young people, meanwhile, emphasised the importance of social media for connection, identity, creativity, and learning. They called for guidance and support – rather than restrictions – to help them navigate digital spaces safely and constructively.



Across generations, families called for clearer communication and practical, accessible resources from governments, technology companies, and schools. They identified a need for shared responsibility in fostering safe digital environments and underscored the importance of approaches that are co-designed with, and responsive to, the lived realities of young people and their families.

By centring the everyday experiences of parents and young people, this report offers timely insights into what families prioritise for online safety, and how they believe digital life can be better supported. It highlights opportunities for governments and technology companies to work in meaningful partnership with families – including, and especially, with young people – to co-create more effective, equitable, and rights-respecting approaches to online safety.



3. Introduction

Social media is a key part of everyday life for many young Australians. Recent figures show that 98% of 15-year-olds in Australia use at least one social media platform, with most engaging daily (Chhabra, Pilkington & Seidler, 2024). The eSafety Commissioner's most recent survey likewise found that children aged 10 to 15 are highly active online, with the majority using multiple platforms regularly, and many reporting both positive experiences and exposure to risks of harm (eSafety Commissioner, 2025c). For young people, these platforms are more than just entertainment. They are tools for staying connected with friends and family, exploring personal interests, expressing identity, accessing information, and supporting their mental health (Hanckel et al., 2022).





At the same time, public concern about the potential risks of social media has intensified. In recent years, debates around youth digital safety have focused on cyberbullying, addiction, 'doomscrolling', online predators, misinformation, and exposure to age-inappropriate or harmful content. The Australian Government's decision to restrict social media use for children under 16 years of age constitutes an attempt to respond to these concerns (Third, 2025). Announced in late 2024, the Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act 2024 mandates that social media companies take reasonable steps to prevent users under 16 from accessing their platforms, with significant penalties for non-compliance (Fardouly, 2025). The law is the first of its kind globally and is set to take effect by December 2025. While other jurisdictions, including those within the European Union, are progressing toward regulatory models – such as age verification systems and parental consent mechanisms – Australia's approach is the world's first legally enforceable age restriction preventing young people under 16 from accessing major social media platforms (eSafety Commissioner, 2025a).

Little is formally documented about the lived experiences and perspectives of parents of 13 to 15-year-olds, the age group most directly impacted by the social media age restrictions. Likewise, young people's views on their social media use, and their thoughts on having that use curbed on age grounds, remain largely underexplored to date. Despite being among those most actively navigating digital life, their perspectives and strategies are rarely centred in policymaking debates. Yet these lived experiences offer critical insights into how families negotiate online safety and the kinds of support they most need (Third et al., 2014, 2025).

This project seeks to address that gap by working with young people, their parents and their caregivers to surface their insights about the ways they might be impacted by the social media age restrictions. Drawing on the Young & Resilient Research Centre's extensive work in digital safety and youth-centred research (Marsden et al., 2022; Moody et al., 2021; Third et al., 2011, 2013, 2024), the research explores how parents and young people make sense of social media, what they value about it, what concerns they hold, and how they are likely to respond to the legislated restrictions, once they are implemented. It also considers how digital parenting is shaped by broader social conditions, including shifting family values, growing inequality, and the pressure on parents to manage digital risks of harm in the absence of consistent support (Livingstone & Blum-Ross, 2020).



By examining the social, cultural, and political factors influencing family dynamics, the research highlights both tensions and alignments between generations. It seeks to move beyond narratives of protection versus empowerment by listening closely to how families themselves define safe, meaningful, and supported online participation.





4. Background

The media and policy landscape

Governments and technology companies worldwide are moving to tighten regulation of children's and young people's social media use. In Australia, this has culminated in the passage of the Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act 2024, which from December 2025 will prevent those under 16 from holding an account on major platforms (eSafety Commissioner, 2025a). Proponents frame the law as a necessary response to adult concerns about social media's impact on young people's wellbeing. Yet critics, including child-rights advocates and experts, caution that blanket restrictions may create new risks of harm – cutting off vital support networks and undermining young people's rights to privacy and participation (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2024; Finlay & Hollonds, 2024).

Differing views of parents and young people on digital safety, wellbeing and rights

Within the context of the family, duelling perspectives emerge regarding young people's use of social media. Young people feel their use is misunderstood and that parents overestimate the risks of harm while downplaying the benefits (Douglass et al., 2022; La Sala et al., 2024; Schubert & Eggert, 2018; Third & Collin, 2016; Third et al., 2019). For young people, social media is vital for maintaining relationships, support networks, and fostering community and belonging (Byron, 2020; Gibson & Trnka, 2020; Harris & Johns, 2021; La Sala et al., 2024; Rice et al., 2016; Third et al., 2019). Parents, by contrast, voice concerns that social media hinders identity formation (Adorjan & Ricciardelli, 2024; Third et al., 2013) and limits opportunities in the 'real world' (Douglass et al., 2022, p. 5) with some also expressing 'bewilderment' about the attractions of social media (Third et al., 2013, p. 12; see also Jeffery, 2021; Livingstone & Byrne, 2018; Savic et al., 2016).

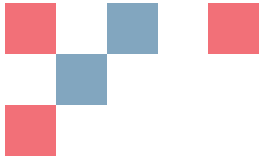
While both groups are active in trying to mitigate online risks of harm, their foci and approaches differ significantly. Parents often show heightened concern about online bullying, predators, pornography, and privacy (Douglass et al., 2022; eSafety Commissioner, 2018; Imran et al., 2023; ReachOut Australia, 2024a, 2024b; Schubert & Eggert, 2018). While young people acknowledge these risks of harm, many feel reasonably confident in managing them using strategies such as controlling who gets to see their posts

and developing skills to enable them to contextualise their interpretations of online communication (Humphry et al., 2023, 2025; Third et al., 2019). Young people's desire for autonomy is central (Clark & Brites, 2018; Gibson & Trnka, 2020; Humphry et al., 2023, 2025; Marsden et al., 2022; Third et al., 2019), although some express interest in knowing where to access appropriate support when needed (Marsden et al., 2022; Third et al., 2019).

Regarding managing social media use, parents commonly employ both overt and covert monitoring and restrictive measures (Adorjan & Ricciardelli, 2024; Adorjan et al., 2022; eSafety Commissioner, 2018; eSafety Commissioner, 2022; Green et al., 2011; Jeffrey, 2021; Nansen et al., 2012; Third et al., 2013). However, young people often express concern about overly intrusive parental mediation, perceiving it as spying or surveillance (Adorjan & Ricciardelli, 2022; Adorjan et al., 2024; Third & Moody, 2021). Some even develop strategies to circumvent parental monitoring, such as using secondary 'burner' phones or 'dummy' accounts (Adorjan & Ricciardelli, 2024, p. 41; see also Adorjan et al., 2022; Jeffery, 2021; Nash, 2021).

These diverse approaches are shaped by differing attitudes and levels of digital literacy. Young people are often stereotyped as more skilled than adults in navigating social media platforms (Jeffery et al., 2022; Savic et al., 2016). By contrast, parents often feel ill-equipped to manage online safety due to limited digital skills (Humphry et al., 2023, 2025; Marsden et al., 2022; Third et al., 2013, 2024). This dynamic can disrupt the family hierarchy of expertise, challenging traditional roles (Savic et al., 2016) with young people bypassing rules, sometimes with little consequence (Humphry et al., 2023, 2025).

Despite these differences, both young people and parents agree on several key principles. Broadly speaking, there is intergenerational consensus about the importance of online safety, acknowledging potential risks of harm and the need to develop relevant education and skills (Douglass et al., 2022; Humphry et al., 2023; Strider et al., 2012; Third et al., 2013; Third et al., 2019). Furthermore, open communication within families regarding online activities is considered valuable across generations (Jeffery, 2021; Jeffery et al., 2022; La Sala et al., 2024; Liu et al., 2024; Schubert & Eggert, 2018; Strider et al., 2012; Third et al., 2013). Young people and their parents and caregivers also share a desire for social media platforms to be better held to account to strengthen online safety and privacy (Adorjan & Ricciardelli, 2024; Humphry et al., 2023, 2025; Third, 2025; Third et al., 2013).



