

October 17, 2025 | MLA4MediLit

Australia's social media ban... and what to do instead

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Digital Child.



Agenda



- 1 The digital childhoods paradox
- 2 Social media ban
- 3 ARC CoE for the Digital child
- 4 The Children's Internet
- 5 What should media literacy educators do?

The digital childhoods paradox

Today's children and young people are required to be digital citizens and will need digital skills for their future.

“Technology should be celebrated. It will solve our problems. It is our economic future. It is here, whether we like it or not”.

But how can we support them to remain safe, successful and well adjusted?

“Technology is a huge problem. There is too much screen time. It is impacting wellness. It is destroying childhood. We need to ban it”.



Social media ban for children to be introduced this year, but age limit undetermined

By political reporter Claudia Long

Federal Government

Mon 9 Sep



Banning young people from social media in Australia

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• This article is more than 1 month old

Australia's dummy spit over kids on social media isn't the answer. We need an internet for children

Aleesha Rodriguez

Tue 10 Sep 2024 07.31 BST

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The ban is a distraction from the need to develop of high-quality experiences online for children of different ages



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Australia's Social Media 'ban'

- Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act 2024.
- Legislation passed December 2024, comes into effect, December 10, 2025.
- Apply to social media platforms that meet three conditions:
 - The sole purpose, or a significant purpose, of the service is to enable online social interaction between two or more end-users
 - the service allows end-users to link to, or interact with, some or all of the other end-users
 - the service allows end-users to post material on the service.

The key idea is to delay young people's access to social media, with the assumption that they will be better prepared to deal with it with more maturity.

Applies most obviously to:
- Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, X, and YouTube



The problem with ‘the ban’

- Age verification is unproven / difficult without invading privacy.
- The definition of social media is problematic (is Roblox or Minecraft social?).
- Young people who rely on social media may be cut off.
- Young people may simply seek out even less regulated online spaces.
- Parents will have more burden, not less.
- It doesn’t require social media companies to make improvements.



ARC Centre of Excellence for the Digital Child

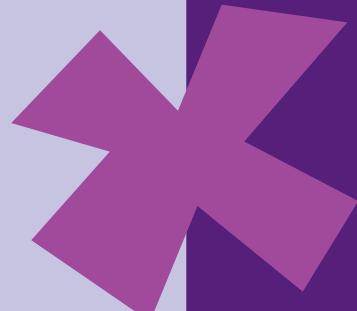
- National research centre, headquartered at QUT.
- Involves: QUT, UQ, Curtin, ECU, Wollongong, Deakin.
- 150+ researchers
- Healthy, Educated, Connected childhoods

