

# Social Media Minimum Age Evaluation

## Academic Advisory Group Meeting

27 May 2025 | 7:00 – 9:00am (AEST)

### AGENDA

**Chair:** s 47E(c), s 47F Commissioner eSafety

Item	Time (AEST)	Lead
<b>1. Welcome</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Acknowledgement of Country</li><li>Remarks from the Chair</li></ul>	7:00–7:05am	s 47E(c), s 47F
<b>2. Welcome from the Commissioner</b>	7:05–7:20am	Julie Inman Grant
<b>3. Remarks from Stanford Social Media Lab</b>	7:20–7:25am	Jeff Hancock Sunny Xun Liu
<b>4. Introduction of Advisory Group Members</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Each Member to briefly (1 min) introduce themselves to the group</li></ul>	7:25–7:40am	All
<b>5. Terms of Reference</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Attachment A: Social Media Minimum Age Evaluation Academic Advisory Group - Terms of Reference</li></ul> <p><i>Outcome: Members to discuss and agree on Terms of Reference, including expectations for Member conduct.</i></p>	7:40–8:00am	s 47E(c), s 47F
<b>6. Evaluation objectives and methodology</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Attachment B: Evaluation Objectives</li></ul>	8:00–8:25am	Jeff Hancock

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- Attachment C: Advisory burning questions
- Attachment D: eSafety Youth Survey
- Attachment E: eSafety Parent Survey

*Outcome: Members to discuss and provide feedback on the draft methodology, noting each Member will be asked to contribute to the proposed methodology ahead of the meeting.*

**7. Identifying special interest groups** 8:25-8:35am s 47E(c), s 47F

- Attachment F: Special interest groups

*Outcome: Members to discuss and identify sub-working groups relevant to Members' interest and expertise as it pertains to the evaluation.*

**8. Timeline and next steps** 8:35-8:45am s 47E(c), s 47F

- Attachment G: Evaluation timeline

*Outcome: Members are aware of project timings and mark their calendars with relevant upcoming dates.*

**9. AoB and close** 8:45-9:00am All

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# SMMA Academic Advisory Group Meeting Minutes

Meeting 1 | 27 May 2025 | 7:00 – 9:00am (AEST)

## Attendees

Affiliation	Name
eSafety	Commissioner Julie Inman Grant s 47E(c), s 47F (Chair) s 47E(c), s 47F s 22 Research and Evaluation s 22 Senior Evaluation Officer s 22 Senior Evaluation Officer
Social Media Lab, Stanford University	Professor Jeff Hancock Dr Sunny Xun Liu Dr Anja Stevic Angela Yuson Lee
Macquarie University	Distinguished Professor Bronwyn Carlson
Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University	Professor Katherine Keyes
MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit, University of Cambridge	Dr Amy Orben
Winston Center for Technology and the Developing Mind, University of North Carolina	Distinguished Professor Mitch Prinstein
School of Education, Deakin University	Professor Julian Sefton-Green
Black Dog Institute, University of New South Wales	Associate Professor Aliza Werner-Seidler
Social Dynamics and Well-Being Laboratory, Georgia Institute of Technology	Associate Professor Munmun De Choudhury
Young and Resilient Research Centre, Western Sydney University	Professor Amanda Third

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## Apologies

Professor Peter Etchells

Professor Jo Robinson

Professor Matthew Gentzkow

## High Level Outcomes

- The advisory agreed to meet quarterly, with the proposed meeting schedule for 2025 as follows:
  - Advisory Group Meeting #2 26th August 2025
  - Advisory Group Meeting #3 11th November 2025
- eSafety provided updates on:
  - Proposed approach for managing collaboration and inputs from the Advisory, via quarterly meetings, more regular special interest groups into which members will self-nominate
  - Timelines and key milestones for the evaluation.
- The draft Terms of Reference (ToR) were discussed, and some amendments and points for further clarification were proposed by the attendees.
- Stanford Social Media Lab (SML) facilitated a dialogue on preliminary thinking regarding the design of the evaluation.

## Action Items

### Academic Advisory Group Member Action Items

- Those members with outstanding MOUs to kindly follow-up with their respective institutions so these can be finalised as soon as possible.
- Advisory Group members to review the revised ToR and supporting guidance and indicate their agreement with these via email to [s 47E\(d\) @esafety.gov.au](mailto:s47E(d)@esafety.gov.au).
- Advisory Group members to consider drafting a public statement in response to eSafety's media release announcing the Advisory, outlining their commitment to transparency, neutrality, and following the evidence. SML will lead and coordinate the development of this statement.
- Advisory Group members to complete the Special Interest Group survey to indicate their evaluation interests.

### Academic Advisory Secretariat Action Items

- eSafety to redraft ToR based on feedback from members and recirculate for agreement.
- eSafety to circulate responses to a number of questions that were raised during the meeting and in subsequent correspondence.
- eSafety to prepare a media release announcing the establishment of the Academic Advisory Group, outlining its function and how it fits with other advisory committees

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and consultation processes eSafety is leveraging to inform the implementation of SMAR.

- eSafety to share additional guidance expanding on the Terms of Reference, offering further clarification and examples of what we would consider acceptable and not acceptable behaviour related to public commentary and professional conduct. This will include a Conflict of Interest declaration form.
- eSafety to book in the Evaluation Design SIG meeting for early June.
  - Once the SIG has met, circulate draft research questions and primary and secondary outcome variables for input from the wider Advisory Group.
- eSafety to revise evaluation objective 5 to reflect member feedback.
- eSafety to circulate calendar invitations for upcoming meetings.

## Detailed Minutes

### Welcome and introductions

- **s 47E(c), s 47F** opened the meeting with an Acknowledgement of Country and thanked the Academic Advisory Group for their generosity in sharing their time and expertise in support of eSafety's evaluation.
- The eSafety Commissioner, Julie Inman Grant, then gave some remarks.
  - She began by extending her gratitude to the group for their support of eSafety and sharing her belief that this approach will stand as best practice for evaluating complex and novel legislative schemes, noting that the world is watching and asking questions about the evaluation already.
  - She noted the importance of respecting children's digital rights, and that eSafety are conceptualising the restrictions as a delay rather than a strict ban.
  - She expressed eSafety's strong commitment to collaboration at all stages of implementing this evaluation.
  - She noted that the policy department who has carriage over the legislation, the Department of Communications, will conduct an independent review of the legislation. She noted:
    - This must occur within 2 years of effective commencement, which means within two years of the minimum age obligation taking effect.
  - She stressed the need for a rigorous, unbiased evaluation given the polarised nature of youth social media access.
  - She noted that the Age Restrictions are just one of a suite of regulatory and preventative measures being led by eSafety. This includes efforts to put more responsibility on service providers up and down the stack, as well as educational materials and support to empower parents and children to be safe online.
  - She noted that there is still a fair degree of uncertainty regarding how the policy will be implemented, but that with a new Minister in place we expect

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things to progress quickly. She committed to eSafety keeping the group updated as implementation planning for the SMMA progresses, inasmuch as this relates to the evaluation.

- Jeff Hancock then spoke on behalf of the Stanford Social Media Lab, who are the Lead Academic Partner for the evaluation.
  - He expressed his enthusiasm to work with this group of esteemed scholars whose work they greatly admire. He emphasised the significance of this opportunity, noting Academics have an important role to play in shaping policy but don't often get this direct pipeline to policymakers.
  - He provided some background on the research program of the Social Media Lab and his own empirical interest in this topic dating back to 2010. They have a strong interest in activating knowledge in a public environment to support evidence-based change.
  - He noted that they are building up a great team at Stanford to support the evaluation, calling attention to the expertise of a Stanford colleague Matthew Gentzkow - who is supporting the evaluation but was unable to join the call - in conducting careful causal research, in particular leveraging administrative datasets.
  - He acknowledged that social media, young people and wellbeing is the conversation of the moment, and that we have an unprecedented opportunity for scientific investigation at a whole population level to further the evidence base and help frame the debate.
  - He echoed the Commissioner's emphasis on clear communication, noting the importance of helping the public understand the policy's intent and measures of success. He stressed the need to consider diverse stakeholder perspectives in the evaluation.
  - Jeff affirmed the Lab's commitment to producing evidence that benefits families, children, and young people.
- Members of the Advisory Group in attendance then introduced themselves and their areas of research interest as they relate to the evaluation. This portion of the meeting was recorded, and can be viewed [here](#).
  - All Advisory members expressed their enthusiasm to be supporting this evaluation, citing an unparalleled opportunity to investigate the impact of social media withdrawal on the health and wellbeing of a whole population of young people.
  - There is considerable breadth and depth of expertise across the members of the Advisory, and the interests they expressed in the evaluation were numerous and complementary.

