



**YOUNG &
RESILIENT
RESEARCH
CENTRE**

Consultations with young people to inform the eSafety Commissioner's Engagement Strategy for Young People

**A REPORT ON
THE FINDINGS**

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THE ESafety COMMISSIONER

The eSafety Commissioner (eSafety) is Australia's national independent regulator for online safety. eSafety leads and coordinates online safety efforts across Commonwealth departments, authorities, and agencies, and engages with key online safety stakeholders internationally, to amplify our impact across borders.

esafety.gov.au



YOUNG & RESILIENT RESEARCH CENTRE

The Young and Resilient Research Centre is an Australian-based, international research centre that unites young people with researchers, practitioners, innovators and policymakers to explore the role of technology in children's and young people's lives and how it can be used to improve individual and community resilience across generations.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2021, the eSafety Commissioner commissioned the Young and Resilient Research Centre at Western Sydney University to run a Living Lab process with children and young people to guide the development of eSafety's Engagement Strategy for Young People.

The process used youth-centred, participatory co-research and co-design methods to explore young people's insights about online safety and develop recommendations for eSafety's online safety messaging and resources, and their ongoing engagement with children and young people. This included co-designing a process for establishing a Youth Advisory group, and a draft Aspirational Statement to underpin the Engagement Strategy for Young People.

Forty-nine diverse young people aged 13–18 in urban and rural/regional locations in New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia, each participated in three 2.5-hour online workshops. Twenty-eight participants identified as female, 18 as male, and three as non-binary or other. Thirty-two were in New South Wales, 11 in Victoria, and three each in South Australia and Western Australia. A total of 34 participants were from urban areas, two were from regional or rural areas, and 13 preferred not to say. Five youth facilitators were trained to deliver the online workshops with young people, on behalf of the research team.

The key findings of this Living Lab process are summarised below. Detailed recommendations can be found in the report.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S ASPIRATIONS FOR ONLINE SAFETY

Young people have high hopes and aspirations for the internet and online safety. In their ideal world, the internet is inclusive, youth-centred, and enabling. They imagine clear roles and responsibilities for parents, governments, and technology companies in keeping them safe – from managing perpetrators, to developing rules and regulations that protect young people from online harms, to teaching them the skills they need to navigate the internet safely and productively. And they want to be involved in decision making around online safety, and to design digital resources that cater for young people's diverse needs. Importantly, their vision is balanced. They want independence balanced with an appropriate level of guidance depending on their age and capacities, and they want freedom balanced with protection, so that they can explore all the opportunities the online world has to offer.

KEY CONCERNS

Young people's main online safety concerns relate to interactions with others online (e.g. catfishing, fake accounts, and contact from unknown people), privacy issues (exposure of personal information, photos, and stolen identities), and security issues (hackers, scams, and malware). Cyberbullying is also a concern among young people. However, they generally feel that there is an oversaturation of cyberbullying education and messaging in schools and at home. Other key concerns include sexual exploitation (grooming, predators), accessing or being exposed to inappropriate content (pornography, violence), misinformation and fake news, commercial advertising (sexual or false advertising, sale of illegal or inappropriate goods), receiving judgement from peers about their opinions online, and the heightened vulnerability of particular groups (e.g. minorities) to a range of online safety issues.

HELP-SEEKING

Young people prefer to seek help from trusted adults in the first instance. They will also seek out professional counselling services, use reporting mechanisms on social media platforms, talk to peers, or consult online forums. They often decide which avenue of support to choose based on an assessment of the situation and the nature of the risk.

However, there are many factors which prevent young people from seeking help. They fear being punished by their parents and are concerned that they may not have adequate information or experience to assist them. They also feel that adults often invade their personal boundaries, pry, or patronise them, which further deters them from seeking help. In other situations, they may not ask for support because they are concerned about stigmatisation or victim-blaming. And sometimes they don't know they need help.

According to young people, the top factors that can increase their help-seeking behaviours include receiving positive reinforcement and support from family and friends, increasing their awareness of available services and the help they can provide, and reassuring them that the services are confidential and anonymous. Clear and relatable information which communicates the consequences of the issue, and stories or anecdotes of other young people who have had shared experiences can also encourage them to seek help.

MESSAGING

Young people have particular preferences for language, tone, visuals, communication channels, and framing of online safety messaging. They want clear and concise communication that is supportive and understanding of their digital practices. They find casual tones and humour more appealing, but they also recognise that there is a time and a place for serious conversations about more sensitive online safety issues. Online safety resources that have a consistent aesthetic and interactive features are more likely to increase their engagement.

Young people want online safety messages communicated to them via platforms they frequently use, and they are less likely to seek out information beyond their online circles. Instagram, TikTok and YouTube are their preferred platforms. However, they say they would also be receptive to messaging on Spotify, television and social media advertising, TED Talks, Google Doodles, and Discord. They are particularly receptive to messaging that is presented by other young people, but they also want to have open conversations with their parents and receive education from their teachers at school about online safety. Importantly, this information should be informed by and have the credibility of government sources.

Unfortunately, young people told us they regularly feel misunderstood and disempowered by online safety conversations. In their experience, adults are often mis-informed about the internet and online safety, which leads to an overly prohibitive approach. Instead, they want adults to invite them into conversations by asking questions and offering constructive alternatives, and by conveying a sense of understanding, trust, and respect for young people's digital practices and skills.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Young people experience a range of barriers that can inhibit their capacity and motivation to engage with organisations. However, there are several factors which can counteract these barriers and encourage a young person to become involved in youth engagement initiatives. These range from factors in the individual domain (personal experiences, internal motivation), to the interpersonal (encouragement from family and friends, networking) and organisational domains (access to opportunities, interactions with organisations), to receiving benefits or outcomes.

Young people identified six best-practice principles for youth engagement initiatives:

- **Diverse and inclusive:** Youth engagement should be inclusive of young people from diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences.
- **Youth-led and supportive:** Youth engagement should empower young people to take leadership over the initiative, while ensuring adults provide support where needed.
- **Action-oriented:** Youth engagement should genuinely listen to young people and transform their ideas into meaningful outcomes.

→ **Collaborative:** Youth engagement should collaborate with young people in the design, delivery and evaluation of youth-centred programs and policies.

→ **Rewarding:** Youth engagement should have benefits that support young people's learning, growth, and development, and adequately compensate them for their time.

→ **Fun and engaging:** Youth engagement activities should be fun, age-appropriate, and easily accessible for young people to participate in.

ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE WORK OF ESafety

Young people had clear recommendations for how to establish and operate a Youth Advisory group which can meaningfully inform eSafety's ongoing work. They felt passionately that young people from a range of backgrounds, geographic locations, and ages should be represented in such an Advisory group, and recommended multiple possible pathways for recruitment, including via social media and schools.

Once established, they said that a Youth Advisory group will be most productive and inclusive if they meet online regularly (using freely available software with appropriate technology support and training, where required) and occasionally face to face (with a subsidy provided for travel). They envision creating a sense of leadership among young people by assigning clear roles and responsibilities to teams and individuals. In this model, adults would play a supportive and supervisory role by providing resources, training, and guidance, while empowering young people to take the lead.

Advisory members would necessarily require training in various topics and skills to enable them to build their capacities and maximise the benefits of their engagement. Both training and regular Advisory activities should be fun and age-appropriate and must avoid replicating extractive or tokenistic consultation formats. Where possible, Youth Advisory members should be involved in the planning and organisation of activities, as well as the development and review of any Advisory outputs. All outputs and resulting outcomes should be communicated clearly back to members.

Finally, evaluation will be vital to the ongoing sustainability and improvement of the Advisory group. Informal evaluation – which seeks the reflections of Youth Advisory members and key eSafety representatives – should be a regular and routine part of the Advisory's processes. In addition, a periodic formal review should also be conducted by an independent evaluator.

INTRODUCTION

A global-first initiative of the Australian Government, the eSafety Commissioner (hereafter, eSafety) is tasked with empowering all Australians to have safer and more positive experiences online. While eSafety has a population-wide mandate, the online safety of children and young people has constituted a strategic priority since it was established in 2015.

Research and practice insights suggest that ensuring the online safety of children and young people requires targeted resources, long-term commitments, and a whole-of-community and systems-based effort. But how can we be sure that online safety education, campaigns, and other initiatives are responsive to children's and young people's needs, and impactful?

In 2021, eSafety commissioned the Young and Resilient Research Centre at Western Sydney University to run a Living Lab process to use youth-centred, participatory co-research and co-design methods to consult with young Australians about:

- how young people perceive, experience, respond to and prioritise online safety issues, and how they want to be supported across online and offline settings to ensure they can use the internet safely and for maximum benefit
- how they would like to be engaged in the ongoing work of eSafety to enhance young people's safe and constructive engagement online.

The consultations were designed to guide eSafety's Engagement Strategy for Young People. The project consulted with **49 diverse young people aged 13–18 in urban and rural/regional locations in four Australian states and territories** to shape eSafety's development of online safety messaging and resources to:

- suggest a process for establishing a Youth Advisory group that can meaningfully engage young people in an ongoing way in eSafety's work
- draft an Aspirational Statement, which captures young people's vision for a safe, vibrant, and inclusive internet.

This report documents young people's insights and advice. While their wisdom will shape eSafety's Engagement Strategy for Young People, it is hoped that the insights contained herein will be of use to myriad other organisations working alongside eSafety to secure the internet for young people for generations to come.

METHODS

The project used a co-research and co-design process to identify young people's key online safety concerns; to define how they want to be addressed by online safety education and resources; to draft a statement that captures their aspirations for their safe online engagement; and to design a process to engage young people meaningfully in the ongoing work of eSafety.

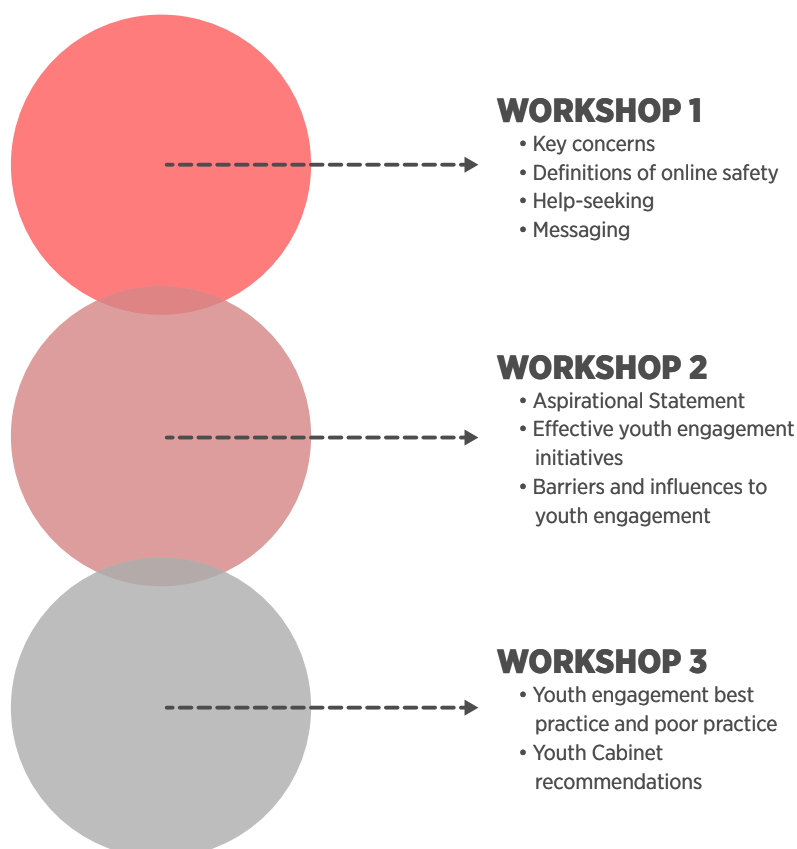
A total of **49 young people** aged 13–18, from New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, and Western Australia, each participated in a series of **three 2.5-hour online Living Lab workshops** (see Appendix A).

These workshops used **creative and participatory methods** and were led by young facilitators who were trained by the Young and Resilient Research Centre team. In the workshops, young people worked in small groups to complete fun and engaging activities designed to envision the goals; identify the barriers and opportunities; co-design the required processes; and critique and refine the draft processes. They engaged in discussions and brainstorming, as well as role playing, collage, and other activities.

The rich data generated by this process was analysed by the Young and Resilient team using textual and visual analysis techniques to generate the findings and recommendations contained in this report.

Each participant and their caregiver were required to give informed consent prior to the workshops. This project had ethics approvals from the Western Sydney University's Human Research Ethics Committee (approval no. 14267).

Overview of workshop content



ONLINE DELIVERY

COVID-19 lockdowns throughout New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia impacted the capacity of partner organisations and young people to facilitate and attend face-to-face workshops. Subsequently, the Young and Resilient team switched to an entirely online model which used an online screening and consent portal for young people to self-register for the workshop series.

Five youth facilitators were recruited and trained to facilitate and deliver the online workshops via Zoom and Miro platforms. The youth facilitators were also trained in online facilitation, ethical procedures for working with young people, and online workshop methods. Facilitators' adhered to strict ethical protocols, as specified in Western Sydney University's ethics approval (approval no. H14267). Each facilitator was paid to deliver the workshops.

Using Miro as the online platform enabled our team to generate rich qualitative data (text, drawings, collage, etc.), while simultaneously creating an engaging and participatory online environment for participants (see Appendix B).

