street

smarthandbook

ACT & NSW

STEP TOGETHER

ASIO Director General Mike Burgess explains

it takes "two clicks"

to go between a page advocating a "hard-line religious interpretation" and a Telegram network that was "explicitly pro-ISIL (The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant), **with propaganda material promoting Australian terrorists**

It takes an average of 23 minutes

for young men to be exposed to misogynistic content on TikTok and YouTube shorts,
regardless of whether they were searching for it.*

** Dublin City University's Anti-Bullying Centre study 2024*

Would you know where to go for help if someone you knew was vulnerable to negative violent extremist influence?

Step Together offers a safe and collaborative space for advice and support.

Call 1800 875 204
www.steptogether.gov.au

Australian Government

Working Together

Mateship is an Australian cultural idiom that embodies equality, loyalty and friendship.

Russel Ward, in *The Australian Legend* (1958, aka "Legend"), saw the concept as one that is central to the ethos and character of Australian people.

Mateship derives from mate, meaning friend, commonly used in Australia as an amicable form of address.

A message from NHWA Chair, Bernie Durkin

Welcome to the latest edition of the Streetsmart Handbook!

The Streetsmart Handbook is a practical resource developed to support young people as they transition to adulthood.

Neighbourhood Watch Australasia (NHWA) knows that the journey to becoming an adult is not the same for everyone, and that there are many different roads that each person can take, either by choice or by circumstance. Though the chosen paths may not be the same for everyone, the signposts along the way are.

The Streetsmart Handbook provides a state-by-state guide to many of the signposts and directions needed to be accessed along the way, to assist young people as they navigate a safe passage along the often rocky road to becoming an adult.

Just as the paths taken to adulthood can be different, so too are the people you will meet and interact with along the way. These people may be peers, friends, neighbours, strangers, family, and, of course, mates; these people are all part of your community.

NHWA is all about community, with people of all ages working together and with community partners, including the police, to create safe, interconnected, inclusive and cared for communities for all. Communities that are based upon the underlying values of Australian mateship.

Mates look out for each other, and that is what NHWA does. The StreetSmart Handbook is an extension of NHWA's offer of mateship, a helping hand, extended to assist with finding answers to questions, providing practical information, making good decisions, and demonstrating ways to stay safe as you become an adult in your community.

If you would like more information please visit our website: **www.nhwa.com.au**

Bernie Durkin

Chair
Neighbourhood Watch Australasia

Bringing people together to create safe, connected, and inclusive communities, where people feel empowered, informed, protected, and engaged with one another, and with their local police.

A message from

AFP Deputy Commissioner Lesa Gale

As the Australian Federal Police Deputy Commissioner, it's my job to highlight to you the importance of protecting yourself and where to get help if something goes wrong both in the online and real world.

I recommend to you the Streetsmart Handbook which does just that. It contains answers to your many questions about being part of a safe, healthy and connected community. It will point you in the right direction of how to access government and other services that can provide advice and support and empower you through your teenage years into adulthood.

As you choose your own path – keep this book nearby so you are informed with all the important tools you will need at your fingertips. The decisions you make now will impact you for the rest of your life. We all make mistakes – it's how we recover from those mistakes that's important. The Streetsmart Handbook will help you make fewer mistakes and guide you through how you recover from the mistakes you do make.

Issues like cyberbullying, image-based abuse, or sextortion can happen to people of all age groups, and it can happen to you. The Streetsmart Handbook can help with what to do if this happens to you. We know technology and the internet are an important part of our everyday lives. Whether you are using technology as part of your studies or on a social basis, being digitally Streetsmart means you will know what to do to stay safe online.

This Streetsmart Handbook has been developed to guide you over the coming years and contains information to answer some of your questions and to point you toward sources of additional support as you seek to maintain a healthy mind, body and relationships.

Good luck! I wish you all the very best.

Lesa Gale
AFP Deputy Commissioner
International & Specialist Capabilities

Deputy Commissioner Lesa Gale APM

AFP Deputy Commissioner
International and Specialist Capabilities

The Streetsmart Handbook will help you make fewer mistakes and guide you through how you recover from the mistakes you do make.

Don't touch it, report it.

Australian Government
Department of Defence

UXO.

Curiosity Can Kill You.

You need to understand the real danger of **unexploded ordnance (UXO).** If you touch UXO - like an old bomb, bullet or hand grenade - it could seriously injure or even kill you. You must know - Don't Touch It!

Report it to the Police on 000

www.defence.gov.au/uxo

STEP TOGETHER

According to the office of the eSafety Commissioner, **1/3 of young people** have reported being exposed to online content **promoting terrorism**

Would you know the **early warning signs** if a friend or family member was being **influenced by an extremist group?**

Would you know where to go for help?

Step Together offers a safe and collaborative space for advice and support.

Call 1800 875 204
www.steptogether.gov.au

Australian Government

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Respectful relationships

Respect is the glue that holds friendships, family and relationships together. Without it, trust breaks down fast. This chapter shows how to bring more respect into your daily life by listening, setting boundaries and handling disagreements calmly. With empathy and honesty, you'll build stronger, healthier connections where everyone feels valued, safe and supported.

Why is respect important?

Respect is the foundation of any healthy relationship, whether it's with friends, family, a boyfriend or girlfriend.

It means valuing each other's feelings, boundaries and opinions, which builds trust and understanding.

Without respect, misunderstandings and conflicts can escalate, leading to hurt and disconnection.

By practicing respect, we build strong, supportive connections where everyone feels appreciated and safe.

In Australia, where diversity and inclusivity are celebrated, respecting others strengthens our sense of community and harmony.

Respect doesn't have to come naturally – it is something you learn.

How you know if there's respect

Here's how you'll know if there's mutual respect in any relationship you have:

- Both people listen to each other's thoughts and feelings without interrupting or dismissing them.
- Conversations are honest and open, with each person feeling comfortable sharing their views.
- Personal space and individual boundaries are acknowledged and honoured by both parties.
- Each person supports the other's goals, dreams, and personal growth.
- Disagreements are handled calmly and constructively, with an emphasis on finding solutions rather than blaming.
- Decisions and responsibilities are shared fairly, with neither person dominating or controlling the other.
- Regular expressions of gratitude and acknowledgment for each other's contributions and qualities.
- Both individuals trust each other and maintain honesty, avoiding deceit or manipulation.