## Discussion of Terms of Reference

- **s 47E(c), s 47F** outlined the purpose of the ToR as being to clearly outline the scope, expectations, and guiding principles for this Advisory Group. It serves as a foundational document to support transparency, accountability, and shared understanding.

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- s 47E(c), s 47F noted that there is a tricky balance to achieve to preserve academic freedom, whilst navigating the tension between independence and the public scrutiny this work is under. eSafety is operating in a highly divided and closely watched environment. Public trust in the evaluation—and in the data itself—will be essential to progressing the policy, building consensus, and ensuring the evidence base is respected and used to inform decision-making.
- s 47E(c), s 47F acknowledged that the work of everyone on the Advisory Group is rigorous and grounded in evidence, and the strong commitment that has been espoused by all members in being led by the data and working together with integrity and transparency, evidenced in their respective EOIs and communications with eSafety to date.
- The floor was opened for questions and discussion around the draft ToR, and in particular the clauses relating to public statements and activities that could impact the perceived objectivity of the group and/or the evaluation.
- Some members interpreted the ToR as being prohibitive of giving interviews to media, however others felt it would be important for members, representing some of the foremost experts in this space, to be able to inform the public debate and discourse as other jurisdictions contemplate similar regulatory approaches.
- Members agreed that public commentary should be grounded in data, not personal opinion.
- A conflict of interest register was proposed, with s 47E(d) suggesting the IICMJE form as a template.
- Members noted that we are engaged in a collective endeavour of organised scepticism, and part of our role will be challenging each other based on the evidence and our understandings of it.
- There was agreement amongst members that laying out what we are doing as transparently and forthrightly as possible from the outset of the evaluation would help to mitigate against any potential challenges regarding the objectiveness of the evaluation.
- It was suggested that the Advisory Group put out a public statement affirming their commitment to being driven by and open to the evidence. The statement would serve as a transparent overview of the Advisory Group’s process, the expertise of its members, and the values guiding their work. It could be released following eSafety’s formal announcement of the Advisory Group to help build public understanding and trust.
- s 47E(d) asked how parent and child voices would be incorporated. It was noted that:
  - The Department has conducted preliminary consultations with parent groups and youth around the Draft Legislative Rules.
  - eSafety is planning broad and deep consultation around the regulatory guidance.
  - eSafety’s Youth Council is actively advising on both implementation and evaluation.

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- eSafety’s announcement could clarify how these various advisory processes align and complement one another.
- There was agreement amongst members that further guidance from eSafety would be beneficial in clarifying expectations of members, particularly some situation-specific advice regarding public commentary, and how they should speak about their role on the Advisory Group.
- It was agreed that following the meeting, the final ToR will be circulated with the minutes and additional guidance materials, and each member will be asked to confirm their acceptance of these.

## Discussion of Evaluation Objectives and Methodology

- Professor Hancock led a discussion on the evaluation’s guiding objectives and methodological approach.
  - He emphasised the need for clear, shared goals to guide methodological decisions, with a focus on generating robust, objective evidence.
  - He gave an overview of some of the emerging themes from the burning questions and preparatory work that members submitted to eSafety regarding evaluation methods, sampling considerations and risks (a summary is also saved [here](#)).
  - He noted that a mixed methods approach is likely most appropriate to help address the evaluation objectives, and that a number of methods are currently being considered.
  - Members offered some feedback on sampling considerations for the evaluation, specifically:
    - Include younger age groups (10-12 year olds)
    - Enriching the sample for the cohorts who are about to enter the age restriction, and those who ageing out
    - Settings-based, community focused sampling for the qualitative research (e.g., peer groups, football clubs, schools, etc.) to explore change in social and cultural dynamics.
  - Members also provided some feedback on methodological approaches that could support the achievement of the evaluation objectives, specifically:
    - longitudinal research
    - intense qualitative work in communities
    - objective assessment of screen time and app use
    - analysis of population-level datasets and data linkage
    - assessment of real-time administrative data from telecommunications providers.
  - Members also provided some feedback on the measurement/conceptualisation of outcomes for the evaluation, specifically the need to:

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- define some primary outcomes, as well as secondary outcomes for the evaluation
  - define which mental health outcomes will be captured – and to ensure we capture both internalising and externalising symptoms and disorders, etc.
  - include broader wellbeing outcomes in addition to mental health e.g., civic engagement, educational engagement and learning, academic and social outcomes (as per [National Academies Consensus Report](#))
  - consider teacher stress in addition to parent stress
  - consider the impact of the policy on social-emotional wellbeing e.g., friendship intimacy, loneliness, social anxiety, social connectedness
  - consider how to evaluate the impact of the policy on children’s digital rights
  - consider substitution effects in addition to displacement activities e.g., outdoor activities, physical activities
  - measure normative changes that will make difference
  - adopt a cross-platform approach
  - measure the presence and impact of siblings
  - consider the digital literacy of parents and carers.
- Members also provided high-level feedback on the youth survey instrument shared ahead of the meeting, specifically that it would be too long for younger adolescents. Members noted that to help prioritise, refine and reduce the items for inclusion in the evaluation, it would be good to have consensus around the primary and secondary research questions and outcome variables.
  - It was suggested that there could be value in adoption of similar measures across studies and jurisdictions. This would help to ensure a coherent evidence base is accruing, and enable multiple points of comparison.
    - eSafety and Stanford expressed a willingness to facilitate this where possible.
    - **s 47E(d)** suggested there may be potential to include some items within the Monitoring the Future survey in the States, which is nationally representative.
  - **s 47E(c), s 47F** noted that there is much more discussion and work to follow on this and confirmed that the next steps for refining the methodology will be convening a Special Interest Group to review methods in early June.

### Discussion around identifying special interest groups

- **s 47E(c), s 47F** outlined plans to establish smaller, time-limited sub-working groups to support evaluation planning between quarterly meetings. These groups will provide targeted technical advice on specific aspects of the evaluation.

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- s 47E(c), s 47F noted that certain aspects of the evaluation may be more relevant to specific members, and the aim is to involve the right expertise at the right time to ensure efficient progress.
- Special Interest Groups will be formed when at least two members express interest and will include representatives from the Lead Academic Partner and eSafety. Membership will be based on expertise and availability.
- Initially, these groups will focus on evaluation design and methodology, with scope to evolve over time (e.g., subject matter expertise, dissemination, knowledge translation).
- The first group, focused on evaluation design, will be convened in the coming weeks.
- Following the meeting, eSafety will circulate a survey for members to self-nominate into sub-working groups and suggest additional areas of interest relevant to the evaluation.

### Overview of Timeline and Next Steps

- s 47E(c), s 47F acknowledged that the evaluation team are constrained by very tight timelines to progress this evaluation and establish a baseline prior to the implementation of the Minimum Age on December 11.
- s 47E(c), s 47F reiterated that, as per the ToR, every effort will be made to incorporate feedback received within the designated consultation period. However, due to time constraints and the need to maintain project momentum, it may not be possible to follow up individually.
- In view of this, members were alerted to some key upcoming dates:
  - **Evaluation Design Special Interest Group (SIG):** We're planning to meet with interested members in early June to refine and finalise the evaluation methodology and protocol.
  - **Review of Evaluation Materials:** Once the methodology is finalised, we'll begin drafting the evaluation materials and instruments. We anticipate sharing these with the Advisory Group for review between 23–27 June.
  - **Ethics Application and Review:** The ethics application is due on 21 July. We aim to circulate the draft application to the Advisory Group for review between 1–11 July. Members who are unable to review the ethics application before submission, we can still include them as investigators at a later stage.

### Other business

- s 47E(c), s 47F mentioned that eSafety are hoping to finalise MOUs as soon as possible, with a public announcement of the Group to follow shortly thereafter. Members were encouraged to reach out to the secretariat if we can assist in this process in any way.
- s 47E(c), s 47F welcomed any other business or items for discussion.

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- s 47E(d) noted that many ideas has been discussed and cautioned against trying to do too much with the evaluation. A concern was raised that this may lead to an evaluation that produces mixed/disparate findings, which in turn gives rise to the potential for advocates of a particular position to cherry-pick insights that support their position or viewpoint.
- Stanford and eSafety noted this concern and confirmed that while the purpose of this meeting was to canvas a broad range of interdisciplinary perspectives and opportunities for the evaluation, but that in the coming weeks we will need to prioritise and streamline the design:
  - eSafety, Stanford, and the design SIG will work to prepare a series of options for consideration by the advisory group. This will include more and less resource-intensive options.
  - The focus in the short-term will necessarily be on what needs to be fielded prior to December.
- s 47E(c), s 47F noted that the secretariat will circulate minutes and action items from this meeting, and the additional guidance materials discussed in the meeting.
- The next meeting will be scheduled for 26th August 2025, and calendar invitations will be sent out shortly.
- s 47E(c), s 47F thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting at 9.00am.

