



22 November 2024

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Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications
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Canberra ACT 2600

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Dear Committee Secretary,

Inquiry into the Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Bill 2024 [Provisions]

The Australian Psychological Society (APS) is the leading professional association for psychologists in Australia and is dedicated to advancing the scientific discipline and ethical practice of psychology. Our work is informed by the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals,¹ which include the promotion of health and wellbeing. Psychology is an essential component of holistic healthcare and is associated with better health outcomes and overall wellbeing.²

The APS acknowledges the invitation to provide a submission to the Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee's Inquiry into the Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Bill 2024. We appreciate the importance of addressing online safety for young Australians and commend the Committee for examining this Bill.

However, the APS is concerned that the time for making a submission — one business day — is manifestly inadequate to properly assess and provide input into a matter of such complexity and significance. The development of legislation in relation to age restrictions on social media requires careful consideration of the extensive body of research on child and adolescent development, the psychological impacts of social media, and broader societal implications.

Rushed commentary on such a complex and psychologically nuanced issue risks failing to adequately consider the evidence, potentially leading to unintended consequences for young people and the Australian community. The APS strongly believes that informed contributions from experts and stakeholders are essential to crafting a regulatory framework that balances safety, autonomy, access to information and community, and the psychological wellbeing of all people involved.

¹ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (2022). *Sustainable Development*.
<https://sdqs.un.org/>

² American Psychological Association. (2020). *What do psychology and psychologists offer humanity?*
<https://www.apa.org/international/global-insights/world-needs-psychology>

Given these concerns, the APS must respectfully decline to provide a submission within the allocated timeframe.

We strongly recommend that the Committee seek to extend the consultation period to allow for comprehensive engagement with psychologists, psychological scientists and other key stakeholders. This would ensure that any policy and regulatory changes are underpinned by robust evidence and reflect the best interests of all Australians.

The APS remains committed to supporting the Committee's important work in fostering a safer online environment. We would welcome the opportunity to contribute to this Inquiry if an appropriate consultation period is established. We can be contacted via email at aps@adelaide.edu.au if further information or input is requested.

Yours sincerely

Dr Zena Burgess FAPS FAICD
Chief Executive Officer