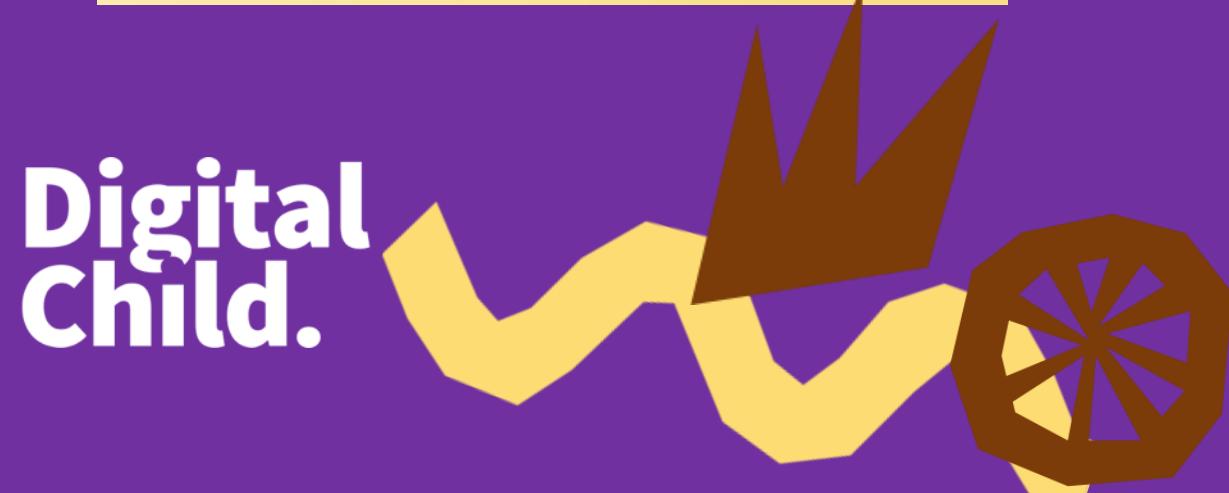
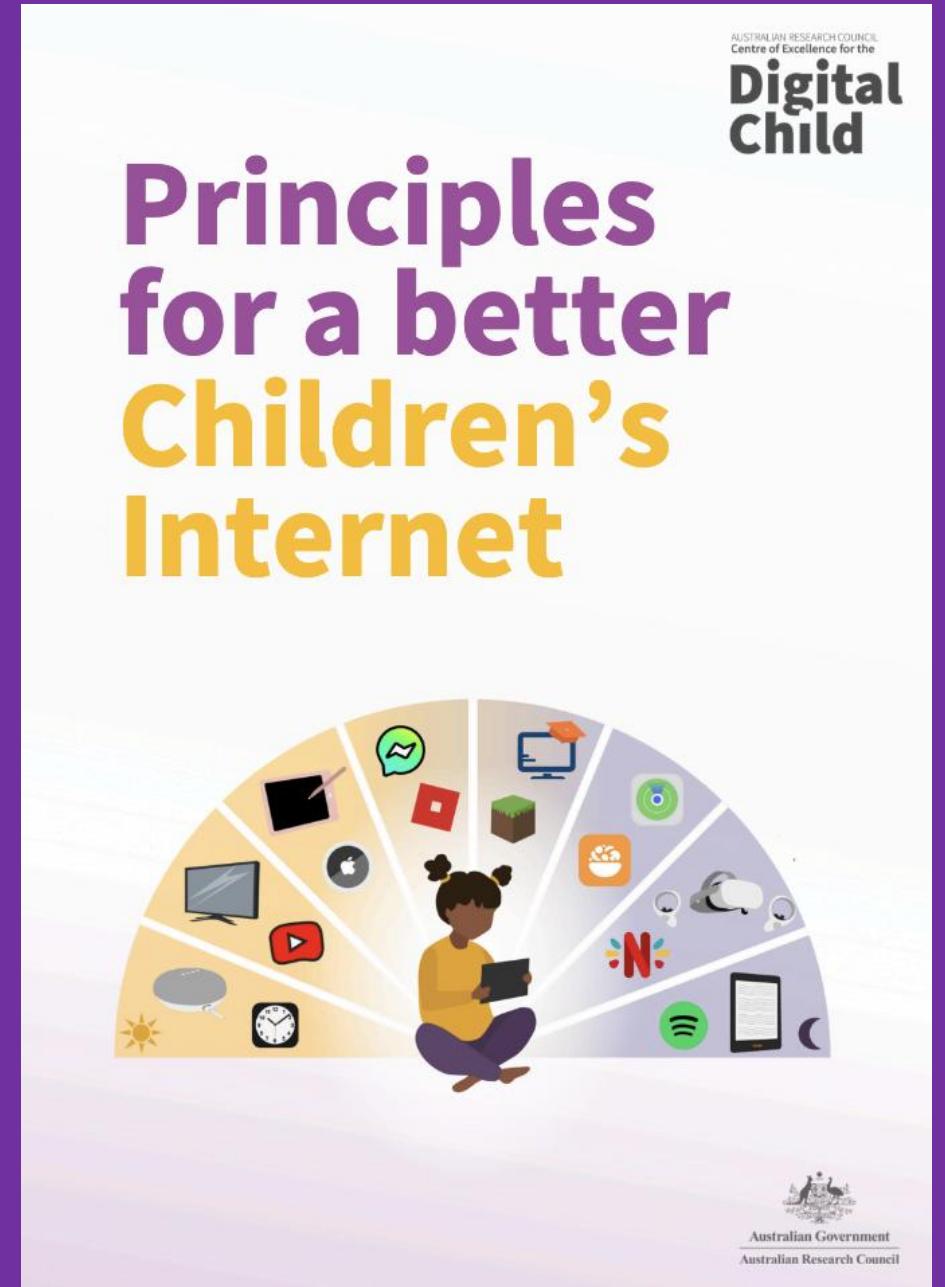


<https://digitalchild.org.au/>

The ‘Children’s Internet’ project

- Inspired by the idea of children’s television.
- Aims to get beyond the digital childhoods paradox, which ultimately places us between a rock and a hard place.
- Focusing just on wellness and screentime does not provide a solution (because the only solution is to ban and restrict – it doesn’t seek improvement).