When respect falls away, here's how you can get it back:

- Start honest conversations about what went wrong and how both sides can improve.
- Admit any errors or wrongdoings on your part and show a genuine commitment to do better.
- Demonstrate reliability and consistency in your actions to rebuild trust over time.
- Establish and respect new boundaries to ensure both people feel safe and valued.
- Make an effort to understand the other person's perspective and validate their feelings.
- Understand that regaining respect takes time and ongoing effort, so be patient with the process.

Respect yourself

Respecting others is important but so is respecting yourself.

Recognise and honour your own boundaries and needs by understanding what you are comfortable with and communicate these within your circle.

By treating yourself with the same respect and care you would offer to a friend, you build a strong, resilient sense of self that can navigate challenges with confidence and dignity.

Positive chats with the folks

Sometimes talking to the parents might feel like you're trying to crack a secret code.

If you're feeling stuck, put some of these tips into action. They might help you get your point across without anyone losing their cool.

1 Choose the right time

Picking the right moment can make a big difference. Wait for a time when your parents are relaxed and not busy. Avoid bringing up important stuff during a TV show or when they're in a rush.

2 Be respectful

Parents love respect, just like you do. Make sure to stay calm and polite, even if you're talking about something you're passionate about. Using a friendly tone can go a long way.

3 Explain your thoughts

Start by explaining your thoughts clearly and calmly. Share your perspective and how you feel. Use "I" statements to express your feelings without sounding like you're blaming them.

4 Listen to their side

Communication is a two-way street. After you've shared your thoughts, listen to what they have to say. It shows that you value their opinion too.

5 Be patient

Sometimes parents need a little time to understand where you're coming from. Don't get frustrated if they don't agree right away. Keep the conversation going and be patient.

6 Use examples

Giving examples can make your point clearer. If you're talking about a rule you'd like to change, explain why with real-life examples.

7 Compromise

Remember that communication is about finding common ground. Be open to finding solutions that work for both you and your parents.

How to be a great communicator

Whether you're chatting with friends, presenting in class, or even just having a family discussion, being a skilled communicator is key. So, get ready to dive into some tips and tricks that will help you become an amazing communicator in no time!

Be an active listener

Active listening involves not just hearing the words spoken but also understanding the emotions, context, and underlying messages conveyed by the speaker. Practicing these techniques will help you become a more empathetic and effective communicator.

- **Give your full attention:** When someone is speaking, focus solely on what they're saying. Put away distractions like your phone or other devices and maintain eye contact to show that you're engaged and interested in the conversation.
- **Use nonverbal cues:** Employ nonverbal cues like nodding, smiling, and maintaining an open posture to show that you're actively listening. These cues demonstrate your attentiveness and encourage the speaker to continue sharing.
- **Reflect and paraphrase:** After the speaker has shared a point, summarise what you've heard in your own words. This not only shows that you're paying attention but also allows the speaker to confirm if you've understood their message correctly.
- **Ask thoughtful questions:** Pose questions that encourage the speaker to elaborate on their thoughts and feelings. These questions show that you're genuinely interested in understanding their perspective and can lead to more meaningful conversations.
- **Avoid interrupting or judging:** Wait for the speaker to finish their thought before responding. Interrupting can make them feel unheard or disregarded. Similarly, refrain from passing judgment or offering immediate solutions, as these actions can hinder open communication.

Be an assertive communicator

There are three main types of communication but being an 'assertive' communicator is usually best for you and the person you're communicating with. Here's what they mean:

1. **Aggressive communication** involves expressing thoughts, feelings, or opinions in a forceful and confrontational manner that often disregards the feelings and perspectives of others.

2. **Passive communication** involves expressing thoughts, feelings, or opinions in a subdued and hesitant manner, often avoiding conflict and failing to assert your own needs and boundaries.

3. **Assertive communication** involves expressing thoughts, feelings, or opinions in a confident and respectful manner that acknowledges both your own rights and the rights of others, promoting open and balanced dialogue.

The way your body talks

Have you ever noticed that sometimes people say things without actually speaking? That's because our bodies can also talk, and this is called 'body language.' Just like how we use words to communicate, our bodies use movements, expressions, and gestures to tell others how we're feeling or what we're thinking. Here's some examples:

- **Faces say it all:** Our faces are like big signs that show what we're feeling. When you're happy, you might smile, and your eyes might sparkle. If you're sad, your eyebrows might droop, and your mouth might turn down. Sometimes, if you're surprised, your eyes might widen. These are just a few ways our faces tell others what's going on inside our heads.
- **Arms and hands have stories:** Have you ever noticed how people use their arms and hands when they talk? If someone's excited, they might wave their hands around. If they're interested, they might lean in or point at something. Crossing your arms can show you're feeling defensive or closed off, while open arms can mean you're welcoming and friendly.
- **Legs and feet speak:** Even our legs and feet can say things! If someone's tapping their foot, they might be impatient. If they're bouncing their leg, they might be nervous. Standing up straight can show confidence, while slouching might make you seem unsure.
- **Eyes and eye contact:** Our eyes can tell a lot too. Looking someone in the eye when you talk shows that you're confident and paying attention. Avoiding eye contact might mean you're feeling shy or uncomfortable.
- **Personal space:** Have you ever felt like someone is standing too close to you? That's called personal space. Respecting personal space shows that you're considerate of others' feelings. If someone backs away, it might mean they want more space.
- **Mirroring:** Sometimes, without even realising it, we copy the movements and expressions of the people we're with. This is called mirroring, and it shows that we're getting along and connecting with them.

Remember, body language helps us understand each other better. But just like words, it's important to remember that body language can have different meanings in different situations and cultures. So, next time you're talking to someone, pay attention to what their body is saying – you might learn a lot more than just their words!

