From:	s47F @meta.com>
Sent:	Thursday, 16 May 2024 11:28 AM
To:	Gannon, Bridget; Irwin, Andrew; Hyles, Andrew
Cc:	s47F
Subject:	Catch up?

Hi Bridget, Andrew I & Andrew H,

I hope you are all well during a no doubt busy Budget Week.

I wanted to touch base and see if you had time to catch up on next Monday 20th May, 2024 either late morning or afternoon? Given the significant number of reforms we're all working on together, I thought it might be helpful to connect and share updates.

Let me know if there are some times that work. I'll be in Canberra to meet with s47F so can come to you all.

Kind regards,

s47F

--
s47F | Australia, Japan, Korea, New Zealand & Pacific Islands
M: s47F | E: s47F @fb.com

∞ Meta

From:	s47F @google.com>
Sent:	Thursday, 20 June 2024 7:17 AM
To:	Gannon, Bridget
Cc:	s22(1)(a)(ii) s47F
Subject:	Re: Canberra catch up [SEC=UNOFFICIAL]

Morning Bridget.

Thanks for coming back to me and apologies for the delayed response - it's been somewhat hectic!
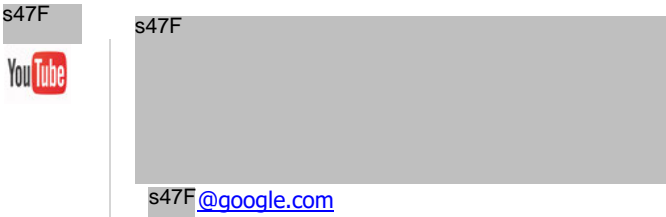
Possible times from our side:

- Tuesday 25 June between 1 and 3
- Thursday 27 June after 11

Please let me know if there is a window that works for you.

We are keen to discuss the full suite of issues currently on our plates but in particular the age verification trial.

Cheers,

s47F

You Tube

s47F

s47F @google.com

On Sun, Jun 2, 2024 at 4:11 PM Gannon, Bridget <Bridget.Gannon@infrastructure.gov.au> wrote:

UNOFFICIAL

Hi s47F

Yep 😊 – the weekend after estimates is always better than the weekend before!

The afternoon of 24 June looks pretty good.

Is there a time that suits you best? I've cc'd s22(1)(a)(ii) who can help us find a time.

Looking forward to seeing you and Lucinda.

Cheers,

BG

Bridget Gannon *(she/her)*

Online Safety, Media and Platforms Division

bridget.gannon@infrastructure.gov.au

P +61 2 6136 s22(1)(a) • M s22(1)(a)(ii)

UNOFFICIAL

From: s47F @google.com>
Sent: Sunday, 2 June 2024 3:53 PM
To: Gannon, Bridget <Bridget.Gannon@infrastructure.gov.au>
Cc: s47F @google.com>
Subject: Canberra catch up

Hi Bridget,

I hope this finds you well and relieved with Estimates behind you!

s47F I will be in Canberra the week of 24 June and thought it would be a good opportunity to touch base on the many work streams currently underway.

Would you be free to meet with us either in the afternoon of Tuesday 25 June or the morning of Thursday 27 June?

Cheers,

s47F

s47F

s47F @google.com

From:	s47F @apple.com>
Sent:	Tuesday, 2 July 2024 10:53 AM
To:	Gannon, Bridget
Subject:	Catch up

Hi Bridget

Great to bump into you last week. Hope your sitting fortnight is going well.

We caught up with the Minister's Office and they asked us to be in touch with you about the age verification pilot. We could share information about how Apple has been thinking about this issue, if helpful.

I'd propose that s47F   join that conversation. Is there a time next week or the following that might especially work for you?

Look forward to speaking then. Much appreciated - cheers

s47F

s47F

2 Southbank Boulevard
Melbourne VIC 3006
s47F
s47F   @apple.com

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Briefing information – age assurance trial

Overview
- On 1 May 2024, the Australian Government committed $6.5 million in the 2024–25 Budget to conduct a trial of age assurance technologies for access to pornography and social media.
- The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communication and the Arts is responsible for this trial.
- The trial will provide an independent assessment of the effectiveness of a range of different age assurance technologies, reviewing them in relation to a range of criteria, particularly privacy and security requirements.

The elements of the trial
- The Trial involves technology assessments, research, consultation and policy advice.
- The **technology** elements include:
  - Testing the market for existing technologies that could be used to limit access to online pornography by children under 18-years-old; and
  - Testing the market for existing technologies that could be used to limit access to social media platforms for an age range between 13- to 16-years-old.
- The **consultation** elements include:
  - Consultation with a Cross-Government Working Group, including agencies with expertise on related technologies, and responsibility for privacy, safety and security.
  - Consultation with Australian youth, through engagement with the Office for Youth.
  - Stakeholder engagement with parent groups and experts, academics, industry groups, community and civil society organisations, and First Nations representative bodies.
- The **research** elements include:
  - Consumer research on Australians' attitudes towards the use of age assurance technologies for access to online services; and
  - Literature review on international implementation precedents for age assurance, academic/international evidence on age limits for social media, and social media harms/benefits.
- The Department will provide **policy advice** to Government, informed by the findings of the trial, research and consultation.

Definitions
- **Age assurance** is defined by the eSafety Commissioner as a broad term that includes both age verification and age estimation solutions. The word 'assurance' refers to the varying levels of certainty different solutions offer in establishing an age.
  - **Age verification** is defined by the eSafety Commissioner as measures that determine a person's age to a high level of accuracy. An example of age verification is the use of physical or digital government identity documents to establish a person's age.'
  - **Age estimation** technologies provide an approximate age to allow or deny access to age-restricted online content or services

- Age assurance is not necessarily an exact science. Technology might look at language used, key strokes, sites accessed, and in some cases check that against the age claimed by a user to limit a young person's access to harmful material.
    - This lower threshold could involve less collection of sensitive data, alleviating some privacy and security concerns.

Page **2** of **2**

Australian Government **Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts**	**Meeting/Event Brief** **MB24-000517**

To: The Hon Michelle Rowland MP, Minister for Communications

MEETING: Age Assurance consultation with the Youth Steering Committee (Office for Youth)

Timing: Wednesday 14 August 2024, 11:00am – 11:50am

Venue: Committee MG49, Australian Parliament House

Meeting with:

- Youth Steering Committee (Office for Youth) – see bios at **Attachment A**
- The Hon Dr Anne Aly MP, Minister for Early Childhood Education, Minister for Youth
- The Hon Emma McBride MP, Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, Assistant Minister for Rural and Regional Health (**observer only**)

You requested the meeting with the Youth Steering Committee to discuss young people's attitudes towards social media and use of age assurance technology in Australia.

Our Proposed Objectives:

To hear from young Australians about their experiences of the benefits and harms of social media; views on what is an appropriate age to begin using social media; and willingness to engage with age assurance technologies to access social media and age-restricted online content.

Their Objective:

To engage in policy and program design by providing insights to the Government on youth experiences.

Key Points:

Meeting structure

1. You will give a 5-minute address at the start of the meeting and provide final remarks (see agenda below and Talking Points at **Attachment B**).

11:00am	**Acknowledgment of Country, welcome and introductions**	Andrew Irwin
11:10am	**Address from Minister**	Minister Rowland
11:15am	**Discussion on Age Assurance** *OFY to support with the use of Mentimeter and Minister and DITRDCA to guide discussion.*	Youth Steering Committee members
11:45am	**Final remarks from the Minister**	Minister Rowland
11:50am	**Meeting close**	

2. The department will support you to facilitate discussion with the Youth Steering Committee. To guide the conversation, the department, your office, and the Office for Youth agreed to 4 key questions, supplemented by discussion prompts (see **Attachment C**).

1

a.   The Office for Youth will use online surveying platform Mentimeter during the meeting to prompt initial responses from the Youth Steering Committee.

3.   The Youth Steering Committee will receive briefing material about the age assurance trial ahead of the meeting (see **Attachment D**).

Office for Youth – Youth Steering Committee

4.   The Office for Youth is a dedicated unit in the Department of Education, established to support the contribution of young people and advocates, improve and harmonise policy across government, and ensure government is communicating effectively with young people.

5.   Under the direction of the Minister for Youth and the Office for Youth, the Youth Steering Committee supports implementation of *Engage! A strategy to include young people in the decisions we make* and advises on whole-of-Australian-Government priorities.

6.   The Youth Steering Committee comprises 15 members aged 13–25 with diverse backgrounds from across Australia. Eight ongoing members are halfway through their 2-year term, with 7 new members commencing in July 2024.

Background

7.   The Australian Government committed $6.5 million in the 2024–25 Budget for the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communication and the Arts (the department) to conduct a trial of age assurance technologies that could be used to limit access to:

a.   online pornography by children and young people under the age of 18; and

b.   social media platforms for an age range of between 13 and 16 years.

8.   To ensure that stakeholders' views are considered as part of the trial process, the department is conducting targeted consultation with young people, parents, academics, industry, community and civil society organisations, and First Nations representative bodies.

9.   Given the direct impact of any age assurance policy decisions on Australian youth, understanding their perspectives on age assurance technologies and accessing social media is essential to finding an effective solution.

Sensitive and Critical Information: Nil

Name: Bridget Gannon
Position: A/g First Assistant Secretary
Division: Online Safety, Media and Platforms
Ph: 6136 s22(1)(a)(ii)
Mob: s22(1)(a)(ii)
Date Cleared: 12 August 2024

Contact Officer: Andrew Irwin
Division: Online Safety Branch
Ph: 6136 s22(1)(a)(ii)

Attachments:

Attachment A: Biographical Details

Attachment B: Talking Points

Attachment C: Discussion Questions: Youth Steering Committee

Attachment D: Youth Steering Committee pre-briefing

YOUTH STEERING COMMITTEE

FACTSHEET AND COMMITTEE BIOGRAPHIES

OFFICE FOR YOUTH

- The Office for Youth has been established as a dedicated unit in the Department of Education to support the contribution of young people and advocates, improve and harmonise policy across government, and ensure government is communicating effectively with young people.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT MODEL

- In the 2022-23 Budget, the Australian Government committed ongoing funding to establish a new Youth Engagement Model (the Model) to formally engage young people in policy and program design. The initiatives under the model include

    - **Establishment of an Office for Youth** which includes a Youth Steering Committee, an Australian Government Interdepartmental Committee on Youth, and an Australian Government Intergovernmental Coordination Committee on Youth.

    - **Development of a youth engagement strategy** which was delivered in March 2024.

    - **Establishment of 5 youth advisory groups** to work directly with Australian Government departments and agencies on discrete policy and program development.

    - **Funding for the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition (AYAC)** to support its critical role in youth advocacy, engagement and research.

YOUTH STEERING COMMITTEE

- The Committee is made up of 15 members aged 13 to 25 from across Australia. Full membership of the Committee was announced on 6 July 2024.

