

The growing prevalence and accessibility of social media platforms such as TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram have transformed the way Australians, particularly youth, learn about and engage with various topics. This paper clearly gives understanding that DFA must strongly promote the drug prevention message using social media platforms because this is particularly relevant for the most vulnerable of our population—young people—who are the largest consumers of these social media platforms. Page 4 please see attached paper.

Submission to the Joint Select Committee on social media and Australian Society Prepared by Tesfa Yimer, Gary Chan, Caitlin McClure-Thomas, Tianze Sun, Giang Vu, Jason Connor, Daniel Stjepanovic, and Janni Leung on behalf of the National Centre for Youth Substance Use Research the University of Queensland Submitted on 26 Jun 2024.

The growing prevalence and accessibility of social media platforms such as TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram have transformed the way Australians, particularly youth, learn about and engage with various topics. While these platforms offer many benefits, they have also become a conduit for the widespread promotion and normalisation of substance use. The Australian National Drug Strategy 2017-2026 outlines Australia's commitment to harm minimisation through a balanced approach of demand, supply, and harm reduction (Department of Health, 2017). The widespread availability of substance use related content on these social media platforms is a challenge to harm minimisation attempts. This is particularly relevant for the most vulnerable of our population—young people—who are the largest consumers of these social media platforms. Page 4

## Conclusions

The widespread presence of substance-related content on social media poses a significant risk to Australian youth. Our research shows that this content is easily accessible, often portrays substance use positively and can influence young people's attitudes and behaviours.

Protecting young people from substance related social media content needs:

1. Implementing stronger age verification measures on social media platforms.
2. Developing better systems to detect and remove content that promotes illegal substances.

3. Strong regulation on social media companies to enforce content moderation and age restriction on substance-related content.
4. Using social media for targeted anti-substance use campaigns

*The drug prevention taskforce should review the social media platforms such as TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram and maybe others of interest to find out how best to get a positive message regarding the importance for youth to make this a life changing and inform decision on drug use. We are aware that Shane Dalgarno is using Facebook and other media programs on the internet, but I believe this has been directed to the adult population I maybe wrong. I believe it is important for Taskforce to focus on this problem and come up with a plan. (Don't believe band only will work)*

*At present it does appear the Federal Government **Key Aspects of Australia's Restrictions are for bans***

- **In-Scope Platforms:** Platforms like TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram—alongside YouTube, Snapchat, Reddit, and X—must take reasonable steps to prevent under-16s from holding accounts. [1]
- **Enforcement:** Tech companies face massive potential fines for non-compliance, prompting major removals of underage accounts by providers like Meta. [1, 2]
- **Ongoing Challenges:** Recent data and studies indicate that many young Australians continue to access platforms using workarounds, alternative apps, or relaxed verification checks. [1, 2]
- Explore the official guidelines through the [eSafety Commissioner](#). [1]
- Read a summary of the legislation via [UNICEF Australia](#). [1]
- Check updates on compliance from the [Australian Government Department of Infrastructure](#). [1]

How does social media affect teens? A deep dive

<https://this.deakin.edu.au/society/how-does-social-media-affect-teens-a-deep-dive/>

When the [Online Safety Act 2021](#) changed on December 10, 2025, Australians under the age of 16 lost access to a host of social media sites. The Australian government hopes its social media ban will prevent under-16s from holding accounts on apps including Facebook,

Instagram, Kik, Reddit, Snapchat, Threads, TikTok, Twitch, X (formerly Twitter) and YouTube.