



THE SENATE

## ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS REFERENCES COMMITTEE

### **Sample of individual submissions made in response to a campaign**

#### **Explanatory note from the committee secretariat**

The committee received approximately 3400 short submissions from individuals expressing concerns and opposition to age verification. While the content of these submissions varied, they make similar points and follow a similar format, reflecting that they were prompted by larger campaigns by interest groups encouraging supporters and other individuals to make a submission.

The committee has decided to publish a representative sample of such submissions received.

The committee thanks all individuals who took the time to put their views on this important issue and appreciates their contribution to the committee's work.

Dear Sir/Madam,

I write to make a submission on Age Assurance, which I hope will assist the Senate.

My primary concerns that I would like you to consider are:

- \* Existing evidence does not support the effectiveness of age verification systems. The age assurance trial's cherry-picked data overestimates their performance, while citing incomplete or contested studies that ignore contradictory findings on online harms. This flawed methodology undermines the trial's conclusions and casts doubt on age verification systems' ability to achieve their intended purpose.
- \* Age assurance undermines online privacy as all users must demonstrate their age, potentially exposing sensitive information. Furthermore, tech companies outside the jurisdiction may exploit age verification data for user profiling, compromising individuals' anonymity and allowing targeted advertising and data exploitation. This erodes trust and control over personal information.
- \* Age assurance as a digital ID would make users identifiable, allowing employers to discipline them for lawful speech and increasing the risk of defamation claims. This would lead to self-censorship, as individuals would be less likely to express opinions or share content for fear of retribution or litigation, chilling free speech.

Please stop age verification. Thank you for considering my concerns.

Regards,

Dear Sir/Madam,

Please consider this to be my submission to the Senate, concerning the Age Assurance Inquiry.

In particular I am concerned about the following issues:

1. I believe age assurance undermines online privacy because it requires all users to prove their age, relying on private data collection and storage.

Given the tech industry's poor track record with data governance, this increases the risk of privacy breaches.

2. "I fear age assurance as a form of digital ID will chill my free speech. If I must prove my age online, I'll lose anonymity and self-censor, lest my words be misattributed or judged based on my age, not their merit."

3. I feel my rights as a parent are being undermined because the government is increasingly trying to regulate what online content my children can access.

I believe I'm best placed to make those decisions, not a centralized authority. This overreach is eroding my ability to govern my child's development and exposure, undermining my parental autonomy.

Please stop age verification. Thank you for considering my concerns.

Regards,

Dear Sir/Madam,

I write to make a submission on Age Assurance, which I hope will assist the Senate.

"As someone who values online expression, I'm wary of age assurance as a digital ID. If it strips me of anonymity, I'll self-censor for fear of retribution. Free speech will suffer, and I won't be alone in my silence."

"As a student, I'm concerned that a social media ban would undermine my education. By limiting access to YouTube and other platforms, I'll miss out on valuable learning resources and online skills, like internet etiquette, until I'm 16. This delay will stunt my development and leave me unprepared for an increasingly digital world."

"As a parent, I feel my rights are being undermined because centralized authorities are increasingly controlling what my child can access online, eroding my ability to govern their development and make decisions about their exposure to certain content."

I hope the Senate Committee will make it clear that Age Assurance does not work.

Yours sincerely,

Dear Sir/Madam,

This email is my submission on Age Verification to be considered as part of your inquiry.

Here are some of the concerns I would like you to consider:

1. "As I'm forced to prove my age online, I'm exposing myself to potential data breaches. The collection and storage of my personal info for age verification puts me at risk, given the tech industry's dubious track record on data protection."
2. As a parent, I feel my rights are being undermined by government regulators who restrict my children's access to online content. I know my children best and should decide what forums, educational sites, and political debates they can access based on their maturity level, not a one-size-fits-all government policy.
3. As someone invested in Australia's global standing, I worry that age assurance risks undermining our international reputation by creating a hostile environment for free expression and innovation, and undermining our credibility when speaking out against censorship abroad.

