



**LIVERPOOL YOUTH ACTION GROUP**

# **SOCIAL MEDIA SUMMIT**

Summary of key points from meeting held on  
29 September 2024.



**CHARISHMA  
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MEMBER FOR LIVERPOOL

# FOREWORD

The Social Media Summit is a unique chance for Government to engage young people, and hear directly from them about their experiences on social media.

I set up the **Liverpool Youth Action Group** to provide a representative collective of young people with a direct channel to myself and the State Government to affect change on the issues they care about most. I was fortunate enough to receive great interest from many community members about this proposal and received many expressions of interest from local young people.

I convened the first meeting of Liverpool Youth Action group in September, where we discussed experiences of social media and online safety in light of the upcoming social media summit.

At that meeting, it was agreed that the discussion points would be collated into a submission to the summit.

This summit is a chance for us to let young people take the lead, as key stakeholders in these conversations. Contained in this report are some of the dilemmas, as well as potential solutions, with regard to the quickly changing digital space.

It is my hope that this is duly considered when crafting solutions to some of the issues identified by the summit.

*Charishma*

**Charishma Kaliyanda MP**  
Member for Liverpool



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On 29 September 2024, the **Liverpool Youth Action Group convened for its inaugural meeting**. As part of that meeting, the group discussed the **upcoming social media summit** to be held by the NSW Government and SA Government as a joint venture on 10-11 October 2024.

The group discussed various positive and negative impacts of social media. Salient in this conversation were:

- The need for appropriate repercussions for cyberbullying.
- Issues with anonymity.
- The application of reporting mechanisms across social media.
- Regulation of content and its relationship with free speech.
- The role of parents in supervising social media use.

**This report is a summary of points discussed at that meeting for the summit's consideration.**

# **SOCIAL MEDIA:**

## **A USEFUL MODERN TOOL**

**The Liverpool Youth Action Group was asked to highlight ways social media has improved their day-to-day lives. For many, social media has become an important aspect of their lives. Among the positive impacts were the following:**

### **Social media as a useful communication tool**

This is particularly poignant for those in the group – like many in the Liverpool electorate – that have family or friends who live overseas. For these members, social media was a vital way of staying in contact with close ones and updated on their wellbeing.

### **Social media as a space for raising awareness**

Members of the group highlighted social media as a key space by which they are engaged about issues and current affairs. They find that social media pages they trust are key sources of information and educational content.

### **Social media as the marketplace of ideas**

Social media was identified as a key marketplace of ideas for many members of the group. They mentioned that it was a useful tool to engage with new perspectives and opinions. They also identified social media as a key platform for the expression of their own viewpoints, as well as a key creative outlet.

### **Social media as entertainment**

For many in the group, social media is a source of entertainment and enjoyment.

# SOCIAL MEDIA:

## UNPACKING HARM

### Anonymity: a double-edged sword

A concept members raised and discussed was online anonymity, and its impacts: both positive and negative.

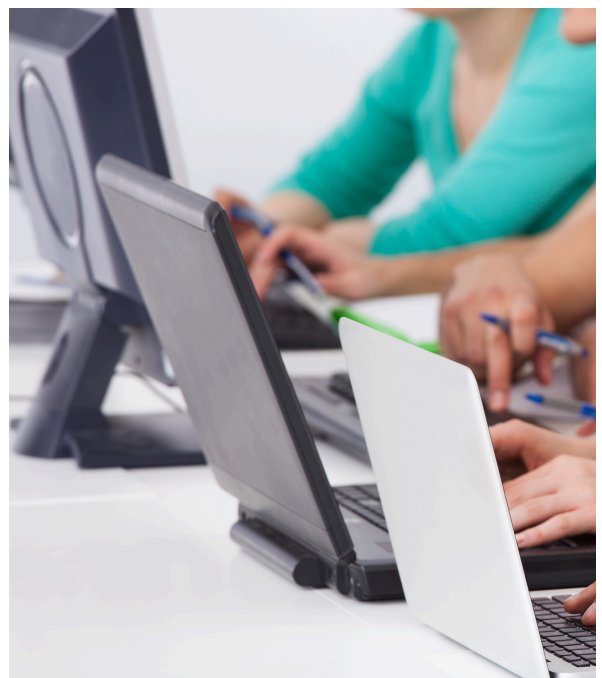
Some members of the group reflected on some of the positives of anonymity, namely that it allowed for more self-expression. However, some of the negatives of anonymity were also explored. This included severe cyberbullying by anonymous profiles.