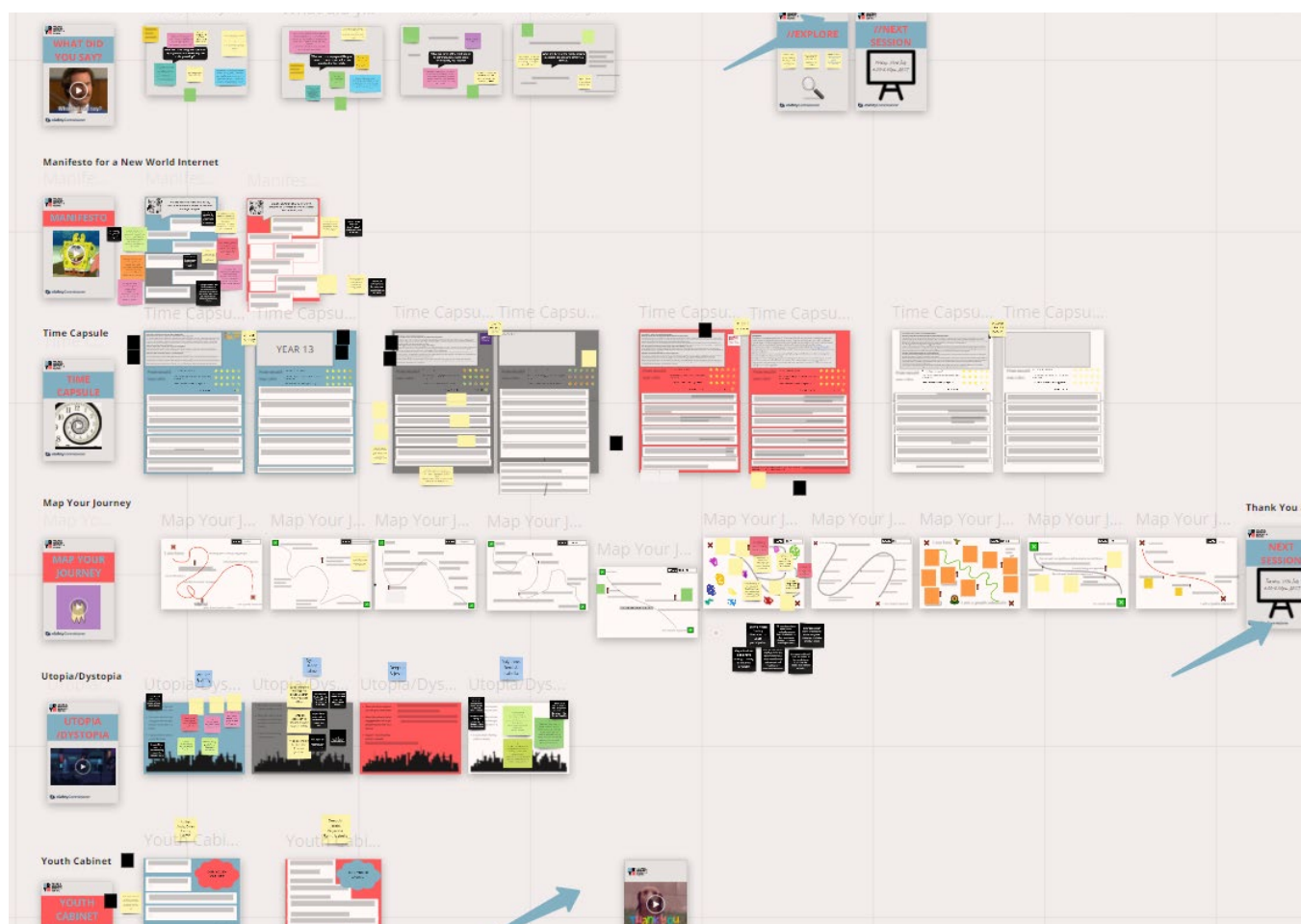
RECRUITMENT AND SAMPLE

Participants were recruited with the assistance of youth-facing partner organisations in New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, and Western Australia, who shared the registration portal with young people in their networks.

In total, 49 young people from diverse backgrounds attended the online workshops. Of these, 28 identified as female, 18 as male, and three as non-binary or other. Thirty-two participants were in New South Wales, 11 in Victoria, and three each in South Australia and Western Australia. A total of 34 participants were from urban areas, two were from regional or rural areas, and 13 preferred not to say.

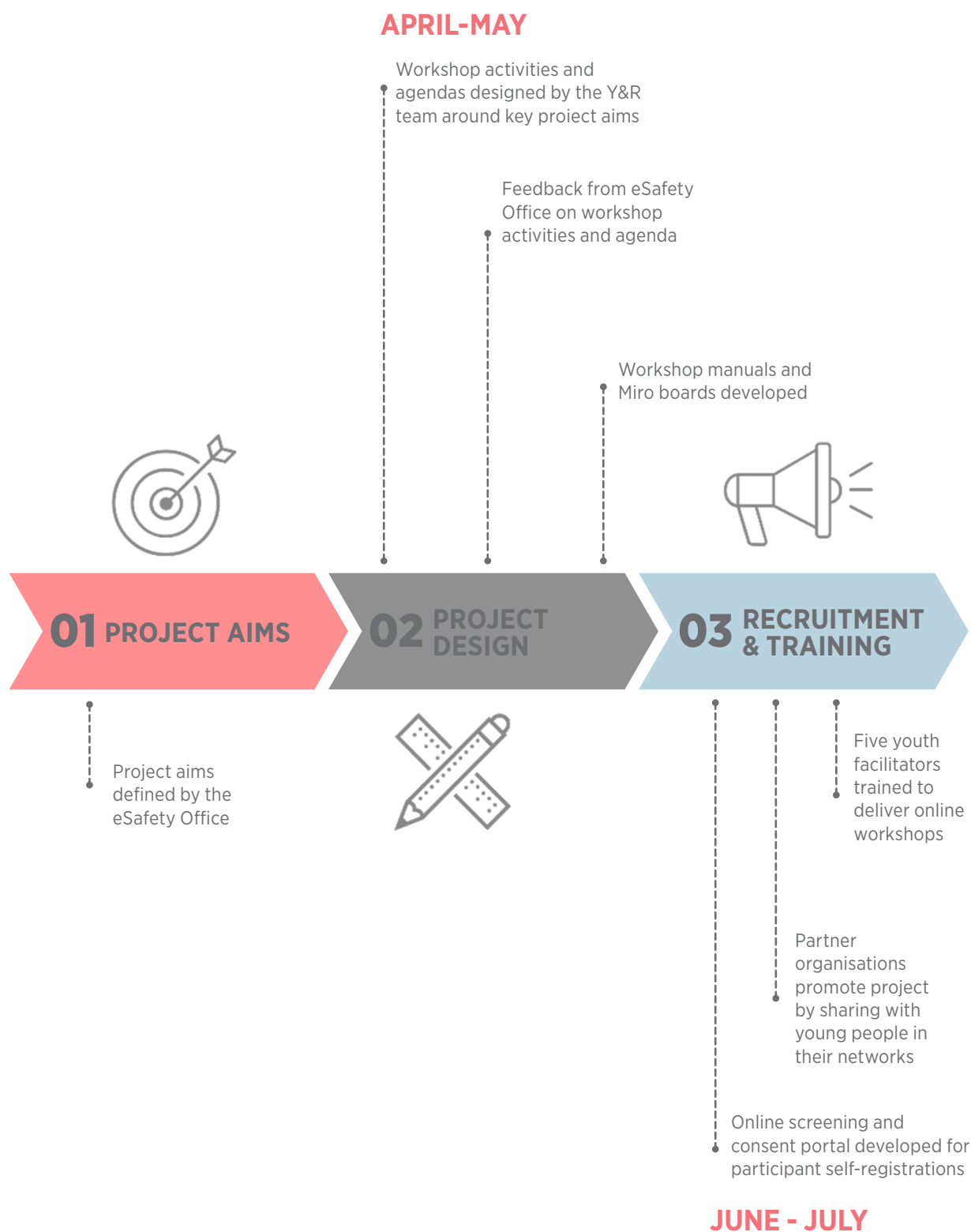
Young people were each given a \$100 gift voucher to acknowledge and thank them for their time and expertise. Eighteen young people expressed interest in staying updated about the project and its outcomes.

Rather than generating a representative sample, this project aimed to surface a diverse range of young people's experiences to shape the recommendations for eSafety's online safety resources, the Youth Advisory group, and the Aspirational Statement.



Screenshot of Miro boards with completed activities

PROJECT ON A PAGE



JULY-AUGUST

Participants take part in 3x 2.5-hour online workshops

WORKSHOP 1

Key online safety concerns
Help-seeking behaviours
Online safety messaging and communication

WORKSHOP 2

Aspirational Statement
Effective and ineffective youth engagement
Pathways and barriers to youth engagement

WORKSHOP 3

Ideal state of youth engagement
Youth Cabinet



SEPTEMBER

First draft of report completed

Feedback from eSafety Office on workshop activities and agenda

Second draft of report completed

Copyediting and design of final report

04 ONLINE WORKSHOPS

05 CODING & ANALYSIS

06 WRITE-UP



- Data exported from Miro boards and entered into analysis spreadsheets
- First round of coding for pre-defined priority themes
- Second round of coding for emergent themes from data
- Thematic and visual analysis of data set to generate key findings



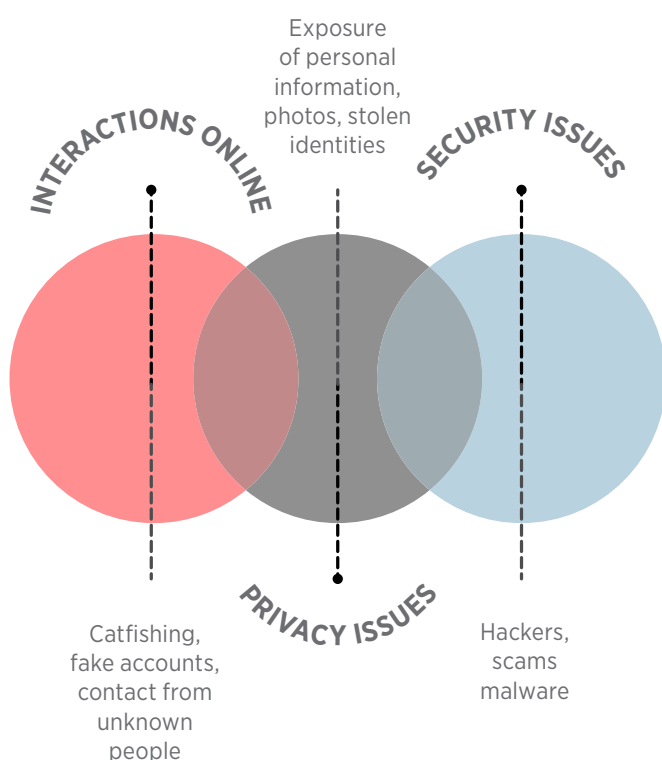
AUGUST

I. KEY CONCERNS

To help better target online safety education and resources, workshops explored young people's key concerns about online safety. This section reports on what young people identified as the most dangerous issues online, how likely they think it is that they will experience that issue, and what people, platforms or behaviours comprise or undermine their perfect internet.

Young people's top three online safety concerns relate to interactions with people online (catfishing, fake accounts, and contact from unknown people), privacy issues (exposure of personal information, photos, and stolen identities), and security issues (hackers, scams, and malware).

Young people's top three online safety concerns



Of these issues, approximately 66% of participants expect to encounter privacy or security issues online, in contrast to 85% who feel that it is likely they will have negative interactions with unknown people online. This is possibly representative of the normalisation among young people of chatting to people you meet online and having followers you don't know on social media.

Overall, participants were divided in how dangerous they felt this activity was – 40% felt it was very dangerous, 18% felt it was somewhat dangerous, and 42% felt it wasn't particularly dangerous. Regardless of how dangerous they thought it was, all were aware of the risks but felt they could continue this behaviour without endangering themselves or others with suitable precautions in place.



Young people want tips and guidance on how to navigate interactions online with unknown others.

Young people felt that cyberbullying and harassment were a concern. However, they exhibited a sense of "cyberbullying fatigue" due to a perceived oversaturation of cyberbullying education and a hyper-focus on cyberbullying by teachers and parents. Young people expect cyberbullying to occur but feel they have sufficient information about this to manage the risks.

Other online safety concerns raised by young people included:

- sexual exploitation (grooming, predators)
- accessing or being exposed to inappropriate content (pornography, violence)
- misinformation and fake news
- commercial advertising (sexual or false advertising, sale of illegal or inappropriate goods)
- receiving judgement from peers about their opinions online
- vulnerability of particular groups (e.g. minorities) to a range of online safety issues.

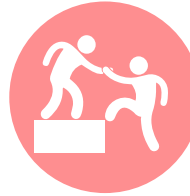
II. HELP-SEEKING

When and how do young people seek help in dealing with online safety challenges? What barriers stand in the way of them seeking help, and what would encourage them to seek help when they need it? This section documents what participants said about their current help-seeking practices and how they can be strengthened to ensure that all young people receive the support they need at the right time.

HELP-SEEKING PRACTICES

Young people seek help from trusted adults (parents, teachers, police) for online safety issues in the first instance. They will also seek out professional services (counselling, helplines), reporting mechanisms (on social media websites, the eSafety Commissioner), peers, or to a lesser extent, online forums or internet searches if they feel that they can't manage a situation on their own.

Young people are adept at understanding which sources of support are best for the particular issue. For example, if the issue pertains to something illegal, they would seek help from police; if they have mental health concerns, they would seek out school counsellors or helplines; if the issue involves a breach of privacy or a particular website, they would approach IT support or use reporting mechanisms.