- The Committee supported the development of the Australian Government's new youth engagement strategy, *Engage! A strategy to include young people in the decisions we make*.

    - The Committee remains an ongoing commitment under Action 1.1 of *Engage!*.

- The Committee is under the direction of the Minister for Youth, and the Office for Youth.

    - As part of their workplan, the Committee will support the Office for Youth to implement *Engage!* and advise on whole-of-Australian-Government priorities.

- The Committee is supported to participate in meetings and provided with leadership training and support through the Youth Engagement Model's funding of AYAC.

YOUTH STEERING COMMITTEE BIOGRAPHIES

s47F

ATTACHMENT B

<u>TALKING POINTS</u>

<u>Opening address</u>

- Thank you for meeting with us today to discuss the age assurance trial. This trial responds to increasing community concern about the impact of harmful content online, for example pornography, and of social media on young Australians.

- As outlined in the pre-briefing you received, the trial is being undertaken by my department. Its objective is to determine the effectiveness of available age assurance technologies as an option to:
  - o prevent access to online pornography by children and young people under the age of 18; and
  - o age-limit access to social media platforms for an age range of between 13 and 16 years.

- As part of this work, my department and I are engaging with users of technology, including young Australians like yourselves, parents and parenting experts, academics, the digital industry, community and civil society groups, and First Nations representatives.

- When it comes to the two streams of the trial – the issue of access to pornography is relatively straightforward, as this element is dealing with content that is already <u>illegal</u> for children to consume. Because of that, the trial will focus on technologies that can restrict access to these sites for people aged under 18.

- The question of an appropriate minimum age for access to social media, and the use of age assurance technologies to enforce this, is more complicated. That's why I thought today's discussion should focus on the social media element of the trial.

- At this stage, there is no clear and agreed age for limiting social media access, and both the Prime Minister and I have made it clear that what is implemented at a Commonwealth level must be <u>effective</u>. When I say 'effective', I mean effective in the protection – not isolation – of young people.

- We are hearing from young people – as well as mental health organisations like Blackdog, BeyondBlue and ReachOut – about the benefits of social media interactions as well as the harms they experience.

- The Government wants to minimise the harm that can arise from young people using social media and accessing content online that is not appropriate for them.

- I want to emphasise that there are no right or wrong answers to the questions we'll be discussing today. It is important for me to hear from you about your lived experiences and views on age assurance technologies and social media.
- On that note, let's now move on to the discussion portion of today's meeting.

[Discussion to be facilitated by the department and Office for Youth]

Closing remarks

- Thank you again for your time today.
- It's been great to hear your insights on social media and age assurance technologies. All of this will help my department in looking at that question of effectiveness, and help the Government decide what to do when the trial ends.

Roundtable: Youth Steering Committee (Office for Youth)

Time: 11:00am – 11:50am
Date: Wednesday 14 August 2024
Venue: Committee MG49, Australian Parliament House
Attendees:

- Youth Steering Committee – 13 of 15 members (bios at **Attachment A**)
- The Hon Michelle Rowland MP, Minister for Communications
- The Hon Dr Anne Aly MP, Minister for Early Childhood Education, Minister for Youth
- The Hon Emma McBride MP, Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, Assistant Minister for Rural and Regional Health (**observer only**)
- Advisers
- OfY staff (Gemma Sandlant, s22(1)(a)(ii)) and Age Assurance Taskforce staff (Andrew, s22(1)(a)(ii))

Facilitator: Andrew Irwin / Minister Rowland

AGENDA ITEM	LEAD	START TIME
1. **Acknowledgment of Country, welcome and introductions**	Andrew Irwin	11:00am
2. **Address from Minister**	Minister Rowland	11:10am
3. **Discussion on Age Assurance** - OFY to support with the use of Mentimeter - Minister and DITRDCA to guide discussion	All	11:15am
4. **Final remarks from the Minister**	Minister Rowland	11:45am

ANNOTATED AGENDA

Agenda item	Talking points
1. **Acknowledgment of Country, welcome and introductions** 11:00-11:10	• Welcome everyone. My name is Andrew Irwin, I lead the Online Safety Branch in the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts. • Before we begin, I'd like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands from which we are all meeting today, and pay respects to their elders past, present and emerging. I extend that respect to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are in the room with us today. • We're very grateful to you all for making the time to meet with us. • Today we have the honour of being joined in our discussion by Michelle Rowland, the Minister for Communications, and we also have Emma McBride, the Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, and for Rural and Regional Health, here to listen to the conversation. • And I believe you have already met Dr Anne Aly, the Minister for Youth, who is also joining us. • As there are a lot of people here today, let's go around the room and briefly introduce ourselves. • *Introductions* • Thank you. And I have my team here from the department s22(1)(a)(ii) • Before we dive into today's session, I'd like to let you know that the department will arrange to meet with the Youth Steering Committee again in a few months, to address any follow-up questions coming out of today's discussion, and to provide an update on how your

Agenda item	Talking points
	• contributions are informing the work of the age assurance trial. • I now invite Minister Rowland to make her opening address.
2. Address from Minister 11:10-11:15	*Delivered by Minister Rowland – see Minister's Talking Points at* **Attachment B**
3. Discussion on Age Assurance 11:15-11:45 OFY to support with the use of Mentimeter Minister and DITRDCA to guide discussion	• Thank you Minister. • We have 4 key questions we would like to discuss with you today. We will ask you to first answer on Menti, and we will then discuss your thoughts as a group. Thank you to the Office for Youth for preparing and running Menti. • s22(1)(a)(ii) *to give instructions on accessing the Menti survey.* **11.15am** **Question 1:** Why do you use social media? What do you enjoy about social media? Is there a particular platform you prefer? Discussion prompts: • What kind of benefits does social media bring? • Can social media be harmful – and, if so, what are the harms that concern you? • Are some platforms more beneficial or harmful than others? • Do you have any ideas on what you might want to spend your time doing if you were not spending as much time on social media? **~11.23am**

Agenda item	Talking points
	Question 2: Most platforms say you must be 13 to create a social media account. How would you feel if this minimum age was increased as a legal requirement? What age do you think would be reasonable? Discussion prompts: • Do you have any thoughts on the benefits and/or negative consequences of age limits? • [*If the majority of the group agrees on an age*] Why do you think this age is most appropriate? **~11.31am** **Question 3:** How likely would you be to use an age assurance technology to access social media? For example, providing your ID or using facial recognition to prove you meet the minimum age requirement. Discussion prompts: • What is your current understanding of the different types of age assurance technologies and would the differences impact on your willingness to take up or apply these technologies in your social media use? • What would make you more or less likely to use age assurance (e.g. privacy settings, security for data, accessibility concerns)? • How effective do you think age assurance would be in keeping underage people away from social media? **~11.38am** **Question 4:** Aside from age assurance, are there other supports or government actions that you think could help improve safety in online environments? Discussion prompts:

Agenda item	Talking points
	• Who should be primarily responsible for the safety of young people online? The Government? Platforms? Parents? • What actions should those who are responsible take to keep you safe? • Are you aware of how to access help/support if you have personally experienced harm online/if you're worried about issues like sextortion, violent content or image-based abuse? • What sort of education would help young people understand the benefits and risks of social media and how to use it safely (e.g. advertising campaigns, school curriculum, digital literacy programs)?
4. **Final remarks from the Minister** 11:45-11:50	*Delivered by Minister Rowland – see Minister's Talking Points at* ***Attachment B***

	Meeting/Event Brief
Australian Government **Department of Infrastructure, Transport,** **Regional Development, Communications and the Arts**	**MB24-000546**

To: The Hon Michelle Rowland MP, Minister for Communications

MEETING: Age Assurance consultation at Special Meeting of eSafety's Youth Council

Timing: **Thursday 22 August 2024**, **5.30pm AEST to 6.15pm AEST**

Venue: Virtual Meeting

Meeting with:

- eSafety Youth Council – see bios at **Attachment A**
- Julie Inman Grant, eSafety Commissioner
- Delia Rickard, Independent Reviewer

You will be attending the first half of a Special Meeting with the eSafety Youth Council to discuss young people's attitudes towards social media and use of age assurance technology in Australia.

This is your first meeting with the new Youth Council members, who commenced their term in April 2024.

Our Proposed Objectives:

To hear from youth representatives about their experiences of benefits and harms of social media; views on what is an appropriate age to begin using social media; and willingness to engage with age assurance technologies to access social media and age-restricted online content.

Their Objective:

To engage in policy and program design by sharing insights and experiences about online safety with eSafety and the Government from a youth perspective.

Key Points:

Meeting structure

1.   The meeting is separated in two parts – you will give an address after introductions, and then participate in an interactive session on age assurance with the Youth Council members. Talking points are at **Attachment B** and the agenda is at **Attachment C**.

2.   In the second part of the meeting, the department will support Delia Rickard to participate in a session on the Independent Review of the *Online Safety Act 2021*, which you are not expected to attend. eSafety have advised that the eSafety Commissioner is also expected to leave at the end of the session on age assurance.

3.   The department will support you to facilitate discussion with the Youth Council.
To guide the conversation, the Council has received briefing material ahead of the meeting, including a list of key questions supplemented by discussion prompts. This material was agreed between the department, your office, and eSafety, and is available at **Attachment D**.

1

4.   The discussion questions for the eSafety Youth Council meeting are the same as those for the Youth Steering Committee that you attended on 14 August.

eSafety Youth Council

5.   The Council facilitates a direct line for young Australians to share the insights and voices to the Australian Government and eSafety, ensuring young people remain central in the decision-making process for policies and programs impacting them.

6.   The Council was appointed in April 2024, aged 13 to 24 years, from a diverse range of experiences, genders, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and locations in Australia.

Background

7.   The Australian Government committed $6.5 million in the 2024–25 Budget for the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communication and the Arts (the department) to conduct a trial of age assurance technologies that could be used to limit access to:

    a.   online pornography by children and young people under the age of 18; and

    b.   social media platforms for an age range of between 13 and 16 years.

8.   To ensure that stakeholders' views are considered as part of the trial process, the department is conducting targeted consultation with young people, parents, academics, industry, community and civil society organisations, and First Nations representative bodies. To date, consultation has been held with the Office for Youth (14 August) and parent groups (16 August).

9.   Given the direct impact of any age assurance policy decisions on Australian youth, understanding their perspectives on age assurance technologies and accessing social media is essential to finding an effective solution.

