Australian Government
Digital Transformation Agency

dta

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Committee Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Committee Secretary,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs on the inquiry into age verification for online wagering and online pornography.

The Digital Transformation Agency (DTA) helps government improve digital services to make them simple, clear and fast. One of the ways we do this is through delivering whole-of-government digital platforms, including a federated Digital Identity ecosystem (Digital Identity).

The DTA believes that the Digital Identity program could be used to reduce technological barriers in achieving stronger age verification requirements by providing a convenient alternative for users to verify their age.

Digital Identity in Australia

The DTA is delivering a system which allows people and businesses to have a single, secure way to verify their identity to use government services online. Creating a digital identity is like doing a 100-point identification check but it removes the need to visit a government office with identity documents. It will allow more Government services to move online and be available whenever and wherever people and business need to access them.

The DTA is delivering a national Digital Identity capability in partnership with several Australian Government Agencies. We are testing the system through pilot programs with real users.

The linked video to demonstrates what Digital Identity could look like:
https://www.dta.gov.au/our-projects/digital-identity/easier-access-online-government-services

Digital Identity does not involve a unique identifier, nor does it allow tracking of online activities. Instead, it provides a means for a person to authenticate their identity online. Furthermore, identity providers in the Digital Identity system must meet the strict privacy and security requirements. These requirements are set out in the DTA's Trusted Digital Identity Framework (TDIF) and other governance. This governance would extend to any online wagering and online pornography sites which seek to verify age through the Digital Identity system.

The current Digital Identity system only provides access to selected federal government services. While the system is expected to allow access to private sector and state/territory government services, this is some way down the track and will require both legislative and technological change. The use of Digital Identity to achieve age verification for all global online wagering and online pornography sites would require the expansion of the Australian Digital Identity system to international private entities.

How Digital Identity could support Age Verification

Digital Identity could be used to verify identity attributes, including age, for online wagering and online pornography. Such sites would only receive the information required to confirm the user meets the age requirements of the service. Other information could potentially be provided, but this would be consent based to ensure the users privacy is protected.

User Choice

The Australian Digital Identity system is voluntary, it is also only one way people can verify their identity when accessing government services. We would expect that it would only be one of a number of potential pathways that individuals may use to undertake age verification. The DTA recommends that if Digital Identity is used to provide a verified age for online wagering and online pornography, it should be an optional choice for users.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the inquiry into age verification for online wagering and online pornography. Should the Committee have further questions please contact [redacted].

Yours Sincerely,

Randall Brugeaud
Chief Executive Officer
Digital Transformation Agency

Date: 1 November 2019