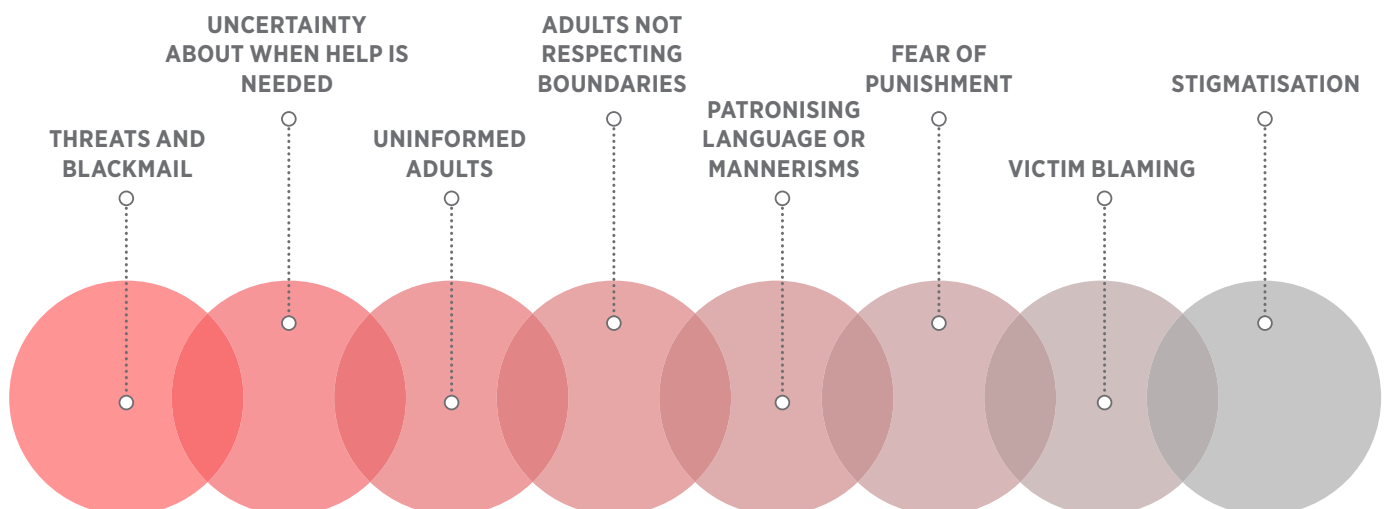
Young people seek help differently, according to their assessment of the situation, the nature of the risk and the level of threat presented.

"If the person's life is in danger, I would make sure I am with them and contact the developers." (Male, New South Wales)

"[I would seek help] from trusted adults who can help with [let's] say if your bank details are stolen, they can contact banks to solve them or...for...cyberbullying, using Kids Helpline [because it can]...really impact on your wellbeing. Or...go to a trusted adult to see if police need to be involved (things like pedophilia and things that can put your life at risk)." (Female, New South Wales)

"If someone took my bank account while I was shopping on an unreliable website, I'd follow up with my bank and criminal stoppers." (Male, New South Wales)

"If the private information of my friend was being circulated or someone was blackmailing them, I would immediately... get in touch with...the police department responsible for cybersecurity. Mentally, I think my friend would be struggling so I would refer them to counselling places or reassure them to the best of my ability. I would also get in touch with people to remove the private information. If they are a victim of a predator, I would immediately consult the police as well." (Female, South Australia)



Barriers to help-seeking experienced by young people



Young people are most likely to contact a trusted adult (e.g. parents, teachers) if they need help. But they want to be confident that adults have the necessary knowledge to help them and they won't be patronised or punished [by their parents] for sharing and seeking help.

BARRIERS TO HELP-SEEKING

Young people are less likely to seek help if they are faced with issues like threats or blackmail, and they acknowledge that they may not know when they need to seek help. In young people's experience, they have found that trusted adults and institutions do not always have adequate information or resources to assist them in problem-solving, and this deters them from reaching out for support. Further, unsupportive approaches that prevent young people from seeking help include getting too personal (e.g. prying or asking for too much information), not respecting their boundaries, punishing, stigmatising, victim-blaming, or using patronising language and mannerisms.

If young people expect to experience any of these behaviours, they can be discouraged from seeking support.

"[We would like my parents to] assure us that even if something had gone wrong, they'd help us out rather than scolding and berating us." (Workshop 1, whole-group activity)

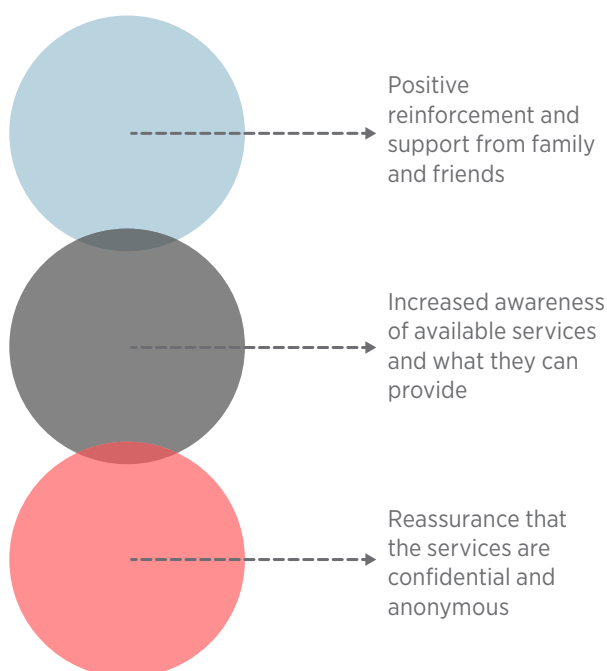
"Some online situations can come with threats and blackmail which can deter people from seeking help. These situations include grooming and revenge porn." (Female, New South Wales)

INCREASING HELP-SEEKING BEHAVIOURS

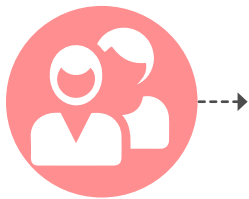
Young people want to be reassured by the knowledge there are organisations and services that can help, but importantly they want to know how they can help and what difference receiving help will make to the problem. Having friends and family who encourage and advocate for seeking help de-stigmatises the practice. It's critical, however, that young people can be confident that their privacy, and the confidentiality of what is disclosed, will be maintained. Young people want to know they can trust who they approach, and they also want to feel safe, comfortable, and respected.

"I would DM (direct message) my friend and we would try troubleshooting together..." (Male, New South Wales)

"I would personally feel encouraged knowing what the person or organisation could do to help and have a good idea what I was going into and the benefits it would potentially bring." (Female, New South Wales)



Top-three factors increasing young people's help-seeking behaviours



Young people are positive about professional support services available to them. They think these services are generally reliable and supportive. But they want to be reassured that these services are confidential and anonymous. These factors are critical to encouraging help-seeking.

"[I would seek help if] I knew that the issue would be handled privately, and with someone trusted or reliable." (Female, New South Wales)

"By creating an open, anonymous platform for discussion, it allows for this kind of discussion to be normalised." (Male, New South Wales)

"If the information regarding how to deal with these situations is provided in a way where I feel safe, or where I can keep my identity hidden for the most part, I would feel comfortable in confiding in the proper authorities and asking for help." (Female, South Australia)

Concerningly, some young people will wait until they feel that the issue is getting worse, cannot be resolved or that someone's life is in imminent danger before they seek help. Clear and relatable communication is important in reinforcing positive help-seeking behaviours and encouraging young people to seek help before the issue becomes unmanageable. If young people understand the possible or probable consequences of the situation and the serious ramifications of not seeking help, they are more inclined to seek out support. Hearing stories or anecdotes of other young people with shared experiences can also contribute to legitimising and destigmatising help-seeking practices.

"Safe spaces where you aren't being judged for what you say/ do [would encourage me or my friends to seek help]." (Female, New South Wales)

"[I would seek help upon] learning about others in the same position." (Male, New South Wales)

"I think my friends can resonate with the need to get help if they hear the personal stories of others and empathise with their circumstances so that they can take the next step and get the appropriate help." (Female, South Australia)

III. MESSAGING

How do young people relate to and make sense of current online safety messaging? This section draws on young people's appraisals of current online safety messaging to identify key principles for developing messaging that will speak to young people's concerns, thereby empowering them to better identify and manage online safety risks.

Above all, participants were adamant that, where possible, **young people should be engaged in the design of online safety messaging to ensure its relevance, relatability, and appeal.** They also made concrete recommendations about how to ensure online safety messaging hits the mark.

LANGUAGE AND TONE

Young people want online safety messages that are concise and easy to read and understand. They prefer clear writing styles and youth-friendly language that doesn't try too hard to be 'cool'. Technical jargon and an oversaturation of information can feel impenetrable to young people and should be avoided.

Young people prefer messages that take a positive stance on internet safety and aim to be supportive, understanding and encouraging of young people's digital habits. Messages that are prohibitive (e.g. 'don'ts' or 'nevers') or alarmist (e.g. *"Online friends are bad because they're all older men catfishing you and trying to coerce you into sharing sexual content"* – Workshop 3, whole-group activity) can make young people disengage and shut down. These narratives and tones make young people feel like they are being patronised or berated and undervalues their experiences and skill sets.

Young people want the tone of online safety conversations to be appropriate to the subject matter. Overall, they tend to prefer an informal, colloquial tone because it makes them feel comfortable and the conversation less of a 'big deal'. However, at the same time, they understand there is a time and place for serious conversations about more severe issues (e.g. online sexual exploitation and abuse). They want the messages that they receive about these issues to adequately convey the consequences and communicate an informed and educated perspective.



Young people want the tone of online safety messaging to be appropriate to the subject matter. They prefer casual conversations, but recognise the need to have serious conversations about serious issues.

When appropriate, humour can be a powerful mechanism to bring a lighthearted tone to online safety conversations and make them more digestible for young people. It can also encourage young people to share the message among their friends and peers if it resonates with their sensibilities.

Personal anecdotes and stories about other young people's online safety experiences can also be a useful communication tool. Stories feel relatable and engaging while also depersonalising the scenario, reducing the discomfort that comes with discussing sensitive subjects.

"[The] language [and] tone [of online safety messages]: Not controlling or rude but more-so encouraging and understanding of the fact that these things could happen and supporting me if they did." (Female, New South Wales)

"Perhaps include some humour (in appropriate places) as things spread on the internet when the viewer finds something so enjoyable or meaningful that they want it to be seen. Serious content does not thrive under these conditions. Keep in mind, humour is extinguished if it does not relate to young people." (Male, New South Wales)

"[I want to receive messages that are] lighthearted, colloquial...but straightforward." (Female, South Australia)

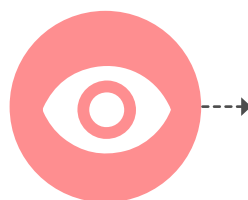
"Humour mostly engages me because even if the topic being discussed is boring, humour helps draw out essential details yet still engages the viewers....I find it most engaging when there is a video that has comedic elements that discusses online safety." (Workshop 7, whole-group activity)

"When they use real examples rather than theoretical examples...engaging learning can be done when real-life examples are used." (Workshop 7, whole-group activity)

VISUAL FEATURES

The overall 'look and feel' of a website or resource, including layout, colours and fonts, evokes an immediate impression which can impact young people's receptiveness and engagement. Young people spoke about the need for an 'aesthetic', referencing the 'look and feel' of internet subcultures and social media accounts.¹ An 'aesthetic' has consistent themes and design elements which makes it identifiable and conveys a particular 'vibe' or mood. Developing a visual identity using colours, fonts and graphic design, and then maintaining it across messaging and platforms can mirror youth pop cultures and enhance young people's engagement.

Young people prefer clean, uncluttered layouts which incorporate empty spaces and balanced visual elements. Bright, eye-catching colours can appeal to young people, however shades that clash or are too bold can be jarring. Colours should enhance readability rather than diminish it. Fonts, too, should be consistent. Resources should not use more than two different typefaces (e.g. Arial, Courier New), and these fonts should be maintained across all materials. Larger font sizes can be used to highlight key messages so that they can be communicated at a glance.



Young people prefer messaging with a consistent visual aesthetic that makes information engaging, appealing and easy to digest.

Online safety resources that appear text-heavy are less likely to engage young people. Information should be communicated in bite-sized 'chunks', with varied font sizes or visualised using infographics.

Varied visual content – for example, images, videos, and infographics – stimulates young people's interest and motivates them to interact with the resource. A lack of images on websites can feel 'amateurish' from young people's perspective. They want images that look professional but do not clutter or overwhelm the layout. Young people also enjoy embedded multimedia content, such as videos, which can convey information easily without the need to read text. To maximise impact, videos should be short, humorous, visually appealing, and tailored specifically to young people.

"[Yes], this page looks like something that would attract a younger audience due [to] the aesthetics of the page." (Female, Victoria; Female, Western Australia)

"By making it bright and having the information summarised helped keep it short and simple so people don't get confused and tired of reading all the information." (Female, Victoria; Male, New South Wales)

"I would try to add images that help convey the information presented on the website. Important that the images and text continue to be presented in a non-aggressive way, makes it easy to read and understand." (Male, Victoria)

"Keep the font consistent. The typewriter script look[s] off compared to the rest of the writing. The background is also really bright and makes the text hard to read." (Female, Victoria; Female, Western Australia)

"The addition of suitable images would help reinforce points and make the website more engaging." (Male, Victoria)

INTERACTIVITY

Young people appreciate online content they can engage and interact with. Games and quizzes are popular features that introduce a sense of fun and playfulness to a serious conversation and motivate learning and engagement. They also make young people feel as though they are active participants in the conversation. This can help to overcome feelings that online safety conversations are one-sided and do not communicate to young people 'on their level'. Like humour, interactive elements can also encourage sharing among peer groups, and help to disseminate the message to a wider audience.