Sex, sexuality & gender

Sex, sexuality and gender can feel confusing, and that's okay. These words mean different things, but understanding them helps you make sense of yourself and respect others too. In this chapter we break it down in simple ways, answer common questions, and share where to go for help if you or a friend ever need it.

Intimate relationships

An intimate relationship is a special connection that happens between two people who really care about each other. It's a way of showing love and affection that involves physical intimacy. It involves things like holding hands, hugging, kissing, and even more private actions that feel good and special to both people. But here's the important part: a sexual relationship should always happen when both people are comfortable, understand what's happening, and agree to it. It's a big deal and should be based on trust, respect, and open communication.

Consent

Consent means that everyone involved agrees and feels comfortable before doing anything that's private or intimate, like hugging, kissing, touching or anything else.

It's important to ask for and give consent before doing anything that involves someone's body. If you want to hug or hold hands with someone, you should ask them if it's okay first. And if someone asks you for a hug, you have the right to say yes or no. No matter what, your feelings and comfort come first.

Why is this so important?

Well, giving, asking for, and receiving consent is all about treating each other with kindness and respect. It shows that you care about how the other person feels and that you're making sure both of you are comfortable. Imagine how you'd feel if someone did something that made you uncomfortable without asking – that wouldn't feel good, right? Consent makes sure that everyone feels safe and happy in their interactions and sets boundaries.

But what does consent actually MEAN?

Here's what consent looks like in practise:

- **Asking before doing:** Before you engage in any private or intimate activities, always ask for permission. If you want to hug, kiss, hold hands, or do anything else that involves someone's body, make sure to ask them if it's okay. And remember, it's okay if they say no – everyone has the right to decide what they're comfortable with.
- **Listening and respecting:** If someone says they're not comfortable with something or changes their mind, it's important to respect their decision without any pressure or judgment. Consent can be given or withdrawn at any time. Being respectful of each other's choices shows that you care about their feelings.
- **Clear communication:** Openly talk about your boundaries and feelings with your partner or the person you're interacting with. Let them know what you're comfortable with and what you're not. Encourage them to do the same. This helps both of you understand each other better and build trust.
- **Body language matters:** Sometimes, body language can also show whether someone is comfortable or not. Pay attention to their cues. If they seem hesitant, tense, or uncomfortable, it's a sign to slow down or check in with them.
- **No pressure, no guilt:** Never pressure or guilt anyone into doing something they're not comfortable with. It's important to prioritise everyone's well-being and feelings. A healthy relationship is built on mutual understanding, trust, and shared decisions.
- **Educate yourself:** As you grow and learn, take the time to educate yourself about healthy relationships, consent, and the importance of communication. Understanding these concepts will help you navigate relationships in a respectful and positive way.

Remember, practicing sexual consent is all about treating each other with kindness, empathy, and respect. It's a key part of building healthy relationships that make everyone involved feel valued and safe.

What does the law say?

The age that someone can consent to any kind of sexual contact varies slightly between state and territories in Australia. In the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, Northern Territory, Queensland, Victoria and Western Australia the age of consent is 16 years, while in Tasmania and South Australia the age of consent is 17 years of age.

Sexting

Sexting is when people send or receive intimate or explicit messages, photos, or videos through phones or other devices. While technology can be super cool for staying connected, it's important to know that sexting can also have some serious downsides.

Sexting might seem like a quick way to share feelings or connect with someone you like, but it can be harmful for a few reasons. First, once you send something online, you might not have control over where it goes or who sees it. That means private pictures or messages could end up being shared without your permission. This can lead to embarrassment, hurt feelings, and even bullying. Second, it's important to consider your safety. Sharing explicit content could make you vulnerable to online predators or other unsafe situations. Lastly, sexting can have legal consequences, especially if you're underage. It's crucial to remember that the laws around this can be strict, and it's not worth getting into trouble.

So, what can you do about it? Well, the best thing is to think twice before you share anything intimate online. If you're unsure, talk to a trusted adult or friend about it. Remember that your feelings and boundaries come first – don't let anyone pressure you into sharing something you're not comfortable with. If someone sends you explicit content, it's okay to say no or even block them if you feel unsafe. If you've shared something and you're worried about it, talk to someone you trust – like a parent, teacher, or counsellor. Remember, your wellbeing and safety are super important, both online and offline.

Sexuality

Everyone's sexuality is different. Some people are attracted to only one sex, and others are attracted to a diversity of people regardless of sex or gender, with a lot of different preferences in between.

People use a few common labels to identify their sexuality. Your sexuality isn't defined by who you have sex with – it's about how you feel and how you choose to identify yourself. The important thing is that you choose what label feels comfortable, or you choose no label at all. You might find, like many others have, that the label you choose changes over time.

Words to describe sexuality

Straight/Heterosexual
Attracted mostly to people of the opposite sex or gender.

Gay/Homosexual
Attracted mostly to people of the same sex or gender (refers to guys – and often to girls, too).

Lesbian
Attracted mostly to people of the same sex or gender (refers to women).

Polysexual
Attracted to romantic and sexual partners of many but not all genders, sexes or sexual identities ('poly' means 'many'.)

Bisexual+
An inclusive term that describes being attracted to romantic and/or sexual partners of more than one gender or sex. Some people in this community prefer the term pansexual, which generally describes being attracted to all sexes or genders, and others in the community may prefer the term queer.

Asexual
Not really sexually attracted to anyone.

Some people also choose the labels 'queer or 'fluid' as a way of expressing themselves by their own personal feelings.

What is gender?

Gender refers to your sense of who you are as a boy, girl or something else, as opposed to what your physical characteristics, genes and hormones indicate. Identifying your gender can be more diverse than simply seeing yourself as 'male' or 'female', and people express their gender in different ways.

There are many different words and labels that people use to describe their sex or gender characteristics and identities. Here are some of the most common ones.

Cisgender
A word used to describe people whose gender agrees with their body sex or assigned sex.

Trans and gender diverse
A general word for people whose gender is different from their physical sex, including transgender people.

Transgender
A person whose gender identity or gender expression does not conform to that typically associated with their sex assigned at birth.

