

SMMA Academic Advisory Group Meeting Minutes

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

Attendees

Affiliation	Name
eSafety	Deborah Welsh, Executive Manager, Strategy, Engagement and Research (Chair) Members of eSafety Research and Evaluation team
Social Media Lab, Stanford University	Professor Jeff Hancock Dr Sunny Xun Liu Members of the SML team
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
Orygen; Centre for Youth Mental Health, Melbourne University	Professor Jo Robinson

Apologies

Kathryn King (Chair)

Dr Amy Orben

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Professor Julian Sefton-Green

High Level Outcomes

- The Academic Advisory Group (AAG) were updated on recent developments in the implementation of the Social Media Minimum Age (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 SMMA related research and evaluation tracker with AAG members.

Academic Advisory Group Member Action Items

- SML 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,
 - 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.

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Detailed Minutes

Welcome and opening remarks

- eSafety opened the meeting with an Acknowledgement of Country.
- eSafety 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

- eSafety 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.
- A member posed a question about who is mounting the high court challenge, and whether industry actors may be involved in supporting/funding this. eSafety noted that they were 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 addressed the National Press Club of Australia.
- Their [speech](#) touched on a range of details about the social media law reform.
- They 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.

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

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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

- eSafety provided an update on baseline data collection:
 - eSafety 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.
 - eSafety advised that fieldwork would close on December 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 December 4 to monitor affected participants who are entering the study as a mitigant.
 - eSafety 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.
 - Very few participants had completed consent forms for data linkage at the time of the meeting. eSafety noted the evaluation team were exploring opportunities to seek consent again in later waves once they have had an opportunity to build greater rapport and trust with participants, and noted they would gratefully receive any ideas or advice for how to bolster consent rates in future waves.
 - eSafety noted that there has been a large number of surveys conducted in the field on the same or similar topics over recent months, which they expect may have influenced enrolments into the study.
 - Baseline qualitative fieldwork is also complete and had yielded some insights (see below).

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- SML provided an update on developments in relation to cross-country comparative studies, which are being initiated largely by SML, 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.
 - SML 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. eSafety offered their help in facilitating connections with jurisdictions in which eSafety hold relationships where needed/as appropriate.
 - SML noted the potential for Difference-in-Differences studies with SMMA-like implementations at different time points would be incredibly powerful.
 - A member 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

- SML led a discussion about the Open Science Framework pre-registration and plans for dissemination.
- SML 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.
- SML noted that a dissemination special interest group will be established, and sought self-nominations to this group, which will consider in more detail the 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.
- eSafety noted there will be two parallel streams for dissemination – public facing (for example through reports published on eSafety's website, webinars) and peer-

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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.
 - 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

- eSafety then provided a summary from the Attitudes of children and parents to social media age restrictions ahead of implementation 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.
 - 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

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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 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

- The group discussed the significant media interest and increasing volume of requests for AAG members to comment on the SMMA, particularly over the past week.
- A member noted that she 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.
- SML 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.
- eSafety 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.
- eSafety also requested that members with any forthcoming publications that relate to the SMMA please let us know, ideally in advance of publication.
- Finally, eSafety reminded members to keep their conflict of interest declarations up to date and alert them as/when there are changes to these.

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- eSafety thanked members for their time and thoughtful contributions over the year, and formally closed the meeting.

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