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# Social Media Minimum Age Evaluation

## Academic Advisory Group Meeting

26 August 2025 | 7:00 – 9:00am (AEST)

### AGENDA

**Chair:** s 47E(c), s 47F

eSafety Commissioner

Item	Time (AEST)	Lead
<b>1. Welcome</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Acknowledgement of Country</li><li>Remarks from the Chair</li></ul>	7:00–7:05am	s 47E(c), s 47F
<b>2. Situational updates and recent developments</b>	7:05–7:15am	s 47E(c), s 47F
<b>3. Project updates</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Ethical review</li><li>Procurement</li><li>Inclusion of UK cohort and CVE measures</li></ul>	7:15–7:20am	eSafety
<b>4. Overview of final study design</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Attachment A: Social Media Minimum Age Evaluation Study Design</li></ul>	7:20–7:30am	Social Media Lab
<b>5. Review of outcome measures</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Attachment B: Discussion points for outcomes measurement review</li><li>Attachment C: Social Media Minimum Age Evaluation Outcomes and Measures</li><li>Attachment D – Social Media Minimum Age Evaluation Child survey</li><li>Attachment E – Social Media Minimum Age Evaluation Parent/caregiver survey</li></ul>	7:30–8:30am	Social Media Lab

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<b>6. Public announcement of AAG members</b>	8:30-8:35am	s 47E(c), s 47F
<b>7. Key messages for AAG statement in response to announcement</b>	8:35-8:50am	Social Media Lab
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attachment F: Reflection for AAG Response Statement</li> </ul>		
<b>8. Any other business and close</b>	8:50-9:00am	s 47E(c), s 47F
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qualitative Special Interest Group</li> <li>Reminder to update any new conflicts of interest</li> </ul>		

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# SMMA Academic Advisory Group Meeting Minutes

Meeting 2 | 26 August 2025 | 7:00 – 9:00am (AEST)

## Attendees

Affiliation	Name
eSafety	s 47E(c), s 47F (Chair)
	s 47E(c), s 47F
	s 22 Research and Evaluation
	s 22, Senior Evaluation Officer
	s 22, Senior Evaluation Officer
	s 22, Senior Research Officer
	s 22, Senior Research Officer
Social Media Lab, Stanford University	Professor Jeff Hancock Dr Sunny Xun Liu Dr Anja Stevic Dr Angela Yuson Lee Zacariah Smith-Russack
Macquarie University	Distinguished Professor Bronwyn Carlson
Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University	Professor Katherine Keyes
University of Melbourne; Royal Children's Hospital; Murdoch Children's Research institute	Professor Susan Sawyer
Winston Center for Technology and the Developing Mind, University of North Carolina	Distinguished Professor Mitch Prinstein
School of Education, Deakin University	Professor Julian Sefton-Green
Black Dog Institute, University of New South Wales	Associate Professor Aliza Werner-Seidler
Social Dynamics and Well-Being Laboratory, Georgia Institute of Technology	Associate Professor Munmun De Choudhury

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Young and Resilient Research Centre, Western Sydney University	Professor Amanda Third
School of Psychology, Bath Spa University	Professor Peter Etchells
Orygen; Centre for Youth Mental Health, Melbourne University	Professor Jo Robinson
Department of Home Affairs	s 47E(c), s 47F

## Apologies

Dr Amy Orben

Professor Matthew Gentzkow

## High Level Outcomes

- The Advisory Group endorsed the overall evaluation design and measurement, with recommendations for targeted refinements to improve clarity and completeness, reduce burden, and strengthen alignment with existing research.
- Members were reminded to finalise and submit outstanding governance documentation, including MOUs, Terms of Reference, and Conflict of Interest declarations, ahead of the public announcement.
- The group collaboratively identified high-level key messages for a joint response statement to accompany the public announcement, emphasising independence, transparency, and the evidence-based nature of the evaluation.

## Action Items

### Academic Advisory Group Member Action Items

- Those members with outstanding MOUs to kindly follow-up with their respective institutions so these can be finalised as soon as possible.
- Those members who have not yet returned their Conflict-of-Interest form or formally accepted the ToR, please do so as soon as possible.
- Professor Jeff Hancock to draft a public statement in response to eSafety's media release announcing the Advisory, incorporating the input from members during the meeting.

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- Members to review draft public statement and endorse prior to its publication.

### Academic Advisory Secretariat Action Items

- eSafety to revise the evaluation design, specifically timing of data collection waves that are scheduled for December.
- eSafety to revise the survey instrument based on member feedback.
- eSafety to submit revised tools to HREC.

### Detailed Minutes

#### Welcome and opening remarks

- s 47E(c), s 47F opened the meeting with an Acknowledgement of Country.
- s 47E(c), s 47F noted that there have been a number of important developments in the implementation of the Social Media Minimum Age initiative including substantial progress in refining the evaluation design.
- s 47E(c), s 47F thanked the Academic Advisory Group for their generosity in sharing their time and expertise through out-of-session working groups and for providing ad hoc feedback on materials in support of eSafety's evaluation.

#### Situational updates and recent developments

- s 47E(c), s 47F then provided a **situational update**, including the following notable recent developments:
  - s 47E(c), s 47F explained that under the Online Safety Act, the Minister for Communications was required to seek independent advice from the eSafety Commissioner before making legislative rules. s 47E(c), s 47F noted that this request was made on 12 June, and the Commissioner provided her advice on 19 June.
  - s 47E(c), s 47F reported that, following this advice, the Minister made legislative rules on 29 July to exclude certain types of online services based on their sole, primary, or significant purpose.
  - s 47E(c), s 47F noted that the excluded services include online gaming platforms, standalone messaging applications, and online services that support users' health and education.
  - s 47E(c), s 47F highlighted that the Government chose not to name YouTube as an excluded service under the SMMA obligation. s 47E(c), s 47F explained that this

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decision aligns with eSafety’s advice, which recommended that no specific platform or service be excluded by name due to the rapidly evolving nature of online platforms and their changing risk profiles.

- <sup>s 47E(c), s 47F</sup> further explained that eSafety’s advice included two key recommendations:
  - That the Rules should consider the risk of harm in addition to the purpose of a service, particularly in relation to the presence or absence of safety measures designed to mitigate risks associated with specific design choices, features, and functionalities.
  - That the implementation of the SMMA should be monitored for continuous improvement, with a view to identifying emerging challenges that may require further rules or reforms.
- <sup>s 47E(c), s 47F</sup> also noted that the legislative rules are supported by an explanatory statement, which outlines how eSafety should assess whether a platform’s purpose is sole, primary, or significant. <sup>s 47E(c), s 47F</sup> explained that this assessment should consider:
  - The features and functions of the platform.
  - How these features are deployed and influence user engagement and experience.
  - The actual use of the platform, beyond its stated purpose.
- Finally, <sup>s 47E(c), s 47F</sup> noted that the explanatory statement acknowledges that a platform’s purpose may evolve over time, and that this should be taken into account in ongoing assessments.
- <sup>s 47E(c), s 47F</sup> provided an overview of recent **public and media reception and** an update on the **Consultation Process and Reasonable Steps:**
  - <sup>s 47E(c), s 47F</sup> noted that the SMMA has bipartisan political support and has polling that consistently shows strong public support in Australia for greater regulation of social media, including age assurance.
  - <sup>s 47E(c), s 47F</sup> noted that since June 2025, eSafety has been actively consulting with a broad range of experts and online service providers regarding the implementation of age restrictions under the SMMA legislation.

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- <sup>s 47E(c), s 47F</sup> explained that these consultations have involved over 335 individuals representing more than 160 organisations. Stakeholders included academics, technical experts, industry representatives, civil society organisations, parenting groups, and children and young people from both Australia and the international community.
- For further details, see eSafety’s media release [Key steps on the Journey to a social media minimum age](#) and the summaries from the [Social media age restrictions consultation](#).
- <sup>s 47E(c), s 47F</sup> reported that the consultation process concluded last week, and that eSafety is now reviewing the insights and feedback received to inform the development of industry guidelines. These guidelines will outline what constitutes reasonable steps to prevent under-16s from creating accounts on age-restricted social media platforms.
- <sup>s 47E(c), s 47F</sup> emphasised the importance of providing guidance that is both timely and evidence-based. <sup>s 47E(c), s 47F</sup> noted that eSafety is aiming to finalise the guidelines by September.
- <sup>s 47E(c), s 47F</sup> clarified that the regulatory guidance will be principles-based, rather than prescribing specific age assurance technologies. The goal is to support industry in taking reasonable steps while allowing flexibility in how these steps are implemented.
- <sup>s 47E(c), s 47F</sup> explained that once the requirements come into effect later this year, eSafety may request information from service providers regarding their compliance with the age restrictions and may take enforcement action where appropriate.
- Finally, <sup>s 47E(c), s 47F</sup> noted that the assessment framework is to be released shortly to assist industry to self-assess whether their services are included.
- The Assessment framework has now been published and is available at: <https://www.esafety.gov.au/about-us/industry-regulation/social-media-age-restrictions/assessment>

**Question from <sup>s 47E(d)</sup> :** How is eSafety narrating the fact that many platforms target their safety features through accounts? <sup>s 47E(d)</sup> expressed concern that elements of the legislation will expose children to risk of harm.