Centring families in online safety debates

The literature points to significant differences in how parents and young people understand social media use, its risks of harm and benefits, and the impact of potential restrictions such as Australia's social media age restrictions. Researchers highlight that young people and the adults who care for them would benefit from stronger digital literacy and open intergenerational dialogue (Jeffery et al., 2022; Savic et al., 2016; Third et al., 2019). Studies consistently show that many parents struggle to keep pace with their children's digital lives; not only in terms of knowing what their children do online, but also in understanding the norms, platforms, and practices that shape everyday digital participation (Jeffery et al., 2022; Savic et al., 2016). By contrast, young people are often described as digitally skilled and seeking autonomy in their online engagements (Humphry et al., 2025; Savic et al., 2016; Third et al., 2013, 2019). Building on this, much of the literature argues that social media is "neither inherently good nor bad" (Liu et al., 2024, p. 1402); rather, its impact depends significantly on the context of use, the quality of interactions, and individual circumstances (Adorjan & Ricciardelli, 2024; Douglass et al., 2022).

The literature urges policymakers, educators, and technology companies to move beyond simplistic, restrictive responses and to adopt more nuanced approaches to online safety.

Alongside supporting responsible digital citizenship and equipping families with the skills to navigate online environments, researchers emphasise the importance of addressing the design of digital platforms and strengthening regulatory frameworks (Savic et al., 2016; Third et al., 2013, 2019). Intergenerational conversations and participatory approaches are consistently highlighted as valuable, particularly when young people's expertise is acknowledged and embedded into the development of digital resources and policy responses.

Parents and young people continue to have different perspectives on social media's risks of harms, benefits, and the value of restrictions, yet both groups emphasise the importance of being heard in decisions that affect their digital lives. The policy process to date has allowed little meaningful space for these insights and experiences. The 24-hour window for submissions to the Online Safety Amendment Act in November 2024, for instance, was widely criticised for falling short of basic standards of consultation and transparency (Human Rights Law Centre, 2024). While the eSafety Commissioner's more recent consultation seeks to engage with relevant expertise and lived experience (eSafety Commissioner, 2025b), families remain clear: effective online safety requires that their perspectives are taken seriously, and that policies and regulations are developed in partnership with them.



5. Methods

This project used a qualitative approach to explore the experiences and insights of parents and young people about how they view social media and the upcoming social media age restrictions in Australia.

The project received ethics approval from the Bellberry Human Research Ethics Committee (Approval No. 2024-11-1945) on 30 January 2025. A literature review was undertaken to inform the development of the interview guides and the youth workshop schedule. The review focused on intergenerational dynamics attending social media use; including areas of conflict and agreement between young people and their parents and caregivers; digital literacy gaps across generations; and young people's and parents'/caregivers' perceptions of risk and harm. The review also explored international discussions on the impacts of social media bans, and the nuanced requirements to create safe and well online platforms and experiences.

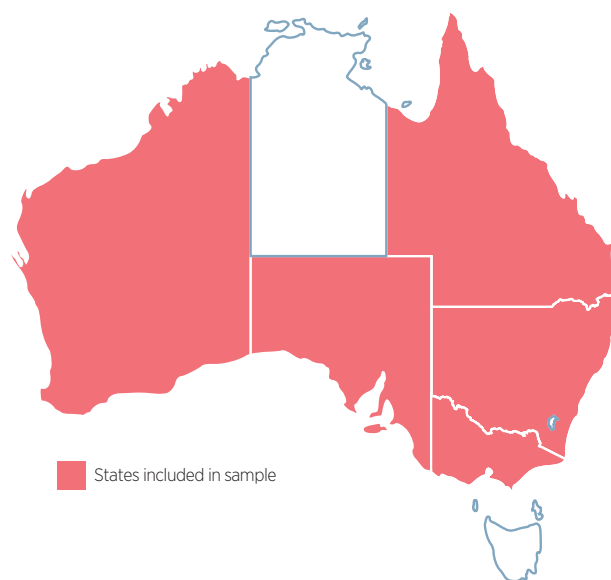
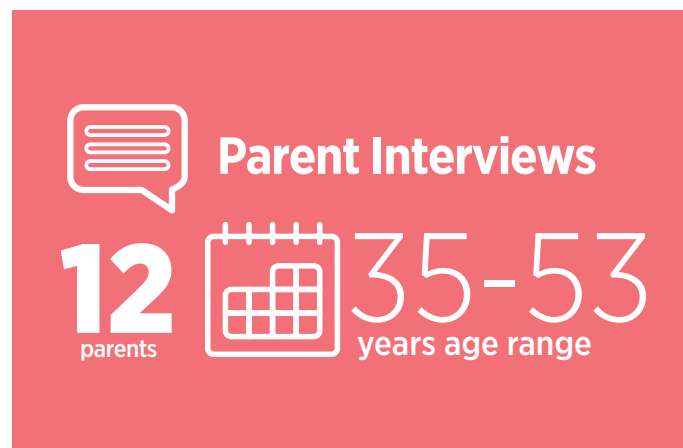
Twelve parents from diverse backgrounds and locations across Australia were recruited to take part in online semi-structured interviews. Recruitment was outsourced to a panel provider (Octopus Group). The participants included both mothers and fathers, ranging from 35 to 53 years in age. These parents represented a variety of household contexts, including two parent and single parent households; extended family households in which grandparents, aunts and uncles also care for young people; culturally diverse and migrant households; households with neurodivergent family members; First Nations households; and households with LGBTQIA+ parents. This diversity ensured the research documented a range of perspectives and experiences that often go unheard in policy and practice.

The transcripts were thematically double coded by the research team, using NVivo software. This process involved collaborative discussions to identify key emergent themes after the interviews. Researchers then independently applied the relevant codes to the transcripts and triangulated them with another member of the team.

The insights from parent interviews informed the development of a participatory youth workshop, with 15 participants, aged 13 to 16 years, which was held in Western Sydney. The workshop activities explored young people's views on social media and the upcoming age restrictions. They also provided young people with the opportunity to reflect on findings from the interviews with parents; to share who they believe is responsible for keeping them safe when using social media; and to identify the supports they need to participate effectively and safely in online environments that balance safety with the ways they actually use social media in their everyday lives.

Data from the youth workshop were systematically analysed using both emergent themes and the thematic framework developed during the parent interviews. Researchers coded participant responses against these themes to compare answers from parents and young people.

The workshop format used with young people was designed to foster dialogue, collaboration and comfort among peers. The workshops prioritised shared meaning-making. Because of the collaborative nature of the workshop, this process generated fewer individualised quotes than the



one-on-one interviews conducted with parents. Nonetheless, the workshops offered rich insights into young people's priorities and experiences.

Throughout this report, verbatim quotes from participants illustrate findings and analysis. In some instances, quotes have been lightly edited for clarity; for example, minor corrections to grammar to aid readability or to correct transcription errors. Any such changes are indicated. The content has not otherwise been altered. The quotes are identified by gender, location, and age of the participant.

6. Key Findings

6.1. Perceptions of social media across generations

6.1.1. Parents' and caregivers' perceptions of risk

Existing research highlights intergenerational tensions in how social media is understood and experienced, with parents often acknowledging its potential for connection and information-sharing, while also expressing deep concern about its risks of harm to children's wellbeing. The current study builds on this work by exploring how parents interpret and respond to the evolving digital landscape.

"We know a lot of parents who have gone through social media bullying. There's a lot of documented cases of children self-harming... because of social media bullying. That's one of our biggest risks and our fears. They are not able to ... detach and say, 'Oh, these are just words online'."

Father, 48-year-old, New South Wales, Two-parent household

In the current study, parents described a range of perceived risks of harm associated with social media, including the influence of harmful actors; the impact on mental health and social relationships; exposure to inappropriate or distressing content; and distraction from more meaningful offline activities. These concerns were often grounded in first-hand experiences or proximity to harm, including cases of online bullying, self-harm, and sextortion – and they shape how parents navigate their children's social media use. Many participants described a strong preference for their children to interact only with peers they know in real life.

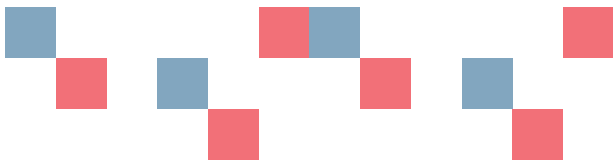
Parents' and caregivers' concerns about harmful content are associated with a wide range of digital artefacts, including unsolicited nude images, sexually explicit videos, dating app advertisements, and politically motivated or misleading information. Parents also expressed concern about the role of powerful interest groups in shaping what children see, including violent or misogynistic narratives and children's limited access to credible, diverse viewpoints. Some raised the growing challenge of distinguishing between AI-generated and authentic content, suggesting this may compound children's vulnerability to misinformation.

"Misogynistic, violent, dangerous, unsafe, unhealthy messaging. It's quite inconsistent but it's pervasive. So if you weren't having those conversations with your children, they might not know what to be looking for in terms of that kind of unsafe, inappropriate content. It's not like Andrew Tate 24/7, but it's also not all baking and puppies."