Genderqueer/non-binary
Any gender identity that sits within, outside of, across or between the spectrum of the male and female binary. A non-binary person might identity as gender fluid, trans masculine, trans feminine, agender, bigender etc.

Intersex
A person born with reproductive organs, hormone levels and/or sex chromosomes that aren't exclusively male or female. There are many different states of being intersex, and they're not always obvious on the outside or even diagnosed.

LET'S ARGUE THE CASE:

SHOULD AI BE HELD TO YOUTH-SPECIFIC ETHICAL STANDARDS?

SETTING THE SCENE:

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) IS EVERYWHERE.

It curates your TikTok feed, suggests what you should watch next on Netflix, recommends what to buy online, helps you research your schoolwork (hello, ChatGPT).

But here's the big question: *Should AI be held to special ethical standards when it deals with young people, or should everyone be treated the same?*

This is not just a 'tech geek' issue. It cuts right to how much freedom you have online, how safe you feel, and how much control you actually hold over your own digital identity.

Disclaimer: *This article is designed to spark debate and reflection. It does not replace professional advice. If you are experiencing issues relating to digital wellbeing, privacy, or mental health, please seek guidance from a trusted professional, parent/guardian, or support service.*

#1 QUICK FACT

A 2025 report found that 47% of young Australians have used AI tools for emotional or relationship advice.

#2 QUICK FACT

The average teenager spends more than 5 hours per day on social media, giving algorithms thousands of data points daily.

#3 QUICK FACT

In Finland, digital literacy is taught in schools just like maths and science. Teens learn how fake news spreads, how algorithms recommend content, and how to spot manipulation online.

#4 QUICK FACT

In 2024, Australia announced plans to ban social media for under-16-year-olds, with fines for companies that allow younger users. Supporters say it's about safety. Critics call it censorship.

#5 QUICK FACT

13,000+ young Australians (aged 12–17 years) accessed homelessness services in 2023/24, many via online referrals. AI support may be a lifeline.

THE CASE FOR YOUTH-CENTRED AI STANDARDS

1 YOUNG PEOPLE ARE MORE EASILY INFLUENCED

When you're scrolling socials, it's not just random content landing on your 'for you'. Algorithms track what you click, how long you hover, and even what makes you pause for a second.

For adults, this can be annoying. For teens, who are still forming habits and identities, it can be genuinely harmful.

Think about ads targeting body image, gambling apps disguised as fun 'games' or 'finfluencer' convincing people they can get rich quick.

Without stricter rules, AI systems can manipulate young people more easily than adults.

2 CONSENT ISN'T ALWAYS CLEAR

Most people skip the 'terms and conditions', and young people are even less likely to read or understand them.

When you tick 'I agree', you might be giving away permission for your data, photos, or even your location to be stored and sold.

Ethical standards could force companies to use plain English, clearer consent forms, and limits on what can be collected from under-18s.

3 PARALLELS WITH OTHER PROTECTIONS

Young people already get special protections in other areas of life: you can't leave school until a certain age, there are child-specific labour laws, and limits on junk food ads. Why? Because society recognises that young people deserve an extra layer of safety. AI and online platforms should be no different.

4 SHIFTING RESPONSIBILITY TO CORPORATIONS

Right now, the burden falls on teens to protect themselves: setting privacy settings, knowing when to block or report, or resisting the pull of addictive apps.

Stronger rules would shift responsibility onto the companies that profit from your attention.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Without stricter, youth-centred rules, young people are exposed to manipulation and exploitation. Companies shouldn't treat 15-year-olds the same way they treat 50-year-olds.

THE CASE AGAINST YOUTH-CENTRED AI STANDARDS

1 OVERREGULATION COULD LIMIT ACCESS

Imagine if companies decided it was too risky to offer their platforms to young people.

What if Instagram or TikTok simply blocked everyone under 18 rather than redesign their algorithms?

Stricter rules could unintentionally shut teens out of spaces where friendships, creativity, and learning thrive.

2 EDUCATION, NOT RULES, BUILDS RESILIENCE

Some argue the real solution is teaching young people how algorithms work. If you understand how YouTube recommends videos, you're better equipped to spot manipulation and take back control.

Like learning road rules before riding a bike, digital literacy may empower young people more effectively than regulation.

3 YOUTH ARE NOT PASSIVE USERS

It's easy to assume young people are helpless against AI. But teens are already coding, designing apps, running activism campaigns, and using platforms in ways adults never imagined.

Over-protective regulation risks treating young people as fragile instead of powerful digital citizens.

4 LAWS MOVE SLOWER THAN TECHNOLOGY

By the time governments pass laws, AI has already leapt ahead.

Some argue it's better to focus on flexible, broad principles for everyone rather than youth-specific rules that may quickly become outdated.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Regulation could backfire, limiting access, underestimating young people's abilities, and failing to keep pace with innovation.

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT

Do you trust corporations to protect you voluntarily, or do you think they need to be legally forced?

Would stricter youth-specific rules make you feel safer online, or patronised?

Should we invest more in education so you can take control of your online experience yourself?

Who should have the final say on your digital footprint: you, your parents, the government, or tech companies?

THE MIDDLE GROUND

Like many debates, the truth may lie somewhere in between. Youth-specific ethical standards might be necessary in high-risk areas, like preventing gambling ads or AI tools that promote harmful body image content.

But at the same time, investing in education could make teens more powerful users, capable of questioning and challenging the systems around them.

Some experts suggest a 'co-regulation' model: tech companies design safer platforms while schools and governments boost digital literacy. This way, young people are both protected and empowered.

WHY THIS DEBATE MATTERS

AI isn't going away. If anything, it's becoming more personal, persuasive, and embedded in daily life. The choices we make today about whether to regulate AI differently for young people will shape how fair, safe, and empowering the online world feels in the years ahead.

So, where do you stand? Should AI companies be held to higher ethical standards when it comes to youth, or should the focus be on teaching young people how to navigate algorithms themselves?

FINAL THOUGHT

Debating issues like this is about more than technology. It's about values, freedom, safety, responsibility, fairness, and trust.

