



Fams Position Statement: Young People and Social Media

Our Position

Fams fully supports the call to action to address the impacts of social media on young people but urges the government to reconsider the proposed ban, highlighting the potential unintended risks it may create.

Social media's influence on our daily lives is growing, bringing both benefits and challenges. Young people are especially susceptible to its effects on mental health and social development. While there is justified community concern and a need for reform, the impact on young people is complex and requires a carefully considered policy response. Banning or demonising social media may push its use underground, introducing new risks.

Implementing the proposed ban faces practical challenges. Young people can circumvent restrictions with ease, potentially increasing child protection risks by reducing parental oversight.

During the pivotal stage of moral development between early adolescence and young adulthood, young people are more likely to make choices to avoid punishment and be seen as 'good' by others, while also moving towards prioritising peer relationships. The complex mix of developmental changes may lead some to use social media despite a ban to maintain connections, while being less likely to seek help when online issues arise to avoid consequences or disappointing care givers. This reluctance could delay important help-seeking behaviours, such as accessing support for a wide range of risks, from peer relationship issues and online scams to child exploitation and grooming, ultimately increasing mental health and child protection risks.

Currently, there is no established evidence or research showing that banning social media for those under 16 improves child safety or mental health. A ban might disrupt vital support networks for young people. It is important to acknowledge that social media use is not inherently harmful but presents both benefits and risks.

Given this complexity, a balanced approach is needed—one that acknowledges the benefits of social media while mitigating risks, without unintentionally exacerbating those risks through policy changes. The primary responsibility should not fall on already overburdened families. Instead, we must explore alternative solutions that place the majority of responsibility on government, social media platforms, and industry stakeholders, with an emphasis on accountability and user safety.

Young people must be at the heart of any solution as they know and understand what works best for them. Their voices are integral to the design of responses. Young people and families need to be equipped with the skills and knowledge to have meaningful conversations and



minimise harm while engaging with social media platforms. Responses must ensure young people, particularly in early adolescence, are supported to navigate this landscape.

As the peak body representing the early intervention and prevention sector in child protection, we strongly advocate for proactive, evidence-based policies that thoughtfully weigh the benefits and risks of social media, improve safety, and provide opportunities for early intervention.

Policies must involve young people in decision-making, ensuring their voices are central to the process, and address the broader social factors contributing to poor mental health outcomes in youth. Collaboration between young people, communities, and industry is essential to create a safe, supportive, and empowering online environment.

About Fams

Fams is the peak body in New South Wales that supports the early intervention and prevention sector. This sector provides critical services for children, young people, families, and communities.

Fams works collaboratively with Government, Policy and decision-makers, non-government organisations, academic organisations, peak bodies, family and community services sector, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and organisations working with diverse communities. We advocate for improved policies and resources for children, young people, families, communities and services.

The below principles are modelled in all aspects of planning, service delivery, management and administration:

- Children and families should be safe.
- Children and families receive services that are flexible and responsive to their needs.
- Children and families can access services embedded in their community.
- Children and family's growth and development is enhanced by research supported practice.
- Children and family's social, cultural, racial and linguistic identities are affirmed and strengthened.
- Children and families work together with services in relationships based on trust and respect.

Contact

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