Mother, 41-year-old, Queensland, Household with LGBTQIA+ parents

"Self-image is a big thing. If you see people on Instagram, sharing their perfect picture with all the filters, and they're standing in a big house or a mansion, you start to think, maybe things aren't as good as they could be. Especially teenagers, I think they're at that age where they're starting to look at themselves, and it makes it harder for them to not judge themselves."

Father, 36-year-old, Queensland, Household with neurodivergent family members



When discussing mental health, several parents described social media as a space where children are exposed to harmful comparisons, unrealistic body standards, and pressures to conform. Some also referred to high-profile cases where children were harmed by viral challenges or peer bullying online, reinforcing concerns about the potential emotional and psychological toll of digital life.

The term “addiction” surfaced frequently in parents’ accounts, often used to describe children’s difficulty disengaging from constant scrolling or short-form video content. This view reflected a more deterministic framing of technology, with parents observing that social media seemed to absorb their children’s attention at the expense of face-to-face interaction, learning, or personal safety. They shared observations of children clustered in social settings, physically present but absorbed in their devices, and voiced unease about the erosion of attention spans and its potential impact on schoolwork and daily functioning.

6.1.2. Young people navigating parental concerns and potential risks of harm

In the workshop, young people reflected on what they believe their peers and parents worry about when it comes to social media use. Their responses demonstrated a high level of awareness and insight, often reflecting the concerns they associated with both parents and peers, and closely aligning with the worries voiced by parents in the interviews. Young people recognised that adults are particularly concerned about the effects of social media on attention spans, academic performance, face-to-face communication, and emotional wellbeing. They also noted that parents worry about online safety, cyberbullying, ‘addiction’, and exposure to harmful or misleading content.

Importantly, many young people identified that parents see social media as a distraction from schoolwork and social interaction, and expressed awareness of adult fears about children engaging with strangers online, especially older users. Several groups also reflected that parents may be concerned about excessive screen time, unregulated spending (particularly while gaming), and the influence of idealised or curated content presented by influencers. This alignment between young people’s perceptions and parent concerns suggests that young people are not only attuned to adult anxieties but are also actively negotiating these dynamics in their daily lives.

When reflecting on their own concerns, young people raised fewer issues, although they still thoughtfully considered the

“I think it’s an excellent resource if used correctly. It’s easy and quick to get information. So I think the most reliable news source to me is ABC. But at the same time for incorrect information, spreading rumours, things like that, it’s just as quick.”

Father, Western Australia, 38-year-old,
Household with LGBTQIA+ parents

“My 16 year-old recently put up a post about their plans for the future, which I thought was really good to see. And it’s one of those things that’s definitely an upside, like with social media, she’s giving voice to her ambition and her drive to leave school and go places with their life, which is really encouraging. And then people can then see that they can react to that, hopefully in a positive way. And I would hate for that stuff to fall by the wayside.”

Father, 36-year-old, Queensland,
Household with neurodivergent family members

potential harms. They pointed to the emotional impact of online bullying, including effects on self-esteem, as well as the pressure to conform to unrealistic standards promoted on social media. Some spoke about time lost to scrolling, general exposure to negative content, and the ways in which misinformation and manipulated media could shape their understanding of the world. A few raised concerns about scammers and data security, indicating a nuanced, although slightly varied, awareness of the complexities of digital life.

While young people did not explicitly raise concerns about the role of powerful technology companies or identify specific, harmful content types, such as misogynistic or gender-based material, this may reflect the format of the mixed-gender group discussions, or simply different conceptual frames used by young people. What emerged strongly, however, was that young people are not disengaged or naïve about the challenges of digital life. Rather, they are navigating a complex and evolving

“Sometimes jobs, looking up companies, they’ve got their Facebook page, and they can help you with applying for stuff, like your first job. So if you want to write a cover letter, you’ve got the information. A lot of people do their promotion towards Facebook or Instagram now, and I guess it helps them in that sense.”

Mother, 35-year-old, Western Australia, Household with carers

ecosystem in which they are simultaneously potentially at risk of harm and deeply invested.

Their perspectives underscore the importance of recognising young people as capable contributors to discussions about online safety. They are not only able to articulate their own experiences, but are also acutely aware of the tensions that arise in intergenerational understandings of risks of harm, responsibility, and digital wellbeing.

6.1.3. Families recognise social media as a space for connection and learning

While parents and young people voiced a range of concerns about the risks of harm associated with social media, they also recognised its diverse and meaningful benefits. Their reflections highlight the complex role digital platforms play in contemporary family life; not only as sites of potential harm, but as spaces for connection, learning, aspiration, and affirmation.

For many parents, social media offered immediate and efficient access to information, entertainment, and inspiration. They valued its capacity to keep families informed, particularly in relation to school updates, news events, and everyday life logistics. Some appreciated being able to access a range of perspectives outside of traditional media, while others noted the value of filtering content through trusted sources such as ABC News. Yet, this awareness of social media’s strengths was accompanied by a recognition of its pitfalls: the same speed that facilitates news circulation can also accelerate the spread of misinformation, underscoring the importance of critical engagement with content.

Parents also spoke about the emotional and aspirational value of social media for their children. For some, it was a space where young people could share their ambitions, receive encouragement, and build confidence through positive reinforcement from peers and networks. These moments were viewed as significant in supporting adolescents’ emerging sense of identity and purpose.

In addition to personal expression, parents identified social media’s value as an informal educational tool. Some cited the usefulness of short videos and reels for learning and skill-building, while others noted its role in facilitating access to job opportunities, career advice, and resources to support young people transitioning into work. These platforms were seen as bridges between adolescence and adulthood; spaces



where young people could begin to engage with the world beyond school.

Young people echoed many of these sentiments. When invited to reflect on the opportunities of social media, they consistently pointed to its educational and informational potential. They described social media platforms as spaces for learning new things – often more efficiently than through traditional means – and as a tool to explore their interests and to develop skills relevant to their lives and futures.



"We're very open and very transparent with things. So our kids know if something's wrong they're not necessarily in trouble straight away. As a family unit, we'll work together."

Father, 53-year-old, Victoria, Culturally diverse household

"I am fearful for people that live in different households that don't get that [digital safety] straight up discussed. And I think that's more scary than knowing. In this day and age, we have to be pretty straight up if we want to protect the kids."

Mother, 35-year-old, Western Australia, Household with carers

"You know, they're just going to do what they want. You can't kind of restrict them on that. It all comes back to just being open and honest with your kids... If you've raised kids with that openness, then they're pretty good with all that kind of stuff. There's not a lot of real digital parenting required."

Father, 53-year-old, Victoria, Culturally diverse household

"I use a parent app. It's called Custodio... It allows me to block apps, and set screen time limits... All our devices actually turn off at 10 o'clock at night. It also filters websites... I find that on the whole quite helpful."

Mother, 53-year-old, New South Wales, Single-parent household

6.2. Parental strategies centre on guidance, dialogue, and building children's digital resilience

Parents in this study approached social media parenting with a deep sense of care and responsibility, noting a complex mix of perceived risks of harm and benefits, personal values, and broader parenting philosophies. Central to their approach was their desire to raise children who could navigate the digital world with confidence, autonomy, and critical awareness.

While parents expressed a range of approaches to managing social media use, a recurring theme was the importance of trust, mutual respect, and open communication. Many described intentional efforts to create safe and supportive home environments where social media use could be openly discussed and collectively navigated. These conversations often involved setting boundaries, co-developing rules, and fostering a shared understanding of expectations, with the aim of nurturing children's individuality and agency.

Rather than defaulting to restriction or control, many parents saw their role as educators and guides, supporting their children to critically assess the digital content they encountered. Conversations about risks of harm such as sextortion, fake AI content, and data privacy were framed not to alarm, but to equip children with the tools to make informed choices.

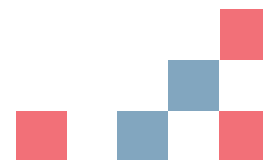
Several parents also described their efforts to help children understand and influence the content they encountered through platform algorithms. These conversations went

"We talked about curating content that you actually want to look at, and pushing towards the algorithm that you would like to see."

Mother, 41-year-old, Queensland, Household with LGBTQIA+ parents

"You've got to inform yourself... It might be uncomfortable... but ultimately, if you want the best for your kid, you want to understand it more."

Father, 47-year-old, Western Australia, Migrant household



beyond safety, inviting children to think critically about the digital environments they were co-creating.

Ultimately, parents emphasised the importance of enabling young people to develop a sense of self-regulation and digital discernment. Trusting in their children's capacity to make good choices was, for many, a cornerstone of effective digital parenting.