Sensitive and Critical Information: Nil

> Clearing Officer: Bridget Gannon
> Position: A/g First Assistant Secretary
> Online Safety, Media and Platforms Division
> Ph: 6136 s22(1)(a)(vii)
> Mob: s22(1)(a)(ii)
> Date Cleared: 20 August 2024

> Contact Officer: Andrew Irwin
> Position: Assistant Secretary
> Online Safety Branch
> Ph: 6136 s22(1)(a)(vii)
> Mob: s22(1)(a)(ii)

Attachments:

Attachment A: Biographical Details

Attachment B: Talking Points

Attachment C: Agenda

Attachment D: Pre-Briefing and Discussion Questions: eSafety Youth Council

ATTACHMENT A

<u>BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS</u>

These are the details of all 17 members of the Youth Council. However, we understand that not all members are able to attend the meeting.

s47F

ATTACHMENT B

<u>TALKING POINTS</u>

Opening address

- Thank you for meeting with us today to discuss the age assurance trial and the Online Safety Act Review.

- I will be here for the first part of the meeting to talk about age assurance and I will then leave you with Delia to talk about the review of the Online Safety Act.

- Delia is reviewing Australia's online safety laws and will make recommendations to Government on how we might strengthen our laws.

- The age assurance trial responds to increasing community concern about the impact of harmful content online, for example pornography, and of social media on young Australians.

<u>Background to the trial</u>

- I understand my department has provided some pre-briefing material about the trial it is undertaking. The trial's objective is to determine the effectiveness of available age assurance technologies as an option to:

  o prevent access to online pornography by children and young people under the age of 18; and

  o age-limit access to social media platforms for an age range of between 13 and 16 years.

- That's why we are engaging with users of technology, including young Australians like yourselves, parents and parenting experts, academics, the digital industry, community and civil society groups, and First Nations representatives to inform our work.

- Keeping young people safe online through the use of age assurance is complex, as it involves the balancing of accuracy, privacy, and security considerations in a rapidly-changing industry. That is the key issue we're looking at – whether effective age assurance technologies can be implemented here in Australia.

- When it comes to the two streams of the trial – the issue of access to pornography is relatively straightforward, as this element is dealing with content that is already <u>illegal</u> for children to consume. Because of that, the trial will focus on technologies that can restrict access to these sites for people aged under 18.

- The question of an appropriate minimum age for access to social media, and the use of age assurance technologies to enforce this, is more complicated. That's why I'm suggesting today's discussion focus on the social media element of the trial.

Young peoples' unique perspective

- We understand that consultation with young people is vital to finding the right solution. Much of the debate to date has been people talking <u>about</u> children and families – and we need to talk <u>with</u> them to make sure that whatever we come up with hits the mark.

- If we are going to regulate young people's use of social media we need to take young people's and their parents views, needs and interests into account.

- Last week I met with another energetic group of young people from the Office of Youth's Youth Steering Committee. It was a great discussion and the whole group engaged meaningfully and shared a range of views. I am looking forward to a similar discussion today.

- We are hearing from young people – as well as mental health organisations like Blackdog, BeyondBlue and ReachOut – about the benefits of social media interactions as well as the harms they experience.

Parents' Roundtable

- Last week, I also attended a roundtable with parents and parent groups to hear directly about their views and concerns about the benefits and harms of social media and attitudes towards age assurance technologies.

- What I heard from that discussion is that parents see the harms that are present for children on social media and want action from Government and from platforms to address these issues.

- They also recognise that children engaging with each other online can have great benefits and that young people's digital literacy skills development is important.

Enforcing a minimum age for social media

- I acknowledge that the issue of social media access is complex and that the Government's response must balance the need to keep children safe while also protecting their privacy and allowing them to develop digital literacy.

- To determine the correct minimum age for social media, we have to understand what harms we are trying to protect children from experiencing. Only then can we decide what age young people are resilient and mature enough to engage in these environments.

- Australia is not alone in seeking more accountability for platforms to enforce their own age limits. We are also not alone in questioning whether 13 is an appropriate minimum age, with countries including France, UK and the United States all taking steps to increase and enforce a minimum age.

- We are here to listen to your views about what an appropriate age could be. But one thing both the Prime Minister and I have made clear is that any age limit must be <u>effective</u>. When I say 'effective', I mean effective in the protection – not isolation – of young people.

- Importantly, we are very much a joined-up government working together to get this right. This means we're working closely across portfolios like youth and mental health. I'd particularly like to thank Julie for eSafety's assistance in facilitating today's conversation.

Today's Roundtable

- I want to emphasise that there are no right or wrong answers to the questions we'll be discussing today. It is important for me to hear from you about your lived experiences and views on age assurance technologies and social media.

- On that note, let's now move on to the interactive discussion portion of today's meeting.

[Discussion to be facilitated by the department]

Closing remarks

- Thank you again for your time today.

- It's been great to hear your insights on social media and age assurance technologies. All of this will help my department in looking at that question of effectiveness, and help the Government decide what to do when the trial ends.

Special Meeting of eSafety's Youth Council:
Age Assurance and Review of the Online Safety Act

Date: 22 August 2024
Time: Log on at 5.25pm
5.30 to 7.00pm AEST
Link: **Join the meeting now**

Agenda

Time	Activity	Facilitator
5:30pm AEST	**Welcome – (5 mins)** • Acknowledgement of Country • Meeting expectations • Housekeeping **Introduction by the eSafety Commissioner, Julie Inman Grant (5 mins)**	Departmental Representative (Andrew Irwin)
Part 1		
5:40pm	**Welcome address by the Hon Michelle Rowland MP, Minister for Communications (10 mins)**	Minister Rowland
5:50pm	**Interactive session on age assurance (25 mins)** • Questions provided to the group prior to the meeting • Questions for the Minister	Departmental Representative (Andrew Irwin)
6.15pm	**BREAK (5 mins)**	
Part 2		
6:20pm	**About the Review of the Online Safety Act 2021 (5 mins)** • Introductions	Departmental Representative (Andrew Irwin)
6:25pm	**Interactive session on the Online Safety Act Review (30 mins)** • Questions provided to the group prior to the meeting	Delia Rickard
6:55pm	**Meeting Close (5 mins)** • Wrap-up and next step	Departmental Representative (Andrew Irwin)

Youth Council: Age Assurance Trial (Part 1)

The age assurance trial
- On 1 May 2024, the Australian Government committed $6.5 million in the 2024–25 Budget for the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communication and the Arts (the department) to conduct a trial of age assurance technologies.

What is age assurance?
- Age assurance is a broad term that includes both age *verification* and age *estimation*. The word 'assurance' refers to the different levels of certainty that technologies provide when establishing a user's age.
- *Age verification* determines a person's age to a high level of accuracy. An example is the use of physical or digital government identity documents.
- *Age estimation* provides an approximate age of a person. This lower threshold could involve less collection of personal data.
- Age assurance technologies might examine a user's identity documents like a driver's license, facial features in a photo or live video, voice, key strokes, language used online or the sites they have accessed.

What is the trial doing?
- The age assurance trial will include an independent technical assessment of a range of age assurance technologies, reviewing their effectiveness in relation to various criteria, including accuracy, privacy and security requirements. This assessment will look at 2 streams, considering age assurance technologies that could be used to limit access to:
    - online pornography by children and young people under the age of 18; and
    - social media platforms for an age range of between 13 and 16 years.
- As part of the trial, the department is speaking with a range of groups, including young people, parent groups, academics, industry groups, community organisations, and First Nations bodies.
- The department has also established a Cross-Government Working Group that brings together government agencies with expertise on age assurance, privacy, safety and security.
- The age assurance trial also involves research into consumer attitudes on the use of these technologies, international approaches, evidence surrounding age limits for social media, and the harms and benefits associated with social media use.
- In combination, the technical assessment, consultation and research outcomes will help the department develop advice to Government at the conclusion of the trial. Government can then decide on the next steps.

Why do we want to speak to young Australians?
- The Government wants to minimise the harm that can arise from young people accessing content online that is not appropriate for them and using social media. However, for age assurance technologies to keep young people safe online, they need to be effective. We understand that it is critical to get privacy and security right, and that the conversation around young people's use of social media is complex.
- During the session, we want to hear from you about your experiences on social media (good and bad), how likely you would be to use different age assurance technologies to access social media, and what other initiatives you might like to see from Government to support you to have safe experiences online.

Youth Council: Discussion Questions (Part 1)

Question 1: Why do you use social media? What do you enjoy about social media? Is there a particular platform you prefer?

Discussion prompts:

- What kind of benefits does social media bring?
- Can social media be harmful – and, if so, what are the harms that concern you?
- Are some platforms more beneficial or harmful than others?
- Do you have any ideas on what you might want to spend your time doing if you were not spending as much time on social media?

Question 2: Currently, most platforms say you must be 13 to create a social media account. How would you feel if this minimum age was increased as a legal requirement? What age do you think would be reasonable?

Discussion prompts:

- Do you have any thoughts on the benefits and/or negative consequences of age limits?
- [If the majority of the group agrees on a particular age] Why do you think this age is most appropriate?

Question 3: How likely would you be to use an age assurance technology to access social media? For example, providing your ID or using facial recognition to prove that you meet the minimum age requirement.

Discussion prompts:

- What is your current understanding of the different types of age assurance technologies and would the differences impact on your willingness to take up or apply these technologies in your social media use?
- What would make you more or less likely to use age assurance (e.g. privacy settings, security for data, accessibility concerns)?
- How effective do you think age assurance would be in keeping underage people away from social media?

Question 4: Aside from age assurance, are there other supports or government actions that you think could help improve safety in online environments?

