

I wish to make a submission regarding the Online Safety bill currently being considered. As a researcher who looks at how young people in Australia prevent gender-based violence, I am highly aware for the need for prevention measures targeting violent behaviour that takes place in every social environment.

The internet should be supportive, friendly and safe for self-expression and growth. This environment should be inclusive for the expression of sexuality and desire. Young people in Australia have shared that until using social media, their freedom of identities, sexualities and expressions of love were unavailable. This puts them at odds to feel equal, safe and find fulfilling relationships. Apps and social platforms such as Instagram for example help young people safely find others like themselves, as well as understand others who are different to themselves. Removing access to this range of supportive peer-created resources for young people online may reverse steps we have made in shifting the attitudes and behaviours that support violent behaviour in Australia. As we have only begun to unearth the discussions necessary to engage whole communities in changing this national problem, it would be bereft to see such a silencing.

There is growing concern that the ambiguity of this bill and its lack of protections for those who engage with social technology as a part of their *existing* online safety strategies will put many young people and marginalised groups in Australia at risk of violence and criminalisation.

This bill requires greater clarity of definitions to hold accountability to its power and transparency for online users. The bill should also acknowledge the requisite of privacy as a safety concern for multiple communities in Australia who may be exploring themselves and but wish to do so without cultural recourse. For an online safety bill to be 'safe', strong definitions and understandings around the nuance and conditions under which consent is provided online must be pronounced within the bill.