Notably, some parents also acknowledged their own responsibilities as digital mentors. This included actively seeking information, embracing discomfort, and committing to ongoing learning.

6.2.1. Parents use rules and tools to manage risks of harm, but recognise their limits

For many parents, managing children's engagement with social media was deeply shaped by their perceptions of the risks of harm, ranging from screen overuse, to exposure, to harmful or age-inappropriate content, loss of social skills, and vulnerability to manipulation or misinformation. These concerns underpinned a range of parental strategies, which sought to balance guidance and restriction, often amid complex family, cultural, and developmental dynamics.

Several parents implemented firm household rules around screen time, device usage, and platform access as a way of curbing overuse and mitigating perceived harm. Parents often enforce these rules through digital parenting tools, such as apps that enabled content filtering, limited app usage, and controlled time online. For some families, this involved banning device use in bedrooms, particularly for children under 18, or automating device shutoff times at night.

However, while such tools were regarded as helpful, parents acknowledged their limitations. Children were often able to circumvent restrictions, and these safeguards do not necessarily prevent their exposure to harmful content.

"Even though I had safety blocks on... she still came across really highly sexualised content."

Mother, 53-year-old, New South Wales, Single-parent household

"They try to argue their way... If I put a restriction in place, they've got to argue in relation to the reason I put it in place."

Father, 38-year-old, Western Australia, Household with LGBTQIA+ parents

"She says, 'My sister gets this, but I'm not'... She sees the half-sister is always on her phone... that age group is obsessed with social media."

Mother, 35-year-old, Western Australia, Household with carers

"If our parents tell us what we should do [in Indonesia], we can see other people around us have the same values. But here we are all multicultural."

Mother, 48-year-old, South Australia, Migrant household

"It will be dependent on him personally... we know what his impulse control is like... very susceptible based on his neurodivergence."

Father, 36-year-old, Queensland, Household with neurodivergent family members

This creates an imperative for ongoing vigilance and emotional labour, as parents try to stay one step ahead.

Parents reported that enforcing boundaries is not always straightforward. Many parents spoke of the everyday negotiations, arguments, and resistance they faced when implementing rules, especially when siblings or peers were perceived to have fewer restrictions.

Parents also identified challenges they associate with cultural differences. Some described feeling that their parenting values, shaped by cultural or religious traditions, were not always mirrored in broader Australian society, making it harder to enforce the limits they impose.

Others spoke about parenting in the context of neurodiversity, reporting that conventional approaches to digital risk management did not always apply. These parents emphasised the importance of tailoring strategies to the specific needs of their child, and expressed concern about how neurodivergent children may be particularly susceptible to misinformation, manipulation, or sensory overwhelm online.

Parents' accounts of their experiences clearly demonstrated that they are grappling daily with a complex and evolving digital environment that requires constant negotiation of the binaries between care and control, trust and risk of harm, structure and flexibility. While digital tools and rules formed part of the parental toolkit, many parents recognised the limits of restriction and the need for ongoing dialogue, cultural adaptation, and personalised approaches to help children, and themselves, navigate the digital landscape safely and confidently.

6.3. Young people's views and strategies

6.3.1. Young people see social media as essential for connection, identity, and learning

For the vast majority of young people in the workshop, social media is not merely a pastime – it is an essential part of everyday life, woven into the fabric of how they connect, communicate, and make sense of the world. Through social media, young people stay in touch with friends and family, express who they are, access news and information, and learn new skills. It offers them space to retreat, reflect and relate.

Young people do not experience social media as a domain separate from the rest of life; rather, it is one important space where they live out their identities, relationships and everyday experiences.

6.3.2. Restrictions alone are ineffective – young people adapt and find alternatives

When restrictions are imposed without consultation or consideration of their perspectives, young people often find ways to navigate around them. They are resourceful, using secondary devices, dummy accounts, or migrating to platforms not typically recognised as “social media” to continue engaging with peers in familiar ways.

These workarounds speak to the importance of including young people in decisions that affect their digital lives, to co-create meaningful and workable approaches to safety and wellbeing.

6.3.3. Young people want guidance through dialogue, not surveillance or control

Young people are not averse to parental involvement. In fact, many recognise the value of guidance from trusted adults. But they are clear that support should not feel like surveillance. They want dialogue, not monitoring; respect, not control, from adults.

Young people often find themselves stepping into a role of digital educator within the family, not because they want to, but because they feel they must. They describe initiating safety conversations with their parents out of necessity, aware that many adults feel ill-equipped to understand or respond to the risks of harm and opportunities that shape young people's online experiences.

But they don't want to carry this responsibility alone. Young people are calling for governments and institutions to ensure parents and carers have access to the education and tools they need to support open, informed conversations at home.

They are not asking to be left to their own devices, literally or figuratively. Rather, they seek collaborative, respectful approaches that recognise their agency, insights and right to participate in shaping the conditions of their digital lives.

“I use it [social media] to escape [and] be in my own time.”

15-year-old, female

“[Social media] helps me stay connected to my cousin who lives with their dad.”

13-year-old, male

“[It's] easy to call and chat to friends – connects you with friends.”

Group work, 13–15 years

“Kids will just go on a different platform that's not called social media, it'll be gaming or something, but we'll do the same things.”

14-year-old, male



“Let parents check their children’s account, how long they have been [online] and what they have been doing.”

Group work, 13–14 years

“[Parents should] support children to use social media safely and in a limited way.”

Group work, 13–14 years

“Having conversations about limits and how much they want you spending on it... would be beneficial for everyone.”

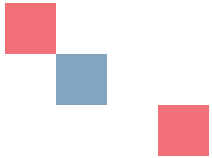
Group work, 13–14 years

“It’s my job to start the conversation with my parents so I can stay safe.”

13-year-old, male

“Not learning what to avoid on social media makes us more vulnerable later.”

Group work, 14–15 years



6.4. Families have diverse perspectives on age-based social media restrictions

6.4.1. Parents voice both support for safeguards and concerns about unintended consequences

Among parents who supported the social media age restrictions, a range of reasons were offered. Some viewed it as a welcome safeguard; a means to reduce children's exposure to online harm and support parents who struggled to set boundaries around digital use.

Others described the restriction as a way to hold powerful technology companies to account, expressing concern about the impact of platforms that no longer prioritise social connection.

For some, the legislation made it easier to enforce existing family rules, particularly in households where children were already being asked to wait before joining certain platforms.

One parent noted that relatives overseas wished similar legislation existed in their own countries.

Others hoped the policy might prompt young people to reconnect offline, spending more time with family, forming friendships locally, or rediscovering non-digital forms of social connection.

At the same time, many parents expressed concern about how the age restrictions had been introduced and what it might mean in practice. They pointed to a lack of clear public information, uncertainty around enforcement, and discomfort with what felt like a politicised response to community concern. For some, the legislation represented a deeper loss, a reduction in parental autonomy and trust between children and adults.

Among parents who opposed or questioned the age restrictions, concerns centred around its impact on family decision-making and trust. For many, the legislation felt like an overstep; replacing flexible, relationship-based parenting with a rigid, top-down rule.

Some parents were sceptical about the motivations behind the policy, suggesting it was politically driven and designed to reassure, rather than meaningfully engage with families' lived realities.

There were concerns about unintended consequences. Several parents worried the restriction might create a false sense of security, encouraging disengagement rather than ongoing conversations about digital life. Others feared that children would circumvent the rules, without telling parents when they needed help.

"You know, you have no idea what is happening to your child once they close that bedroom door. So I think for those parents out there that don't manage it, I think the age restriction is a good thing."

Mother, New South Wales, 53-year-old,
Two-parent and First Nations household

"I think now, as they've grown into large, mega companies, they have lost the plot, so to speak. And I think the focus is not so much on socialising. It's more alienating people."

Father, 48-year-old, New South Wales,
Two-parent household

"I have no problem with the age restrictions coming in because then it helps me ... We need some help to control it ... like I said, we've told them they can't have it [Snapchat], but I guess it would make it easier for parents to control that if it came into legislation. I 100% support it."

Mother, 38-year-old, New South Wales,
First Nations household

"If you try and ban your kids from doing something, they're still doing it. They're just not talking to you about it."

Mother, 41-year-old, Queensland,
Household with LGBTQIA+ parents



"I think it will be really interesting to see how they manage to do it in real time. How it will be implemented? Whether it can be. Are you going to come knock on my door if my under 16-year-old is using it? That would be a massive breach of personal privacy laws."