As the generation living most of your lives in a digital world, your voice is vital.

Because if decisions are made without you, it's your future that gets shaped without your consent.

DEBATE STARTER PACK FOR THE CLASSROOM

Now you've heard the case for and against, and in the middle! Here's how to bring the debate to life in the classroom.

TOPIC:

Should AI be held to youth-specific ethical standards?

PURPOSE:

To encourage students in years 9-12 to think critically about AI, data privacy, digital wellbeing, and the balance between freedom and protection online.

DEBATE SETUP

Two teams:
Pro = Yes, youth need special protections
Con = No, treat everyone the same

FORMAT

Time: approx. 30mins
Opening statements: 5 mins each
Rebuttals: 3 mins each
Audience Q&A: 10 mins
Closing statements: 2 mins each

CUE CARDS FOR 'PRO' SIDE

VULNERABILITY:

Teens are more impressionable, still forming habits and identities → need protection from manipulation.

CONSENT GAP:

Terms and conditions are confusing; it's unfair to expect under-18-year-olds to give informed consent.

EXISTING PRECEDENT:

Society already gives young people special protections (schooling, work hours, advertising).

CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY:

Burden should shift from teens to tech giants who profit from their data.

SAFETY FIRST:

Harm from gambling ads, body image content, or predatory algorithms can be lifelong.

CUE CARDS FOR 'CON' SIDE

OVERREGULATION RISK:

Companies might block teens entirely rather than redesign systems.

EDUCATION BUILDS POWER:

Teaching digital literacy empowers teens long-term, laws can't.

YOUTH AGENCY:

Teens are not passive. Gen Z are creators, coders, activists online.

TECH MOVES TOO FAST:

Laws quickly become outdated; education is more flexible.

FREEDOM & BELONGING

Overprotecting risks patronising teens and cutting them off from digital spaces.

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Keeping e-safe

Spending time online for study, connecting with friends and family or finding a great recipe, your next adventure or pair of shoes is the upside of our continuously expanding digital world.

Like many great things in life, spending time online can have its downside and dangers. Here's some of the less pleasant by-products of the exciting world of digital technology and tips for keeping yourself safe.

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eSafety

visit **eSafety.gov.au**

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is the use of technology to bully a person with the intent to hurt or intimidate them.

Some examples of cyberbullying include:

- hurtful or abusive messages
- creating fake accounts in someone's name to trick or humiliate people
- spreading nasty rumours or lies about someone
- sharing photos of someone to make fun of them or humiliate them

What to do

Resist the urge to respond

Resist the urge to respond to any hate targeted at you online, it usually just makes it worse. Often people will say hurtful things just to get a reaction and you don't want to be associated with that or provide them with any reason to get you in trouble as well. Stick to treating people the way you want to be treated online and offline, and you will definitely feel better about yourself.

Screenshot evidence

Before you block or delete, make sure you screenshot. If you've seen or been the target of mean or nasty stuff online, your immediate reaction might be to make it disappear, but it's really important you keep evidence of it. This might help you out down the track if they continue to be nasty and you need to report it to eSafety*. However, if the bullying material involves nudes, be aware that possessing or sharing such images of people under 18 may be a crime, even if the picture is of you or you have just taken a screenshot for evidence purposes. For information about relevant laws in Australia, visit Youth Law Australia. You can also read our advice on what to do if your nudes have been shared.

Report to the online service or platform

Most social media services, games and apps have a function that makes it easy to report and block online bullying. You can find reporting links for social media, apps, games and websites in The eSafety Guide. If people continue to post mean stuff about you that you can't see, but your friends tell you about, encourage your friends to report it too.

Online drama

Lies and rumours can spread like wildfire online, and it's not always easy to know the best way to respond.

Often when something happens at school or within your friend group, the drama can spill out onto social media or private messenger apps. Whether you're directly involved or not, it's always best to have a cool head and help diffuse the situation if you can.

What to do

Resist the urge to retaliate

Resist the urge to retaliate. Rather than continuing the cycle of negativity, try intervening with some positive comments or changing the subject. If you feel like you might be tempted to retaliate, turn off your notifications and leave your phone somewhere for a while, so you can concentrate on other things.

Offer a new perspective

If you see a one-sided mean post about someone you know, rather than scrolling by, you could shake it up and offer a new perspective. It could be as simple as offering a different side to the story or saying something really nice about the person they're targeting. Even offering something completely off-topic can help to interrupt the stream of abuse.

DM the person being targeted

Reach out to the person being targeted and let them know you've got their back. Even if they're not your best mate, sending them a message to make sure they're okay can have a huge impact on another person.

Report the post

If the post, messages or photos are on a social media service, you should report it. Reporting is anonymous on most social media services and can be an effective way to put a stop to the drama. For more info, check out the eSafety Guide.

Get outside help

If the drama is getting serious, it might be time to reach out for more help. Speak to a trusted adult, or someone with a bit more authority who would be able to help you out with the situation. Encourage whoever it is targeted at to seek help too. If they are feeling really down, let them know that they can reach out to a counselling or support service that is right for them.

Report it to eSafety

If you have trouble getting the content removed and you are under 18, you can report it to the cyberbullying team at eSafety. We can work with you to get the hurtful content taken down and point you in the right direction to get help and support. If you are 18 and over, read our tips on how to deal with adult cyber abuse and what you need to do to report it.

Talk to someone

Cyberbullying can make you feel isolated and like everyone is out to get you, but that's not the case. Make sure you talk to people you trust and get support from mates or adults that have your back, and you'll realise that you are not alone. There are also many online and phone counselling services with caring people ready to hear you out.

Your digital rep

Your online profile is like a digital resume. Anyone can look you up. That's why your digital rep matters. This section gives you quick tips to check what others see, fix things that don't feel right, and protect your privacy. It's not about being fake, it's about showing the version of you that feels real and positive.

This means it's really important that you know what your online reputation looks like and how to fix it if you need to. Here's some quick things you can do right now to check out your social media self and change it if you need to.

