

# Common Sense Party of Australia

*Your Hands on Australia's Future*



## Submission to the inquiry related to the Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Bill 2024 [Provisions]

21 November 2024

Dear Committee,

The Common Sense Party of Australia would like to make a very simple submission to the Environment and Communications Legislation Committee for the Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Bill 2024 inquiry. This submission is to highlight three points:

1. the merits of this bill
2. the reasons why legislation is needed
3. the disgust at the flagrant arrogance of the way this bill (and inquiry) is being run in such an overtly political and undemocratic fashion.

The bill is beneficial and as a world first, could be phenomenal in setting up a precedence for the international community to follow. As a former teacher, I know the damage these psychologically trained services can do. I've had a student respond in class to a question in a manner as if he was *in* his app. This wasn't a joke, this was an instinctive response, followed by embarrassment. He was 10 years old.

Of course, there will be work-a-rounds. Yes, young people will find ways to use it. This bill's purpose is more though than banning usage. It sets a societal norm. It gives permission to parents to say, "no, it's now the law." This though will require arming parents and young people as to the scientific evidence as to why these platforms are harmful. Actually explain – **with shown examples** – the devices and strategies used by these apps to get people hooked (e.g. that the apps use demographics, data, location information, links to peers, image and audio collection and your own interactions of course, to feed you more content that will keep you engaged – and that much of this is based on emotive and psychological damage as it is particularly highly engaging). Explain that young people are especially susceptible to these psychological efforts due to their brain development stage. Educate Australians as to why this law is not just good, but necessary. Please learn from this. Educators see the effects. Parents may see the effects. But the facts and the education explain and give faith in the law. Without this faith, this law's intentions will not be realised.

Legislation is needed, as opposed to some pathetic voluntary code of conduct or simply asking parents or young people to be aware of the risks, because these social media platforms are run for profit. As they do not charge users, their revenue is from advertisers. The more engagement they have with their platform, the more they can



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charge. So the business model is about driving engagement. This means **there is NO ONUS to the user**. They have absolutely no care as to if people are being scammed, abused, vilified, denigrated, lied to, having disinformation shown etc. If content of that nature is viewed, shared, engaged with, it will be promoted. It is as simple as that. We all know it. It's a capitalist reality. Accept this fact and legislate accordingly.

The process of passing this bill through the parliament is a complete and utter embarrassment! The rush of this **5-day** 'inquiry' (that period *includes* the writing of the report!) screams of arrogance – largely due to bipartisan support of the bill. Instead of hearing from expert witnesses and from the community in a proper inquiry, this is a rushed and limited process. I wonder how many witnesses will appear and how wide a views will be represented to the one public hearing **the day before the report is due!** To have a submission period of around 30 hours gives a massive middle finger to the proper processes of democracy in Australia. You all know that this is a sham process. That this is just so you can pretend to have had a committee process and so that this gives some fake legitimacy to the bill that will be rammed through the Parliament in no more than 5 sitting days.

The Australian people deserve better and it is not our fault that for 2.5 years there has been virtually no preparation on this issue and that it has to be rushed through without proper process. This blame rests with the Government and the Opposition, who teamed up are enabling the irrelevance of any recommendations from this inquiry. This isn't good governance. What's worse is that this should be great governance. Here is the opportunity to lead. Here is a chance to demonstrate to the world, with proper explanation, how serious this issue is and how it can be dealt with. But, with real disappointment, you have squandered that opportunity.

Thank you for the opportunity (*ha!*) to contribute to this discussion. We hope this submission is constructive and look forward to following the process further.

Kind regards,



The Common Sense Party of Australia