Mother, 41-year-old, Queensland,
Household with LGBTQIA+ parents

"I think something in between... your parents still have potentially, up to a year or two years' worth of monitoring... So if something's inappropriate, the parents get to be like a moderator, or something like that."

Father, 47-year-old, Western Australia,
Migrant household

"I support, and not only me, I talk to some other people as well, like my parents and my sister. Because they are also suffering [with] their kids. India hasn't done anything. Australia ... is really, really good. I personally support them."

Father, 52-year-old, New South Wales,
Single-parent household

"It's just going to make parents' lives harder, because they're not going to have any control over their lives. It's taken that decision away... I believe there's been no parents' say in this new legislation at all. So it's really concerning as to why parents don't have any input into what's going to be happening going forwards."

Father, 47-year-old, Western Australia,
Migrant household

"I just think with politics and stuff, they like to do things that look effective now, and they have to say things that make people happy. So saying we'll just do a restriction makes it seem definite and finalised."

Mother, 35-year-old, Western Australia,
Household with carers



“It’s going to make parents think that their kids are automatically safe...”

**Mother, 41-year-old, Queensland,
Household with LGBTQIA+ parents**

Some felt the restrictions could delay digital skill-building, making it harder for young people to manage risks of harm when they eventually do gain access. Others floated alternative models, such as phased access or child-specific platforms with greater parental oversight, though they acknowledged that such solutions are difficult to implement at scale.

Even some parents who supported the age restrictions voiced discomfort with aspects of its implementation, particularly around age verification, privacy, and surveillance.

Some anticipated emotional strain and ongoing family tension, particularly for children already engaging in social media environments.

There were also concerns about young people losing important points of connection, particularly for those in geographically isolated areas, or those who rely on digital spaces to maintain friendships.

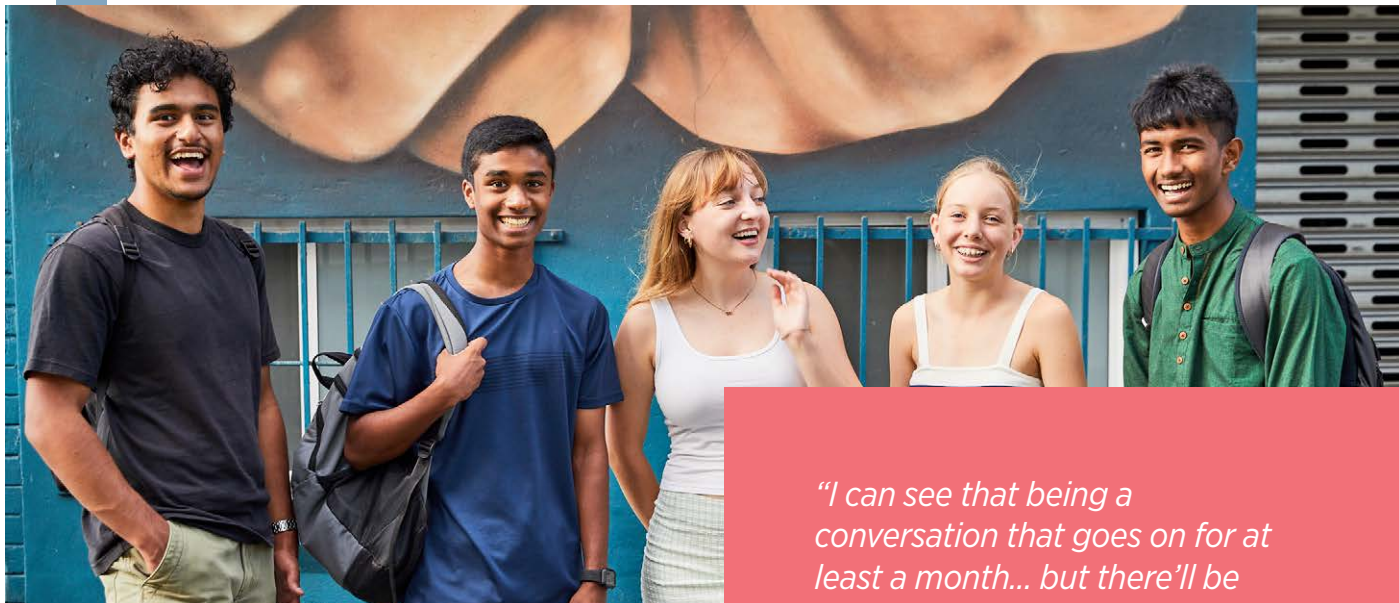
Across perspectives, most parents expressed doubt about how the legislation would be enforced. Many believed that workarounds, by both children and parents, would be common.

Some also predicted that social media companies would adapt, further blurring the boundaries between platforms and making regulation more complex.

For others, the restriction felt largely irrelevant, either because their children were not engaged in social media, or because they had already built trust-based, open conversations about digital life within the home.

6.4.2. Young people call for inclusion in decisions shaping their digital lives

Young people expressed strong and multifaceted concerns about the legislated social media age restrictions. For many, it signalled a deep disconnect between policy decisions and the lived realities of their digital lives. Rather than seeing the restriction as protective, most viewed it as punitive — a decision made about them, not with them — with significant consequences for their wellbeing, learning, and sense of connection.



Young people spoke powerfully about how social media functions as more than a form of entertainment. It is a critical tool for accessing mental health resources, peer support, and information that helps them make sense of themselves and the world around them.

Several participants characterised the age restrictions as a violation of their rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). In particular, they cited their right to be heard in decisions that affect them (Article 12), to access information (Article 17), to express themselves (Article 13), and to associate with others (Article 15). What emerged was a clear sense that young people felt excluded from decisions about their digital lives, even as they bear the most direct consequences.

From their perspective, social media is a space for expression, identity development, creativity, community participation, and civic engagement. The restriction, when applied without consultation, was seen not only as disempowering, but as erasing their contributions and concerns as digital citizens.

Interestingly, many young people also expressed support for parental decision-making, suggesting that decisions about digital access should happen at home and not be imposed by governments.

While many were confident they could find workarounds to the restriction, they also expressed concern about doing so without adult support. They worried that the lack of trusted guidance could leave them more vulnerable, not less.

In short, young people did not reject guidance or safety. What they called for was the opportunity to participate in shaping that guidance, not to be excluded from it. They want to co-create solutions with the adults in their lives, not be sidelined by one-size-fits-all approaches that fail to recognise the complexity of their digital worlds.

"I can see that being a conversation that goes on for at least a month... but there'll be arguments."

Father, 38-year-old, Western Australia, Household with LGBTQIA+ parents

"It [the social media age restriction] might make her feel isolated being an only child... it can stop connection... so that's the way they converse with one another as a group."

Mother, New South Wales, 53-year-old, Two-parent household and First Nations household

"The kids... are very smart, they are just bypassing those rules."