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**Response from s 47E(c), s 47F** eSafety is very concerned about this and is engaging with industry about this. s 47E(c), s 47F noted that it is eSafety’s position that key safety features, including user reporting, should be available in logged out states and that the absence of such features is problematic, particularly given how many young people presently engage with platforms without an account. s 47E(c), s 47F noted it will be important for the evaluation to monitor this as a potential unintended consequence. s 47E(c), s 47F also highlighted the distinction between government as holding responsibility for policy design and development, whilst eSafety holds responsibility for regulatory execution and evaluation.

### Project updates

- s 22 welcomed the AAG and provided an update on the project focussing on ethical review, procurement, and emerging collaboration opportunities:
  - She noted that the team has been exceptionally busy over the past few months progressing the evaluation design and supporting materials.
  - She explained that this work has been undertaken in close collaboration with the Social Media Lab, and members of the Evaluation Design SIG, Qualitative SIG, and the Data Linkage SIG.
  - She extended sincere thanks to all those involved, acknowledging that their expertise, time, and thoughtful input have been critical to developing a robust and meaningful evaluation approach within tight timeframes.
- s 22 provided an update on ethical review,
  - She explained that AIFS had agreed to hold an extraordinary meeting to review the ethics application, following some challenged with HREC committee availability. The ethics application would be submitted later that day. A decision is expected around 29 September.
  - She noted the survey instrument would be shared with the committee later this week for final refinements.
  - She added that a separate ethics application had been submitted to Bellberry to enable a qualitative sub-study before the legislation’s effective commencement.
  - This sub-study will explore baseline knowledge and attitudes toward the SMMA legislation among children aged 10–16 and their caregivers, with potential for follow-up research.

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- She confirmed the Bellberry review is scheduled for later this week.
- s 22 then provided an update on procurement:
  - She noted that the eSafety team had developed a detailed Statement of Work and Request for Quote (RFQ) to procure a data collection provider for the evaluation.
  - She explained that the team had met with potential providers to assess their capability and ensure alignment with the evaluation's methodological and operational needs.
  - She noted that four providers were invited to respond, with submissions due by 10 September and appointment expected by month-end.
  - She added that discussions are ongoing with AIFS to support data linkage, and a proposal has been submitted to Telstra to access telecommunications data, with thanks to Amy Orben for her support.
- Finally, s 22 provided an update on emerging collaboration opportunities:
  - s 22 explained that the team had been approached by colleagues from the UK Home Office and the Australian Department of Home Affairs to explore the impact of the SMMA legislation on exposure to countering violent extremism (CVE) content online.
  - She noted that, after careful consideration, the team had agreed to proceed with the collaboration.
  - She outlined two key reasons for this decision: to avoid duplication of a separate large cohort study, and to generate internationally comparative data that would support difference-in-differences (DiD) analysis and strengthen the evaluation design.
  - She noted that CVE-related questions will be included in the baseline and wave 5 surveys and have been peer reviewed for methodological soundness.
  - She explained that the CVE component would be managed collaboratively, with input from both the UK Home Office and the Australian Department of Home Affairs.

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- She noted that this collaboration would contribute to a broader understanding of the legislation’s impact across national contexts and inform future policy development in both jurisdictions.
- She provided an overview of the UK’s Online Safety Act 2023, which places new duties on social media companies and search services to ensure user safety. Under the Act, services likely to be accessed by children were required to complete children’s risk assessments by 24 July 2025, with the child safety regime fully in effect by Summer 2025.
- s 47E(d) expressed concern about scope creep regarding the inclusion of CVE questions but was gratified to hear they are only to be included at baseline and wave 5.

### Overview of Final Study Design

- Jeff Hancock provided an overview of the final study design, including the proposed timeline and wave structure:
  - He confirmed that baseline and Wave 1 would be conducted while participants are still in school to ensure consistency.
  - The design includes monitoring for unintended consequences throughout the study.
- Several members of the AAG raised concerns of data collection in December.
  - In response, SML and eSafety agreed that follow-up waves originally scheduled for December will be moved to November to avoid holiday-related attrition and changes in screen time patterns.
- Other key points raised by members of the AAG included:
  - s 47E(d) raised concerns about participant burden due to the number of waves in a relatively short period. s 47E(d) suggested reducing the scope of Wave 3 to focus on a limited set of themes, and prioritising Waves 4 and 5 for change evaluation. s 47E(d) emphasised the importance of being protective of participants and transparent at baseline about what young people and parents are signing up for (e.g., number of waves and when these will occur).
  - s 47E(d) asked whether conducting a wave during or around school holidays might help capture changes in social media use across

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different periods of the school year. eSafety noted there is potential to undertake some qualitative work in the holiday period.

### Review of Measures

- Lead by Jeff Hancock, the group reviewed the proposed survey measures, with several members providing feedback and suggestions for refinement.
- The group reviewed proposed child survey measures, with broad support for the inclusion of items related to digital stress, online hate, and social comparison.
  - Members provided feedback on refining the balance between internalising and externalising measures, improving alignment with other studies, and ensuring relevance to emerging issues such as school phone bans and generative AI.
  - Timeframes for recall were discussed, with agreement to limit most items to a four-week period and to consider variations between school nights and weekends.
  - Recommendations were made to streamline modules and reassess certain scales to reduce participant burden and improve validity.
  - Detailed recommendations and actions taken are detailed in Appendix 1.
- The group reviewed proposed measures for the parent survey, focusing on parental wellbeing, attitudes toward the ban, and family dynamics, with some suggestions for refinement:
  - There was strong support for including indicators such as parental stress, household chaos, and preparedness to support children as the legislation comes into effect.
  - Members recommended refining digital self-efficacy items, improving clarity around child age reporting, and ensuring parents respond about a single target child throughout the survey.
  - Suggestions were made to include bespoke items on offline activity displacement, ease of implementing the ban, and frequency of discussions with other parents.
  - Detailed recommendations and actions taken are detailed in Appendix 1.

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- Where possible, alignment with existing national surveys was encouraged. eSafety noted in the selection of wellbeing measures, they had prioritised those scales that were included in Australia's Young Minds: Our Future Study, a large nationally representative survey investigating the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people aged 4-17 years in Australia.

### Public Announcement of AAG Members

- s 47E(c), s 47F provided an update on the upcoming public announcement of AAG members, scheduled for early September. s 47E(c), s 47F expressed enthusiasm about sharing the news more broadly and emphasised the importance of finalising all required documentation to stay on track.
- Members were reminded to submit the following documents as soon as possible:
  - Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)
  - Formal email agreement to the Terms of Reference
  - Conflict of Interest (CoI) form
- s 47E(c), s 47F noted that the announcement cannot proceed until all documentation is received. s 47E(c), s 47F thanked those who had already submitted their forms and urged remaining members to prioritise completion.
- s 47E(c), s 47F advised that media interest in the group is growing, with several outlets already requesting names of Advisory Group members. While the names are not yet public and should not be shared, members were reminded that journalists may reach out directly. If contacted, members are encouraged to email the Secretariat for support, who will connect them with the Strategic Communications team.
- Communications guidelines have been circulated to assist members in responding to media or public inquiries. These resources may be helpful as external interest continues to build.
- Additional points raised during discussion:
  - s 47E(c), s 47F noted that the AAG is not yet public and should not be shared. s 47E(c), s 47F confirmed there is a strong desire to proceed with the announcement but reiterated that all documentation must be finalised first.
  - In a discussion around media engagement, Katherine Keyes cautioned her fellow AAG members to be mindful of media, noting that journalists may seek to provoke less considered or measured responses.

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- In response to a question, s 47E(c), s 47F advised that the preference is for members to decline media engagement related to the SMMA evaluation until the announcement is public. Once released, media responses should be guided by the key messages in the official statement, and the public communication guidelines.