I hope your report will make it clear that age verification does not work and should be stopped.

With regards,

Dear Sir/Madam,

Please consider this to be my submission to the Senate, concerning the Age Assurance Inquiry.

Here's the main concerns I would ask you to please consider:

- \* From what I've seen, I'm not convinced that age verification systems are effective. Studies often mistake correlation for causation, and trials selectively present data to exaggerate the success of existing solutions. To me, the evidence just doesn't add up to support their claims.
- \* As someone concerned about online privacy, I worry that age assurance measures could be misused. While age verification has merits, there's little to prevent tech companies from exploiting this data for user profiling, undermining our privacy and control over personal information.
- \* I'm hesitant to express myself online if age assurance measures are in place. As an adult, I risk being caught up in a social media ban, and the loss of online anonymity could silence me. The fear of being identified and penalized would stifle my willingness to share my thoughts, effectively chilling my free speech.

I look forward to the Senate's careful consideration of my concerns.

Kind regards,

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing with my concerns about age verification.

In my opinion, age assurance undermines online privacy because tech companies outside the jurisdiction can easily exploit age verification data for user profiling without facing consequences.

"As someone who values free speech, I'm hesitant to use age assurance because being identifiable will chill my online expression, fearing employer backlash for my lawful but unpopular opinions."

As a parent, I feel my rights are being undermined by mandated systems that could override my consent and replace my family's values with bureaucratic judgment. I, not government regulators, am best placed to decide what online content my children may access.

I hope the Senate Committee will make it clear that Age Assurance does not work.

Very best wishes,

Dear Sir/Madam,

Please consider this to be my submission to the Senate, concerning the Age ID / Social Media Ban Inquiry.

As someone who expresses opinions online, I self-censor fearing age assurance will incorrectly flag my content as matures-only, suppressing my legitimate speech and stifling public discourse.

As a small tech business owner, I feel the proposed regulations put me at a disadvantage. I can't afford the costly age-assurance systems that big tech can, and I may have to block Australia entirely, reducing online diversity. This locks in big tech's dominance.

As someone from a marginalized group, age assurance can disadvantage me. Facial estimation systems may not work well for my skin tone or indigenous features. If I have traditional facial tattoos, like some Maori do, the system is even less likely to work for me.

Please make it clear that age verification is not acceptable and should be stopped

Regards,



Dear Sir/Madam,

Please consider this to be my submission to the Senate, concerning the Age Assurance Inquiry.

My main arguments are:

1. Based on the limited information provided, I don't believe there is sufficient evidence to conclude that age verification systems are effective. The lack of transparency around the systems and their privacy and security impact makes a thorough evaluation impossible. Additionally, the age assurance trial relies on contested or incomplete studies while disregarding contradictory findings, calling into question the validity of its conclusions.
2. As someone concerned about online privacy, I believe age assurance undermines it. Requiring all users to prove their age enables tech companies, especially those outside the jurisdiction, to exploit this data for user profiling without sufficient safeguards.
3. "As a digital citizen, I'm concerned that age assurance as a form of digital ID would stifle my free speech. I've seen legitimate UK commentary improperly age-gated, and I fear losing anonymity will silence me due to fear of retribution or judgment."

I hope your report will make it clear that age verification does not work and should be stopped.

Very best wishes

Dear Sir/Madam,

Please consider this to be my submission to the Senate, concerning the Age ID / Social Media Ban Inquiry.

In particular I am concerned about the following issues:

- As someone concerned about online privacy, I believe age assurance's reliance on private data collection and storage, coupled with the tech industry's poor track record in data governance, significantly increases the risk of privacy breaches.
- As a small tech business owner, I feel suffocated by the new regulations. I couldn't possibly afford the expensive age-assurance infrastructure, giving 'big tech' a monopoly. It's crushing diversity and forcing us to block Australia or close up shop.
- As a disabled child, complex verification processes are harder for me to navigate due to my neurodivergence or cognitive impairments, effectively silencing my participation and penalizing my family.