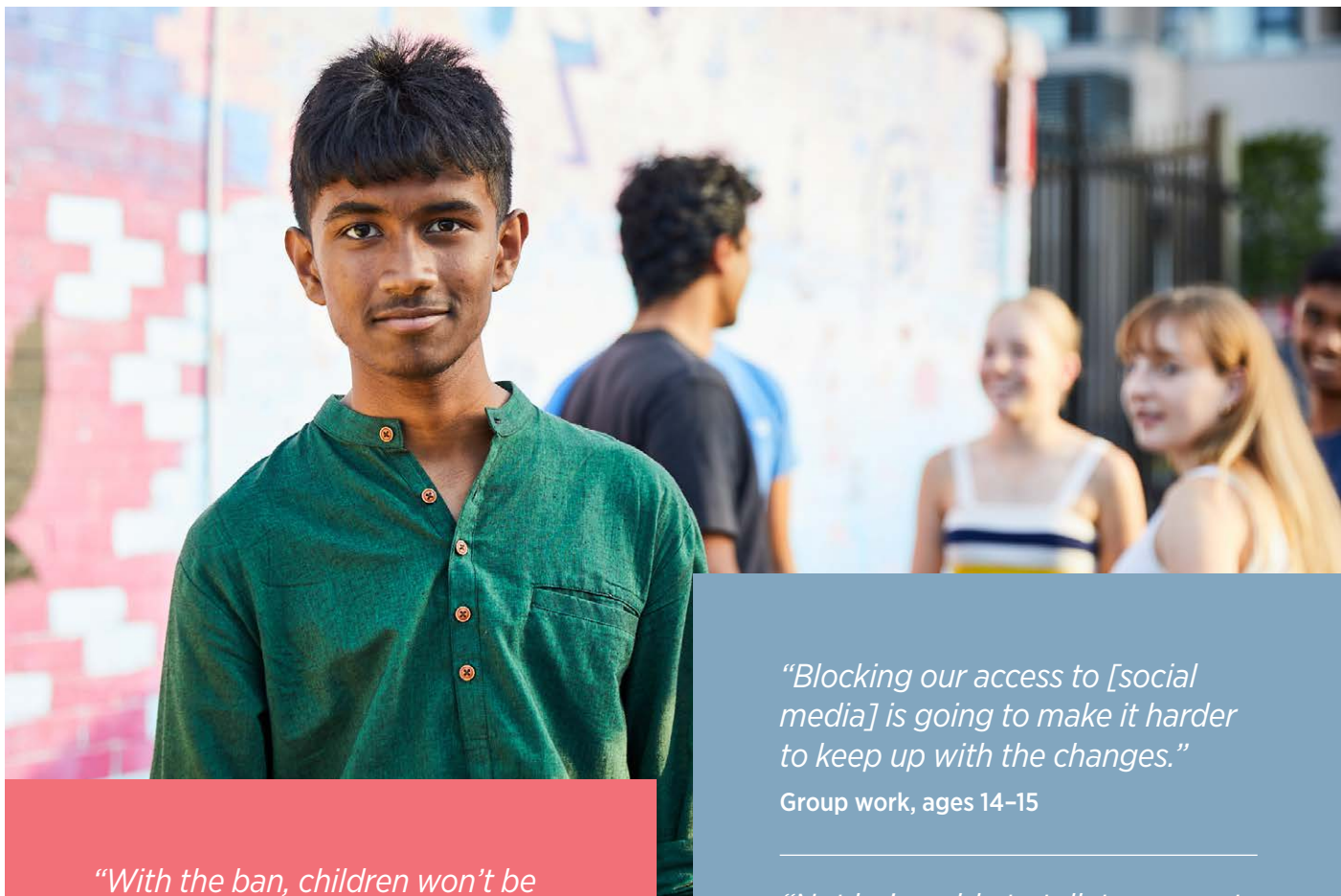
Father, 52-year-old, New South Wales, Single-parent household

"Parents will get around it if they want to."

Mother, 53-year-old, New South Wales, Single-parent household

"I'm sure they'll find ways... the lines between different platforms are also becoming very blurry."

Father, 48-year-old, New South Wales, Two-parent household



“With the ban, children won’t be able to communicate as well.”

Group work, ages 13–15

“[Social media] connects us with the world and current affairs, current trends, communities.”

Group work, ages 13–15

“They’re taking too much control from parents. Parents should get the final say.”

13-year-old, male

“Most kids always find a way to go on restricted platforms, which can lead to more dangers.”

15-year-old, female

“Blocking our access to [social media] is going to make it harder to keep up with the changes.”

Group work, ages 14–15

“Not being able to talk to support groups or find mental health resources makes things worse.”

Group work, ages 13–15

“Ask young people what they think. We are the most affected.”

15-year-old, non-binary

“I don’t want adults to make such a decision for someone so young.”

15-year-old, female

“[The ban] would limit the amount of information we get on the internet.”

Group work, ages 14–15



6.5. Families stress that communication and trust matter more than regulation

The social media age restrictions are more than a regulatory measure, they are also reshaping how families navigate digital life together. For some parents, the uniformity of the law offers clarity and relief. In households where parents have struggled to enforce age-based rules, the legislation is seen as a helpful external benchmark; a way to avoid conflict by referring to a shared standard that removes negotiation from the home.

However, other parents voiced concern that the restriction may have the opposite effect, pushing young people into secrecy or disengagement. These parents fear that when social media is prohibited outright, it does not disappear; rather, it moves underground. In these conditions, open communication can erode, and the adults young people might turn to in times of difficulty are shut out.

What emerges clearly – from both parents and young people – is that trust plays a critical role in shaping how families respond to the age restrictions. Young people describe trust as something built through consistency, honesty, and being taken seriously. When adults rely solely on control or restriction without listening, young people say they are less likely to speak openly or seek support when issues arise. In contrast, when adults take the time to ask, listen, and respond with care, young people feel safer and more willing to talk about their digital lives.

Young people consistently emphasised the importance of being able to speak honestly with trusted adults about their experiences online. They described the power of open dialogue and an ongoing process of negotiation, reflection, and learning together.

In their view, age restrictions cannot substitute for trust and open communication. Relationships built on mutual understanding create the space for co-learning and shared responsibility. Young people are not asking to be left on their own. Rather, they are calling for solutions that include them as co-creators, instead of rules that are imposed from the top.

“We’ve told them they can’t have it, but they just... I guess it would make it easier for parents to control that if it came into legislation. I mean, 100% support it.”

Mother, 38-year-old, New South Wales, First Nations household

“If you try and ban kids from doing something... they’re still doing it. They’re just not talking to you about it. So I think that if we’re going to block those communication spaces from happening, the kids are still doing it, and it’s less safe because they don’t have you as a support person.”

Mother, 41-year-old, Queensland, Household with LGBTQIA+ parents

“We need transparency and trust in each other. The kid being able to trust the adult in their life to have a conversation without feeling like they’re not being listened to.”

14-year-old, male

“Sit down and have a conversation about the whole topic in general.”

13-year-old, male



6.6. Families want clear communication, practical tools, and shared responsibility

6.6.1. Parents call for clear guidance, accessible resources, and consistent messaging

Across the board, parents emphasised the need for clear, timely, and practical guidance to support them in navigating the implications of the social media age restrictions at home. While some parents supported the restriction and others were more sceptical, there was strong consensus that the policy had been poorly communicated. Parents expressed frustration that, since its announcement, little information had been shared by the government.

They wanted to know: When does the restriction begin? Which platforms does it apply to? How will age be verified? What happens to existing accounts? What will be expected of me as a parent?

In the absence of answers, many felt underprepared and anxious about how to speak to their children about the restriction in a way that would foster understanding and not create conflict.

Parents stressed that they were willing to take responsibility for supporting their children, but needed practical tools and trusted, consistent messaging to do so.

There was a clear call for straightforward, jargon-free explanations. Parents wanted communication that made the policy accessible to people from all walks of life, and resources that helped translate the law into meaningful conversations with children.

Many parents also believed that technology companies have a role to play in supporting the policy's implementation. They wanted platforms to work with the government to help reduce confusion and demonstrate collective accountability to children and families.

Parents suggested that how platforms communicate the restriction would directly shape how young people respond to it. Transparent, empathetic messaging could reduce young people's frustration and help parents hold firm boundaries with less conflict.

Parents proposed that communication materials be age-appropriate and audience-specific. They called for two distinct resources: one for adults on how to speak with their children about the restriction, and another designed for young people; accessible, engaging, and framed in language they understand. Some suggested creative strategies to increase accessibility and reach, such as catchy jingles, livestreamed parent sessions, or school-based information nights co-facilitated by police or youth-focused organisations.

"Once you want to take something away, they'll want to know why. And you're not just going to say to them, well, the government stopped it for under 16s, end of story. There needs to be some kind of explanation as to why, just to ease the blow."

Father, 53-year-old, Victoria, Culturally diverse household

"I'd like to know some detail. What is our role going to be in this going forwards? What are we going to be looking for? Also, what restrictions might be placed upon us — authentications, checks, and so on. If it gets too hard, people will not do this."

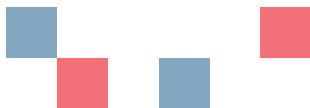
Father, 47-year-old, Western Australia, Migrant household

"Perhaps just a black and white step-by-step explanation as to what the rules are. Nothing is broken down as simply as when there's an election."

Father, 38-year-old, Western Australia, Household with LGBTQIA+ parents

"Have a how-to pamphlet that actually explains how kids would need to hear it. There's no value just saying, 'legislation says this is bad for kids'."

Father, 38-year-old, Western Australia, Household with LGBTQIA+ parents



Alongside schools, parents identified other trusted institutions — such as headspace, Lifeline, and their church communities — as key partners in helping families navigate this change. They valued support that felt local, relational, and rooted in the contexts they already engage with.

Ultimately, parents were not asking for government or industry to take over their role. Instead, they wanted these institutions to provide the information and tools that would empower them to support their children with clarity, confidence, and care. They asked for:

- Clear, accessible explanations of what the restriction involves and how it works
- Age-appropriate resources for both parents and children
- Trusted delivery channels such as schools, community organisations, and familiar digital platforms
- Support from technology companies in reinforcing messages consistently and constructively
- Respect for parental agency, recognising that families are best placed to support young people when they are well-informed.

“If they can help parents and kids understand where this is coming from — from a non-biased approach — it would go a long way to reducing the irritation and the anger.”