### **Key messages for AGG statement in response to announcement**

- As agreed in the previous meeting, the AAG will develop a joint response statement to accompany the upcoming public announcement of the group, tentatively scheduled for mid-September. Jeff Hancock led a discussion on the key messages to be included, with the aim of ensuring clarity, consistency, and protection for members.
- Key points raised during the discussion included:
  - The group agreed it is important to clearly state that AAG members do not represent the government, and that the group operates independently.
  - Jeff Hancock emphasised the group's role in collecting the best possible evidence to inform both government and the public.
  - There was discussion around whether to highlight the diversity of viewpoints within the group. While this diversity is a strength, members noted that drawing attention to it may expose individuals to risk. It was agreed that this should be acknowledged carefully, without being a focal point.
    - s 47E(d) recommended framing the group's work as evidence-based, rather than opinion-driven, to avoid misrepresentation and safeguard members.
    - s 47E(d) advised that while internal differences should not be hidden, they need not be publicised. s 47E(d) recommended preparing for media scrutiny and working with communications colleagues on counterpoints.
  - s 47E(d) suggested including the term transparency, noting it is often a public concern and a useful framing device.
  - s 47E(d) noted that the evaluation cannot fully address the risks associated with specific features or functions of social media, as distinct from the content served by algorithms. s 47E(d) emphasised the need to clearly define the scope and limitations of the evaluation.

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- Jeff Hancock reiterated that this is the first society-wide intervention of its kind, and the evaluation will not answer every question. The statement should clarify what the evaluation will and won't address.
  - s 47E(c), s 47F clarified the group's independence, noting that eSafety is separate from government, and the AAG is further removed again. s 47E(c), s 47F suggested this independence be highlighted as a core strength of the group.
  - The group discussed additional transparency measures, including the possibility of publicly registering the study on the Open Science Framework (OSF) to support full transparency.
- There was broad agreement that the statement should:
  - Emphasise the group's **independence and evidence-based approach**.
  - Clearly **outline the scope and limitations** of the evaluation.
  - Reinforce the group's **commitment to a robust, transparent, and high-quality evaluation**.
  - Avoid implying either endorsement of, or opposition to, the legislation itself.
  - Be mindful of protecting members from undue scrutiny or misrepresentation.

### Any other business and close

- Before closing the meeting, s 47E(c), s 47F thanked members for their time, insights, and thoughtful contributions. s 47E(c), s 47F acknowledged the group's ongoing engagement and its critical role in shaping the direction and impact of the evaluation.
- A few final updates were provided:
  - Qualitative Special Interest Group: The Secretariat will be in touch shortly to schedule a meeting. Members were asked to keep an eye out for the invitation.
  - Academic Publications: The team is receiving media requests for comment on academic papers and commentaries. Members were asked to notify the Secretariat of any upcoming publications to help manage responses proactively.
  - Conflict of Interest Declarations: eSafety will review submitted declarations over the next fortnight and follow up with members if needed. Members

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were reminded to keep their declarations up to date and to notify the Secretariat of any changes. A standing agenda item will be included in future meetings as a reminder.

- The meeting was formally closed.

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## Appendix 1

Proposed changes	Details	Actioned	Related action
<b>Child survey</b>			
1. Addition: digital stress	<p>It was recommended that we include additional measures of fear of missing out (FOMO), notification stress, and the feeling that they need to be online and constantly responding to their friends etc. to better capture digital stress.</p> <p>Resource shared by MP:  <a href="https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10567-019-00300-5">https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10567-019-00300-5</a></p> <p>Relevant items already included in the survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I feel like I need to be on social media most of the time, otherwise I might miss out on things my friends are doing</li> </ul>	<p>The existing item was retained.</p> <p>Additional items measuring availability and production pressure were included:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>My friends expect me to always be available on social media.</li> <li>My friends expect me to be on social media every day.</li> <li>My friends expect to be able to communicate with me on social media all the time.</li> <li>My friends expect me to always post new content.</li> </ol> <p>Response: <i>Not true at all for me – Very true for me</i></p> <p>Source: <a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051241239282">https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051241239282</a></p> <p>An item measuring FOMO:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I get anxious when I don't know what my friends are up to.</li> </ol> <p>Response: <i>Not true at all for me – Very true for me</i></p> <p>Source: <a href="http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2013.02.014">http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2013.02.014</a>.</p>	15. Replace: Different problematic social media use scale suggested
2. Addition: externalising behaviour	<p>The AAG noted the limited coverage of offline bullying and physical altercations, referencing literature that links phone bans to reductions in school fights. It was recommended that we include additional externalising behaviour items.</p>	<p>Items adapted from the Gatehouse Bullying Scale (GBS; Bond et al., 2007) and the Cyberbullying Scale (CBS; Stewart et al., 2014) were included:</p> <p>X. In the past year has anyone done any of the following things to you in real life?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>teased you or called you names</li> <li>tried to keep others from liking you by saying mean things about you</li> <li>told lies about you to make others not like you</li> <li>deliberately left you out of things</li> </ol>	

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Proposed changes	Details	Actioned	Related action
		<p>e) threatened you</p> <p>f) said they won't like you unless you do what they want you to do</p> <p>g) Physically hurt you</p> <p>X. Did anyone do any of these things to you, in real life, in the <b>past four weeks</b>?</p> <p>&gt; Filter responses from above question</p> <p>Additional items from the SDQ were also included:</p> <p>a) I often have trouble getting along with my classmates.</p> <p>b) I fight a lot.</p> <p>Response: <i>strongly agree – strongly disagree</i></p>	
3. Removal: reduce internalising measures	To allow for additions of the externalising measures and to avoid repetition, it was recommended that we reduce the number of internalising measures included in the survey.	<p>The following scales were removed/replaced from the survey to reduce repetition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General Belongingness Scale (GBS) was removed</li> <li>• Social Connectedness Scale (SCS) was removed</li> <li>• The K10 was also replaced with the K6</li> </ul>	
4. Addition: offline social interactions	There was an interest in expanding the offline social activities questions to capture social interactions in greater detail (e.g., splitting out split out peers and family socialisation)	<p>The existing item measuring frequency of “<i>spending time in person with family and friends...</i>” was changed to:</p> <p>X. How often, if at all, do you usually ...</p> <p>a) spend time in person with friends outside of school hours (like hanging out with friends ‘in real life’)?</p> <p>b) spend time in person with family (like being with parents, siblings, aunts or uncles, cousins ‘in real life’)?</p>	
5. Edit: Ensure we can distinguish between connectedness to peers and family	It was noted that it will be important to distinguish between connectedness to family versus peers.	<p>As noted in change 3, we have removed the GBS and SCS due to repetition.</p> <p>Peer-relationships are assessed using the SDQ peer-relationship subscale and the Friendship Quality Scale (both online and offline).</p>	<p>3. Removal: reduce internalising measures</p> <p>7. Addition: Quality of</p>

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Proposed changes	Details	Actioned	Related action
6. Addition: Social comparison beyond body image	<p>Members recommended expanding social comparison measures beyond body image to include social lives, popularity etc.</p> <p>Relevant items currently in survey include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being online makes me feel bad about myself (online participation harms)</li> <li>• I feel like I care too much about things like views, followers, likes, comments and shares</li> </ul>	<p>We also measure family communication and cohesion separately.</p> <p>The included scales/items should allow us to adequately distinguish between peer and familial relationships.</p> <p>Those items currently included in the survey were retained.</p> <p>Additional items from the Upward Social Comparison Scale were included (adapted so they are not specific to social media):</p> <p>X. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I often think that others have a happier life than me</li> <li>I often think that others have a better life</li> <li>I often think that others feel better than me</li> </ol> <p>Response: <i>strongly agree – strongly disagree</i></p> <p>Source: <a href="https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0736585319301546?via%3Dihub">https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0736585319301546?via%3Dihub</a></p> <p>Additional items addressing need for popularity were also added:</p> <p>X. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I have done things to try to make me more popular, even when it meant doing something I would not usually do</li> <li>It's important that people think I'm popular</li> <li>At times, I've changed the way I dress in order to try to be more popular</li> <li>At times, I've hung out with some people, so others wouldn't think I was unpopular</li> </ol> <p>Response: <i>strongly agree – strongly disagree</i></p> <p>Sources: <a href="https://link.springer.com/article/10.1023/A:1005152515264">https://link.springer.com/article/10.1023/A:1005152515264</a>  <a href="http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.05.083">http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.05.083</a></p>	friendships offline and online