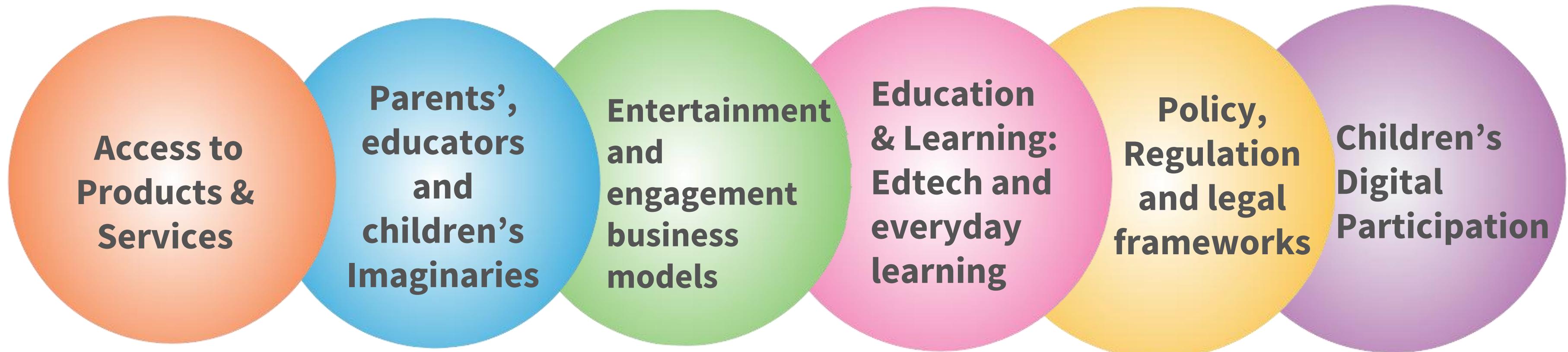


The ‘internet’ in this case is a metaphor for all the connected digital experiences children have – from television through to AI chatbots.



Digital Child.

The 'Children's Internet' is experienced through



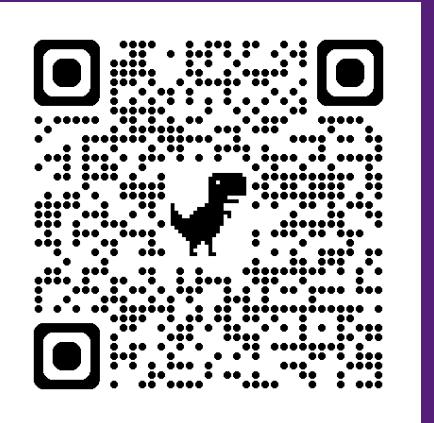
Roblox case study

- A creative game-based platform popular with children, with 32.1 million daily active users under 13.
- Second quarter of 2024: generated over US \$893mil. through the sale of digital assets - especially through the in-game currency, Robux.
- Has a wide impact on children's popular culture – highly popular as YouTube content.
- Controversial due to business model and child safety concerns.
- Enables creation of games through the Creator Hub – built in learning about coding and games creation.
- Has a 'Learn and Explore' section, which claims to be educational.



Significant implications for:

- Quality of experience – entertainment and learning.
- Child-centred design
- Business model / exploitation – (eg 'pay to play / play to win')
- Safety and wellbeing and parenting.



Roblox: A Rapid analysis



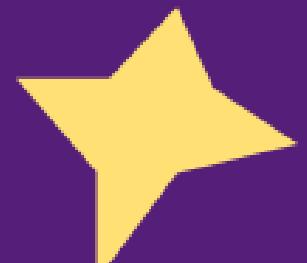
Principles for a better Children's Internet



There are four overarching things we can focus on, as a society, to improve children's online experiences. This includes supporting the development of:

1. Standards for high-quality digital experiences for children
2. Slow design and decision-making processes driven by consultation with children
3. Child-centred regulation and policy
4. Media literacy policy and programs

Principles for a better Children's Internet



Implications for Media Literacy

1. Invest in media literacy education from early education onwards.
2. Focus on parental media literacy education.
3. Evolve media literacy to remain relevant to social and digital media and AI: algorithmic literacy, new business models and so on.
4. Address social and relational aspects of media, not just the ‘representational’.



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Civic media literacy and education
Professor Paul Mihailidis delivers a mini masterclass on what civic media literacy is, and how civic media education can be used in the classroom.

Use the News: Should YouTube be exempt from the social media ban?
This video from BTN High is a great tool for the classroom to Use the News and develop your students' media literacy skills.

<https://www.abc.net.au/education/media-literacy>

Questions?

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