

Sample – Campaign 4

Dear Committee Secretariat,

I am writing to voice my deepest concern regarding the Australian Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Bill 2024, which appears to be expedited through the legislative process with undue haste.

I am disgusted that both the Labour and Liberal parties are allowing only a brief 24-hour window for public submissions on this legislation, which many perceive as a covert means to introduce government-controlled biometric digital ID requirements for social media access. Such rapid legislative action raises questions about the integrity and transparency of our political processes.

Here are the critical points that need addressing:

- **Privacy and Data Security:** The requirement for ID-based age verification necessitates the handling of highly sensitive personal information. This not only heightens the risk of data breaches and identity theft but also opens avenues for potential misuse of personal data, particularly affecting young individuals.
- **Exclusion and Accessibility:** This bill could result in social and informational exclusion for those without government-issued identification, including but not limited to marginalised communities and teenagers. This could hinder their access to essential platforms for education, social interaction, and personal growth.
- **Effectiveness and Enforcement:** There is scant evidence to suggest that age restrictions via ID verification would effectively protect children online. Instead, there's a risk that such laws might push minors towards less secure, unregulated digital spaces, paradoxically increasing their vulnerability.
- **Impact on Privacy and Free Expression:** Such verification processes might inhibit access to important content on sensitive topics like health, sexuality, and education, potentially stifling free expression and the right to information, which are foundational to democratic societies.

I implore you to reconsider this bill. Its implications extend far beyond child protection, touching on fundamental freedoms and rights. Rejecting this bill, would close the back door and be a stand for preserving democratic values and protecting the rights to privacy and free expression for all Australians.

Yours sincerely,

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Dear Committee

I am writing to express my deep concern about the **Social media Minimum Age Bill 2024** and urge you to reconsider your support for it. This legislation raises serious issues that could have far-reaching consequences for individuals, families, and our society as a whole.

My Key Concerns with the Bill

1. Lack of Transparency in Verification Methods

The bill does not provide any clarity on how age and identity verification will be implemented for users over 16. Without this information, there are significant unanswered questions about the security of personal data and the potential for misuse.

2. Premature Legislation

Rushing this bill through Parliament without fully disclosing the operational details risks creating flawed legislation that may require constant amendments. This piecemeal approach undermines public trust in government processes.

3. Undermining Parental Rights

By imposing blanket rules, the bill removes the ability of parents to make decisions about their children's online activity. The responsibility for monitoring and managing children's internet usage rests firmly with parents, not the government.

Parents already have access to numerous tools and apps to monitor and control their children's online activity. Platforms like **Bark, Qustodio**, and built-in parental controls on devices provide families with the resources to set screen time limits, block inappropriate content, and track online behavior. These solutions are tailored to individual family needs and reflect the diversity of parenting styles, something a broad-brush legislative approach cannot achieve. Supporting parents to use these tools effectively would be far more empowering than attempting to legislate away their role.

4. Privacy Risks

Mandating age verification increases the likelihood of extensive data collection, which could lead to significant privacy breaches. Forcing individuals to submit personal information to access online platforms is a slippery slope that many Australians will not support.

5. Potential for Social Isolation

For teenagers, social media is often a lifeline for connection, support, and communication, especially in challenging times. Limiting their access without providing viable alternatives risks increasing feelings of isolation and alienation.

6. Pushing Children Underground

This bill may unintentionally push children to bypass restrictions by seeking unregulated or less secure platforms. When mainstream social media platforms become inaccessible, children and teens could turn to "underground" sites or apps that lack the moderation, safety, and transparency of established platforms. This creates an even more dangerous environment, exposing them to greater risks such as exploitation, cyberbullying, or harmful content. Instead of protecting young people, this legislation could leave them more vulnerable and harder to reach when they need help.

Instead of imposing heavy-handed regulations, the focus should shift toward:

- **Promoting Digital Literacy:** Equipping young people and families with the tools and knowledge to navigate social media safely.
- **Encouraging Platform Responsibility:** Collaborating with platforms to create safer online environments through improved moderation and user settings.
- **Empowering Families:** Supporting parents to make informed decisions by educating them on available tools and strategies rather than taking this authority away from them.

Supporting this bill sends a troubling message to voters that their privacy, parental rights, and social freedoms are secondary to unproven regulatory measures. Please understand that if you choose to support this bill, I will actively campaign against your re-election. I believe this legislation reflects a significant misalignment with the interests and values of the community.

The unintended consequences of pushing young people into unsafe, unregulated online spaces must not be ignored. Families already have the means to manage their children's online presence. It is neither the role of the government to overreach into personal decisions nor the solution to this complex issue.

I urge you to reconsider your position and advocate for a more balanced, transparent, and effective approach to online safety.

Sincerely,