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Proposed changes	Details	Actioned	Related action
7. Addition: Quality of friendships offline and online	It was suggested that we distinguish between offline and online friendships when assessing peer-relationships and quality of these relationships.	<p>Additional questions were included to explore the nature of online interactions:</p> <p>X. In the past four weeks, about how often, if at all, have you interacted online with the following types of people?</p> <p><i>(Online interactions can include chatting, messaging, gaming with other people, commenting, or sharing content with each other.)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) People you know in real life (like friends from school, sports, or your local community)</li> <li>b) People you don't know personally, but who are connected to your friends or family in real life (like a friend of a friend or a friend of your sibling)</li> <li>c) People you've only met online (you don't know them in real life and they're not connected to your friends or family)</li> </ul> <p>Response options for each: <i>Yes / No / I don't want to say</i></p> <p>The Friendship Quality Scale was adapted and included in the survey to measure the quality of friendships both online and offline.</p> <p>Source: <a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407594113011">https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407594113011</a></p>	
8. Addition: Displacement from social media to other screens (TV, gaming etc)	It was suggested that we better capture digital displacement (i.e., moving from social media onto other screen-based activities).	<p>Additional items have been included to understand use and frequency of online gaming and streaming services (e.g., Netflix, Disney+), in addition to AI:</p> <p>X. Have you done any of the following in the past <b>year</b>?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Played video games online</li> <li>b) Watched streaming services (like Netflix, Disney+)</li> </ul> <p>Responses: <i>Yes / No, not in the past year / I don't want to say</i></p> <p>X. Have you done any of these in the past <b>four weeks</b>?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Show responses select at above question</li> </ul> <p>Responses: <i>Yes / No, not in the past year / I don't want to say</i></p>	

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Proposed changes	Details	Actioned	Related action
		<p>X. When you're not at school or at work (or sleeping), how often do you <b>usually</b> do the following <b>online</b>?</p> <p>Response: <i>At least once or twice a day to Never – I don't do this at all anymore</i></p> <p>&gt; Show responses select at above question</p>	
9. Replace: self-esteem scale	It was recommended to replace the Rosenberg Self-esteem scale with the single-item self-esteem scale to reduce items (previous research shows that the scales are highly correlated)	<p>Removed Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale and replaced with the SISES:</p> <p>a) I have high self-esteem.</p> <p>Response: Not very true of me 1-----7 Very true of me</p>	
10. Removal: Consider reducing some of the measures under theme 2 (e.g. use of Gen AI)	It was recommended that we could remove the questions related to AI.	<p>It was decided that we would not remove Gen AI items given the concern about uptake of these platforms among children and young people and the potential for displacement to these platforms.</p> <p>eSafety and SML will continue to review the survey for duplication and opportunities to reduce items.</p>	
11. Addition: Extend concept of digital literacy beyond performance	It was suggested that we include critical and creative dimensions of digital literacy, such as participation (e.g., the digital ladder of participation).	<p>Additional items were included in the existing question measuring online activities. These include:</p> <p>X. Thinking back over the past <b>four weeks</b>, how often, if at all, have you done the following?</p> <p>a) Signed an online petition or supported a cause online</p> <p>b) Shared my opinion online about a social or political issue</p> <p>c) Participated in an online group or forum about social/environmental issues</p> <p>d) Posted my own videos, music, or artwork online</p> <p>e) Designed something online (e.g. game, website, digital art)</p> <p>f) Worked with others online on a school or creative project</p> <p>g) Helped someone else learn something online"</p>	

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Proposed changes	Details	Actioned	Related action
		h) Reported something harmful or inappropriate online	
12. Edit: Standardised reference period to past 4 weeks, unless clear reason to a different period or no specified time frame.	It was recommended that we would standardise the reference period where possible, and no longer than 4-weeks for most questions/scales.	The timeframe has been standardised to 4-weeks across scales and items, unless there was a clear reason to a different period or no specified time frame (e.g., comprehension of a question).  Note that exposure to harms is asked at 12-months and 4-weeks to ensure we are capturing exposure to less common harms. This will be cognitively tested with children prior to fieldwork.	
13. Edit: Modify sleep measures to assess sleep and wake times opposed to hours and specify a day type.	It was suggested that we edit the measures of sleep quantity to focus on sleep and wake times, opposed to average hours of sleep as children are generally not accurate in calculations of sleep duration.  It was also recommended that we specify whether we are assessing sleep on school days or weekends or holidays, as this is likely to differ.	Measures of sleep duration were replaced with usual time of going to sleep and waking for both school days and weekends – adapted from Pittsburgh Index.  The reference period for the sleep measures was reduced to two weeks, opposed to four, to increase accuracy in recall.  Source: <a href="https://www.med.upenn.edu/cbti/assets/user-content/documents/Pittsburgh%20Sleep%20Quality%20Index%20%28PSQI%29.pdf">https://www.med.upenn.edu/cbti/assets/user-content/documents/Pittsburgh%20Sleep%20Quality%20Index%20%28PSQI%29.pdf</a>	
14. Edit: Peer relationships 5-item scale – not generally accepted by researchers in this area	A member flagged that a 5-item scale to measure peer-relationships is unlikely to be accepted by the experts in the field.	Two additional items from the SDQ items measuring peer-relationships as well as the Friendship Quality Scale were included in response to other comments.  Given limitations in survey space, a fuller scale, beyond what is noted above, could not be included.	2. Addition: externalising behaviour  7. Addition: Quality of friendships offline and online

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Proposed changes	Details	Actioned	Related action
15. Replace: Different problematic social media use scale suggested	<p>Alternative scales were recommended to capture Problematic Social Media Use</p> <p>Original items included were:</p> <p>How often, if at all, do you do the following?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) I think about social media apps or planning my use of social media apps</li> <li>b) I feel the need to use social media apps more and more</li> <li>c) I use social media apps so I can forget about my problems</li> <li>d) I try to use my social media apps less, but I can't</li> <li>e) I become stressed or upset if I am not allowed to use my social media apps</li> <li>f) I use social media apps so much that it has had a bad effect on my schoolwork or job</li> </ul>	<p>To promote alignment between existing cohort studies and to capture and allow us to track problematic use of online platforms more broadly, the following items from the Young Minds Our Future study were included in place of the original scale:</p> <p>X. How often, if at all, do you do the following?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Do you go without eating or sleeping because you are on online, on social media, or playing video games?</li> <li>b) Do you feel bothered when you cannot go online, on social media, or play video games?</li> <li>c) Do you catch yourself going online, scrolling through your feeds or playing video games when you are not really interested?</li> <li>d) Do you spend less time than you should with family or friends because of the time you spend online, on social media, or playing video games?</li> <li>e) Do you spend less time than you should doing schoolwork/work because of the time you spend online, on social media, or playing video games?</li> <li>f) Have you tried unsuccessfully to spend less time online, on social media, or playing video games?</li> </ul> <p>Responses: 1 - <i>Never/almost never</i> / 2 - <i>Not very often</i> / 3 - <i>Fairly often</i> / 4 - <i>Very often</i></p> <p>The original items were removed from the survey in favour of the above.</p>	
16. Edit: Open question(s) preference	<p>There was a strong preference among members for the open-ended question “<i>What, if anything, do you think people your age might miss out on without social media?</i>” over the</p>	<p>The below open-end question was included in the survey:</p> <p>X. What, if anything, do you think people your age might miss out on without social media? [OPEN]</p>	

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Proposed changes	Details	Actioned	Related action
	alternative: <i>"Imagine you are a parent of a teenager. What would you say to your teenager about social media, and why?"</i>		
17. Addition: Views about the SMMA	It was recommended that we ask about attitudes towards and support for the SMMA.	There are already several questions in Theme 1 under 'Attitudes towards the social media age restriction'.	
18. Edit: Consider randomising section order	It was suggested that randomisation of the survey sections could be a helpful strategy to mitigate dropout, if it doesn't have implications for survey priming etc.	This is still under consideration; however, full randomisation is unlikely to be possible due to concerns of priming and order effects of the survey sections.	
19. Edit: Language from 'School day' to 'school hours' (p16)	For ease of comprehension for children, it was recommended that language be changes from 'school day' to 'school hours'.	Language was edited in response to this comment.	
20. Suggestion: Try to harmonize wellbeing measures with the Young Minds Our Future survey	Continuing from previous conversations, it was recommended that we harmonise the wellbeing measures with those included in the Young Minds Our Future survey.	We have included several measures in our survey which align with those included in the Young Minds Our Future (YMOF) study, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (note K6 was included, but K10 in YMOF).</li> <li>• Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (SWEMWBS)</li> <li>• School Connectedness Scale</li> <li>• Items measuring to Problematic Use and Withdrawal from online activities, social media use etc (control-related harms)</li> </ul>	15. Replace: Different problematic social media use scale suggested
<b>Parent/Caregiver Survey</b>			

