

Media release

Social media: the way forward must include the voice and views of young people.

Friday, 20 September 2024

The NSW Advocate for Children and Young People, Ms Zoë Robinson, wants young people's perspectives included in crafting fair and effective policies for social media regulation that genuinely addresses their needs and concerns.

Ms Robinson said, "Children and young people must be included when we are making decisions that impact on their lives. We need to make sure that diverse views and ideas are sought and considered. Not all social media experiences are alike, and not all social media is bad."

"Education and awareness are key parts of what is needed. Leading mental health organisations have also said that we risk further harm to children and young people if we cut them off from their supports and communities," she said.

This follows the recent announcement from the Federal Government who are looking to introduce new laws to enforce a minimum age for access to social media and other relevant digital platforms.

Ms Robinson added, "The decisions we are making in government affect children and young people, who don't always have seats at the decision table."

In a recent survey* children and young people have said the top three uses for social media are "entertainment, watching videos and connecting with family and friends." When asked about harmful experiences they list "seeing fake news or misinformation, seeing racist or seeing sexist content" as the top three harmful experiences.

"The work should focus on education around fake news and misinformation, working on eradicating racism and how do we eliminate sexist and abusive content. They are the issues young people list, so our work and policy should start there," said Ms Robinson.

"We need to listen to young people and invest in education, awareness and supporting the existing work of, for example, the eSafety Commissioner," she said.

The Advocate for Children and Young People welcomes the NSW Premier's upcoming Social Media Summit and supports the inclusion of young people, both at the summit and in the development of policy and legislation around social media use.

ENDS

**Results based on polling commissioned by The Advocate for Children and Young People and conducted by SECNewgate Research of 1,017 young people (aged 10-24 years) in NSW, conducted in August – September 2024.*

For more information or to arrange an interview with the Advocate for Children and Young People please contact: Anwen Ruttle | 0439 346 249 | media@acyp.nsw.gov.au