¹ For example, see: https://aesthetics.fandom.com/wiki/List_of_Aesthetics

“Add some quizzes, fun videos, make it more engaging for the target audience.” (Female, New South Wales; Female, Victoria; Male, New South Wales)

“Games about cyber safety [are some of the most engaging messages I have received].” (Workshop 6, whole-group activity)

“[Improve messaging by making it] more interactive – maybe some questions/a quiz.” (Male, New South Wales; Female, New South Wales; Female, New South Wales)

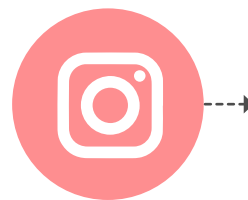
HOW TO MAKE ONLINE SAFETY MESSAGING APPEAL TO YOUNG PEOPLE

- 01 Use clear, concise language that is easy to read and understand
- 02 Send a positive and supportive message, rather than a prohibitive one
- 03 Adopt a casual tone and don't speak down to young people
- 04 Use humour where appropriate to bring a lighthearted tone to confronting messages
- 05 Share personal anecdotes and stories from other young people to make messages more relatable
- 06 Develop a coherent aesthetic that appeals to young people and replicate it across messaging and channels
- 07 Use infographics, images, consistent fonts and uncluttered layouts to maximise visual appeal
- 08 Minimise text-heaviness and information overload
- 09 Embed games, quizzes and engaging videos that young people can interact with

PLATFORMS

Young people want online safety messages to be communicated to them via platforms they frequently use. They appreciate having the content put in front of them, rather than needing to search for the information outside of their usual online spaces.

Instagram and TikTok, followed by YouTube, are their preferred platforms and, currently, messaging will likely reach a wider youth audience on these sites. Twitter and Facebook appear to be less popular, although there may still be some value in communicating via these platforms.



Young people want online safety messaging to be communicated through platforms and channels they regularly use (Instagram, TikTok, etc.). They are less likely to seek out information beyond their online circles.

Young people expect different types of content across different social media platforms. Content should therefore be tailored for the platform it is using. For example, young people expect content on TikTok to be humorous (and occasionally political), whereas Instagram content places more emphasis on the aesthetics of the post. Young people turn to YouTube for informative content and, as such, it can be used to communicate more in-depth information and messages.

Advertisements on various platforms such as Spotify, television, and social media are also effective in reaching audiences beyond followers and friends. Many young people do not have paid Spotify accounts and, as such, are frequently exposed to ads dispersed throughout listening sessions. Similarly, in lieu of paid-for streaming services, advertisements during popular youth television shows may also help to disperse the message. TED Talks, Google Doodles, and Discord are other potential avenues for communicating online safety messages.

“I would prefer small, strong messages [about online safety] that can be communicated as advertisements on popular platforms, for example, Spotify ads.” (Female, South Australia)

“I think [online safety information] does appeal to a younger audience because it is concise and straight to the point, it uses images and social media such as TikTok.” (Male, New South Wales)

"I would want [online safety messages] to be explained in a calm but still serious tone, and probably through an ad on tv or people on social media sharing important information about those issues." (Female, New South Wales)

"[I want online safety messages communicated] through YouTube as the majority of people who use the internet use that platform always, if not daily." (Male, New South Wales)

"[I want to receive online safety information on] social media, for example, Insta, Twitter (even TikTok because using humour is engaging) ...YouTube." (Female, South Australia)

RELATABLE AND TRUSTWORTHY COMMUNICATORS

Young people are most responsive to messaging that is communicated by other young people. Adult presenters sometimes feel 'cringe' to young people, or like they are trying too hard to appeal. Where possible, young or youthful presenters should be used to make the content more relatable and attractive. Well-known social media influencers, personalities and celebrities also enhance young people's engagement, and can help disseminate the message to a wider audience.

At home, they want parents to have open conversations with them about their online safety concerns while respecting their privacy.

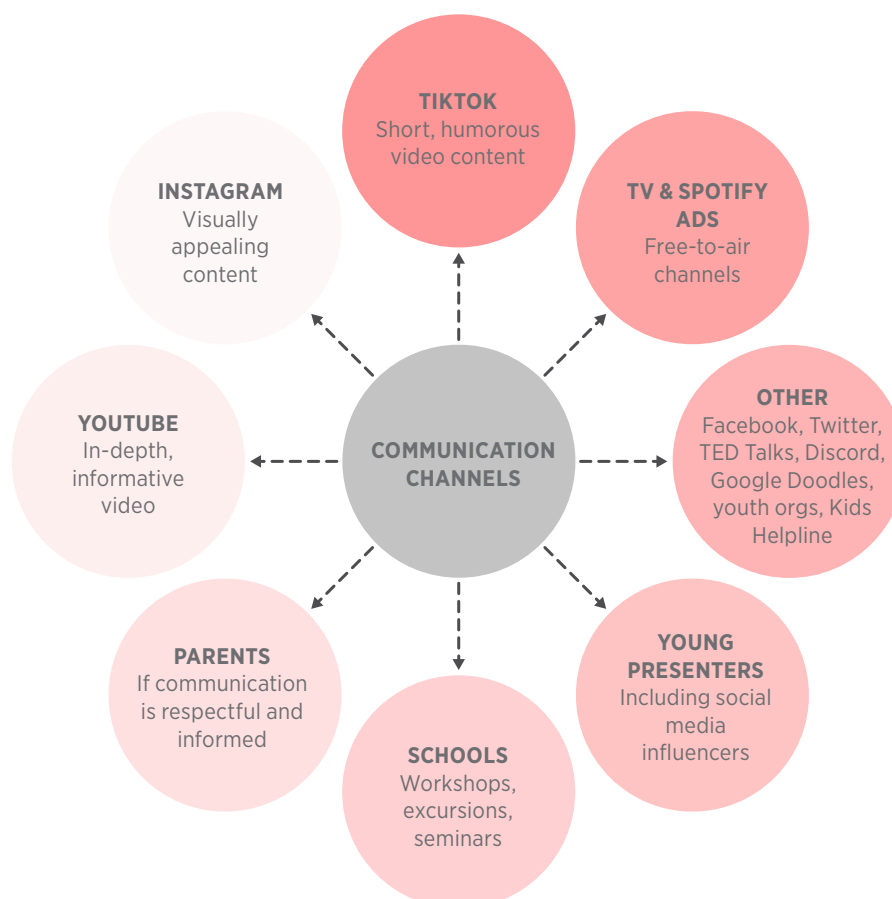
At school, they want education on these issues through workshops, excursions, and activities. Talks from police are not an effective way to communicate about online safety, despite being a common practice in some schools. Young people find these presentations intimidating or 'too serious' which can detract from the messaging. Outside of home and school, young people may also be responsive to messaging via youth and community organisations, and services such as Kids Helpline. Importantly, they feel that the online safety information they receive should be informed by, and have the credibility of, the government and other reliable online safety resources.

"The older host [is unappealing]. I know this guy was trying to come off with...a relatable, wryly amused personality, but it was a tad cringey." (Female, South Australia; Female, New South Wales; Gender queer, Victoria)

"It's appealing for young people because...the influencer is young herself; it makes her messages more relatable." (Male, Victoria, Female, South Australia)

"[I would like to receive information from] organisations known for spreading information like this, for example, Kids Helpline, school." (Female, New South Wales)

"I would like the government and other reliable people to sponsor and work with young influencers [to deliver online safety messages]." (Female, New South Wales)



Young people's preferred channels of communication for online safety messaging



Young people are most receptive to online safety messaging delivered by other young people. But they also want parents and teachers to give them reliable online safety information from credible government sources.

WHAT (NOT) TO SAY AND HOW (NOT) TO SAY IT

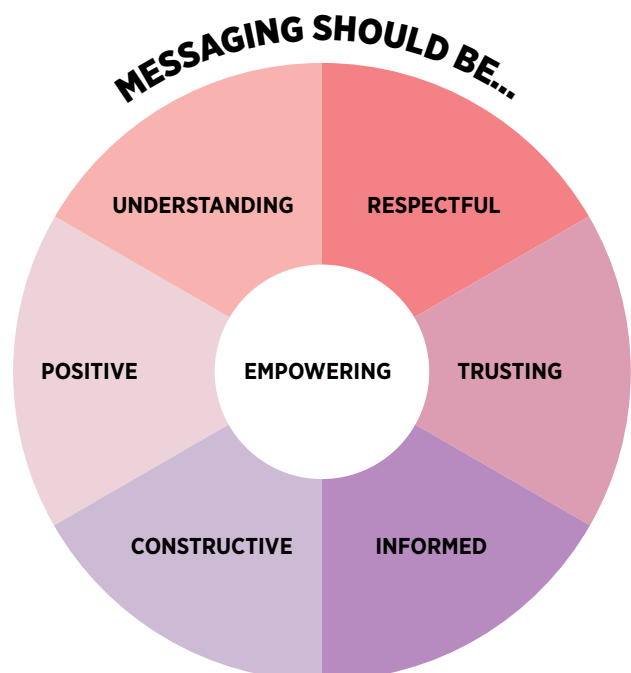
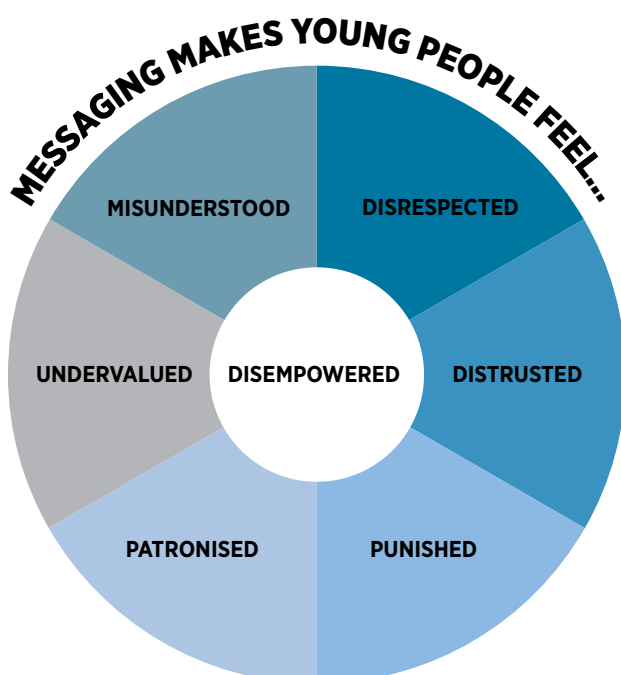
Feelings of being misunderstood, disempowered, or that their digital skills are undervalued are the primary sources of frustration for young people when it comes to communication from adults about online safety issues. Initiating conversations with phrasing such as “In our day...” or “When I was your age...” conveys outdated thinking that fails to attempt to understand young people’s digital practices. Exacerbating this, young people often feel that adults are mis- or uninformed about the realities of the internet and online safety, and that this results in overly prohibitive or fear-driven messaging.

When initiating conversations about online safety, young people want adults to pose questions to them and respectfully invite them to engage in discussions about these topics. This sets up the conversation on their terms, encouraging them to participate in the discussion more openly, and does not force them into a dialogue they are unwilling to engage in.

They want informed messaging that communicates alternative, safe ways to approach and resolve online safety issues, instead of immediately prohibiting the activity. Over-used or clichéd statements such as “Don’t talk to strangers” are particularly off-putting and repetitive. Turning ‘don’t’ statements (e.g. “*Don’t send selfies to others, people will screenshot!*” – Workshop 4, whole-group activity) into constructive messages (e.g. “*Instead of don’t send selfies to others, say ‘be mindful of who you are sending to, make sure they are your friends’.*” – Workshop 4, whole-group activity) can communicate a willingness to collaborate on solutions that work for both parties.

Young people deeply value online technologies and appreciate the benefits and enjoyment the internet brings to their lives. Blanket statements which assert that the internet as a whole is bad or a risk, without acknowledging any positive aspects, are unappealing to young people. Instead, young people told us that messages that begin by recognising the ways young people value and use the internet are more likely to be positively received.

Finally, they want to feel respected and trusted. Adults tend to ask questions or have conversations that transgress young people’s sense of privacy (e.g. “Who are you talking to online?”). This can feel invasive and convey distrust both of young people and of how they use the internet. Messaging should instead seek to empower young people to independently make their own informed decisions with appropriate levels of support, and with respect to their age and digital literacies.



INSTEAD OF...

SAY...

"Don't take selfies and share them."

"Be mindful of who you are sending selfies to. Make sure they are your friends."

"Social media is dangerous and bad for you."

"I know social media is a big part of your life and it's great that it lets you connect with your friends, but it also comes with some risks that you need to be aware of when you're using it."

"Don't talk to ANYONE you don't know online!"

"If you are going to talk to someone you don't know online, make sure you don't give them any of your personal information or photos. You can talk to me if you're not sure - you won't get in trouble."

"Online friends are all older men trying to catfish you and coerce you into sharing sexual photos."

"I know you are aware of grooming risks online, but this can be pretty serious stuff and it's important to have upfront conversations about it. Do you know the signs to look out for if someone is trying to groom you?"

"Why are you watching strangers' lives?" (When watching TikTok)...
"Where did you get this from?" (When showing them something funny)...
"Who made this?" (When showing a funny video)

"Don't share private info",
"How do you know that is your in-person friend and not someone pretending to be them?", **"People online are always fake",**
"Stranger danger..don't talk to them you haven't met them."