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Proposed changes	Details	Actioned	Related action
21. Addition: CHAOS Scale	It was recommended that we add the CHAOS scale as a measure of family environments and a proxy for family wellbeing.	<p>The short-form version of the CHAOS was included:</p> <p>X. Below are some things that happen in most homes. Please select the answer that best describes your home:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) My child has a regular bedtime routine</li> <li>b) You can't hear yourself think in our home</li> <li>c) It's a real zoo in our home</li> <li>d) We are usually able to stay on top of things</li> <li>e) The atmosphere in our house is calm</li> </ul> <p>Response: (1) Definitely untrue / (2) Somewhat untrue / (3) Not really true or untrue / (4) Somewhat true / (5) Definitely True</p> <p>Source: <a href="#">Measuring CHAOS? Evaluating the Short-form Confusion, Hubbub and Order Scale   Collabra: Psychology   University of California Press</a></p>	
22. Addition: Views about the SMMA	It was recommended that we ask about attitudes towards and support for the SMMA.	There are already several questions in Theme 1 under 'Attitudes towards the social media age restriction'.	
23. Addition: Measuring life events as a control	It was recommended that we include measures of significant life events that can be used as a control for changes in mental health, wellbeing, and functioning.	<p>We included a question in the parent/caregiver survey asking about several significant events in the child's life:</p> <p>X. Have any of these life events happened to your child during the past year?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Death of a family member</li> <li>b) Divorce or separation of parents</li> <li>c) Major personal injury or illness</li> <li>d) Major change in the health or behaviour of a family member</li> <li>e) Death of a close friend</li> <li>f) Changed to a new school</li> <li>g) Major change in living arrangements (e.g. moved to a new home or different city)</li> <li>h) Friendship break-up</li> </ul>	

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Proposed changes	Details	Actioned	Related action
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Relationship break-up</li> <li>j) Pubertal development</li> <li>k) School suspension</li> <li>l) Major change in family financial circumstances (e.g. job loss, financial stress)</li> <li>m) New sibling or sibling leaving the family home</li> <li>n) Questioning their personal identity</li> <li>o) I don't want to say</li> </ul>	
24. Addition: Measure(s) of parent wellbeing	It was recommended that we include a measure of parental mental health beyond parental stress/mental load.	The Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K6) was included.	
25. Reduce: Parent perceptions of child wellbeing	It was recommended that we reduce the number of scales / items measuring parents' perceptions of child's wellbeing.	<p>The following scales were removed from the parent/caregiver survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General Belongingness Scale</li> <li>• Social Connectedness Scale</li> </ul>	
26. Addition Families' offline behaviours/ activities (displacement)	It was suggested that we considering including items addressing family's offline behaviour including parental effort – there may be barriers to facilitating their child's increasing offline activities.	<p>Two additional bespoke questions were included in the survey to measure parental effort:</p> <p>X. In the <b>past four weeks</b>, to what extent, if at all, did you...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) help your child with their homework?</li> <li>b) help your child find good ways to handle boredom?</li> <li>c) help your child to find activities that they will enjoy?</li> <li>d) help your child manage their daily schedule and responsibilities?</li> <li>e) coordinate transportation or logistics for your child's social and extracurricular activities?</li> <li>f) support your child through emotional ups and downs?</li> <li>g) help your child navigate friendship challenges?</li> <li>h) stay aware of your child's online social circles?</li> <li>i) stay aware of child's offline social circles?</li> </ul>	

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Proposed changes	Details	Actioned	Related action
		<p>j) ensure your child’s environment and relationships are safe and supportive?</p> <p>k) negotiate rules and expectations with your child?</p> <p>l) enforce boundaries while respecting your child’s growing independence?</p> <p>Response scale: <i>Almost always (1), Most of the time (2), Some of the time (3), A little (4), Never (5)</i></p> <p>X. In the <b>past four weeks</b>, how much effort was it for <b>YOU</b> to...</p> <p>&gt; Show responses select at above question</p>	
27. Edit: Review approach to capturing child age – potential to simplify	It was recommended to simplify the approach to capturing child age.	While we appreciate the approach may be more complex than other, this is required to facilitated quota management with our panel provider.	
28. Addition: Attitudes towards government ‘interference’ / regulation	It was recommended that we capture overall attitudes towards government ‘interference’ or regulation as this could act as a mediator / moderator of other outcomes of interest.	<p>We have included several questions addressing parental attitudes towards the social media age restriction, including:</p> <p>X. To what extent do you support the introduction of the new social media laws?</p> <p>Response: <i>Strongly support (1), Somewhat support (2), Neither oppose nor support (3), Somewhat oppose (4), Strongly oppose (5)</i></p> <p>X. Overall, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements:</p> <p>a) The new social media laws make me feel supported as a parent.</p> <p>b) The new social media laws give me a sense of relief.</p> <p>c) The new social media laws help me feel more in control of my child’s media environment.</p>	

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Proposed changes	Details	Actioned	Related action
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- d) The new social media laws make me feel reassured about my child’s well-being.
- e) The new social media laws make me feel annoyed.
- f) I dislike that my child is being told they can’t have social media accounts.
- g) I worry the new social media laws might not work well for every child — including mine.
- h) I have mixed feelings about the new social media laws.

Response: 5-point strongly agree – strongly disagree

X. What impact do you think the new social media laws will have for Australian children? [open response]

Additional measures regarding broader political affiliation were deemed out of scope for this evaluation.

29. Removal: algorithm literacy questions	Given that digital literacy overall tends to correlate with confidence in more specific areas – it was suggested that we could remove the two items addressing algorithm and AI literacy.	These items were retained in the survey.	
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30. Addition: Frequency of discussions with children/ other parents about children’s social media use	It was suggested that we include an item to understand potential changes in the frequency of conversations that parents/caregivers are having with other caregivers (e.g., parents of peers) regarding their children’s social media use.	An item was added:  X. In the <b>past four weeks</b> , how often, if at all, did you discuss your child’s use or potential use of social media with the parents/ caregivers of your child’s peers?  Response: <i>Very often, Often, Sometimes, Rarely, Never</i>	
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Proposed changes	Details	Actioned	Related action
31. Reduce: social media norms item	<p>It was suggested that capturing social norms in such a way may not be useful (does not tell us the reality of the situation – only perceptions of the reality). Norms may be better captured via qualitative elements.</p> <p>Statement H in particular was considered hard to answer - perception of what others believe (most parents believe social media does more harm than good).</p>	<p>Statement H was removed from the survey items, while the remainder of the scale was retained.</p> <p>Social norms will be captured through qualitative research to gain a greater depth of insight.</p>	

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# Social Media Minimum Age Evaluation

## Academic Advisory Group Meeting

11 December 2025 | 7:00 – 8:00am (AEDT)

### AGENDA

**Chair:** s 47E(c), s 47F

eSafety Commissioner

Item	Time (AEST)	Lead
<b>1. Welcome</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Acknowledgement of Country</li><li>Remarks from the Chair</li></ul>	7:00–7:05am	s 47E(c), s 47F
<b>2. Updates on SMMA developments</b>	7:05–7:10am	s 47E(c), s 47F
<b>3. Updates on Evaluation developments</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Data collection progress</li><li>Cross country comparison</li></ul>	7:10–7:20am	s 22 Jeff Hancock
<b>4. Discussion about analysis and dissemination</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Open Science Framework</li><li>Research questions and analysis approach</li><li>Nominations for disseminations SIG</li></ul>	7:20–7:45am	Jeff Hancock Social Media Lab
<b>5. Early reflection from qualitative fieldwork</b>	7:45–7:55am	s 22
<b>6. Any other business and close</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Reminder to update any new conflicts of interest</li></ul>	7:55–8:00am	s 47E(c), s 47F

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# SMMA Academic Advisory Group Meeting Minutes

Meeting 3 | 11 December 2025 | 7:00 – 8:00am (AEDT)

## Attendees

Affiliation	Name
eSafety	s 47E(c), s 47F (Chair) s 22 Research and Evaluation s 22 Senior Evaluation Officer s 22 Senior Evaluation Officer s 22, Senior Research Officer
Social Media Lab, Stanford University	Professor Jeff Hancock Dr Sunny Xun Liu Dr Anja Stevic Dr Angela Yuson Lee Dr Anthony Chen Zacariah Smith-Russack
Macquarie University	Distinguished Professor Bronwyn Carlson
Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University	Professor Katherine Keyes
University of Melbourne; Royal Children's Hospital; Murdoch Children's Research institute	Professor Susan Sawyer
Winston Center for Technology and the Developing Mind, University of North Carolina	Distinguished Professor Mitch Prinstein
Black Dog Institute, University of New South Wales	Associate Professor Aliza Werner-Seidler
Social Dynamics and Well-Being Laboratory, Georgia Institute of Technology	Associate Professor Munmun De Choudhury
Young and Resilient Research Centre, Western Sydney University	Professor Amanda Third
School of Psychology, Bath Spa University	Professor Peter Etchells

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## Apologies

s 47E(c), s 47F (Chair)

Dr Amy Orben

Professor Julian Sefton-Green

## High Level Outcomes

- The AAG were updated on recent developments in the implementation of the SMMA obligation, the status of baseline data collection for the evaluation, and early insights.
- Approaches to dissemination to support transparency and uptake of evaluation outputs were discussed, and a decision taken to establish a Special Interest Group to further progress these conversations.