Discussion prompts:

- Who should be primarily responsible for the safety of young people online? The Government? Platforms? Parents?
- What actions should those who are responsible take to keep you safe?
- Are you aware of how to access help/support if you have personally experienced harm online/if you're worried about issues like sextortion, violent content or image-based abuse?
- What sort of education would help young people understand the benefits and risks of social media and how to use it safely (e.g. advertising campaigns, school curriculum, digital literacy programs)?

eSafety Youth Council Special Meeting

Time: 5:30pm – 7:00pm (participants asked to dial in at 5.25pm)
Date: Thursday 22 August 2024
Venue: Virtual Meeting – Microsoft Teams
Attendees:

- eSafety Youth Council – bios at **Attachment A**
- The Hon Michelle Rowland MP, Minister for Communications
- The eSafety Commissioner, Julie Inman Grant
- Delia Rickard PSM, Independent Reviewer of the *Online Safety Act 2021*
- Advisers
- eSafety staff
- Departmental staff (Bridget, s22(1)(a)(ii), and OSA Review Secretariat)

Facilitator: Part 1 - Bridget Gannon / Minister Rowland

AGENDA ITEM	LEAD	TIME
1. **Acknowledgment of Country, welcome and housekeeping**	Bridget Gannon	5:30pm
2. **Introduction from the eSafety Commissioner**	Julie Inman Grant	5:35pm
PART 1		
3. **Welcome Address from Minister**	Minister Rowland	5:40pm
4. **Interactive session on Age Assurance** • Minister and DITRDCA to guide discussion	All	5:50pm
5 MINUTE BREAK		6:15pm
PART 2		
5. **About the *Review of the Online Safety Act 2021***	Bridget Gannon	6:20pm
6. **Interactive session on the *Online Safety Act 2021*** • Delia Rickard to guide discussion	Delia Rickard	6:25pm
7. **Meeting close** (wrap up)	Bridget Gannon	6:55pm

ANNOTATED AGENDA

Agenda item	Talking points
1. **Acknowledgment of Country, welcome and introductions** 5:30PM – 5.35PM	• Welcome everyone. My name is Bridget Gannon, I lead the Online Safety, Media and Platforms Division in the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts. • Before we begin, I'd like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which we are all meeting today, and pay respects to their elders past, present and emerging. I extend that respect to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are in the meeting with us today. I am joining you from Ngunnawal country. • We're very grateful to you all for making the time to meet with us. Before we begin let's do a quick round of introductions. Can I start with members of the Youth Council if you could please state your name and where you are from? • *Introductions* • Thank you. We have the Minister for Communications, Minister Michelle Rowland and the eSafety Commissioner, Julie Inman Grant with us today. I also have my team here from the department – s22(1)(a)(ii) . • Before we start the discussion, I'd like to invite the eSafety Commissioner, Julie Inman Grant, to say a few words and then Minister Rowland to make an opening address.
2. **Introduction from the eSafety Commissioner** 5:35PM – 5.40PM	• 5 minutes

Agenda item	Talking points
3. Address from Minister 5:40-5:50PM	• I now invite Minister Rowland to make her opening address and provide an overview of the age assurance trial. *Delivered by Minister Rowland – see Minister's Talking Points at* **Attachment B**
4. Discussion on Age Assurance 5:50-6.15PM Minister and DITRDCA to guide discussion	• Thank you Minister. • To make sure this discussion runs smoothly, please mute yourself when you are not speaking. If you have a contribution to make, please raise your hand. As mentioned earlier, please state your name when you speak. • While the department will be taking notes on the discussion today, to encourage free conversation we will not attribute any direct quotes or views to any one participant. • We have 4 key questions to get through – around 6 minutes per question. I apologise in advance if I have to interrupt so we can move to the next question. ==~5.52pm== **Question 1:** Why do you use social media? What do you enjoy about social media? Is there a particular platform you prefer? <u>Discussion prompts:</u> • What kind of benefits does social media bring? Are some platforms more beneficial or harmful than others? • Can social media be harmful – and, if so, what are the harms that concern you?

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Agenda item	Talking points
	• Do you have any ideas on what you might want to spend your time doing if you were not spending as much time on social media? s47C

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Agenda item	Talking points
	s47C

Page 5 of 16

Agenda item	Talking points
	s47C ==~5.58pm== **Question 2:** Most platforms say you must be 13 to create a social media account. How would you feel if this minimum age was increased as a legal requirement? What age do you think would be reasonable?

Discussion prompts:

- Do you have any thoughts on the benefits and/or negative consequences of age limits?
- [*If the majority of the group agrees on an age*] Why do you think this age is most appropriate?

~6.03pm

Question 3: How likely would you be to use an age assurance technology to access social media? For example, providing your ID or using facial recognition to prove you meet the minimum age requirement.

Discussion prompts:

- Do you understand the different types of age assurance technologies and would the differences impact on your willingness to take up or apply these technologies in your social media use?
- What would make you more or less likely to use age assurance (e.g. privacy settings, security for data, accessibility concerns)?
- How effective do you think age assurance would be in keeping underage people away from social media?

~6.12pm

Question 4: Aside from age assurance, are there other supports or government actions that you think could help improve safety in online environments?

Discussion prompts:

Agenda item	Talking points
	• Who should be primarily responsible for the safety of young people online? The Government? Platforms? Parents? • What actions should those who are responsible take to keep you safe? • Are you aware of how to access help/support if you have personally experienced harm online/if you're worried about issues like sextortion, violent content or image-based abuse? • What sort of education would help young people understand the benefits and risks of social media and how to use it safely (e.g. advertising campaigns, school curriculum, digital literacy programs)?
5. **Final remarks from the Minister** 6.13PM-6.15PM	*Delivered by Minister Rowland – see Minister's Talking Points at **Attachment B***
5 MINUTE BREAK	
6. **About the *Review of the Online Safety Act 2021*** **6.20pm – 6.25pm**	*Handling:* Delia is aware of the limited time and wants to get straight into it. Talking Points • The next part of the meeting is focussed on the review of our online safety laws. • Before I hand over to Delia, I'd like to briefly note that in November last year the Minister for Communications appointed Delia to undertake the review.

Page 8 of 16

Agenda item	Talking points
	• The review is happening 12 months earlier than initially planned in recognition that the online world is changing rapidly. The review is a really important opportunity to make sure that the Online Safety Act is providing support to users in Australia. • The conversation this evening is about making sure that Delia is hearing from younger voices in our community and that your ideas and perspectives can be considered in making recommendations to Government. • I will now hand over to Delia to start the conversation with you.
7. **Interactive session on the Online Safety Act 2021** **6.25pm – 6.55pm** (Delia Rickard to guide discussion)	*Handling:* Delia will run the discussion, but feel free to jump in if you think it's needed. The following questions were provided to the Youth Council in advance of this meeting. **Question 1:** Are Australia's laws working to protect young people online? Discussion prompts: • How much of an issue is online safety for most young people day to day? What are the risks and benefits? • What happens when young people experience harm? How likely are they to tell their family or friends? • What might stop young people seeking help about an online harm? What might encourage them?

Agenda item	Talking points
	• Do young people help each other online? Are there barriers to helping others? How do people support friends experiencing online harms? • Do young people know how to get help if they have a bad experience online? • Has anyone you know tried to get help and been unable to get help about a bad experience online? **Question 2:** What needs to change to make sure young people are having safer online experiences? Discussion prompts: • There are lots of different ways to improve online safety, including by making new laws, providing more education or making online services safer to begin with – what works and what will be most effective? • What should governments think about when making laws about young people online? For example: accessibility, safety, privacy? • What other types of supports or government actions could help improve online safety?
8. Meeting close (wrap up) 6.55pm to 7.00pm	*Handling:* Bridget to close meeting • Tthank you all again for joining us tonight.

Agenda item	Talking points
	• This conversation has been very valuable and provided Delia with lots of things to take away and consider. If there is something else that you think of regarding age assurance or the review that you'd like to share, or if you have any questions, please feel free to get in touch. • Thank you again.

From:	Age Assurance Trial
To:	s47F
Subject:	Invitation to Age Assurance Virtual Roundtable [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Date:	Thursday, 8 August 2024 10:47:00 AM
Attachments:	image001.png

OFFICIAL

Dear s47F

On 1 May 2024, the Australian Government announced $6.5 million in funding for an age assurance trial, to examine options to protect children from harmful content such as pornography, social media and other age-restricted online services.

The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communication and the Arts (the department) is progressing the trial, which aims to determine the effectiveness of available age assurance technologies as an option for addressing both:

- Access to pornography by those under the age of 18; and
- Access to social media by children, including considering the right minimum age for access.

I am writing to invite you to a Virtual Roundtable discussion to hear directly from Australian parents and representative parent groups such as yours about your experiences with children using social media, your views on an appropriate minimum age for social media access, and your attitude towards age assurance technologies.

The Hon Michelle Rowland MP, Minister for Communications, will address the roundtable. The Australian Government is keen to hear from parent groups and parents who have experienced the effects of social media and online content on their children. To that end, I request that you invite up to two parents, if possible, who would be willing to participate in this Roundtable and share their experience and views. To encourage free conversation, the Roundtable will be held under Chatham House rules – that is, remarks will not be attributed to any one participant. This Roundtable is part of a series of consultations to inform the Government's Age Assurance Trial. The Trial responds to increasing community concern about the impact of online pornography and social media on Australian children.

Please RSVP by **2pm Friday 9 August** to confirm your attendance and provide names and email addresses of your invitees. A meeting invite will be sent next week with a MS Teams link.

Roundtable details

Date: Friday, 16 August 2024

Time: **10.30am – 12noon**

Location: virtual meeting

Age Assurance Trial Taskforce

Online Safety Branch • Online Safety, Media and Platforms Division

ageassurancetrial@infrastructure.gov.au

GPO Box 594 Canberra, ACT 2601

Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts

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infrastructure.gov.au

I acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land on which we meet, work and live.
I recognise and respect their continuing connection to the land, waters and communities.
I pay my respects to Elders past and present and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

OFFICIAL

Subject:	Age Assurance Virtual Roundtable
Location:	MS Teams
Start:	Fri 16/08/2024 10:30 AM
End:	Fri 16/08/2024 12:00 PM
Recurrence:	(none)
Meeting Status:	Meeting organizer
Organizer:	Age Assurance Trial

Required s47F

Irwin, Andrew; s22(1)(a)(ii) s47.

Optional Attendees: s47F

OFFICIAL

Thank you for confirming your attendance at the Age Assurance Virtual Roundtable, to hear directly from Australian parents and representative parent groups such as yours about your experiences with children using social media, your views on an appropriate minimum age for social media access, and your attitude towards age assurance technologies.

Please find a MS teams link below. Attached is a one page brief on the purpose of the discussion and background on the Age Assurance Trial.

Please see attached proposed Discussion Questions for tomorrow's roundtable.

We look forward to your attendance and hearing from you.

Kind regards
Age Assurance Trial Taskforce

Microsoft Teams [Need help?](#)
Join the meeting now
s22(1)(a)(ii)

![Australian Government Coat of Arms] **Australian Government** **Department of Infrastructure, Transport,** **Regional Development, Communications and the Arts**	**Meeting/Event Brief** **MB24-000578**

To: The Hon Michelle Rowland MP, Minister for Communications

MEETING: Age Assurance Trial – Parents Roundtable

Timing: Friday 16 August 2024, 10:30am – 12:00pm

Venue: Virtual Meeting – MS Teams

Meeting with: Parents and parents' groups – see bios at **Attachment A**

The meeting with parents and parents' groups is to discuss attitudes towards young people using social media and use of age assurance technology in Australia.

Our Proposed Objectives:

To hear from Australian parents about their experiences of the harms and benefits of their children using social media; views on what is an appropriate age to begin using social media; and willingness to engage with age assurance technologies to access social media and age-restricted online content.

Their Objective:

To provide insights to the Government on parent experiences and shape policy design.

Key Points:

1.   You will give a 5-minute address at the start of the meeting (see agenda below and Talking Points at **Attachment B**).

Meeting structure

10:30am	Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country (10 mins)	Andrew Irwin
10:40am	Opening Address from Minister Rowland (5 mins)	Minister Rowland
10:45am	Facilitated discussion (facilitated by Andrew Irwin) (1 hours)	All
11:45am	Concluding remarks (15 mins)	Andrew Irwin
12:00pm	Close	

2.   The department invited 24 parent groups and requested that they invite parents with lived experience to the discussion. To date, 22 participants from 10 groups have accepted the invitation. The department is following up with remaining invitees.