What to do

Google yourself

Anyone can Google your name or find info from your social media accounts if you don't keep them private, including potential employers (or dates!) – so be really careful what you post because you may not be able to get rid of it once it's public.

Check your privacy settings

If you find a few random photos or posts that are publicly available and you didn't think they were, it's a good time to change your privacy settings. Check out the eSafety Guide to find out more about the privacy settings for particular social media platforms and how to change them.

Say no to posts or photos

You may have heard the saying 'if it isn't on social media it didn't happen' but we know that this is not true. Opt out of photos or ignore tag requests if you want to protect your digital reputation.

Get posts/photos/ videos taken down

If the posts are from someone else and you're tagged in them – try to un-tag yourself or ask the person who posted them to take them down.

Think before you post, like or follow something

Make sure that the pages, groups, photos, tweets or videos you like, follow subscribe to or comment on, are true reflections of you and actually things you want to be associated with. Remember, a potential employer may not know that you've liked a page or uploaded a photo as a joke or understand its wider context.

As the saying goes, if in doubt,

don't post it!

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Established in 2019 by Jaymeila Webb (Accredited Sports Dietitian and ANZAED Credentialled Clinician), our mission is to break down barriers to eating well and create a world where the nutrition industry does no harm. Eating should be easy, right? It's about finding what works for you. Nutrition advice should be simple and feel like a normal way of eating.

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Unsafe or unwanted contact

A stranger or someone you know can make you feel uncomfortable or unsafe. Here are some warning signs that something is not quite right.

Our research shows that one in four young people are being contacted by strangers online. Contact from a random stranger can be risky. But even online contact from someone you know can make you feel that something is not quite right.

Signs to look out for

Some people who contact you genuinely just want to be friends or chat. The problem is that some others, both men and women, target young people online to scam you, to trick you into giving them nude or sexual pictures or videos, or to harm you in some other way.

The person contacting you online could be someone who is older, but it could also be someone close to your age. It might be a stranger, or it might be someone you know. It could start innocently, with someone being very friendly and helpful to make you trust them, before things get uncomfortable or risky.

Here are some warning signs

- **You feel that something is not right** — trust your instincts.
- **Things don't add up** — their online profile doesn't match what you see and hear when you talk or chat with them.
- **They tell you their webcam is broken** — sometimes a person who wants to harm you pretends to be your own age and says their webcam is broken so you can't see what they really look like.
- **They contact you a lot and in different ways** — for example, you meet them on Instagram, then they switch platforms and start direct messaging you.
- **They ask you who else uses your computer or tablet** — or even which room of your house you are in.
- **They ask you for favours and do things in return** — people who want to harm you may even offer you money or followers, but then won't deliver what they've promised.
- **They say they like your appearance or body** — or ask very personal things like 'have you ever been kissed'?
- **They insist on meeting** — they may keep saying they want to see you in person and try to make you feel guilty or threaten you if you don't agree.
- **They want to keep your relationship secret** — people who want to harm you often try to keep their friendship with you extremely private from the beginning.

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How to protect yourself from unwanted contact

Make your accounts private

By adjusting your privacy settings, you can stay in control of who sees what you post online and who can contact you directly.

For example, you can update your settings to only accept messages from people on your 'friends' list.

It's also a good idea to check your location sharing options to make sure your location is only available to you or to specific friends.

If you want to know how to check what is public, see page 29 about managing your digital reputation.

You could even sit down for 30 minutes and check all the privacy settings in your social media apps – it will be time well spent!

Delete contacts you don't talk to

Go through all the people who are your online friends or who follow you on social media and check that you actually know them. If you don't, it's probably a good idea to delete them.

Bonus tip — when you get a notification that it's someone's birthday and you don't know them well enough to say HBD on their profile, think about deleting them from your account.

Delete requests from strangers

When you get a friend or follow request from someone you don't know, check if you have mutual friends. Remember, it's easy for a person online to pretend to be someone they are not. If you're unsure, delete the request.

How to deal with unwanted contact

If contact with a stranger, or with someone you know, makes you feel uncomfortable or unsafe, stop responding to the other person straight away.

In situations like this, it's really important to talk to a trusted adult about what's been happening.

Screenshot evidence

It's best to take screenshots of anything that makes you feel uncomfortable.

Report and block

Once you have all your screenshots, you can report the other person directly to the platform and then block their account to prevent them sending you further messages. It's also a good idea to talk to a trusted adult about it.

Report to eSafety

If the contact continues, get help. You might be able to make a cyberbullying report via eSafety, visit eSafety.gov.au

Report to police

If you feel you are in immediate danger, contact your local police, or in an emergency call triple 000.

HELP!

Where to go for help

For free, confidential support contact:

For more information

eSafety has legal powers to help protect people who live in Australia from the most serious online abuse and harmful content. This includes content that appears on social media, games, chat apps, emails, messages (including SMS), forums and websites.

If you've been cyberbullied and need help with what to do next, read our tips on this page and find out more in the cyberbullying section of the eSafety website at **www.esafety.gov.au**

eSafety

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Be the ally we all need

Being an ally means backing people up and helping everyone feel included. It doesn't always mean confronting someone, sometimes it's listening, standing beside a mate, or calmly calling out unfair behaviour. This chapter shares easy ways to show support every day. Small actions add up, and together we can make a big difference for others.

Content for pages 36-39 is courtesy of

Australian Human Rights Commission

Visit **https://itstopswithme.humanrights.gov.au/** for more.

Racism ally

Being an ally is not about 'saving' people who are living with racism – it's about being aware of inequality, calling it out where it exists, and above all listening to people who experience it, and elevating their voices.

Here are some suggestions for how you can be a good ally to people from racially and culturally diverse backgrounds.

Social settings

If you see someone being racially targeted in public, a powerful symbol of support is to go and sit or stand next to them and check if they're okay. This also sends a message to the perpetrator that their actions are not acceptable.

You can say something to the perpetrator if it feels safe. This doesn't have to be aggressive – in fact it's much better if you stay calm. It could be as simple: "Why don't you leave him/her alone?"

A useful tip is to avoid calling the person racist, because this will only make them defensive, and they'll probably stop listening to you. Better to criticise the comments, not the person.