"You're too young for social media... You don't need to have social media because it's unsafe. Socialise with others in person."

It makes me cringe when adults say...

"Social media is evil...you'd be fine and could still live normally without it."

"Don't accept follow requests from people you don't know extremely well", **"Don't post photos of yourself online",**
"Don't play online games with chat because you might approach strangers", **"Don't talk to people online at all costs!!"**

"In our day, we just spoke to each other."

"You need to let me go through your following and followers. Make sure I can see everything you post and do."



IV. YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

We know that online safety education and resources targeting young citizens are significantly more likely to resonate with their audiences if they are co-designed with young people themselves. But how can we best engage young people in developing the necessary tools and resources to support them to be safe online? And how might organisations meaningfully engage young people on an ongoing basis? In this section, we document young people's suggestions about how organisations like eSafety can work with young people to enhance the impacts of online safety initiatives.

engagement initiatives. These range from factors in the individual domain (e.g. personal experiences and actions), to the interpersonal (e.g. interactions with family members and social networks) and organisational domains (e.g. interactions with organisations and opportunities), and finally receiving benefits or outcomes.



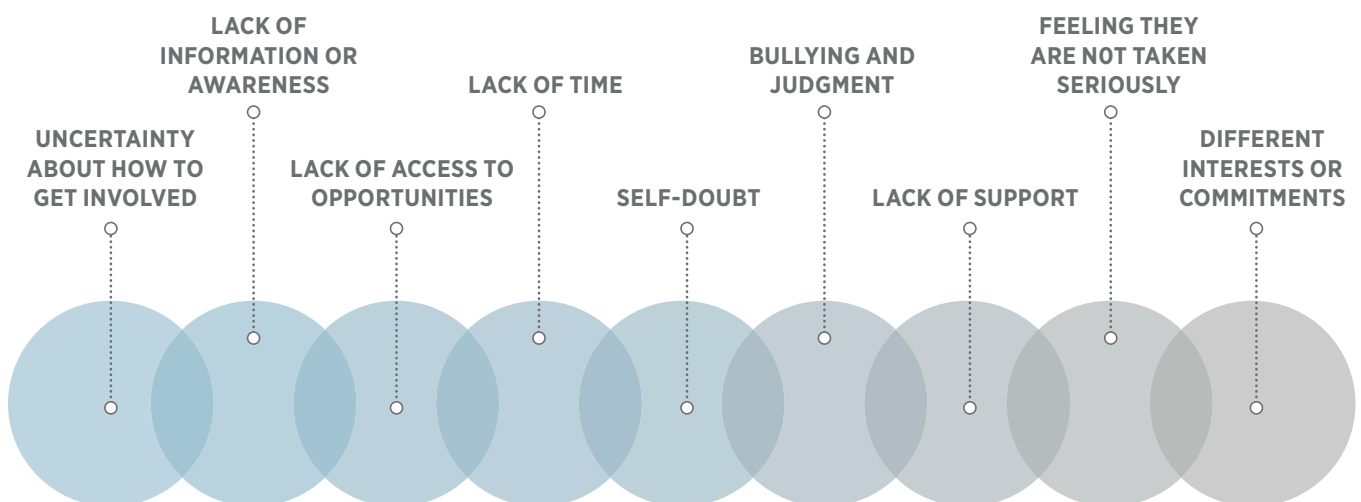
Young people feel that organisations often wait for young people to reach out to them, rather than actively reaching out to them in the places where they commonly spend time.

A. BARRIERS AND INFLUENCES

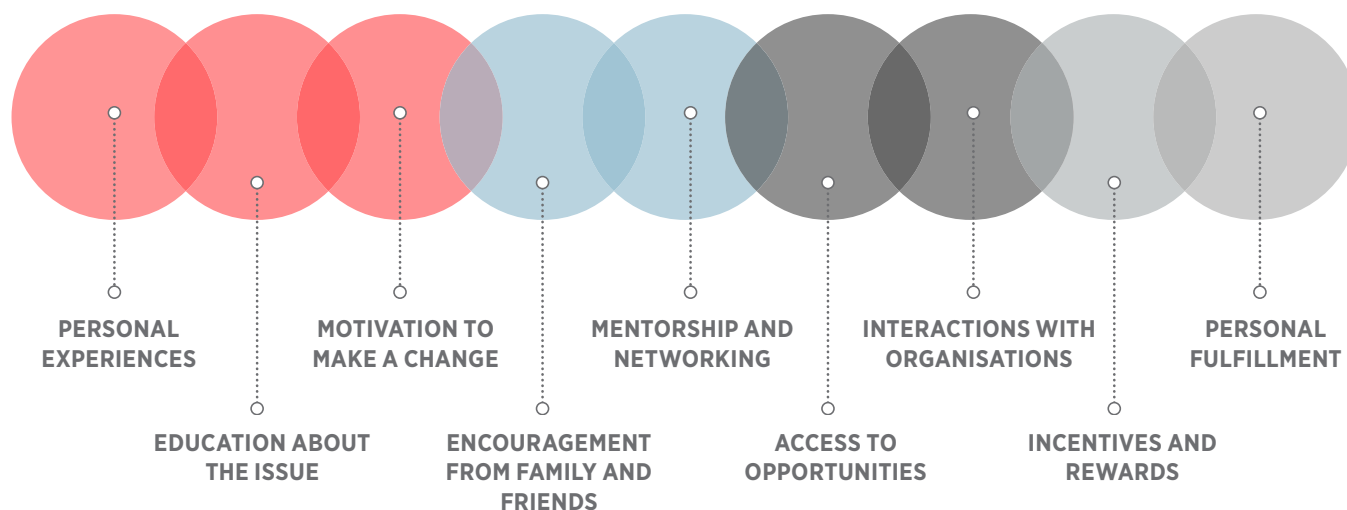
Young people experience a range of barriers which can inhibit their capacity and motivation to engage with organisations. These barriers range from a lack of information, access to opportunities, time or support from family or friends, to fear of bullying or judgement from peers, to a pervasive sense that young people's views aren't taken seriously by adults or organisations.

At the same time, there are several factors which can counteract these barriers and encourage a young person to become involved in youth

engagement with organisations is most likely to come after having a set of individual and interpersonal experiences that have motivated them to seek out opportunities. This is because young people feel as though organisations often wait for young people to reach out to them rather than reaching out to young people themselves. At the same time, they feel that they need a certain level of preparation or experience before they can access these opportunities. Organisations seeking to engage young people should take a proactive approach by reaching out to them in online and offline spaces where they commonly spend time, offering preparation or support to fully enable their participation.



Barriers to youth engagement experienced by young people

Factors influencing young people's engagement**B. BEST PRACTICE PRINCIPLES**

Young people have a range of ideas about what good youth engagement looks like. These can be distilled into six best practice principles: Diverse and inclusive; youth-led and supportive; action-oriented; collaborative; rewarding; and fun and engaging.

DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE

Engagement should be inclusive and involve young people from diverse cultural, religious, economic, and geographic backgrounds. Organisations should make special efforts to engage with:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
- culturally and linguistically diverse young people
- young people living with disabilities
- gender and sexuality diverse young people
- young people living in regional and rural areas
- young people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds
- young people from other minority groups.

Young people are concerned that those from minority groups have fewer opportunities to participate in matters that affect their lives and that many youth engagement initiatives unfairly advantage young people from more privileged parts of society. They want all young people to have access to these opportunities, and they value the richness that different perspectives, backgrounds, and opinions bring to these initiatives. It is important to have mechanisms in place to ensure the voices of less privileged young people are not drowned out by others on these platforms.

"Everyone [should be included]: [A] range of ethnicities, genders, sexualities, political views. We need to see issues from as many perspectives as possible. Make it clear that people from all backgrounds are welcome and that their voices

matter. In a lot of places that scream diversity, the privileged people talk over marginalised communities on issues that involve them." (Female, New South Wales; Male, New South Wales; Female, New South Wales; Non-binary, South Australia)

"[Good youth engagement] attempts to accommodate for the sectors/diversity of the youth of Australia, with different perspectives...[for example] regional/metro/suburban youth; LGBT youth; different ethnicities/religions; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders." (Female, Victoria; Male, New South Wales; Female, South Australia; Male, Victoria)

"Young people from all walks of life – different cultures, religions, citizenship status, gender identities, sexualities, socioeconomic status, employment history etc. Many people are involved with many different experiences as this will help get many differing points of view." (Female, New South Wales; Female, New South Wales; Male, Victoria; Female, Victoria)

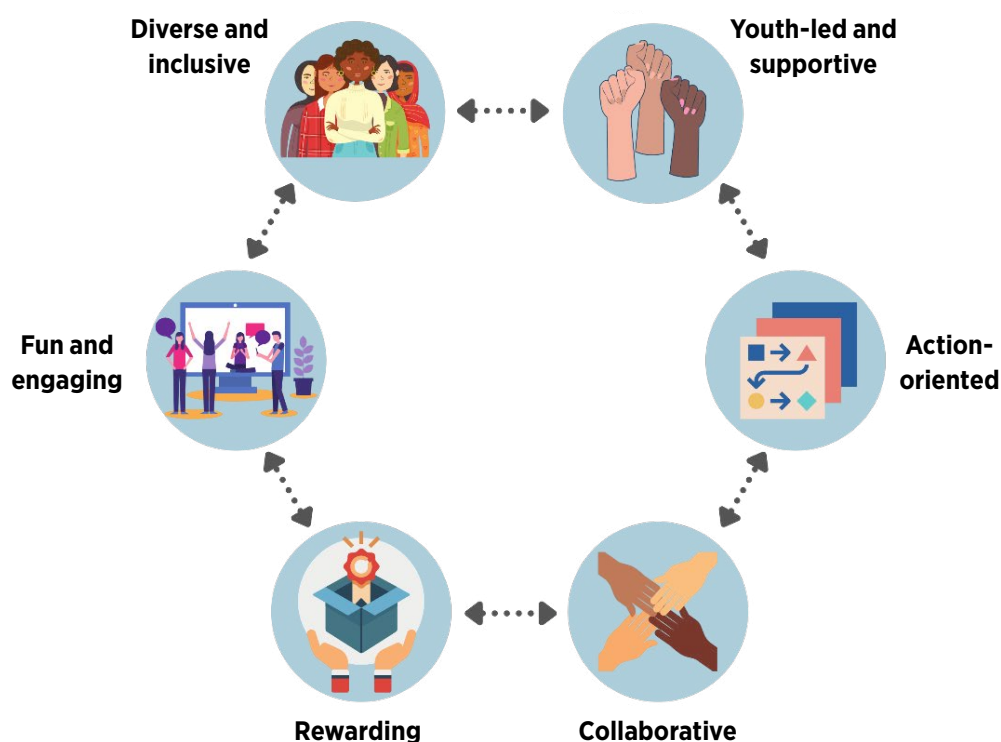


Youth engagement should be inclusive of young people from diverse backgrounds, perspectives and experiences.

YOUTH-LED AND SUPPORTIVE

Young people want to be empowered to take leadership of initiatives that can improve the lives of other young people. To achieve this, they want to work in partnership with adults in ways that are mutually respectful and non-hierarchical. They see adults' roles as

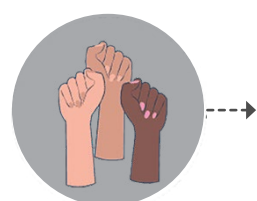
Best practice principles for youth engagement



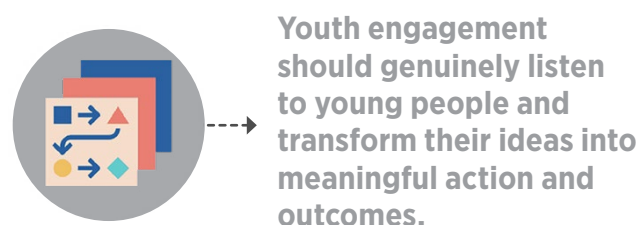
fundamentally supportive, providing resources, guidance, training, and networking where necessary, but ultimately allowing young people to take the lead. Engagement grounded too heavily in consultation, without providing opportunities for young people to determine the direction and create their own outputs, can feel one-sided and tokenistic.

“Adult supporters are involved but do not make major decisions or take on leadership roles, [they] simply help young people with the steps needed to take action that may need adult supervision or help for legal reasons or because young people often lack connections.” (Female, Victoria; Male, New South Wales; Female, South Australia; Male, Victoria)

“Adults are there for support – young people [should] develop their own opinions. Adults make you feel comfortable and assist [but don’t] really share perspectives. Not a prominent role unless asked for an adult perspective.” (Female, New South Wales; Male, New South Wales)



Youth engagement should empower young people to take leadership over initiatives, while ensuring adults provide support where needed.



ACTION-ORIENTED

Young people often feel as though their ideas and opinions are not heard or respected. This is further reinforced when they do not see clear outcomes resulting from their contributions to consultations and other engagement activities. Engagement should focus on genuinely listening to young people and transforming their ideas into meaningful action and outcomes. Critically, engagement also means reporting back to young people on the impact their contributions make, drawing clear connections between their contributions and the associated outputs and transformations.

