



Tasmanian Catholic Schools Parents Council

21 December 2021

TCSPC Submission for the: **INQUIRY INTO SOCIAL MEDIA AND ONLINE SAFETY**

Good afternoon,

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the above Inquiry.

By way of background, the Tasmanian Catholic Schools Parents Council (TCSPC) is a collaborative and representative organisation dedicated to assisting Catholic School parents (and children), ensuring they have voice at both a local and national level. We also aim to help with Parent Engagement within Catholic Education as a whole, and to help and empower parents take an active role in the education of their children.

Specifically, in regard to some points of the Terms of Reference, we would like to make the following comments:

We are a strong advocate of the Australian Governments 'eSafety Commissioner' and in particular have found two aspects which are excellent: the free webinars that have been offered, and which will continue to be offered into 2022, in regards to e-safety topics and; the vast array of online support that is available. We have attended a number of the webinars and found them very well run and extremely relevant.

As a Council that represents (Catholic School) parents, we are aware of the angst and concern that parents have in regard to their children accessing harmful content and conduct. Despite filters and parents being observant to their children's use of online platforms, there remains real and anecdotal feedback of many children inadvertently accessing content, or being contacted by, for example, other game players who do not have a child's best interests at heart. We welcome anything this inquiry can identify to improve protection from harmful social media and online content and conduct .

With regard to social media (for example Facebook, TikTok, etc.), through pressure from the media, the Commonwealth Government, and governments and organisations around the world, there has been improvement in monitoring and censoring of behaviour, messaging, information, language, contact, and content. However, there continues to be room for improvement in all of these areas. We urge the Commonwealth Government to continue working with leading cyber safety organisations with expertise and experience in child safety, to ensure



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regulation of social media is strengthened to ensure our children are safe from inappropriate content, conduct and contact.

Throughout the year, the TCSPC has supported individual schools with funding to assist 'Parent Engagement', with many schools using funding to engage professional speakers to address parents on subjects aimed at assisting the parent/child relationship. One clear theme coming through is that children are experiencing levels of anxiety, stress and worry at levels that are greater than previous. An identified reason for this is the pressure children feel through their 'online experience'. Some examples include: feeling the need to keep up with their peers; not wanting to be seen as 'different by not being active on line; stress felt because others seem to be leading the perfect lives. From a parent's perspective, there is also the pressure of constantly worrying about the amount of time children are spending online, and as mentioned earlier, the risk of inappropriate content etc.

In summary, the TCSPC supports the **INQUIRY INTO SOCIAL MEDIA AND ONLINE SAFETY**, and we welcome actions that will have a positive outcome for both parents and children.

Regards,

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