Father, 38-year-old, Western Australia, Household with LGBTQIA+ parents

“Maybe you need to have parent information nights, the school hosts it, but then live stream it from a social media platform... or have the police liaison person come in, like they do for other issues. It’s no different.”

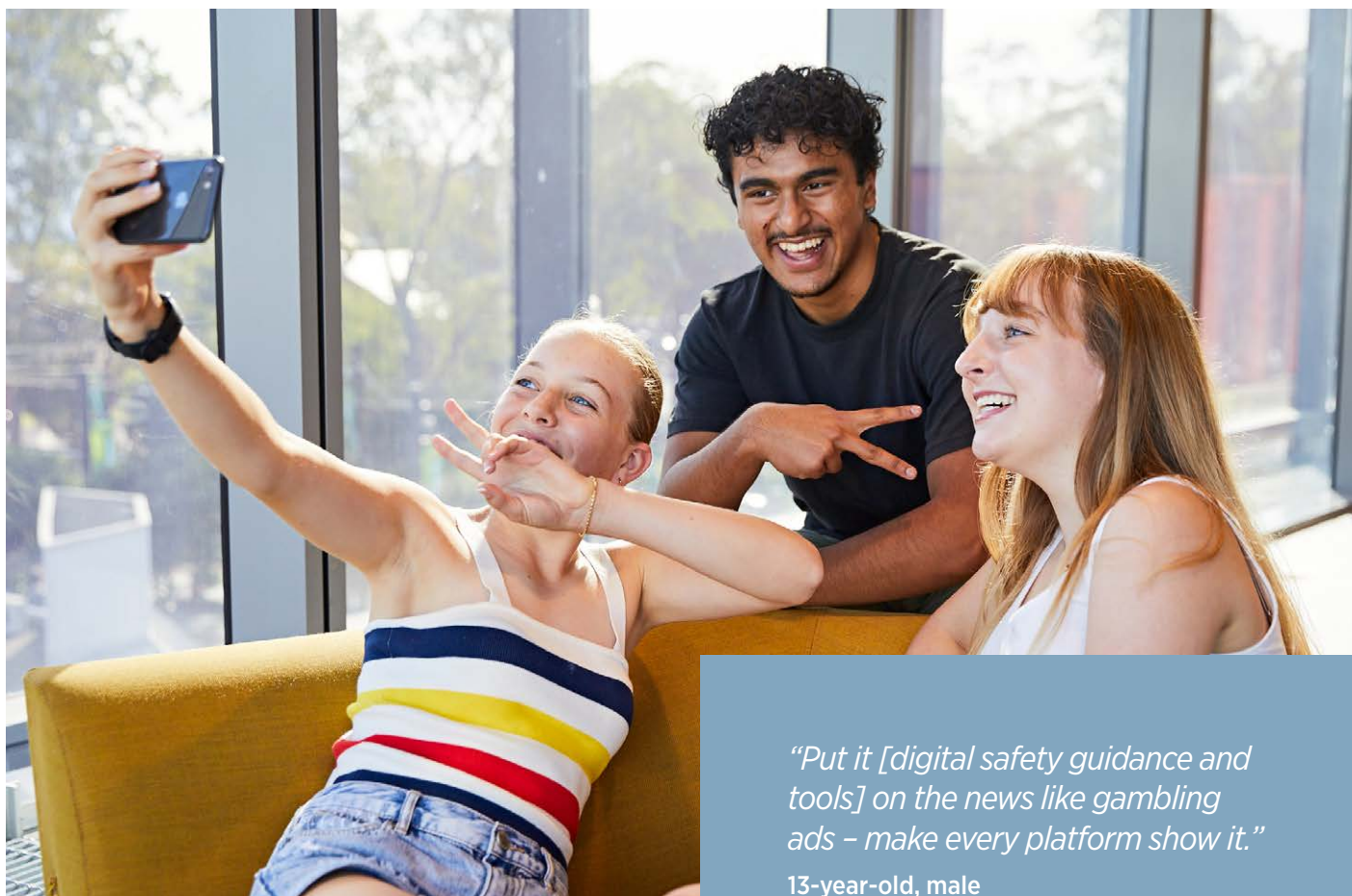
Mother, 53-year-old, New South Wales, Two-parent household and First Nations household

“They need to come out and say, okay, whilst we think our platform is great for this, we are aware that it’s not so great because of this. So therefore, we back the Australian Government in what they’re saying... not just hearing it from one source.”

Mother, 53-year-old, New South Wales, Two-parent household and First Nations household

“I think they’ve got a certain duty of care. I wouldn’t want them to just say, ‘Hey, we would like you to keep using Instagram, but the government doesn’t allow it anymore, so you know — too bad’.”

Father, 53-year-old, Victoria, Culturally diverse household



6.6.2. Young people want parents supported with the knowledge and tools to guide them

Young people recognise that their parents genuinely want to support them in using social media safely, but many also feel that adults lack the knowledge, tools, or confidence to do so effectively. Rather than criticising parents, young people are asking for better support for the adults in their lives, so they are equipped to have informed, open conversations about the online world.

They suggest that guidance and tools for parents should be accessible, practical, and communicated across multiple trusted channels.

While young people appreciate the need for safety, they do not believe that restrictions alone will help. For them, social media is embedded in how they connect, learn, and grow. They want support to develop the skills and confidence to navigate these spaces. They do not want to be excluded from them.

Young people also emphasise that open, respectful communication within families is key, and that this cannot happen unless adults feel prepared to lead those conversations with understanding and care.

Ultimately, young people want respect, inclusion, and trust from the adults and decision-makers in their lives.

“Put it [digital safety guidance and tools] on the news like gambling ads – make every platform show it.”

13-year-old, male

“Parents need to be told about things like parent lock, so they can support children to use social media safely.”

13-year-old, male

“Parents need to understand that kids need social media to learn and connect.”

13-year-old, male

“Sitting down and having a conversation about the whole topic in general would be beneficial for everyone.”

13-year-old, male



7. Conclusion

Families across Australia are already navigating the complexities of digital life. They do not need to be told why this matters; they live it every day. What they need is support: practical tools, clear messaging, inclusive decision-making, and shared responsibility across government, industry, and community. With respect, trust, and partnership at the centre, we can build not only safer online spaces, but stronger relationships between generations – online and off.

This study shows that young people and their parents bring valuable insights into the risks of harm and opportunities associated with social media, and the supports they need to participate safely and meaningfully. Parents expressed a strong desire to guide and protect their children but often felt ill-equipped in the absence of clear, consistent communication and practical resources. Young people, meanwhile, voiced frustration at being excluded from decisions that shape their digital lives and called for education, guidance, and the opportunity to contribute to solutions.

These findings echo broader concerns in the literature, which caution against relying on restrictive, age-based measures as a stand-alone response. Researchers have pointed to the risks of harm associated with displacement into unregulated spaces (Chhabra et al., 2025), the ethical and privacy challenges of age verification technologies (Rodriguez, Dezuanni & Heck, 2025), and the importance of systemic responses rooted in platform design, education, and accountability (Fardouly, 2025).

The Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act 2024 provides one frame for addressing public concerns, but it is only one piece of the puzzle. This report does not seek to re-open the debate about the legislation. Instead, it offers evidence-based recommendations to ensure that any response to online safety meets public expectations and is grounded in the everyday realities of family life. These findings can complement ongoing consultations, including those led by the Office of the eSafety Commissioner, and ensure that the insights and experiences of those most affected remain central to policy and practice.

8. Recommendations

The following recommendations are grounded in the lived experiences of young people and parents in this study and are supported by wider research and policy commentary. Their implementation requires shared responsibility across government, technology companies, educators, and families.

1 **Communicate clearly, early, and consistently about the social media age restrictions**

Ensure families receive timely and accessible information about the purpose of the restriction, implementation timelines, affected platforms, age verification processes, data privacy, and parents' roles. Messaging should be coordinated across government, platforms, and schools.

Rationale: Parents cannot support or explain the restriction without clear, consistent information they trust.

2 **Prioritise co-design with young people and families**

Engage young people and parents in the development, testing, and refinement of online safety policies, platform features, and educational resources.

Rationale: Policies developed without young people's input risk being ineffective or harmful. Young people are experts in their own digital lives and want to be part of shaping safer spaces.

