



Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications
Committees
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Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

By e-mail to: ec.sen@aph.gov.au

21 November 2024

Dear Committee Secretary

Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Bill 2024

We are writing to express our deepest concern about the approach being taken to this Bill. The referral of such a significant Bill to a Committee with one day for the public to provide submissions is an absolute insult to the electorate of Australia and to the rights of children and young people.

We have reviewed the Bill and note that it amends not one but two existing Acts. For most people to understand how the law will operate if the Bill is passed requires a person to locate both existing Acts and identify how the Bill amends those Acts and how the amended provisions will interact with other aspects of the legislation. This is no small task and certainly not feasible within 24 hours.

Many young people, including particularly marginalised young people, rely on access to social media to establish supportive friendship networks. This includes both young people with disability and young people who are unsure of their sexual orientation or gender identity. To have access to safe networks online is vital to their mental health and wellbeing. While recognising the significant harm that can arise through abuse of social media, the rushed approach to this legislation tramples on those young people's rights and futures.

If this Bill is the right legislative approach, surely the Parliament should take the time ensure it can hear from all of those who are likely to be affected by it. The potential negative consequences need to be



understood and the Parliament needs to be assured that all of the appropriate safeguards are in place to prevent the Bill resulting in unintended and potentially detrimental outcomes for marginalised young people.

We urge the Committee and the Parliament to take the time to understand how marginalised young people in particular rely on the online environment to develop safe friendship networks and find others who share their experiences. This is particularly true for young people in rural and remote areas of Australia whose personal experiences may mean they feel they are alone and without any support or understanding.

Yours sincerely

Michael Small
Director

Dr Robin Banks
Director

CC: