

Media release

Children and young people wanted education and for decision makers to take on the “big guys”

Friday, 29 November 2024

The NSW Advocate for Children and Young People, Ms Zoë Robinson, believes solutions proposed by young people to combat harmful online content should have been the foundation of government policy and regulation.

Ms Robinson said, “Young people have voiced a clear message: education and awareness are the foundational elements needed to tackle issues like misinformation, cyberbullying, and violent or extremist online content.”

“It is important that we give children and young people the tools they have asked for, such as more education resources, greater transparency from social media companies, and co-designed solutions,” said Ms Robinson.

This follows the announcement from the Federal Government who have passed a national social media ban for those aged 16 years and younger.

“An age ban alone will not solve the issues young people are facing and doesn’t include the solutions that they have suggested. Over 90 young people participated in the NSW Social Media Summit and came up with solutions and ideas, that were not solely focussed on age restrictions.” said Ms Robinson.

In October, the SA and NSW Governments heard from young people about their experiences with social media. Young people, who participated in the NSW Summit, offered solutions including creating a ‘legislative framework that holds the companies accountable to filter off hate speech and discriminatory content,’ and ‘educating people across all generations on digital literacy and algorithms rather than banning it,’ as well as ‘targeted education resources for young people across schools, universities, and communities.’

“In implementing any ban or restrictions, it is crucial to consider the impact on the most affected groups. This includes children and young people in regional areas, as well as those from the LGBTQTI+ community, who rely on social media to maintain connections with family and friends,” said Ms Robinson.

The NSW Advocate for Children and Young People hopes that moving forward, any policy or implementation plan considers the solutions that young people have offered, and ensures supports are in place for those that will feel the loss of online communities the most. The Advocate notes the safety by design work undertaken by the e-Safety Commissioner incorporates the views and voices of young people and welcomes that approach to the issues that young people, themselves say, they are facing.

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