3.   The department will support you and facilitate discussion with the parents. To guide the conversation, the department and your office agreed to 5 questions, supplemented by discussion prompts (see **Attachment C**).

4.   The attendees have been provided information about the age assurance trial as part of the invite (see **Attachment D**).

Background

5.   The Australian Government committed $6.5 million in the 2024-25 Budget for the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communication and the Arts (the department) to conduct a trial of age assurance technologies that could be used to limit access to:

    a.   online pornography by children and young people under the age of 18; and

    b.   social media platforms for an age range of between 13 and 16 years.

6.   To ensure that stakeholders' views are considered as part of the trial process, the department is conducting targeted consultation with parents, young people, academics, industry, community and civil society organisations, and First Nations representative bodies.

7.   Given the direct impact of any age assurance policy decisions on Australian parents and their children, understanding parents' perspectives on age assurance technologies and young people accessing social media is essential to finding an effective solution.

8.   The South Australian and New South Wales governments have announced a joint summit on social media to be held in October which will also hear from parents concerned about the impact of social media on their children.

Sensitive and Critical Information: Nil

Name: Bridget Gannon
Position: A/g First Assistant Secretary
Division: Online Safety, Media and Platforms
Ph: 6136 s22(1)(a)(ii)
Mob: s22(1)(a)(ii)
Date Cleared: 14 August 2024

Contact Officer: Andrew Irwin
Division: Online Safety Branch
Ph: 6136 s22(1)(a)(ii)

Attachments:

Attachment A: Biographical Details

Attachment B: Talking Points

Attachment C: Discussion Questions

Attachment D: Parents roundtable pre-briefing

ATTACHMENT B

<u>TALKING POINTS</u>

- Thank you for taking the time from your busy schedules and meeting with us today to discuss the age assurance trial. This trial responds to increasing community concern about the impact of harmful content online, for example pornography, and of social media on young Australians.

- You as parents and representatives of parents are best placed to bring your experience to the discussion.

- Earlier this week I had the pleasure of meeting an energetic group of young people – those who'll be directly affected by age assurance. It was a great discussion and the whole group engaged meaningfully and shared a range of views.

- I was supported by my colleagues the Minister for Youth, Dr Anne Aly and the Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, Emma McBride. Which is to say we are very much a joined-up government working together to get this right.

<u>Background to the trial</u>

- My department has provided some pre-briefing materials about the trial it is undertaking. The trial's objective is to determine the effectiveness of available age assurance technologies as an option to:
  - o prevent access to online pornography by children and young people under the age of 18; and
  - o age-limit access to social media platforms for an age range of between 13 and 16 years.

- That's why we are engaging with users of technology, including parents and parenting experts like yourselves, young Australians, academics, the digital industry, community and civil society groups, and First Nations representatives to inform our work.

- Keeping our children safe online through the use of age assurance is complex, as it involves the balancing of accuracy, privacy, and security considerations in a rapidly-changing industry. That is the key issue we're looking at – whether effective age assurance technologies can be implemented here in Australia.

- When it comes to the two streams of the trial – the issue of access to pornography is relatively straightforward, as this element is dealing with content that is already <u>illegal</u> for children to consume. Because of that, the trial will focus on technologies that can restrict access to these sites for people aged under 18.

- The question of an appropriate minimum age for access to social media, and the use of age assurance technologies to enforce this, is more complicated. That's why I'm suggesting today's discussion focus on the social media element of the trial.

Parents' unique perspective

- We understand that consultation with young people and their parents and carers is vital to finding the right solution. Much of the debate to date has been people talking <u>about</u> children and families – and we need to talk <u>with</u> them to make sure that whatever we come up with hits the mark.

- If we are going to regulate young people's use of social media we need to take young people's and their parents views, needs and interests into account.

- We are hearing from young people – as well as mental health organisations like Blackdog, BeyondBlue and ReachOut – about the benefits of social media interactions as well as the harms they experience.

- From a parents' perspective – I know how time poor parents are, and we don't want to set up a source of tension in the household between children, their parents and carers.

- I acknowledge that the issue of social media access is complex and that the Government's response must balance the need to keep our children safe while also protecting their privacy and allowing them to develop digital literacy.

- Up until now, parents have shouldered the challenge of deciding whether their children have social media access, without clear guidance on the impact these services have on their developing minds as well as their physical and mental wellbeing.

Enforcing a minimum age for social media

- To determine the correct minimum age for social media, we have to understand what harms we are trying to protect children from experiencing. Only then can we decide what age children are resilient and mature enough to engage in these environments.

- Australia is not alone in seeking more accountability for platforms to enforce their own age limits. We are also not alone in questioning whether 13 is an appropriate minimum age, with countries including France, UK and the United States all taking steps to increase and enforce a minimum age.

- I note that South Australia and New South Wales governments are holding a joint summit on social media in October and they will also be engaging with parents and parenting groups. We appreciate you are engaging with many levels of government on these issues.

- We are here to listen to your views about what an appropriate age could be. But one thing both the Prime Minister and I have made clear is that any age limit must be <u>effective</u>. When I say 'effective', I mean effective in the protection – not isolation – of young people.

Today's Roundtable

- The objective of today's Roundtable is to establish how the Government and parents can work together to minimise the harm that can arise from young people using social media and accessing content online that is not appropriate for them.

- On that note, I'll hand over to Andrew Irwin from the department to facilitate the discussion portion of today's meeting.

[Discussion to be facilitated by the department]

The age assurance trial

On 1 May 2024, the Australian Government announced $6.5 million in 2024–25 to conduct a trial of age assurance technologies. The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communication and the Arts (the department) is facilitating the trial.

Why do we want to speak to Australian parents?

The Government wants to minimise the harm that can arise from young people accessing content online that is not appropriate for them. We want to understand the impact social media is having on Australian children and explore an appropriate age for accessing social media. Parents are uniquely placed to share experiences with children accessing age restricted content and social media. However, for age assurance technologies to keep young people safe online, they need to be effective and it is critical to get privacy and security right. We acknowledge that the conversation around youth's use of social media is complex.

During the parents' roundtable, we want to hear from you about your and your children's experiences using social media (good and bad), your experience of any instance of children accessing online pornography, how willing you are to use different age assurance technologies to access social media and age restricted content, and what other initiatives you might like to see from Government to support you to keep your children safe online.

What is age assurance?

Age assurance is a broad term that includes both age *verification* and age *estimation* solutions. The word 'assurance' refers to the varying levels of certainty different solutions offer in establishing an age. Technologies might examine a user's identity documents, facial features, voice, key strokes, language used online or sites accessed.

- Age verification measures determine a person's age to a high level of accuracy. An example is the use of physical or digital government identity documents to establish a person's age.
- Age estimation technologies provide an approximate age of a person. This lower threshold could involve less collection of personal data.

What is the trial doing?

The age assurance trial will involve an independent assessment of a range of age assurance technologies, reviewing their effectiveness in relation to various criteria, including accuracy, privacy and security requirements. This assessment will look at 2 streams, considering age assurance technologies that could be used to prevent access to:

- online pornography by children and young people under the age of 18; and
- social media platforms for an age range of between 13 and 16 years.

As part of the trial, the department is speaking with a range of stakeholders, including youth, parent groups, academics, industry groups, community organisations, and First Nations bodies. The department has also established a Cross-Government Working Group that brings together government agencies with expertise on age assurance, privacy, safety and security.

The age assurance trial also involves researching how parents, young people and other consumers feel about using these technologies, international approaches, evidence surrounding age limits for social media, and the harms and benefits associated with social media use.

The technology assessment, consultation and research outcomes will help the department develop advice to Government at the conclusion of the trial. Government can then decide on the next steps.

Roundtable: Parent groups

Age assurance trial

August 2024

Attachments

Attachment	Document	Provided to attendees?
Attachment A	Annotated Agenda	Yes
Attachment B	Minister's Talking Points	No
Attachment C	Discussion Questions	No
Attachment D	Background	Yes

Meeting agenda

Age Assurance Roundtable: Parent groups

LOCATION	DATE / TIME
MS Teams link: **Join the meeting now**	Friday 16 August 2024 10:30am – 12:00pm AEST

Attendees

Name	Organisation/position
s47F	

Name	Organisation/position
s47F	

Agenda

Agenda item	Presenter	Time
1. Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country	Andrew Irwin	10:30am (10 mins)
2. Opening Address from Minister Rowland	Minister Rowland	10:40am (5 mins)
3. Facilitated discussion	Andrew Irwin, All	10:45am (1 hour)
4. Concluding remarks and close	Andrew Irwin	11:45am (15 mins)

Agenda item	Talking points
1. **Acknowledgment of Country, welcome and introductions** 10:30-10:40	• Thank you all for joining us today for a roundtable on the Government's age assurance trial. • I'm Andrew Irwin, Assistant Secretary of Online Safety Branch in the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts. • I would like to begin with an acknowledgement of country. • The Department acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. • We pay our respects to them and their cultures and to their Elders both past and present. • I would like to extend that respect to any First Nations persons joining us today. • I would like to welcome all of the parents and representatives from parent groups who have made the time to attend today. Your expertise will be invaluable for the discussion today.

Agenda item	Talking points
	• Because of the number of attendees present, we will not do introductions today. However, when you speak, please state your name and (where applicable) the organisation you represent. • Before we start the discussion, I'd like to invite Minister Rowland to make an opening address and provide an overview of the age assurance trial.
2. Address from Minister 10:40-10:45	*TPs in MB24-000578*
Facilitated discussion 10:45-11:45	• Thank you Minister. • To make sure this discussion runs smoothly, please mute yourself when you are not speaking. If you have a contribution to make, please raise your hand. As mentioned earlier, please state your name and organisation when you speak. • While the department will be taking notes on the discussion today, to encourage free conversation we will not attribute any direct quotes or views to any one participant. • We have 4 key questions to get through – around 15 minutes per questions. I apologise in advance if I have to interrupt so we can move to the next question. **10.47am** Question 1: Addressing the right age for children to access social media is a complex topic. As parents or groups representing parents in Australia, what is your primary concern about children using social media, broadly, and at certain ages, particularly? Discussion prompts: • We are hearing from young people about the benefits of social media with respect to making and maintaining social connections, especially for those living further away from town, or overseas. What are your views as parents?