“Most youth groups that I have been involved in that were tied in with an organisation/local/state government often just result in our thoughts being passed by members but being limited later on after we had already spent a long time working on it (therefore more communication and clarity is required).” (Male, New South Wales; Female, New South Wales; Male, New South Wales; Male, New South Wales)

“[Good youth engagement] listens to and enacts any advice given by young people.” (Female, New South Wales; Female,

New South Wales)

"Having our ideas heard and applied; [and] being part of the actual process." (Female, South Australia; Gender queer, Victoria; Female, New South Wales; Male, New South Wales; Male, New South Wales; Female, New South Wales)

"[Good youth engagement] uses the ideas from young people to help young people." (Female, South Australia; Male, Victoria)

COLLABORATIVE

Programs and initiatives which invite young people to collaboratively shape their approach to youth engagement are received well by young people. They want to be a part of the process and play an active role in planning, delivering, and evaluating strategies and activities to ensure they are relevant and appropriate for young people. They also want their voices heard and incorporated into decision-making processes related to youth-centred programs and policies, and to have opportunities to assess, feedback, and revise these where necessary.

"Get some youth involved in the planning process of workshops so they stay relevant and minimise how much they pander to young people." (Female, Victoria; Male, New South Wales)

"Ensure that young voices are taken into account when key decisions are being made." (Male, New South Wales; Female, New South Wales; Male, New South Wales; Male, New South Wales)

"Encourage and support the young society to be involved in creating or participating in new programs and projects for youth." (Female, New South Wales; Male, Western Australia; Female, Victoria; Female, New South Wales)

"They also run many other programs, such as allowing [young people] to plan and lead projects, taking part in committees and forums, researching issues, and many more. They...involve young people in their final decisions allowing motivation and involvement." (Male, New South Wales; Female, New South Wales; Female, New South Wales)



Youth engagement should collaborate with young people in the design, delivery and evaluation of youth-centred programs and policies.

Youth engagement that does not have benefits for young people can feel extractive. Young people are drawn to initiatives that nurture their learning, growth, and development, and help them get to where they want to go in life. Certificates of participation, letters of recommendation, employment references, and individual development plans that outline the engagement initiative's goals and how it can contribute to their personal life, work, or school goals can give young people a sense of purpose and value. They also prefer engagement programs that include an educational or pedagogical component so they can gain new knowledge, skills, or experiences.



Youth engagement should have valuable benefits which support young people's learning, growth and development and adequately compensate them for their time.

Similarly, they want meaningful engagement opportunities that contribute to positive outcomes for other people, giving young people a sense of personal achievement and satisfaction. This may also influence them to seek out further opportunities.

Young people feel they should be appropriately compensated with incentives, honorariums, or gift cards commensurate with their time, effort, and contributions. This can also be an influencing factor that motivates young people to take up engagement opportunities.

"[Youth engagement is effective when] helping young people to grow in both age and mindset." (Male, New South Wales; Female, New South Wales; Male, New South Wales; Male, New South Wales)

"[Good youth engagement should include] ways for youth to feel like they are doing something – certificates of involvement, awards/prizes, badges, a title, letter of recommendation (if they've done good work)." (Male, New South Wales; Female, New South Wales; Male, New South Wales; Male, New South Wales)

"[Good youth engagement] actually places [young people] in positions where they feel as though they are doing meaningful work." (Male, New South Wales; Female, New South Wales; Male, New South Wales; Male, New South Wales)

REWARDING

FUN AND ENGAGING

As part of youth engagement initiatives, young people want to participate in a variety of activities and events that are fun, age-appropriate, and easily accessible. They prefer activities that are interactive and take a hands-on approach, and where they have opportunities to work as part of a team with other young people. They envision involvement through surveys, focus groups, formal consultations, seminars, and workshops at school and in the community. Concerts and festivals are also popular among young people. These activities must be equally accessible for all young people by ensuring they are provided at no cost to participants, allowing online participation where feasible, and catering to diverse needs.

“The activities could be held for a couple of days consecutively during the school holidays, and there would be prizes at the end to keep the children motivated.” (Female, New South Wales; Male, New South Wales; Female, New South Wales)

“I also think a hands-on approach is very interactive and a strength of their [youth engagement] approach.” (Female, Victoria; Male, New South Wales)

“They include the youth [as] active participants, and hold... engaging workshops, and other valuable educational training.” (Female, New South Wales; Male, New South Wales)

“Develop more interesting, appealing, and accessible workshops and activities for young people to be involved in [to improve youth engagement].” (Female, Victoria; Female, Western Australia)



Youth engagement activities should be fun, age appropriate and easily accessible for young people to participate in.

C. YOUTH ADVISORY

Young people created a model for operating and sustaining a ‘Youth Cabinet’² which could advise eSafety’s ongoing work. Below, we outline their recommendations for recruitment methods, composition, engagement, roles and responsibilities, training needs, activities, outputs, and evaluation.

eSafety should seek to actualise the best practice principles for youth engagement at all stages of design, implementation, and evaluation of the Youth Advisory group, and in accordance with young people’s recommendations for establishing and maintaining the group.

RECRUITMENT METHODS

Young people were emphatic about the need for organisations to reach out to them – rather than waiting for young people to seek out the opportunities themselves. As such, recruitment should take a proactive approach by reaching out to young people directly in the online and offline spaces where they frequently gather.



Recruitment should proactively reach out to young people in the online and offline places they regularly gather, and clearly communicate the benefits of their involvement.

Social media channels, including Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and Spotify, were recommended as key platforms for recruiting young people. Advertising on these platforms, as well as enlisting partner organisations to share on their channels can provide fruitful recruitment avenues beyond eSafety’s own social media accounts. Recruitment materials used on social media platforms should consider the language, tone, and visual guidelines outlined in ‘Messaging’, and should be co-designed with, or at the very least, reviewed and critiqued by young people to maximise receptivity.

Schools and organisations who work directly with young people can also be approached to reach young people who may be interested in being involved. In addition, recruitment may ‘piggy-back’ on other youth engagement initiatives (e.g. workshops, events, etc.) carried out by eSafety and partner organisations.

Eighteen young people who took part in the workshops for this project expressed interest in staying informed about the development of the Engagement Strategy for Young People. eSafety may consider harnessing the interest and enthusiasm of these young people to help establish the Youth Advisory.

² For the purposes of the consultation, the term ‘Youth Cabinet’ was used in workshops with young people to refer to the Youth Advisory group.

During recruitment, eSafety should ensure that it clearly communicates the benefits of being involved in the Youth Advisory group – that is, what knowledge, skills or experiences young people will gain – and the contributions that members can make to other young people and their communities through their role. In addition, any incentives members receive should be clear and transparent, and adequately compensate them for their contributions, time, and effort (**Principle: Rewarding**).

"Our Cabinet will first interest young people by asking for volunteers through advertisements. These advertisements may be on social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, or Twitter, or other platforms such as Spotify. They will ask for anyone who wishes to volunteer to become members of the Youth Cabinet...The initial advertisement phase will promote strong messages about how youth involvement can change the internet and make it safer for people to use, and how this experience can be used as community volunteering in applications or other projects. We can then interest the youth by offering them financial incentives, such as a wage or gift cards, as a payment for them in helping make the internet a safer place. Celebrity endorsements can also interest the youth." (Female, Victoria; Male, New South Wales; Female, South Australia; Male, Victoria)

"[For recruitment] the Cabinet could provide benefits to young people to spark their interest...[and use] social media platforms which are very popular among young people. By making fun, engaging [and] informative videos, surveys, pamphlets...young people's interest would hopefully be peaked...[and] by giving the young people stuff like gift cards, concert tickets etc." (Female, New South Wales; Male, New South Wales)

"[Recruiting via] Instagram and Facebook...including advertising. People are super political over TikTok and it's kinda the hot thing so maybe there too? Distributing flyers to primary and high schools and higher education facilities." (Female, New South Wales; Male, New South Wales; Female, New South Wales; Non-binary, South Australia)

cohorts in consultation or collaborative activities led by the Advisory group to surface their perspectives and opinions.

Young people did not give clear recommendations on the ideal size of the Youth Advisory group. However, at a minimum, it should include 1-2 representatives from each state and territory.

"Focus on making sure those groups who are often underrepresented get a fair say in the Cabinet...As we move into an arguably more progressive and diverse time in society this Cabinet should reflect that." (Female, Victoria; Male, New South Wales; Female, South Australia; Male, Victoria)

"I would recommend ages 12-24 as they seem to be the most prominent members of the youth community. I would suggest a range of ages because each age group has a different experience." (Female, New South Wales; Male, New South Wales)

"Young people are the representatives of the Cabinet from ages 16-22 with the guidance of the Youth Advocates Office. People from all across the state, backgrounds, and abilities. [Including] different races, disabilities, gender, etc." (Female, South Australia; Gender queer, Victoria; Male, New South Wales; Male, New South Wales; Female, New South Wales)

A youth advisory should be comprised of young people with diverse cultural, linguistic and socioeconomic backgrounds, genders and sexualities, disabilities, ages and geographic locations.



COMPOSITION

When recruiting for the Youth Advisory, eSafety should ensure that young people from diverse backgrounds are represented. Where possible, this should include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, culturally and linguistically diverse, gender and sexuality diverse, young people living with disabilities, and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (**Principle: Diverse and inclusive**).

In addition, representation across states and territories, and urban, regional, and rural locations is important. This project experienced significant challenges recruiting young people from less populous states and territories outside the eastern seaboard. It may therefore be necessary to focus on building a presence and strong connections with schools and youth-facing organisations in these states and territories to better facilitate recruitment.

The Youth Advisory group should also be inclusive of different age groups, while acknowledging their differing developmental needs. Young people involved in this project suggested a range of 12-24 years old, with a balance across ages. At a minimum, an age range of 16-24 years should be considered and thought given to engaging younger

FREQUENCY AND MODES OF ENGAGEMENT

Young people suggested that the Youth Advisory group should meet regularly, once or twice per month, to maintain momentum of the Advisory's activities without overburdening members or competing with other life commitments.

Meetings should be primarily held online to enable young people from regional and rural locations to participate (**Principle: Diverse and inclusive**), with a face-to-face meeting once or twice per year to build collegiality among members and plan the Advisory's future strategy and activities. Members should be provided with a subsidy for travel to face-to-face meetings so that those travelling from more remote locations are not financially disadvantaged.

Zoom and Microsoft Teams are freely available and effective video conferencing platforms which many young people are familiar with, particularly in the wake of the pandemic. Live online collaboration tools

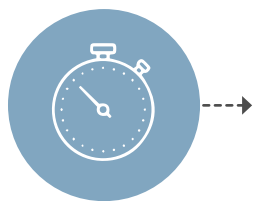
such as Miro can also be used in conjunction with these platforms to create a more interactive experience and enhance members' engagement. Outside of regular meetings, team communication software (e.g. Slack) can facilitate ongoing communication between members. Software that is freely available and easy to use should be the preferred platforms for communication. It is also important to be aware that members may have different levels of digital literacy, and some may require training or support in the use of specific platforms.

"I think meetings once a month either over Zoom or in person would be adequate and they could spend a good amount of time on issues. There could also be small tasks or initiatives carried out in the time between meetings. Meet every six months in person or at the beginning to set out how the Cabinet would run." (Male, New South Wales; Female, New South Wales)

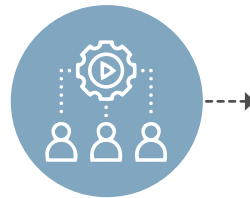
"If [the Cabinet is] meeting [face-to-face], [it's important that] everyone is able to come and access the place easily – perhaps if they live too far past a certain [distance] from the location, they can be subsidised for travel to and from their home." (Male, New South Wales; Female, New South Wales; Male, New South Wales; Male, New South Wales)

"Meet online (Zoom and Slack) – rural people and people from less populated states often get left out of initiatives like this. This ensures people from all locational demographics can attend and meet monthly." (Female, New South Wales; Male, New South Wales; Female, New South Wales; Non-Binary, South Australia)

"The Youth Cabinet themselves can have scheduled meetings where they collaborate and discuss the progress they have made in terms of recruitment and in terms of furthering online safety. They would meet once a fortnight so they have time for their school/university/job and/or other commitments and so that they can make developments individually for the sections they are responsible for in the Youth Cabinet. If recruitment occurs on a national and/or international level, it would be more ideal to have online meetings." (Female, Victoria; Male, New South Wales; Female, South Australia; Male, Victoria)



Meetings should be held regularly online to enable young people across the country to participate. Less regular face-to-face meetings should be supported by travel subsidies for members.



Clear roles and responsibilities should be assigned to teams and individuals. Adults should play a supportive and supervisory role and empower young people to take the lead.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Young people recommend dividing the Youth Advisory group into small teams, each with a specific focus or role, and assigning individual members unique responsibilities within the group. This will encourage members to take leadership over their domains and maximise involvement and input from all members. It will also enable members to identify their own contributions more clearly to the operations and activities of the Advisory group (**Principle: Action-oriented**). Teams may wish to meet more regularly and independently to work on specific tasks.

Teams and responsibilities may include media and communications, outreach, school and government liaisons, or event organisation.

Older members can also act as youth leaders or 'overseers' of the Advisory group. These individuals can help to facilitate meetings, coordinate teams, and take on more operational responsibilities. However, it is critical that mechanisms are in place to ensure that the voices of younger members are not overridden by older Advisory members.

Young people also emphasised the need to have a dedicated eSafety staff member responsible for driving the Youth Advisory's engagement and activities. This staff member should act as the liaison between the Advisory members and eSafety, organise and facilitate meetings, activities, and events, and be available to provide support to members when needed.

Importantly, adult involvement should be supportive and supervisory, rather than dominating or controlling, allowing members to drive the direction and vision of the Advisory group and lead activities and outcomes. Adults can bring value by providing resources, training, and guidance, and connecting young people to people and organisations who can facilitate their work (**Principles: Youth-led and supportive; Collaborative**).