Asking open-ended questions is often a good way to make the perpetrator think about their actions. For example:

- "Why did you say that?"
- "Why do you think that's funny?"
- "What do you mean by that?"

You might also feel comfortable offering your own thoughts or feelings about the person's actions, such as:

- "I don't agree with you"
- "I don't think that's really fair"
- "I find that pretty offensive"

Allies can be important in public settings. Often, if you speak up others will support you. When a few people come together as strangers to speak against racism, it sends a powerful message for change.

Online

Racism also occurs online, particularly on social media, and is just as hurtful as if it was said to the person's face.

If you witness racism on social media or elsewhere online:

- It's often best to ignore the post and consider blocking future posts from the person. It may be better not to engage with them, as they often want you to react in order to start an argument.
- In some situations you may feel it is productive to comment. If someone is personally targeted online, offering support can be a powerful statement of solidarity. Sometimes, if the person who has made offensive remarks happens to be a friend, consider letting them know you disagree with what they've said. A positive attitude always sets a good example and is likely to prompt a more positive response. Beware of feeding the trolls and getting sucked into an argument.
- If the post is on a page you moderate, consider hiding or deleting the comment.
- Taking a screenshot of the offensive material and saving it to your computer can be a good idea. It may be useful later if any follow up is needed and the person deletes what they have published.
- Most social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, have systems for handling complaints about offensive content. Consider alerting the platform, because they can remove the content.
- You can also report the content to the office of the Office of the eSafety Commissioner. They can investigate the matter and follow up with the perpetrator.

Speaking up

Hearing racist comments in social situations can be awkward – especially if they come from family or friends.

Speaking up to the people closest to you, whether in response to a single incident or an ongoing pattern, is a unique challenge. Social dynamics, and the nature of peoples' relationships come into play, and these can affect how comfortable we feel about speaking up.

Calling out racism does not need to be confrontational. Here are some ideas about how you can engage with people productively.

- It's important to stay calm. Getting angry or emotional will make the situation more difficult. It gives the person a reason to ignore you.
- It might be more productive to take the person aside for a private conversation, instead of talking to them in front of others.
- Don't accuse the person of being racist because doing so will make them defensive and argumentative. Criticise the comment not the person.
- Telling the person how their statement makes you feel can be a non-confrontational way to make your point.
- You could ask them questions. Asking them to clarify what they mean might help them explore their own ideas in a constructive way.
- You might appeal to their sense of empathy. Ask 'How would you feel if that comment was made about you?'. This is often better than presenting facts or figures.
- It's very important to listen to their perspective. As abhorrent as their views might seem, if you don't listen to them they will not listen to you. Learning about their existing views might also provide opportunities for them to reflect and see things from a new perspective.

Indigenous Australians' ally

For advice on how to be a good ally to Indigenous Australians, the Australian Human Rights Commission sought input from Summer May Finlay. She's a Yorta Yorta woman, a writer, academic and public health practitioner. Here's what she had to say:

Don't expect Indigenous people to educate you

Allies know Indigenous history through self-education. Indigenous people are only about 3% of the population, and have different levels of knowledge about culture history. Therefore, it's not reasonable to expect Indigenous people to educate you.

Example: learn about the impact of the stolen generations by watching Healing Foundation videos.

healingfoundation.org.au/videos/

Appreciate the diversity among Indigenous people

Indigenous people are not all the same. Differences may be based on age, gender, connection to culture, geography and nation. And remember, differences don't make people more or less Indigenous.

Example: appreciate that Indigenous people may have different views on the same topic.

Please stick with us even when things are tough

Championing Indigenous equity isn't always easy. An ally stands with us at all times, not just when it is easy or fun.

Example: Add your name to Indigenous-led campaigns and share them on social media.

Promote Indigenous voices

Allies allow Indigenous people to speak for themselves. Centring Indigenous people on issues impacting them means making sure that their voices are heard.

Example: on social media, promote articles, infographics and videos by Indigenous people or their organisations.

Be prepared to not be part of decision-making

Indigenous people live their culture, they experience the world as an Indigenous person and know their communities best. Therefore, a good ally appreciates Indigenous need to make the decisions impacting them.

Example: Ask Indigenous people their views on matters relating to them rather than making decisions yourself.

Don't go it alone

Indigenous people should be leading events or issues involving Indigenous people. This means non-Indigenous people need to support Indigenous people to take the leadership role.

Example: If a NAIDOC school event is being organised, make sure you ask the Indigenous person who is leading what you can do to help.

RACISM. IT STOPS WITH ME

If you experience racism, support is available.

Visit **https://humanrights.gov.au/education/students/get-help** to find the right support service in your state.

If it is persistent, you can make a complaint to the Australian Human Rights Commission.

Call **1300 656 419** or **(02) 9284 9600**.

Australian Human Rights Commission

Racism has no place in Australia.

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Become a supporter

Be an ally for people living with a disability

Young people have the power to create a society that values and includes every individual, regardless of their abilities. Being an ally for people living with a disability is about recognising their strengths, advocating for their rights, and fostering an environment of understanding.
By educating yourselves, actively listening, and taking meaningful actions, we can all contribute to a more inclusive Australia where everyone can thrive and participate fully in all aspects of life.

Start by:

Educating yourself

Start by seeking to understand the experiences and challenges that people with disabilities face. Read articles, watch documentaries, and follow disability activists on social media. Educating yourself about different types of disabilities, the social model of disability, and the history of disability rights can help you better grasp the issues at hand.

Listening and empathising

Listening is a powerful tool in allyship. Take the time to listen to the stories and perspectives of people living with a disability. Empathise with their experiences, feelings, and frustrations. When they choose to share their experiences, validate their feelings, and create a safe space for open dialogue.

Never assuming

It's important not to make assumptions about what someone with a disability can or cannot do. Each person's experience is unique, and assumptions can perpetuate stereotypes. Instead, ask respectful and open-ended questions to better understand their needs and preferences.