Agenda item	Talking points
	- What might be the unintended consequences of restricting social media access for teenagers? - Are some social media services more beneficial or harmful than others? ==~11.00am== **Question 2:** What is the role you think Government should play in setting and enforcing an age limit for social media access? <u>Discussion prompts:</u> - Should there be a role for parents in approving access to social media based on the maturity of their children? - What sort of education would help young people understand the benefits and risks of social media and how to use it safely? - What are the risks that concern you most? Why do you think enforcing an age limit would be the best way to address those risks or harms? ==~11.15am== **Question 3:** As discussed earlier, most major social media platforms require users to be 13 years of age to create an account. What do you think is the appropriate minimum age for young people to access social media? <u>Discussion prompts:</u> - Have you or do you experience any challenges in enforcing the current age requirements that exist for social media? - In your view, what are the benefits and negative consequences of restricting access to social media in ages above 13? - Would increasing and enforcing a minimum age have an overall impact on the social pressure for children to be on platforms, or would it just shift it to all occur at one age?

Agenda item	Talking points
	<mark>~11.30am</mark> **Question 4:** Mandating age limits might require implementing technology solutions that check users' ages. How comfortable would you be for your child to use an age assurance technology to access social media? (Please explain the high level options to give more context to the discussion prompt that follows) Discussion prompts: • What is your current understanding of the different types of age assurance technologies and would the differences impact on your willingness to take up or apply these technologies in your child's social media use? • What would make you more or less likely to use age assurance (e.g. privacy settings, security for data, accessibility concerns)? <mark>~11.45am</mark> **Question 5: (if time permits. This question was not provided to the parents beforehand)** Aside from age assurance, are there other supports or government actions that you think could help improve safety in online environments? Discussion prompts: • Who should be primarily responsible for the safety of young people online? The Government? Platforms? Parents? • Are you aware of how to access help/support if you have personally experienced harm online/if you're worried about issues like sextortion, violent content or image-based abuse?
3. **Final remarks and close** 11:45-12.00	• Thank you again for joining us today and giving your thoughts on the use of age assurance technologies for access to pornography and social media. • Your feedback will be an important voice in the Government's decision making process.

<div style="text-align: right; writing-mode: vertical; color: gray;">Released under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 by the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts</div>

Background: If asked

Definitions

- **Age assurance** is defined by the eSafety Commissioner as a broad umbrella term which includes both age <u>verification</u> and age <u>estimation</u> solutions. The word 'assurance' refers to the varying levels of certainty different solutions offer in establishing an age or age range.
    - **Age verification** is defined by the eSafety Commissioner as measures which determine a person's age to a high level of accuracy. An example of age verification is the use of physical or digital government identity documents to establish a person's age.'
        - Age verification often gives rise to considerations of security and privacy.
    - **Age estimation** technologies provide an approximate age to allow or deny access to age-restricted online content or services
- Age assurance is not an exact science. Technology might look at language used, key strokes, sites accessed, and in some cases check that against the age claimed by a user to limit a young person's access to harmful material.
    - This lower threshold could involve less collection of sensitive data, alleviating some privacy and security concerns.

- 'Age gating' is also sometimes used in discussing this topic.
    - Age gating is a check at the entry to an online platform such as a website, which asks a user to confirm that they are a certain age, such as 18 years or over.
    - While age gating falls within the broad category of age assurance, it is not likely to be regarded as a sufficient protection on younger users for the purposes of this trial. That is, it won't be effective.

The elements of the trial

- The Trial involves technology assessments, research, consultation and policy advice.
- The **technology** elements include:
    - Testing the market for technologies that exist and could be adapted to protect children under 18 years of age from pornography; and
    - Testing the market for technologies that could limit access for social media to social media platforms for an age range between 13 to 16 years, with the 'appropriate age' to be determined through other research, consultation and policy development.
- The **research** elements include:
    - Conducting consumer research on Australians' attitudes towards the use of age assurance technologies for access to online services, including targeted youth consultation; and
    - Research into age limits for social media. This will include seeking a literature review on academic/international advice on age limits, international implementation precedents, social media harms/benefits and recommendations for an age limit.
- The **consultation** elements include:
    - Consultation with a Cross-Government Working Group, which includes agencies with policy expertise on age assurance and related technologies, and with responsibility for privacy, safety and security.

- o Consultation with Australian youth, through engagement with the Office for Youth.
  - o Stakeholder engagement with child development experts, researchers, families, industry groups, community and civil society organisations, and First Nations representative bodies.
- The **policy advice** elements include:
  - o The Department will provide advice to Government, informed by the findings of the trial, research and consultation.

What the trial is not doing

- This trial will not involve compelling online platforms or technology providers to participate, as the Department does not have the power to compel organisations to do this.
  - o Procuring a testing organisation to undertake the technical assessment will instead ensure that the results of this part of the trial are independent, and not influenced by any platform or technology's commercial interests.
  - o Platforms and technology providers would however have a strong incentive to participate as doing so will be an important input to the trial's findings, which could in turn lead to regulatory obligations.
  - o And while the Department cannot compel participation, we will definitely be reaching out to a range of services and providers as part of the consultation, and would expect the independent assessor to do so as well.
- Additionally, it is important to note that the trial is not aimed at producing a government endorsement for, or procurement of, a single product, technology or technologies.
  - o Instead, it is an assessment of technologies available to Australians.
  - o It will provide guidance as to whether the market is mature, and able to provide effective age assurance.
  - o It will provide advice to the Government and the Regulator on enforcement of codes and policy going forward.

- We are not aware of a country that has completely 'solved' age assurance as a policy challenge.
  - o We are closely monitoring the work by likeminded governments such as the UK, and discussing lessons learned with them on this topic.

What ages have been proposed for social media access?

Source	Age proposed	Notes
Australian Government Privacy Law	18	The Australian Government response to the Privacy Act Review agrees with the Review's recommendation that a child be defined as an individual not yet 18 years of age, and agrees to establish a Children's Online Privacy Code.
Office of the Australian Information Commissioner	15	The Australian Privacy Principles guidelines allow organisations to presume that an individual over 15 can consent to privacy decisions, where it not practicable for that organisation to assess capacity on a case-by-case basis.
New South Wales	16	Hosting a Social Media Summit in October
Queensland	14	Recommended that parents should limit social media access for children under 14, support children as social media is introduced, and restrict time until healthy habits are established.
South Australia	Ban for under 14 and parental permission for under-16s.	Has appointed former Chief Justice of the High Court Robert French AC to conduct a legal examination into banning children under the age of 14 from having social media accounts.
Victoria	No specific age proposed	The Premier has called for a national response to social media.
TikTok	13	Per their Terms of Service
Instagram	13	Per their Terms of Service – "You must be at least 13 years old or the minimum

		legal age in your country to use Instagram."

From:	Age Assurance Trial
Sent:	Thursday, 15 August 2024 2:04 PM
To:	s47F
Subject:	Invitation to Age Assurance Virtual Roundtable [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Attachments:	Background - Age Assurance Trial.pdf

OFFICIAL

Dear s47F ,

On 1 May 2024, the Australian Government announced $6.5 million in funding for an age assurance trial, to examine options to protect children from harmful content such as pornography, social media and other age-restricted online services.

The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communication and the Arts (the department) is progressing the trial, which aims to determine the effectiveness of available age assurance technologies as an option for addressing both:

- Access to pornography by those under the age of 18; and
- Access to social media by children, including considering the right minimum age for access.

I am writing to invite you to a Virtual Roundtable discussion to hear directly from Australian academics about the available evidence around the harms and benefits of children using social media, an appropriate minimum age for social media access, and attitudes towards age assurance technologies.

The Australian Government is keen to hear from academics and experts about their research and views on the effects of social media and online content on children. To encourage free conversation, the Roundtable will be held under Chatham House rules – that is, remarks will not be attributed to any one participant. This Roundtable is part of a series of consultations to inform the Government's Age Assurance Trial. The Trial responds to increasing community concern about the impact of online pornography and social media on Australian children.

Attached is background information about the trial. Discussion questions will be shared closer to the meeting date.

Please RSVP by **4pm Monday 19 August** to confirm your attendance. A meeting invite will be sent with a MS Teams link.

Roundtable details
Date: Friday, 23 August 2024
Time: **9:00am – 10:30am**
Location: virtual meeting

Age Assurance Trial Taskforce
Online Safety Branch • Online Safety, Media and Platforms Division
ageassurancetrial@infrastructure.gov.au
GPO Box 594 Canberra, ACT 2601

Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts
CONNECTING AUSTRALIANS • ENRICHING COMMUNITIES • EMPOWERING REGIONS

infrastructure.gov.au

I acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land on which we meet, work and live.
I recognise and respect their continuing connection to the land, waters and communities.

From:	Age Assurance Trial
To:	s47F
	s47F ; Irwin, Andrew; s22(1)(a)(ii)
Subject:	Age Assurance Virtual Roundtable - Academia/Experts [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Attachments:	Background - Age Assurance Trial.pdf

OFFICIAL

Thank you for confirming your attendance at the Age Assurance Virtual Roundtable, to hear directly from Australian academics about the available evidence around the harms and benefits of children using social media, an appropriate minimum age for social media access, and attitudes towards age assurance technologies.

Please find a MS teams link below. Attached is a one page brief on the purpose of the discussion and background on the Age Assurance Trial. Discussion questions will be shared prior to the meeting.

We look forward to your attendance and hearing from you.

Kind regards

Age Assurance Trial Taskforce

_____

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Join the meeting now <https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-

s22(1)(a)(ii)

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OFFICIAL

The age assurance trial

On 1 May 2024, the Australian Government announced $6.5 million in 2024–25 to conduct a trial of age assurance technologies. The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communication and the Arts (the department) is facilitating the trial.

Why do we want to speak to Australian academics and experts?

The Government wants to minimise the harm that can arise from young people accessing content online that is not appropriate for them. We want to understand the impact social media is having on Australian children and explore an appropriate age for accessing social media. However, for age assurance technologies to keep young people safe online, they need to be effective and it is critical to get privacy and security right. We acknowledge that the conversation around youth's use of social media is complex.

During the academia roundtable, we want to hear from you about the evidence behind the effect of children using social media (good and bad), how willing Australians are to use different age assurance technologies to access social media and age restricted content, and what other initiatives might be effective from Government to support keeping children safe online.

What is age assurance?

Age assurance is a broad term that includes both age *verification* and age *estimation* solutions. The word 'assurance' refers to the varying levels of certainty different solutions offer in establishing an age. Technologies might examine a user's identity documents, facial features, voice, key strokes, language used online or sites accessed.

- Age verification measures determine a person's age to a high level of accuracy. An example is the use of physical or digital government identity documents to establish a person's age.
- Age estimation technologies provide an approximate age of a person. This lower threshold could involve less collection of personal data.

What is the trial doing?

The age assurance trial will involve an independent assessment of a range of age assurance technologies, reviewing their effectiveness in relation to various criteria, including accuracy, privacy and security requirements. This assessment will look at 2 streams, considering age assurance technologies that could be used to prevent access to:

- online pornography by children and young people under the age of 18; and
- social media platforms for an age range of between 13 and 16 years.