3 **Invest in digital literacy and education for both young people and parents**

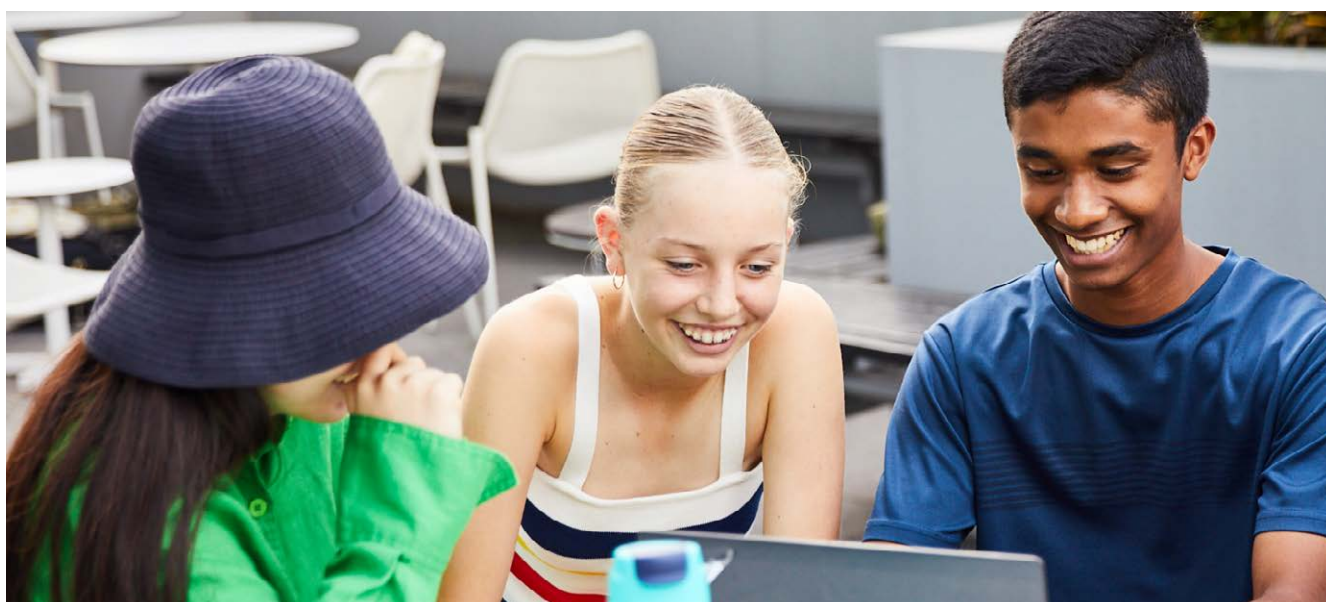
Provide age-appropriate resources that support digital resilience, critical thinking, and online safety skills. Equip parents and caregivers with the tools and confidence to navigate social media use with their children.

Rationale: Young people want support, not exclusion. Parents want to help, but often feel underprepared.

4 **Avoid blanket restrictions in future policymaking**

Favour graduated, age-appropriate approaches that scaffold young people's access to digital spaces with adult guidance and support.

Rationale: Blanket restrictions do not address the conditions that make online spaces unsafe and risk pushing young people to less visible or riskier platforms.





5 Address risks of harm within platforms, not just through exclusion

Hold technology companies accountable for reducing harmful content, addressing algorithmic harms, and embedding child wellbeing into platform design and governance.

Rationale: Restricting access delays risk of harm but does not eliminate it. Platforms must become safer by design.

6 Ensure policy reflects the diversity of Australian families

Design policies that are inclusive of varied family structures, cultural backgrounds, neurodiversity, and geographic contexts.

Rationale: Digital parenting is not a one-size-fits-all experience. Effective support must reflect social and cultural realities.

7 Foster intergenerational dialogue about digital life

Develop campaigns, programs, and resources that support ongoing conversations between young people and parents about online experiences, values, and boundaries — beyond crisis or enforcement moments.

Rationale: Families want to better understand one another. Open, regular dialogue strengthens mutual trust and digital confidence.

8 Strengthen cross-sector coordination and shared accountability

Encourage collaboration between government, platforms, educators, researchers, and community organisations in the rollout of the restriction and broader digital wellbeing strategies.

Rationale: Parents should not be left to manage digital risks alone. Coordinated, multi-stakeholder action — with aligned messaging and shared roles — is essential for meaningful change.



9 Monitor and transparently report on the implementation of new regulations affecting young people's online experiences

Publicly share findings from regulatory initiatives and evaluate their impacts, including reporting on the Age Assurance Technology Trial and evaluation of the Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act 2024. Implementation should be adjusted in response to community concerns around privacy, accessibility, and effectiveness.

Rationale: Without transparency and evaluation, trust will erode, especially around data use, accessibility, and impacts on young people's rights.

10 Support transitions into digital life, rather than delaying them

Design tools and policies that scaffold children's gradual entry into online spaces, similar to learner and practice phases for driving.

Rationale: A sharp age threshold creates an unrealistic divide. Gradual transitions better reflect how digital literacy and responsibility are developed.





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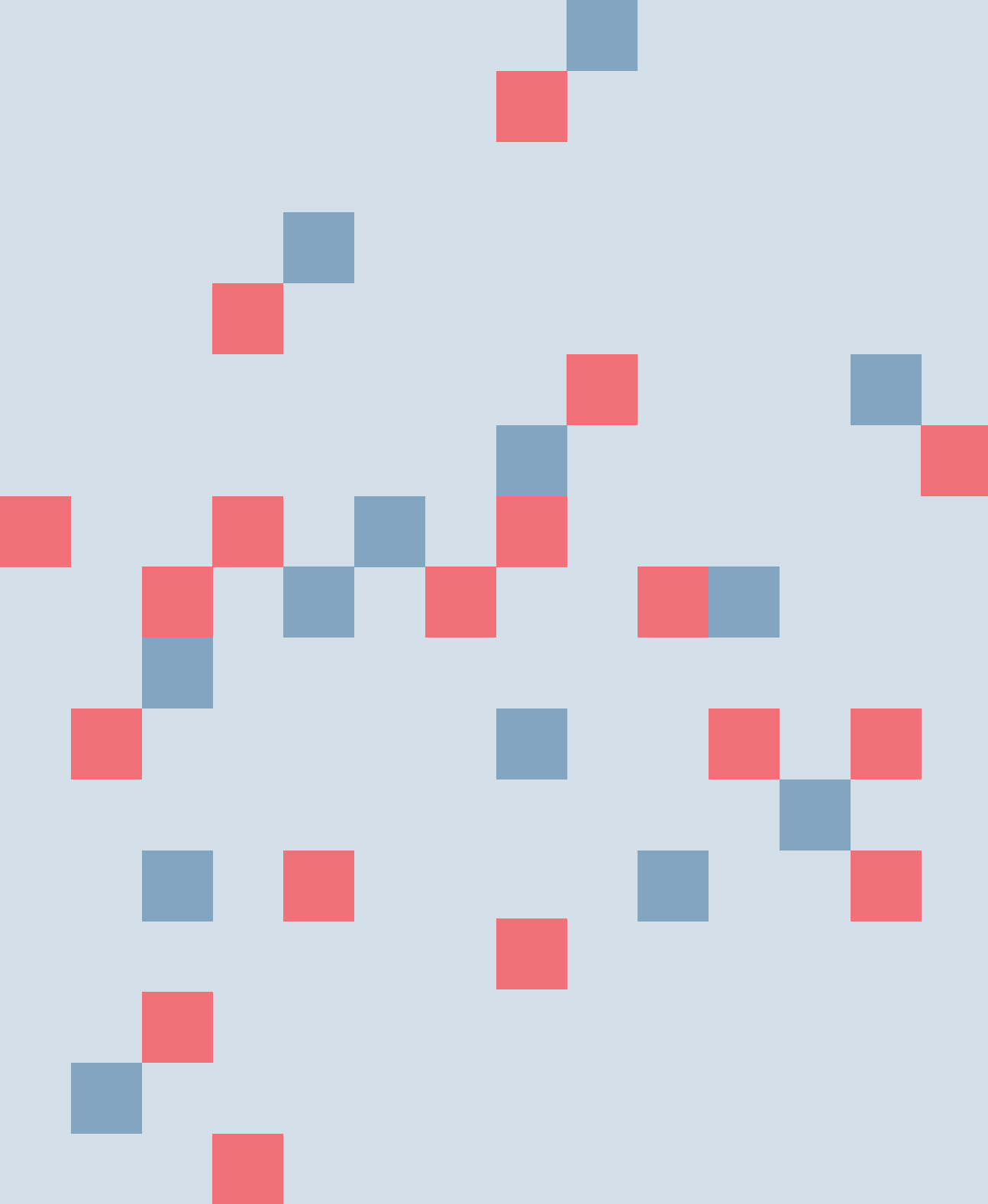
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