The group reflected on what it may mean to incorporate accountability into anonymity. The group was also interested in a tiered system whereby some functions of social media platforms were only available to those who could verify their identity. Those who wished to remain anonymous would be limited to viewing content, without being able to publish content or message other users themselves.

### Cyberbullying

The group was conscious of the effects of cyberbullying on themselves and their peers. They noted that for many, cyberbullying was a source of anxiety.

Members were conscious that many instances of cyberbullying go unreported, and that when they are reported, are inadequately dealt with.



## Existing reporting mechanisms

Group members discussed the effectiveness of existing avenues for recourse on social media. They found that these structures are not adequately addressing some of the harmful behaviour on social media.

Members expressed that when they reported problematic behaviour in the past, it often goes without consequence. They also expressed that comparatively minor incidences are often subject to substantially harsher consequences.

The group concluded that a more **consistent application of rules was necessary across social media platforms.**

## Harmful content and misinformation

The group reported that content of a harmful nature and misinformation was often present on their feed, as a result of social media algorithms.

Many reported seeing content of a racist, sexist, or violent nature. Also reported was content promoting unhealthy expectations and body image.

Many expressed a desire to see more stringent regulation of content available on social media, but acknowledged that there was a need to balance that approach with free speech rights.

## Social media addiction

There was a reflection on the addictive nature of social media, and the need for balance between the online and material worlds.

Group members expressed that overuse of social media could lead to shortened attention spans, mental health harms, and taking time away from essential studying for young people.

## Online safety

The group acknowledged that social media had various safety risks.

Included in those safety risks were exposure to other users of a predatory nature, as well as the potential for their personal information to be leaked.

# CRAFTING SOLUTIONS

**As part of the meeting, members of the Liverpool Youth Action Group were challenged to think of potential solutions to some of the harms identified. The following were some of their ideas.**

## **Addressing Anonymity: A Tiered System**

The group agreed that anonymity was a factor in social media that increases access in a positive way, but also has negative effects. As a solution, the group proposed a tiered approach to social media.

As part of this approach, anonymous accounts would be able to access some, but not all, of the functions of social media platforms. Further functions, namely the ability to interact with other users, would be reserved for users who could verify their identity.

By introducing such a system, the group believes that such an approach will curb some of the more negative behaviours young people can be subjected to on social media platforms.

The group did acknowledge that such an approach, with identity verification, would need to be balanced with the need for privacy, amid some concerns about the providence of data and susceptibility to cyberattack.

## **Cyberbullying: a criminal offence**

Members of the group explored whether or not cyberbullying should be made an explicit offence. There was general agreement that this option should be explored as a deterrence for would-be cyberbullies.

## Age restrictions

The Youth Action Group was asked what they thought the appropriate age restriction for social media was. When asked, they agreed that **16 was the most appropriate minimum age.**

## Regulation of content

Members discussed the possibility of regulating content to limit some of the more harmful content that is posted onto platforms. As a Western Sydney based-group, there was a reflection on the recent proliferation of footage from the stabbing at **Christ the Good Shepherd Church in Wakeley** in April 2024 and subsequent debate regarding free speech concerns.

Upon discussion, the group concluded that regulation is a viable option on these platforms, albeit with a consideration for free speech.

## Better Educational Programs

The group discussed that several existing educational programs were either insufficiently related to the online space, or often missed the mark in an attempt to remain engaging or comical.

The sentiment of the group was that the education space can be better targeted to improve online literacy and promote behaviour that maximises online safety.

Educational programs were also important for parents. The group agreed that parents play an essential role in managing the online activity of their children. A targeted campaign aimed at increasing parental knowledge was widely supported by members.