As part of the trial, the department is speaking with a range of stakeholders, including youth, parent groups, academics, industry groups, community organisations, and First Nations bodies. The department has also established a Cross-Government Working Group that brings together government agencies with expertise on age assurance, privacy, safety and security.

The age assurance trial also involves researching how consumers feel about using these technologies, international approaches, evidence surrounding age limits for social media, and the harms and benefits associated with social media use.

The technology assessment, consultation and research outcomes will help the department develop advice to Government at the conclusion of the trial. Government can then decide on the next steps.

Discussion Questions: Academia/Experts Roundtable

Question 1: A majority of parents are concerned that social media is harmful for children's mental health. Is there evidence that identifies the harms and the extent of harm, either causally linked or correlated to children and teenagers use of social media?

Discussion prompts:

- What evidence is available about the benefits of social media for maintaining social connections?
- Is there any evidence that different social media services, or the way that certain social media is used, are more beneficial or harmful than others?

Question 2: Most major social media platforms require users to be 13 years of age to create an account. Is there research on or evidence to suggest that age 13 or a different (higher) age would be better to reduce harm (or potential harm) for children accessing social media?

Discussion prompts:

- How does the risk of being harmed change as children age?
- What are likely to be the benefits and negative consequences of restricting access to social media in ages above 13?
- Would increasing and enforcing a minimum age have an overall impact on the social pressure felt by children and their parents to have a social media profile? How likely do you think it is that children will find other digital alternatives?
- Would age assurance reduce the problem of children experiencing harms, or would there be unintended consequences?

Question 3: Mandating age limits might require implementing technology solutions that check a user's age. What are your views on age assurance technologies and whether the benefits outweigh the risks?

Discussion prompts:

- What makes you more or less likely to support implementation of age assurance (e.g. privacy settings, security for data, accessibility concerns)?
- Messaging and social media apps offer different experiences, with different benefits and risks of harm. Would applying different levels of age assurance (verification to estimation) proportionate to the risk be an effective way of protecting young people?

Question 4: What role should the Government play in helping parents and children minimise the harms of using social media? Aside from age assurance, what other supports or government actions could help improve young people's online safety?

Discussion prompts:

- Who is responsible for the safety of young people online? Government? Platforms? Parents? What role should each one play?
- What sort of education would help increase understanding the benefits and risks of social media and how to use it safely?

Roundtable: Academia

Age assurance trial

August 2024

Attachments

Attachment	Document	Provided to attendees?
Attachment A	Annotated Agenda	No
Attachment B	Discussion Questions	Yes
Attachment C	Background	No

Meeting agenda
Age Assurance Roundtable: Academia

LOCATION	DATE / TIME
MS Teams link: **Join the meeting now**	**23 August 2024** 9:00am – 10:30am AEST

Attendees

Name	Organisation/position
s47F	

Agenda

Agenda item	Presenter	Time
1. Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country	s22(1)(a)(ii)	9:00am (15 mins)
2. Facilitated discussion	s22(1)(a)(ii) , All	9:15am (1 hour 10 mins)
3. Concluding remarks and close	s22(1)(a)(ii)	10:25am (5 mins)

Agenda item	Talking points

1. **Acknowledgment of Country, welcome and introductions**
 	
9:00-9:15
	• Thank you all for joining us today for a roundtable on the Government's age assurance trial.
	• I'm s22(1)(a)(ii), Director of the Age Assurance Trial Taskforce in the Department.
	• I would like to begin with an acknowledgement of country.
	• The Department acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, sea and community.
	• We pay our respects to them and their cultures and to their Elders both past and present.
	• I would like to extend that respect to any First Nations persons joining us today.
	• I would like to welcome all academics and experts who have made the time to attend today. Your expertise will be invaluable for the discussion today.
	• Because of the number of attendees present, rather than doing introductions I'll do a roll call. Please call out if I miss your name.
	
	Roll call of names
	
	• You will have received some pre-briefing material, but before we start the discussion, I'd like to provide an overview of the age assurance trial.
	
	<u>Overview of the Age Assurance Trial</u>
	
	• The trial's objective is to determine the effectiveness of available age assurance technologies as an option to:
	    ○ prevent access to online pornography by children and young people under the age of 18; and
	    ○ age-limit access to social media platforms for an age range of between 13 and 16 years.

Agenda item	Talking points
	• That's why we are engaging with users of technology, including parents and parenting experts, young Australians, academics, the digital industry, community and civil society groups, and First Nations representatives to inform our work.
	• Keeping our children safe online through the use of age assurance is complex, as it involves the balancing of accuracy, privacy, and security considerations in a rapidly changing industry. That is the key issue we're looking at – whether effective age assurance technologies can be implemented here in Australia.
	• When it comes to the two streams of the trial – the issue of access to pornography is relatively straightforward, as this element is dealing with content that is already illegal for children to consume. Because of that, the trial will focus on technologies that can restrict access to these sites for people aged under 18.
	• The question of an appropriate minimum age for access to social media, and the use of age assurance technologies to enforce this, is more complicated. **That's why I'm suggesting today's discussion focus on the social media element of the trial.**
	<u>Enforcing a minimum age for social media</u>
	• To determine the right minimum age for social media, we have to understand what harms we are trying to protect children from experiencing. Only then can we decide what age children are resilient and mature enough to engage in these environments.
	• Australia is not alone in seeking more accountability for platforms to enforce their own age limits. We are also not alone in questioning whether 13 is an appropriate minimum age, with countries including France, UK and the United States all taking steps to increase and enforce a minimum age.
	• We are here to listen to your views about what an appropriate age could be. One thing both the Prime Minister and the Minister for Communications have made clear is that any age limit must be

Agenda item	Talking points
	effective. When I say 'effective', I mean effective in the protection – not isolation – of young people.
2. **Facilitated discussion** 9:15-10:25	• On that note, let's start our discussion. • To make sure this discussion runs smoothly, please mute yourself when you are not speaking. If you have a contribution to make, please raise your hand. When you speak, please state your name and (where applicable) the organisation you represent. • While the department will be taking notes on the discussion today, to encourage free conversation we will not attribute any direct quotes or views to any one participant. • We have 4 key questions to get through – around 15 minutes per question. I'll start with questions then open to the floor. I apologise in advance if I have to interrupt so we can move to the next question. That said, let's get to the first one. ==~9:17am== **Question 1:** A majority of parents are concerned that social media is harmful for children's mental health. Is there evidence that identifies the harms and the extent of harm, either causally linked or correlated to children and teenagers use of social media? <u>Discussion prompts:</u> • What evidence is available about the benefits of social media for maintaining social connections? • Is there any evidence that different social media services, or the way that certain social media is used, are more beneficial or harmful than others? ==~9:35am== **Question 2:** Most major social media platforms require users to be 13 years of age to create an account. Is there research on or evidence to suggest that age 13 or a different (higher) age would be better to reduce

Agenda item	Talking points
	harm (or potential harm) for children accessing social media? Discussion prompts: • How does the risk of being harmed change as children age? • What are likely to be the benefits and negative consequences of restricting access to social media in ages above 13? • Would increasing and enforcing a minimum age have an overall impact on the social pressure felt by children and their parents to have a social media profile? How likely do you think it is that children will find other digital alternatives? • Would age assurance reduce the problem of children experiencing harms, or would there be unintended consequences? ==~9:50am== **Question 3:** Mandating age limits might require implementing technology solutions that check a user's age. What are your views on age assurance technologies and whether the benefits outweigh the risks? Discussion prompts: • What makes you more or less likely to support implementation of age assurance (e.g. privacy settings, security for data, accessibility concerns)? • Messaging and social media apps offer different experiences, with different benefits and risks of harm. Would applying different levels of age assurance (verification to estimation) proportionate to the risk be an effective way of protecting young people? ==~10:05am== **Question 4:** What role should the Government play in helping parents and children minimise the harms of using social media? Aside from age

Agenda item	Talking points
	assurance, what other supports or government actions could help improve young people's online safety? <u>Discussion prompts:</u> • Who is responsible for the safety of young people online? Government? Platforms? Parents? What role should each one play? • What sort of education would help increase understanding the benefits and risks of social media and how to use it safely?
3. **Final remarks and close** 10:25-10:30	• Thank you again for joining us today and giving your time and your thoughts on the use of age assurance technologies for access to pornography and social media. • Your feedback will be an important voice in the Government's decision-making process.

Duplicate

From:	Age Assurance Trial
To:	s47F
Subject:	Invitation to Age Assurance Trial Virtual Roundtable [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Date:	Tuesday, 20 August 2024 4:48:00 PM
Attachments:	image001.png
	s47F Invitation to Roundtable.pdf
	s22(1)(a)(ii)

OFFICIAL

Dear s47F

On 1 May 2024, the Australian Government announced $6.5 million in funding for an age assurance trial, to examine options to protect children from harmful content such as pornography, social media and other age-restricted online services. The Trial responds to increasing community concern about the impact of online pornography and social media on Australian children.

Please find attached some further information regarding the trial and a letter from James Chisholm, Deputy Secretary, Communications & Media Group, inviting you to participate in an industry stakeholder roundtable on Tuesday 27 August 2024.

Please RSVP by **23 August 2024** to confirm your attendance. Discussion questions will be shared closer to the meeting date.

Roundtable details

Date: Tuesday, 27 August 2024
Time: 10:00am – 11.30am (AEST)
Location: A meeting invite will be sent shortly with a MS Teams link.
Kind regards

Age Assurance Trial Taskforce

Online Safety Branch • Online Safety, Media and Platforms Division

ageassurancetrial@infrastructure.gov.au

GPO Box 594 Canberra, ACT 2601

Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts
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I acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land on which we meet, work and live.
I recognise and respect their continuing connection to the land, waters and communities.
I pay my respects to Elders past and present and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

OFFICIAL

Australian Government

Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts

s47F
s47F

20/08/2024

To whom it may concern

Age Assurance Trial

I'm writing to seek your engagement on the Government's trial of age assurance technology. On 1 May 2024, the Australian Government announced $6.5 million in funding for an age assurance trial, to examine options to protect children from harmful content such as pornography, age-restricted online services, and social media.

The Trial responds to increasing community concern about the impact of online pornography and social media on Australian children. The Government has tasked the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, and the Arts (DITRDCA) to progress the trial, which aims to determine the effectiveness of available age assurance technologies as an option for addressing both:

- Access to pornography by those under the age of 18; and
- Access to social media by children in the 13 to 16+ years age band.

The Trial will also consider the right minimum age for access to social media by children.

Invitation to Roundtable

You are invited to attend a Virtual Roundtable discussion at 10am Australian Eastern Standard Time (Sydney/Melbourne/Canberra) on Tuesday, 27 August 2024. The Roundtable will seek to understand the age assurance and detection practices of industry, including planned responses to age related regulations internationally, and to gain insight into industry's capability, challenges and willingness to implement further age assurance technologies in the Australian context.