I hope your report will make it clear that age verification does not work and should be stopped.

Regards,

Dear Sir/Madam,

I write to make my submissions to the Senate Inquiry concerning Age Verification.

I'm concerned that age assurance undermines my online privacy, as it relies on collecting and storing my sensitive data, which is vulnerable to breaches due to the tech industry's poor track record.

"As someone who values free speech, I fear age assurance as a digital ID would strip me of online anonymity, silencing me for fear of repercussions."

As a parent, I feel my rights are being undermined by age-assurance frameworks that impose a "one size fits all" standard, taking away my ability to decide what online content is appropriate for my own children. I know what's best for them, not the government.

Thank you in advance for considering my concerns.

Yours,

Dear Sir/Madam,

Please consider this to be my submission to the Senate, concerning the Age Assurance Inquiry.

As someone who values online privacy, I'm concerned that age assurance will force me to disclose personal information just to access certain websites, undermining my anonymity and privacy.

The children's social media ban could actually worsen online safety. Parents may reduce supervision due to a false sense of security, while children might believe anything they can access is safe. This combination could lead to increased vulnerability.

As a small tech entrepreneur, I'm stifled by regulations that hand censorship keys to Big Tech, allowing them to squash competition and silence innovative voices like mine.

Please stop age verification. Thank you for considering my concerns.

Best wishes

Dear Sir/Madam,

This email is my submission on Age Verification to be considered as part of your inquiry.

Based on the available evidence, I don't believe age verification systems are effective. The trial's data seems cherry-picked to make the solutions appear better than they really are.

As someone who values online privacy, I'm concerned that age assurance will force me to disclose personal information to tech companies. Even if they promise not to misuse it, I worry they'll use my age data for profiling without my consent.

"I'd self-censor online if age assurance made me identifiable, fearing my employer's retaliation for my lawful but perhaps unpopular opinions, silencing my free speech."

I look forward to the Senate's careful consideration of my concerns.

Best regards,

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to make a submission to the Senate, concerning the Age Assurance Inquiry.

Age assurance requires all users to prove their age, compromising anonymity. Companies outside the jurisdiction could exploit this data for user profiling, undermining online privacy, as there are limited safeguards to prevent misuse of the collected age verification information.

Age assurance, by making users identifiable, enables threats of defamation claims and employer discipline for lawful speech. This chilling effect would discourage people from freely expressing themselves online, as they may fear repercussions, leading to self-censorship and a less open digital public square.

A children's social media ban can create a false sense of security for both parents and children, leading to reduced supervision and increased trust in accessible content, potentially worsening online safety as children may unknowingly engage with riskier material.

I hope the Senate Committee will make it clear that Age Assurance does not work.

Regards,

Dear Sir/Madam,

I write to make a submission on Age Assurance, which I hope will assist the Senate.

The children's social media ban could worsen online safety by increasing age verification requests, risking children's privacy through frequent ID provision. Additionally, parents may relax supervision, assuming the ban ensures safety, leaving children more vulnerable to online threats and potentially increasing harm.

The existing evidence does not support age verification systems working because there is no evidence beyond self-assessment to check privacy, and many studies mistakenly link internet use and harm through correlation rather than proving causation.

Age assurance as a form of digital ID would have a chilling effect on free speech as it could improperly restrict access to legitimate speech, including political commentary, and inadvertently ban adults from social media, silencing their voices.

Please make it clear that age verification is not acceptable and should be stopped

Regards,

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to make a submission to the Senate, concerning the Age Assurance Inquiry.

In particular I am concerned about the following issues:

1. Based on the evidence, age verification systems are not proven to work. Many studies only show a correlation between internet use and harm, not a direct causal link.
2. As someone who values online privacy, I believe age assurance undermines it by forcing all users to disclose personal information just to prove their age, which is concerning.
3. I can't freely express myself online if my identity is linked to everything I say. Age assurance would let employers punish me for lawful speech that they disagree with.

I hope that my concerns will be fully taken on board by the Senate.

Yours sincerely,