"We would need...people to do different jobs to make the Cabinet run, things like an organiser, a techie, and maybe even a marketing manager." (Female, New South Wales; Male, New South Wales)

"[Members] can be part of their own teams and meet together to broadly share ideas rather than all being together in one space ALL the time (since this can lead to young people being more reserved in sharing their responses) ...Older people will be overwatching these sessions rather than instructing them"

– I think that these sessions can be chaired by anyone who is over 16/17 and noted by others too.” (Male, New South Wales; Female, New South Wales; Male, New South Wales; Male, New South Wales)

“Adult supporters in meetings [should be there] to help us recognise when we may need...legal advice, contacts, training, etc.” (Female, New South Wales; Male, New South Wales; Female, New South Wales; Non-binary, South Australia)

“We would have different sections of the Youth Cabinet and delegate different tasks to each of them. One group could be responsible for promotional content such as advertisements to get more volunteers for the Youth Cabinet or...to promote safe online behaviour. This group may also contact schools and organise online safety discussions. Another group may be responsible for direct communication with the government and people responsible for social media platforms to discuss and negotiate with current internet policies in order to make the current policies more inclusive of the youth.” (Female, Victoria; Male, New South Wales; Female, South Australia; Male, Victoria)

“Have sections/divisions of the Cabinet that work on priority areas, for example, media, advertising, hacking, privacy.” (Female, Western Australia; Female, Victoria; Female, New South Wales; Female, New South Wales; Male, Victoria)

TRAINING NEEDS

Providing training on relevant topics and skills can enrich the experience for members and support them to build a range of capacities which will benefit them both inside and outside of the Advisory group **(Principle: Rewarding)**.

Young people suggested training in the following areas:

- online safety training and key issues
- eSafety's aims, objectives and how they operate
- policy and decision-making processes relevant to the Youth Advisory
- leadership, communication and public-speaking skills
- team building
- legal considerations, where relevant to the Advisory's activities.

Training should seek to build on members' strengths and be responsive to their needs and wants. Allowing members to make suggestions about training they would like to undertake and inviting them to be involved in building a foundational program will help to empower them and feel a sense of ownership over the group **(Principle: Youth-led and supportive; Collaborative)**.

“A training program should be run pre-cabinet to prepare young members and educate them on what they need to know about online safety and allow them to develop personal and useful views on the topic.” (Female, New South Wales; Male, New South Wales)



Members should receive training on relevant topics and skills that build their capacities and maximise the benefits of their engagement.

“[The Cabinet should undertake training in] leadership/public speaking skills – similar workshops to Toastmasters.” (Male, New South Wales; Female, New South Wales; Male, New South Wales; Male, New South Wales)

“[The Cabinet needs] an understanding of the objective possibilities that the eSafety Office and Youth Cabinet can actually regulate and help change...to ensure that proposals and suggestions from the Cabinet end up with realistic goals and outcomes.” (Female, Victoria; Male, New South Wales; Female, South Australia; Male, Victoria)

“[The Cabinet needs training] from eSafety in...What eSafety is; What are some dangers on the internet; How to stay safe online; Leadership skills; Communication skills; Team building skills...[this can] create a stronger bond within the Cabinet.” (Female, South Australia; Gender queer, Victoria; Male, New South Wales; Male, New South Wales; Female, New South Wales)

ACTIVITIES

Young people envision Advisory members being involved in a range of internal and outreach activities, including:

- participating in consultations with eSafety and other organisations
- advising on eSafety's youth engagement practices and providing feedback on resources targeted at young people
- contributing to organisational policy and program design involving young people
- conducting consultations, surveys and focus groups with the broader youth population to explore their needs and key issues
- holding educational seminars and workshops on online safety for other young people
- maintaining a social media presence to communicate online safety messaging and the activities of the Youth Advisory
- participating in training programs and orientation activities.

Activities should be designed to be fun, engaging, and age-appropriate for members. This can be achieved by adopting a hands-on, interactive approach where members have opportunities to both speak and listen, using a mix of small and large group work, or by 'gamifying' the tasks and activities **(Principle: Fun and engaging)**. Where possible, the planning and organisation of activities should include input from Youth Advisory members **(Principle: Collaborative)**.

Where there are significant differences in the ages of Advisory members, it may be appropriate to set different tasks or activities according to varying developmental needs and comprehension.

Finally, activities should avoid replicating extractive or tokenistic consultation formats. Clearly outlining the aims and objectives of the activity at the start, updating members on progress afterwards, and communicating the outcomes and outputs back to members can enhance their sense of meaningful and purposeful involvement (**Principle: Action-oriented**).

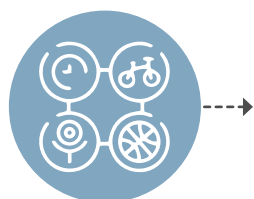
"[The Cabinet should be] involved in policies and procedures around internet safety and keep[ing] these policies relevant to us." (Female, New South Wales; Male, New South Wales; Female, New South Wales; Non-binary, South Australia)

"Workshops [should] differ according to the age of the children. For example, for younger children the activities will be set to be more fun. While for the older children, there would be more workshop-like activities where they could test their knowledge as well." (Female, New South Wales; Male, New South Wales; Female, New South Wales)

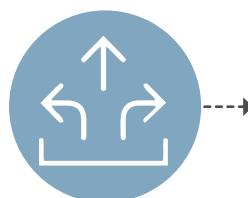
"[Cabinet activities should] enable young people to meet with their peers, socialise, and become part of the community... Promote social change in positive ways for young people; Develop community guidelines that are fair and consistently implemented." (Male, New South Wales; Female, New South Wales; Male, New South Wales; Male, New South Wales)

"I think hands-on workshops might be cool if applicable. [They are] MUCH MORE productive I find." (Female, New South Wales; Male, New South Wales; Female, New South Wales; Non-binary, South Australia)

"It's important to facilitate discussion with relevant professionals and experts within the sector in regard to ongoing Youth Cabinet meetings and [activities]...Frequent engagement with industry and government providers as a means of guiding discussion would be useful...[It's] important, however, to let the Youth Cabinet members still take charge and dictate what solutions etcetera are provided." (Female, Victoria; Male, New South Wales; Female, South Australia; Male, Victoria)



Advisory activities should avoid replicating extractive or tokenistic consultation formats. Instead, they should seek to enhance member's sense of purposeful and meaningful involvement.



Members should be given the opportunity to develop and review advisory outputs. Final outputs should be shared and outcomes should be clearly communicated with the group.

OUTPUTS

The Youth Advisory group should aim to produce tangible outputs that contribute to the work of eSafety and the broader community. These may take a range of forms. Suggestions include newsletters, community guidelines, community engagement platforms, online safety and educational resources for young people, infographics, and social media campaigns. Young people are keen to share these outputs with the wider community via social media channels.

Outputs should always acknowledge the contributions of the Advisory and its members should be given the opportunity to be involved in developing and reviewing outputs before they are finalised. Final outputs should also be shared with the Youth Advisory group and outcomes resulting from the work should be clearly communicated back to members (**Principle: Action-oriented**).

"[The Cabinet should produce] recommendations for how online safety can be improved...[these] should be made regularly so that information stays relevant. Recommendations should be given to the eSafety commission to act on, as well as companies and government." (Female, New South Wales; Male, Victoria; Female, New South Wales; Female, Victoria)

"[The Cabinet] produces community guidelines...newsletters/ community engagement platforms." (Male, New South Wales; Female, New South Wales; Male, New South Wales; Male, New South Wales)

"The Cabinet would produce initiatives and programs for young people to participate in, with surveys going out and statistics discovered being shared to the community. Social media accounts could be created to reach the youth in the community and regular updates of the Cabinet's discoveries could be shared." (Female, New South Wales; Male, New South Wales)

"[The Cabinet should produce] maybe info on how to stay safe, or influence on it? And opinions for organisations to take into consideration so procedures and policies change... Educational materials, petitions, and communications to/ with relevant entities to make real change...Social media and email campaigns to educate and engage young people, talks/workshops at schools workshops online and at libraries/ community centres." (Female, New South Wales; Male, New South Wales; Female, New South Wales; Non-binary, South Australia)

EVALUATION

As the Youth Advisory group evolves, it will be vital to reflect on its successes, and how it can be further strengthened.³ It will be important to budget for such evaluation.

Informal evaluation – which seeks the reflections of Youth Advisory members and key eSafety representatives – should be a regular and routine part of the Advisory's processes. Informal evaluations might include seeking feedback in one-to-one or group conversations, inviting verbal or written reflections from Advisory members at key points (e.g. upon completion of the planning or implementation of a major activity, or during Advisory planning sessions), or a pre-intake and end-of-year survey.

It will also be important to periodically conduct a formal review of the Youth Advisory group, its successes, and areas for improvement by an independent evaluator. Such a review might be undertaken once every two years to ensure that the Youth Advisory has time and opportunity to embed review recommendations.

“Get youth [members] to give feedback about...seminars [and other activities].” (Male, New South Wales)

“Collect advice from [members] in terms of how they found the program and if those programs are actually useful.” (Male, New South Wales; Male, New South Wales; Female, New South Wales)



Regular informal and periodic formal evaluations are vital for strengthening the youth advisory group and ensuring it is effective and sustainable.

³ Young people did not discuss the need for evaluation extensively during these consultations. However, drawing on best practice insights, and taking inspiration from young people's desire to be engaged in decision making around online safety issues that affect them, we have extrapolated the above recommendations.

YOUTH ADVISORY CHECKLIST



RECRUITMENT

- ☒ Recruitment attempts to reach young people from diverse locations, backgrounds and minority groups
- ☒ Social media channels, schools, youth organisations and other youth engagement initiatives are utilised to directly reach young people
- ☒ Young people are clearly informed about the incentives or rewards for participating
- ☒ The benefits and how young people can contribute to the Youth Advisory are clearly communicated



COMPOSITION

- ☒ Young people from different age groups are represented
- ☒ Young people from diverse backgrounds are represented, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, culturally and linguistically diverse, gender and sexuality diverse, young people living with disabilities, and/or those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds
- ☒ Young people from different states and territories, and urban, regional and rural locations are represented



ENGAGEMENT

- ☒ Advisory group meets online regularly (without overburdening young people's schedules)
- ☒ Advisory group has opportunities to meet face-to-face
- ☒ Members are provided subsidies for travel to face-to-face meetings
- ☒ Online communication platforms are freely available and easy to use
- ☒ Members have adequate technical support in the use of online communication platforms



ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- ☒ Advisory group consists of small teams with specific focuses and roles
- ☒ All members are given clear roles and responsibilities
- ☒ An eSafety staff member is dedicated to coordinating the Youth Advisory group
- ☒ Adult involvement is supportive and supervisory rather than dominating
- ☒ Members have ownership over the structure, operation and outputs of the Youth Advisory



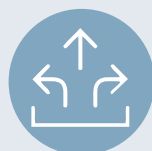
TRAINING

- ☒ Members are trained on topics and skills relevant to their roles
- ☒ Training has benefit and value for members both inside and outside of the Youth Advisory
- ☒ Members have input on the training they receive
- ☒ Training is age-appropriate



ACTIVITIES

- ☒ Members are engaged in a range of different internal and outreach activities
- ☒ Activities are age-appropriate for members
- ☒ Activities are fun, interactive and hands-on
- ☒ Activities consist of both individual and teamwork activities
- ☒ Members are involved in the planning and organisation of activities
- ☒ Activities are age-appropriate
- ☒ Activities' aims and objectives are clearly communicated
- ☒ Members are updated on the outcomes and outputs of activities



OUTPUTS

- ☒ Young people are involved in producing tangible outputs from the Youth Advisor
- ☒ Outputs properly acknowledge the contributions of the members
- ☒ Members have opportunities to review outputs before they are finalised
- ☒ Final outputs and outcomes are shared with members



EVALUATION

- ☒ Regular informal feedback sought from Youth Advisory members and representatives of eSafety about the group's structure, roles, responsibilities, activities and impacts
- ☒ Periodic formal evaluation of the Youth Advisory's efficacy and impact on the quality of eSafety's messaging, resources, and engagement of young people

ASPIRATIONAL STATEMENT

In workshops, young people worked together to begin drafting an aspirational statement that lays out their vision for online safety. Below we present a draft version of this statement, to be refined through a further process to seek young people's input.

DRAFT ASPIRATIONAL STATEMENT

We want...all young people to be safe online, no matter their age, gender, cultural background, or class.

We want...an internet that is non-judgemental, safe, and inclusive, where young people can connect with each other, express and learn about themselves, and explore the world they live in.

We want...youth-friendly online spaces, search engines, and online safety resources, as well as access to age-appropriate, educational, and youth-friendly content for leisure and learning.

We want...to be taught how and why the internet works from a young age, and we want to learn the skills to keep ourselves safe online.

We want...the adults in our lives – caregivers, teachers, community leaders, governments, and businesses – to ensure that we aren't unjustly exposed to danger and to support us to be safe online.

We want...young people from minority groups who may be more exposed to harm when using technology to be given special protections to keep them safe online.

We want...all young people to be able to easily identify and access appropriate avenues for seeking help if they need it. We want these services to be non-judgemental, confidential, and anonymous.

We want...perpetrators of online harm to be held accountable for their actions. But we also want children who make mistakes to be shown compassion.

We want...families to have rules about technology that keep us safe, but these rules need to change as we grow. We want our parents to trust us, and to have open dialogue with us about what happens online. We want to be able to turn to them for help when we need it, without fear of getting in trouble.

We want...governments to develop appropriate guidelines, regulations, and laws to protect young people from harassment, inappropriate content, cyberbullying and invasions of data or privacy.