I strongly encourage you to share the views of your organisation regarding how age assurance methods can best be adopted and at what level/s of the tech stack would these be most effective.

To encourage free conversation, the Roundtable will be held under Chatham House rules – that is, remarks will not be attributed to any one participant. This Roundtable is part of a series of consultations to inform the Government's Age Assurance Trial.

Please RSVP to this invitation by Friday, 23 August 2024 to allow the Department to send an invitation with an MS Teams link.

Future engagement

A key aspect of the Trial is an independent assessment of existing age assurance technologies. It is expected that the independent assessor will engage with all age assurance providers, digital platforms and websites during the trial. We are seeking your cooperation to support testing of age assurance technologies in a real-world environment. This will be discussed at the Roundtable on 27 August.

Yours sincerely

s22(1)(a)(ii)

James Chisholm
Deputy Secretary
Communications & Media Group

GPO Box 594, Canberra ACT 2601, Australia
• (02) 6274 7111 • infrastructure.gov.au

| **From:** | Age Assurance Trial |
| **To:** | s47F |

	s47F	Irwin, Andrew; s22(1)(a)(ii)
Subject:	Age Assurance Trial Virtual Roundtable - Industry [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Attachments:	Background - Age Assurance Trial.pdf
	Industry Roundtable Discussion Questions.pdf

OFFICIAL

Thank you for confirming your attendance at the Age Assurance Virtual Roundtable, which will seek to understand the age assurance and detection practices of industry, including planned responses to age related regulations internationally, and to gain insight into industry's capability, challenges and willingness to implement further age assurance technologies in the Australian context.

Please find a MS teams link below. Attached are discussion questions for the meeting and a one page brief on the purpose of the discussion and background on the Age Assurance Trial.

We look forward to your attendance and hearing from you.

Kind regards

Age Assurance Trial Taskforce

_____

Microsoft Teams Need help? <https://aka.ms/JoinTeamsMeeting?omkt=en-GB>

s22(1)(a)(ii)

OFFICIAL

The age assurance trial

On 1 May 2024, the Australian Government announced $6.5 million in 2024–25 to conduct a trial of age assurance technologies. The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communication and the Arts (the department) is facilitating the trial.

Why do we want to speak to industry?

The Government wants to minimise the harm that can arise from young people accessing content online that is not appropriate for them. To do this, we want to consult with industry to understand what age assurance technology you are already using, what plans you have to respond to actions in other jurisdictions, and your views on what level of the tech stack age restriction can be applied. The trial is looking at age assurance technologies to keep young people safe online, but they need to be effective while also balancing privacy and security. We acknowledge that the conversation around age verification and assurance on social media is particularly complex.

During the industry roundtable, we want to hear from you about the evidence behind the effects on children from using social media (good and bad), how willing Australians are to use different age assurance technologies to access social media and age restricted content, and what other initiatives might be effective from Government to support keeping children safe online.

What is age assurance?

Age assurance is a broad term that includes both age *verification* and age *estimation* solutions. The word 'assurance' refers to the varying levels of certainty different solutions offer in establishing an age. Technologies might examine a user's identity documents, facial features, voice, key strokes, language used online or sites accessed.

- Age verification measures determine a person's age to a high level of accuracy. An example is the use of physical or digital government identity documents to establish a person's age.
- Age estimation technologies provide an approximate age of a person. This lower threshold could involve less collection of personal data.

What is the trial doing?

The age assurance trial will involve an independent assessment of a range of age assurance technologies, reviewing their effectiveness in relation to various criteria, including accuracy, privacy and security requirements. This assessment will look at 2 streams, considering age assurance technologies that could be used to prevent access to:

- online pornography by children and young people under the age of 18; and
- social media platforms for an age range of between 13 and 16 years.

As part of the trial, the department is speaking with a range of stakeholders, including youth, parent groups, academics, industry groups, community organisations, and First Nations bodies. The department has also established a Cross-Government Working Group that brings together government agencies with expertise on age assurance, privacy, safety and security.

The age assurance trial also involves researching how parents, young people and other consumers feel about using these technologies, international approaches, evidence surrounding age limits for social media, and the harms and benefits associated with social media use.

The technology assessment, consultation and research outcomes will help the department develop advice to Government at the conclusion of the trial. Government can then decide on the next steps.

Roundtable: Industry

Age assurance trial

August 2024

Attachments

Attachment	Document	Provided to attendees?
Attachment A	Agenda	Yes
Attachment B	Talking Points	No
Attachment C	Background	No

Meeting agenda

Age Assurance Roundtable: Industry

LOCATION	DATE / TIME
MS Teams link: **Join the meeting now**	27 August 2024 10.00 – 11.30 am AEST

Industry Attendees

Organisation/position	Name
Google	s47F
Meta	
Microsoft	
Snapchat	
X	
TikTok	
Apple	
DIGI	
Aylo	
s47F	
Twitch	
Samsung	
s47F	
International Social Games Association, ISGA	

Organisation/position	Name
Interactive Games and Entertainment Association, IGEA	s47F

Agenda

Agenda item	Presenter	Time / duration
Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country	Andrew Irwin	10:00am (15 mins)
Facilitated discussion	Andrew Irwin, All	10:15am (1 hour 10 mins)
Concluding remarks and close	Andrew Irwin	11:25am (5 mins)

Annotated agenda

Agenda item	Talking points

1. **Acknowledgment of Country, welcome and introductions**
 	
10:00-10:15
	• Thank you all for joining today's roundtable on the Government's age assurance trial.
	
	• I'm Andrew Irwin and I lead the Online Safety Branch. I am joined in the room by my colleagues from the Age Assurance Trial Taskforce.
	
	• I would like to begin with an acknowledgement of country.
	
	• The Department acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, sea and community.
	
	• We pay our respects to them and their cultures and to their Elders both past and present.
	
	• I extend that respect to any First Nations persons joining us today.
	
	• I would like to welcome all industry representatives who have made the time to attend this roudtable. Your expertise will be invaluable for the discussion today.
	
	• Because of the number of attendees, rather than doing introductions I'll do a roll call. Please call out if I miss your name.
	
	Roll call of names
	
	<u>Overview of the Age Assurance Trial</u>
	
	• You will have received some pre-briefing material, but before we start the discussion, I'd like to provide an overview of the age assurance trial.
	
	• The trial's objective is to determine the effectiveness of available age assurance technologies as an option to:
	    o prevent access to online pornography by children and young people under the age of 18; and
	    o age-limit access to social media platforms for an age range of between 13 and 16 years.

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	• The trial will provide an independent assessment of existing age assurance technologies, reviewing their effectiveness in relation to a range of criteria – in particular, accuracy, privacy and security. • We are currently procuring an independent assessor to conduct the trial, through an open tender process. • Once the successful tenderer has been identified, the department will work with the tenderer to map out how industry will be involved in the process. Why we are talking to industry today • We have invited representatives from the digital platform industry, hardware providers and adult websites to this roundtable to allow us to have a conversation about service providers' current age assurance methods, what industry is doing to invest in and develop this space given international legislation regarding age assurance, and where in the tech stack these technologies may be most effective. • It is the responsibility of every organisation in this roundtable to limit the harmful effects of their services on all Australian end-users, particularly children and teenagers. • This is a complex problem and, while no single organisation should be responsible for solving it, industry has a responsibility to invest in the solution. • What remains unclear is how we can practically implement technical solutions to stop under 18s from viewing 18+ content, and children under 13 years old from creating social media profiles or using games and services that have age inappropriate content. • There is a separate discussion that considers whether 13 is the correct minimum age for access to social media, and while we value your insights and any data you might have available on this question,

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	we are also consulting directly with academics, community groups, parents and teens to inform our advice to government on this issue. Intersection with OSA Phase 2 codes process • We are aware that the digital industry is currently developing Phase 2 Codes to improve the safety of Australian users, as requested by the eSafety Commissioner under the *Online Safety Act 2021*. • The age assurance trial is being conducted in parallel to this work, and the department is working closely with eSafety to ensure these are mutually reinforcing processes. • While the trial is not specifically informing the development of the Codes, we expect the results of the trial will help bolster the Codes' effectiveness, for example, by informing what 'reasonable and appropriate' steps are regarding age assurance in the Australian context. • We encourage industry's participation in both these processes, given they are complementary.
2. **Facilitated discussion** 10.15-11.25	• On that note, let's start our discussion. • To make sure this discussion runs smoothly, please mute yourself when you're not speaking. If you have a contribution to make, please raise your hand. When you speak, please state your name and the organisation you represent. • While the department will be taking notes on the discussion today, to encourage free conversation we will not attribute any direct quotes or views to any one participant. • We have 3 key questions to get through – around 20 minutes per question. I'll start with questions then open to the floor. I apologise in advance if I have to interrupt so we can move to the next question. That said, let's get started. **~10.15**

Agenda item	Talking points
	Question 1: Noting that many international jurisdictions are moving towards legislated age assurance requirements, what methods do you currently use, are introducing in the near future, or investing in, which aim to enforce the minimum age requirements? Discussion prompts: • If Australia were to legally mandate the use of age assurance for access to age-restricted online services, what is a reasonable lead time to implement these regulations? • What is your experience in implementing age related regulations internationally, while complying with some of the strictest privacy laws, such as in Europe? **~10.40** **Question 2:** We have heard that many young people lie about their age to create profiles or enter age gated websites. What is industry doing to assure itself that young people aren't circumventing the requirement at the point of account creation or access? Discussion prompts: • What age assurance solutions do you currently employ? How would you go about implementing any new regulatory requirements for age assurance? • For social media services, how often do you hear that someone under 13 has set up an account? What actions do you take when you find out? **~11.25** **Question 3:** Reflecting on the pace and scale of innovation in the digital platform and internet sectors, implementing effective age assurance is likely within the technical reach of industry. What are platforms doing to design technology that can reliably estimate a user's age without requiring sensitive information?

Agenda item	Talking points

	Discussion prompts:
	
	• How do you currently implement and monitor age limit compliance with your terms of service with the best interests of the child at the centre?
	
	• Do you have any data on how breaches to terms of service (including both circumvention of age assurance tech, as well dissemination of known harmful content by users) are managed?
	
	• At what points of service do you engage and educate users about harms and ways to protect children against them?
	    ○ What is provided for parents at sign-up?
	    ○ Do you use alerts for parents when child-owned accounts are at-risk of accessing harmful content.
	    ○ How are you ensuring information about restricting access to age-inappropriate content it is reaching the user/care-taker.
	    ○ Do you undertake regular education engagements with your users about how to manage their content feeds for protection against age-inappropriate content?

3. **Final remarks and close** 11:25–11:30	• Thank you again for joining us today and giving your time and your thoughts on the use of age assurance technologies for access to pornography and social media. We will put you in contact with the independent technical assessor which we are procuring through the open market, so you can participate in the trial. • Your feedback will be an important voice in the Government's decision-making process.