

SMMA Academic Advisory Group Meeting Minutes

Meeting 4 | 24 February 2026 | 7:00 – 9:00am (AEDT)

Attendees

Affiliation	Name
eSafety	Kathryn King, General Manager, Corporate Technology and Strategy Division, eSafety Commissioner (Chair) Deborah Welsh, Executive Manager, Strategy, Engagement and Research Members of the eSafety Research and Evaluation Team
Social Media Lab (SML), 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
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
MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit, University of Cambridge	Professor Amy Orben

Apologies

Distinguished Professor Mitch Prinstein

Professor Julian Sefton-Green

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Minutes

Welcome and opening remarks

- The Chair opened the meeting with an Acknowledgement of Country.
- Members were acknowledged for their thoughtful contributions, including the release of the protocol paper and evaluation hub.

Update on SMMA evaluation

- eSafety provided updates on the following components of the evaluation:

OSF study protocol paper

- AAG members were thanked for their review of the protocol paper which was published on Open Science Framework (OSF) in February 2026.
- The paper is currently under review for publication with the British Medical Journal (BMJ).

Baseline and Wave 2 data collection

- It was noted that Baseline data collection closed in December.
- An update was provided on the characteristics of the study cohort. eSafety indicated that the sample is demographically representative and broadly aligns with national averages for the evaluation's target cohorts. It was noted that data collection for Wave 2 commenced in mid-March. The AAG was reminded that Wave 2 focuses on children and parents' adherence to age restrictions, self-reported impacts of the restrictions, early changes in social media attitudes and behaviours, and measure of family conflict and cohesion. It also includes several mental health measures.

Qualitative evaluation components

- The AAG were invited to provide input on the focus of qualitative research that will follow Wave 3, including potential methodological refinements and adjustments to data collection instruments informed by forthcoming research,

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members subject matter expertise, and insights from earlier waves of data collection.

- eSafety confirmed that a report on the qualitative attitudinal research conducted with a separate cohort of participants prior to the SMMA coming into effect will be published on eSafety website in the coming month.

Dissemination of research

- The SML led a discussion about the pre-registration of analysis plans for OSF and plans for dissemination of evaluation findings.
- It was confirmed that there will be two parallel streams for dissemination – public facing (for example, through reports led by eSafety and published on eSafety’s website, webinars) and peer-reviewed publications.
- The SML shared their ideas for peer-reviewed publications with the AAG and invited members to collaborate on their ideas for pre-registration, as listed below:
 - Wellbeing impacts for children and young people
 - Intentions to adhere with SMMA
 - Perceptions and attitudes towards SMMA
 - Digital harm for children and young people
 - Parent-child cohesion and parent experiences.
- The SML encouraged AAG members to raise any additional ideas for pre-registration with the group, noting pre-registrations are an important tool to support our transparency objectives for the project.
- Other key discussion points centred around:
 - Targeted delivery of findings and reporting to children and young people, and parents and carers.
 - Augmenting reports with descriptive summaries outlining what the findings do and don’t tell us, alongside reporting to help readers make sense of the findings.

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SMMA implementation update

- eSafety's Social Media Age Restriction team provided an update to the AAG on the regulatory guidance and eSafety's approach to compliance, noting that a compliance update would be published in late March 2026.
- AAG members were appreciative of this update, as the information on compliance processes and industry involvement in SMMA implementation provides important context for interpreting the evaluation findings.

Any other business and close

- There was a discussion about the significant media interest, freedom of information requests and increasing volume of requests for AAG members to comment on the SMMA.
- eSafety reminded AAG members to inform them of any forthcoming publications that cover the SMMA legislation.
- eSafety reminded AAG members to keep their conflict of interest declarations up to date and alert the Secretariat as/when there are changes to these.
- eSafety thanked members for their time and thoughtful contributions over the year and formally closed the meeting.

Action Items

- eSafety advised that they will share draft public-facing reporting with AAG for peer review.
- Members to share and confirm pre-registrations with the broader AAG group and eSafety.
- Members to review draft minutes of this AAG meeting prior to publication on the Evaluation Hub.
- Members to update eSafety of any change to conflict of interest declarations.

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