We want...technology companies to clearly communicate what's acceptable on their platforms, how to report harms if they happen, and how they use our data (and what they collect). We want responsive, appropriate, and unbiased moderation in online spaces.

We want...all adults in our lives to work with us to make decisions that affect us, and to design digital resources that genuinely address our needs.

Importantly, we want...balance. Balance between *independence and guidance* – because our need for protection changes as we get older, and we need to take risks so that we can learn and grow; and balance between *freedom and protection* – because being safe should not stop us from exploring all the opportunities that being online can offer.



Female, New South Wales; Female, Victoria; Male, New South Wales: Female, New South Wales

"Young people need to be able to have the skills to identify acceptable and unacceptable online content independently and to ensure that they are safeguarded from the threats they can be exposed to online while they build up this knowledge."

"We want to achieve a balance between freedom and access on the internet with internet safety and respect. We don't want to be too restrictive with what we can access, and we don't want to expose children to too much danger. It's a matter of balance."



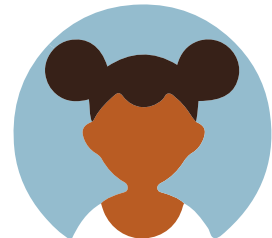
Female, New South Wales: Female, Victoria; Male, New South Wales: Female, New South Wales



Female. New South Wales: Male. New South Wales: Female. New South Wales: Non-binary. South Australia

"[We want to] set our own boundaries online in tandem with comprehensive education on internet safety and knowledge that if a situation or connection goes wrong or becomes dangerous we have ways to get support and to report the occurrence."

"[We call for] world peace and respect. Ensure everyone feels safe and comfortable and respected on the internet as in person, when you aren't protected by a screen; the internet is a place where everyone comes together - more aware of the fact that having a screen in front of them doesn't protect them from other people."



Female. South Australia: Gender queer, Victoria; Female. New South Wales: Male. New South Wales: Male. New South Wales: Female. New South Wales



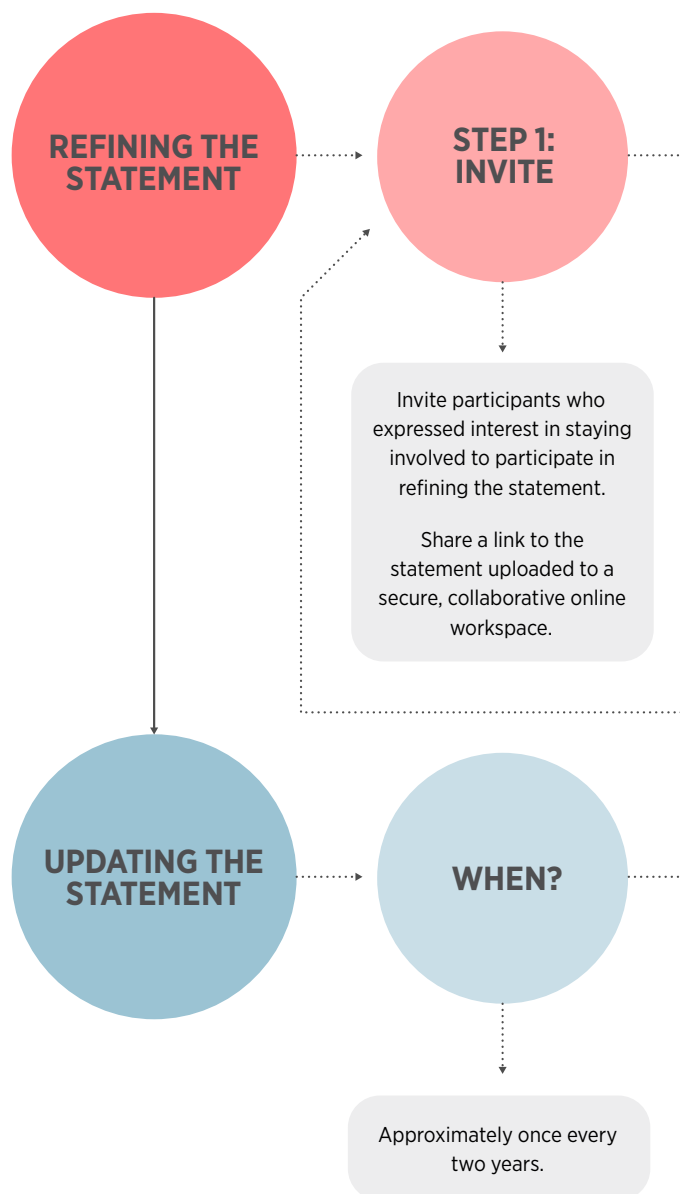
Female. New South Wales: Male, Victoria: Female. New South Wales

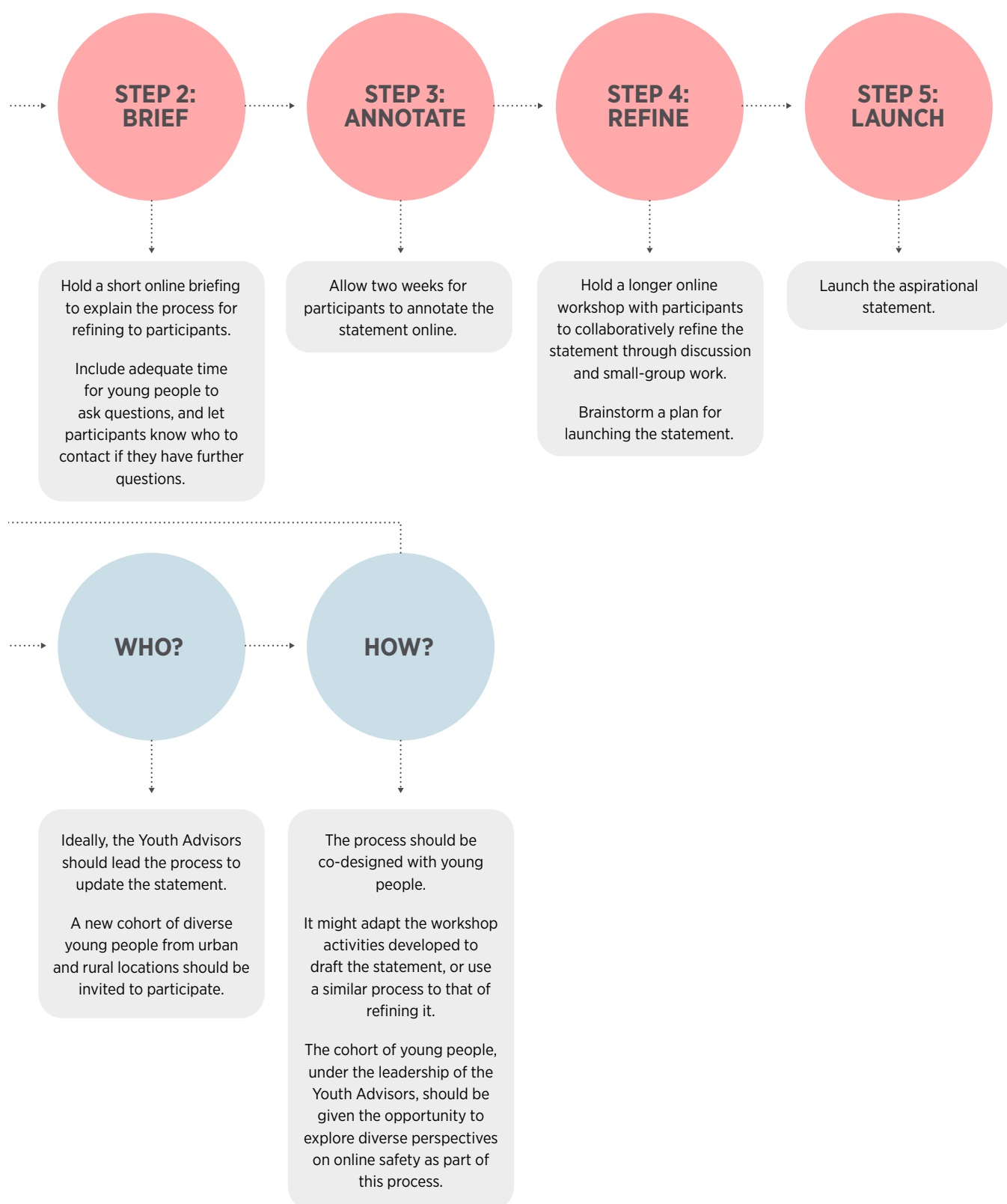
"We believe the internet should be safe for young people. Young people should be able to use the internet freely and not feel like their privacy or information will be shared or leaked. It is vital that the internet is safe for young people so that they are not exposed to explicit or inappropriate content whilst browsing."

REFINING AND UPDATING THE ASPIRATIONAL STATEMENT

The above statement summarises young people's aspirations for a safe, enjoyable, and constructive internet, which emerged through a variety of activities across the workshop series. It will also be critical for eSafety to develop a process to periodically update the statement to account for technological change and the evolution of online safety risks of harm. These processes should be underpinned by the engagement principles outlined above (see Best Practice Principles).

As eSafety grows its capacity to meaningfully engage young people, encouraging an ever-more diverse cohort of young people to refine and update the Aspirational Statement will ensure that it reflects a diversity of views and experiences. To achieve this, it will be important for eSafety to nurture strong partnerships with a wide array of youth-facing organisations around the country who can encourage young people to get involved. Working with youth-facing organisations will strengthen the likelihood that the Aspirational Statement can be activated for young people, and in policy and practice settings. It will also benefit eSafety's work more broadly.





RECOMMENDATIONS

The high-level recommendations that emerged from the insights young people shared in these workshops are summarised below. To implement these recommendations, it is critical that eSafety focuses on raising its profile and building a brand that is trusted, and informed, by young people.

KEY CONCERNS

- eSafety should expand the focus of its existing online safety education, tools, and resources, to directly address the key concerns of young Australians, including issues relating to interactions with others online, privacy, and security.
- eSafety should work closely with diverse young people on an ongoing basis to identify and respond to new and emerging concerns.

HELP-SEEKING

- eSafety should engage young people in developing and implementing a strategy to enhance young people's help-seeking, with priority given to:
 - Supporting young people to better identify, assess, and know when and where to seek help for online safety harms.
 - Producing targeted resources for parents, teachers, and other trusted adults to support young people with accurate and reliable information that enables them to assess and respond to online safety threats, in a judgement-free and supportive manner.
 - Raising young people's awareness of available support services, how they can assist in resolving online safety issues, and which services are confidential and anonymous.

MESSAGING

- eSafety should draw upon the principles identified in this report to develop online safety messaging that appropriately addresses young people's concerns, provides them with information and avenues of redress, and empowers them as responsible and trusted internet users.
- eSafety should seek young people's feedback and input in the development of online safety messaging wherever feasible.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

- eSafety should commit to engaging directly and meaningfully with young people by establishing relevant processes and systems for ongoing engagement, and regularly evaluating these processes in partnership with young people.
- eSafety should invest in developing partnerships with a variety of youth-facing organisations nationwide to support and further guide their youth engagement strategy, and to ensure that online education, tools, and resources can reach young people in the spaces they already inhabit.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A: WORKSHOP ACTIVITIES

Workshop activities were designed by the Young and Resilient team around key research questions and priority areas developed by the Office of the eSafety Commissioner, and were designed to be a mix of individual, small-group and large-group work.

An optional activity was given between workshops one and two for young people to explore examples of organisations that they felt were effectively engaging young people. This activity was completed at their convenience and their findings were used in the Time Capsule activity in workshop two.

A workshop manual was developed which included a step-by-step guide to setting up and running online workshops, how to ensure the safety of participants online, user guides for Zoom and Miro, and detailed activity instructions. The workshop manual can be viewed [here](#).

APPENDIX B: ANALYSIS AND REPORTING

The platform Miro was used to conduct online data gathering. Workshop activities were set up in frames on a Miro board and were completed as individuals, or in small or large groups, using a combination of text, drawing or images to complete. The Miro boards standardised the data generated from each activity. Upon the completion of each workshop, the data was exported or transcribed into a standardised template and uploaded to a secure online repository for analysis by our team.

The data was coded first using priority themes developed using eSafety's Terms of Reference and refined by the Young and Resilient team. A second, more detailed, round of coding was subsequently carried out using a list of themes which emerged from the data during the initial coding phase. The dataset was independently validated by a minimum of two research team members. Interpretive analysis was then carried out using thematic analysis techniques.

Workshop One	<p>Perfect internet: Understand what young people think they need to make the internet a safe place.</p> <p>Time traveller: Explore young people's definitions and understandings of 'online safety'.</p> <p>Warning: Understand what young people perceive/experience to be the biggest online safety issues for them and their friends, identify how young people want to receive information on online safety issues, and examine help-seeking behaviours and what can help foster them.</p> <p>Online safety evaluation: Encourage participants to think critically about online safety campaigns and explore what messaging/communication works for young people.</p> <p>What did you say: Explore ways to enhance intergenerational communication about online safety issues and what messaging/communication works for young people.</p>
Workshop Two	<p>Manifesto for a new world internet: Explore young people's ideas about what a Youth Aspirational Statement should contain.</p> <p>Time capsule: Identify and develop recommendations for effective factors for youth engagement.</p> <p>Map your journey: Identify factors that enable or inhibit youth engagement.</p>
Workshop Three	<p>Utopia/Dystopia: Identify the ideal state for eSafety's youth engagement, and factors that undermine effective engagement.</p> <p>Youth Cabinet: Develop recommendations for an effective Youth Advisory process.</p>

Table 1: Workshop activities and aims



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