## Action Items

### Academic Advisory Secretariat Action Items

- eSafety to schedule a meeting with eSafety's Strategic Communications function to support AAG members to respond to media enquiries.
- eSafety to establish a new Special Interest Group to support dissemination planning.
- eSafety to share Social Media Minimum Age (SMMA) related research and evaluation tracker with AAG members.

### Academic Advisory Group Member Action Items

- Professor Jeff Hancock to draft a public statement on behalf of the AAG to support members to respond to media enquiries.
- Members to review draft public statement and endorse prior to its publication.
- Members to self-nominate for Dissemination Special Interest Group.
- Members to update eSafety as needed on the following:
  - Any changes to conflict of interest declarations,

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- Any forthcoming publications or SMMA-related research that they are aware of, and
- Any intention to make public remarks in their capacity as a member of the AAG.

## Detailed Minutes

### Welcome and opening remarks

- s 47E(c), s 47F opened the meeting with an Acknowledgement of Country.
- s 47E(c), s 47F thanked those members who supported us in finalising the evaluation design and sampling approach, noting the contributions of all members have been invaluable.

### Update on SMMA implementation

- s 47E(c), s 47F then provided an update on the implementation of the SMMA.

### Legal challenge

- The Digital Freedom Project lodged a High Court challenge to the social media minimum age legislation.
- The outcome from the hearing was an agreement for the matter to be heard via a special case, to be filed in February 2026. The High Court will likely hear the challenge sometime in or after March 2026.
- s 47E(d) posed a question about who is mounting the high court challenge, and whether industry actors may be involved in supporting/funding this. s 47E(c), s 47F noted that s 47E(c), s 47F was not aware of any Industry involvement but would seek to confirm this.

### Minister's Press Club address

- On Wednesday 3 December, the Minister for Communications and Minister for Sport, the Hon. Anika Wells MP, addressed the National Press Club of Australia.
- Her [speech](#) touched on a range of details about the social media law reform.
- She also spoke about the Government's commitment to a Digital Duty of Care. This will create additional proactive obligations on industry – putting responsibility on services to prevent harm rather than dealing with issues once they have occurred.

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## Information and support for the community

- Members were advised that eSafety has published a range of resources on its [Social Media Age Restrictions Hub](#) to help the community navigate the upcoming changes. This includes frequently asked questions, and dedicated resources for young people, families and educators, and includes videos, conversation starters, and action plans.
- Throughout November and continuing into March 2026, eSafety are delivering webinars for families and educators.

## Update on SMMA evaluation

- s 22 provided an update on baseline data collection:
  - She noted it had been a busy quarter, with lots of progress made, and baseline survey data collection drawing to a close. At the time of the meeting, there were 3751 dyad survey completes, including 552 dyads in the probability spine.
  - She advised that fieldwork would close on Dec 15 to support achievement of the evaluation team's final sample goals, noting the addition of a question in the survey since account deactivations commenced on Dec 4 to monitor affected participants who are entering the study as a mitigant.
  - She provided an update on consents for optional components of the evaluation – passive smartphone monitoring, and data linkage.
    - At the time of the meeting, there had been 273 installations of the app for passive smartphone monitoring, which is in line with our expectations about opt-in rates for this component.
    - Unfortunately, very few participants had completed consent forms for data linkage at the time of the meeting. She noted the evaluation team were exploring opportunities to seek consent again in later waves once we have had an opportunity to build greater rapport and trust with participants, and noted eSafety would gratefully receive any ideas or advice for how to bolster consent rates in future waves.
  - She noted that there has been a large number of surveys conducted in the field on the same or similar topics over recent months, which we expect may have influenced enrolments into the study.

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- Baseline qualitative fieldwork is also complete and has yielded some insights (see below).
- Jeff Hancock provided an update on developments in relation to cross-country comparative studies, which are being initiated largely by Stanford Social Media Lab, to strengthen the explanatory power of the evaluation:
  - Plans are well underway to initiate data collection with children and young people and parents in the United Kingdom (Jan/Feb). This work is being undertaken in collaboration with Home Affairs and the UK Home Office.
  - Stanford Social Media Lab are planning to launch data collection with children and young people in California (Jan), and New Zealand (Jan/Feb), with both currently under IRB review, and discussions are underway for parallel studies in Canada and Ireland.
  - AAG members also proposed there could be value in considering studies in jurisdictions where similar age-based restrictions are being considered Malaysia, EU (e.g., Denmark, Netherlands), and Indonesia. s 47E(c), s 47F offered eSafety's help in facilitating connections with jurisdictions in which eSafety hold relationships where needed/as appropriate.
  - Jeff Hancock noted the potential for Difference-in-Differences studies with SMMA-like implementations at different time points would be incredibly powerful.
  - s 47E(d) advised of research just fielded in North Carolina (a state-wide survey of approximately 1000 children and young people) with some overlap in measures with the eSafety survey instrument.

### **Discussion about analysis and dissemination**

- Jeff Hancock led a discussion about the Open Science Framework pre-registration and plans for dissemination.
- He noted that the SML team had prepared a draft submission for Open Science Framework, to support to group's goal to be transparent about the evaluation approach and methods, and welcomed members input as collaborators. The submission will be published in advance of the evaluation team receiving any evaluation data.
- He also noted that a dissemination special interest group will be established, and sought self-nominations to this group, which will consider in more detail the

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format, channels, and cadence of publications relating to the evaluation. A number of members expressed an interest in participating on this group in the meeting.

- s 22 noted there will be two parallel streams for dissemination – public facing (for example through reports published on eSafety’s website, webinars) and peer-reviewed publications. Most members present on the call indicated an interest in taking part in this special interest group.
- Other key discussion points centred around:
  - Analytical strategies to support contribution of any observed effects to the SMMA, as opposed to other regulatory interventions or industry developments in online safety (for example, cross-country comparisons; synthetic data analysis)
  - Particular journals we might target and whether a special issue might be appropriate. Journals suggested by members in the meeting were Nature, Science, and the Lancet.
  - The need to publish findings in a timely manner given the domestic and international interest.
  - Public communications and dissemination models that meet the needs of key beneficiaries of the policy, notably children (for example: <https://imascientist.org.uk/>).

### **Early reflections from the qualitative fieldwork**

- s 22 then provided a summary from the baseline qualitative research conducted with parents and young people aged 10-15 years during November. Online focus groups and interviews were held with children aged 10 - 15 and parents/ caregivers. These were led by eSafety’s Research and Evaluation team, and focus groups with children and young people were co-facilitated by youth peer researchers. This involved:
  - 10 x interviews with children aged 10 – 11 (40 mins) + pre-task
  - 7 x text-based focus groups with children aged 12 – 15 (60 mins) + pre-task and post-task
  - 6 x text-based focus groups with parents of children aged 10 – 15 (60 mins)
- The total sample for this qualitative fieldwork was n=72 (n=43 children, n=29 parents/ caregivers), with recruitment via online panel.

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- The sampling was purposive to reflect a mix of age, gender, metro/ regional, states/ territories, socioeconomic status, inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and parents, and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Parents were recruited to ensure a mix of those who were supportive of, neutral or opposed to the SMMA.
- The objective of this fieldwork was to support an understanding of knowledge of and attitudes towards the Social Media Minimum Age (SMMA) among young people aged 10-16 and their parents and caregivers, ahead of the commencement of the age restriction in December 2025. Key discussion points included the role of social media in the lives of children; perceived harms and benefits of social media; knowledge and understanding of the SMMA; attitudes towards SMMA, and expected impacts of the SMMA.
- A report with a more in-depth summary of the qualitative fieldwork is in preparation and expected to be published on eSafety's website in March 2026.
- AAG members noted it would be important to publicise the findings and continue this qualitative work over the course of the evaluation.

#### **Any other business and close**

- There was a discussion about the significant media interest and increasing volume of requests for AAG members to comment on the SMMA, particularly over the past week.
- s 47E(d) noted that s 47E(d) was finding it challenging to navigate some of these requests whilst ensuring alignment to the group's interests.
- A number of members noted they had turned down media opportunities, particularly international media, due to the framing of the requests.
- Jeff Hancock noted the AAG [consensus statement](#) as a point of reference and suggested they could pull together a briefer, more targeted response (drawing on the key messages in the consensus statement) to media that the group can use to support their responses.
- s 47E(c), s 47F offered to connect members of the AAG with eSafety's communications team to help them in considering their response to media enquiries related to the SMMA.
- s 47E(c), s 47F also requested that members with any forthcoming publications that relate to the SMMA please let us know, ideally in advance of publication.

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- Finally, s 47E(c), s 47F reminded members to keep their conflict of interest declarations up to date and alert us as/when there are changes to these.
- s 47E(c), s 47F thanked members for their time and thoughtful contributions over the year, and formally closed the meeting.

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