Speaking up and advocating

Being an ally means using your voice to amplify the concerns and needs of people with disabilities. Speak up when you witness ableism or exclusion. Whether it's addressing derogatory language, advocating for accessible spaces, or supporting inclusive policies, your voice can make a difference.

Being a good ally

Turning your allyship into action is an important step. Here's how you can actively support people living with a disability:

1 Accessibility matters

Advocate for accessible environments by raising awareness about the importance of ramps, elevators, accessible bathrooms, and other facilities. Encourage your school and community places to implement accessible features that benefit everyone.

2 Offer assistance respectfully

If you believe someone might need assistance, always ask first. Offer help respectfully, and respect their choice if they decline. Treat people living with a disability as equals. Don't focus on their disability.

3 Support inclusive initiatives

Join or support organisations that work toward disability rights and inclusivity. Participate in events, fundraisers, and campaigns that promote understanding and raise awareness.

4 Foster inclusive conversations

Include people with disabilities in your social circles and conversations. By normalising these interactions, you help break down societal barriers.

5 Challenge stereotypes

Educate those around you about the harmful impact of stereotypes and ableism. Challenge misconceptions and promote a more accepting perspective.

Remember that while some disabilities are visible, like using a wheelchair to get around or wearing hearing aids, others are not so easy to see – like having difficulty reading or processing information quickly. Disabilities can be things people are born with, or they might happen because of an accident or an illness. Be kind to everyone and take a moment to get to know the person, understand what is going on for them and how they might like to be supported!

Be an LGBTQIA+ ally

'LGBTQIA+' is an evolving acronym that stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer/questioning, asexual. Many other terms (such as non-binary and pansexual) people use to describe their experiences of their gender, sexuality and physiological sex characteristics.

It's important to recognise that we're all different, and that the things that feel right for us are different from the things that feel right for someone else. We should be respectful of and positive about other people's sexuality or sexual relationships, and support their right to explore their sexuality in a safe, consensual and responsible way.

Being an ally is someone who stands up for, supports and encourages the people around them. It's a term that gets used a lot in the LGBTQIA+ community. In this case it refers to someone who is heterosexual and/or cisgender, but who tries to make the world a better place for people who identify as LGBTQIA+.

Being an ally means:

- supporting equal rights for everyone – regardless of race, sexual orientation, gender or religion
- doing what you can to call out discrimination and to fight for equality
- trying to make the world a better place for anyone who identifies as LGBTQIA+.

How to be a great ally

Learn about issues that are important to the community

Talk to people who identify as LGBTQIA+, read books and other publications, listen to podcasts, and visit businesses or websites run by people from the community. Immerse yourself in their world as much as you can and get a sense of what it's like to live in their shoes.

Be visible and support the community as much as you can

This means going to rallies and events, calling out homophobia, transphobia or queerphobia wherever you see it, and supporting businesses, charities or other initiatives owned or operated by LGBTQIA+ people.

Take care of the people in your life who need support

Whether it's friends, family, classmates or workmates, keep an eye on the people you know who are part of the LGBTQIA+ community. Part of being an ally means being there for people when they need you. Offer your shoulder to cry on, give them space to vent or rage, or spend time with them doing something they enjoy, to keep their spirits up.

Be aware of the space you take up

If people ask you questions about the community or for your opinion on an issue, recommend LGBTQIA+ books, magazines, podcasts or social media accounts they can follow. This allows everyone to hear the people in the community speak for themselves.

Talk to the people around you and support them to be an ally, too

The great thing about being an ally for one group of people is that it can open your eyes to be an ally for everyone. People don't fit into just one box. 'Intersectionality' is a term used to describe all the different identities or social categorisations a person has. If someone who identifies as LGBTQIA+ is also a person of colour or also lives with a disability, they might be discriminated against because of each of these identities. So, when you stand up for one marginalised group, you're standing up for them all.

To be an effective ally, we have to be intersectional – which means we can't just fight for the rights of LGBTQIA+ people. We have to be fighting for equality for everyone, regardless of their race, gender identity, disability or sexual preference.

Remember: you really can make a difference to other people.

Kick back with an app

Breakup Shakeup

Feeling down after a breakup? Or just finding it hard to find motivation for anything? Have you lost some of your spark?

Breakup Shakeup can help you come up with cool ideas what to do about it. Getting active and socialising are amongst the best things you can do to start feeling happier and stronger again.

So, give it a try, choose from a large library of activities, and find out some more about each of them using the provided links. Once you make your choice, the app allows you to invite a friend and lock it in your diary. The app can send you reminders, lets you rate your favourite activities and save them in your list, add notes, and much more. Before you know it you'll feel happier again!

Download on the App Store

Support services

These organisations provide information for young people and their parents and carers who may need support. They provide excellent resources, stories from people with lived experience, and information to guide better mental health in young people. Some also offer counselling and direct services.

13YARN

13 92 76

www.13yarn.org.au

Confidential one-on-one yarning opportunity for mob who are feeling overwhelmed or having difficulty coping. Speak with a Lifeline-trained Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Crisis Supporter.

Beyond Blue

1300 22 4636

beyondblue.org.au

Beyond Blue provides information and support to help everyone in Australia achieve their best possible mental health, whatever their age and wherever they live.

BULLYING. NO WAY!

bullyingnoway.gov.au

This website provides information, resources and support services for young children, students, parents and teachers on a range of bullying issues and related matters.

Butterfly

1800 33 4673

butterfly.org.au

If you are suffering from an eating disorder, or suspect one of your friends might be, find out more and get support from the Butterfly Foundation.

headspace

National Youth Mental Health Foundation

1800 650 890

eheadspace.org.au

headspace is the National Youth Mental Health Foundation. They began in 2006, and ever since have provided early intervention mental health services to 12-25-year-olds.

kids helpline

anytime.anyreason.

1800 55 1800

kidshelpline.com.au

Kids Helpline is Australia's only free, confidential 24/7 online and phone counselling service for young people aged 5 to 25. Qualified counsellors at Kids Helpline are available via WebChat, phone or email anytime and for any reason.

Lifeline

13 11 14

lifeline.org.au

Lifeline is a national charity providing all Australians experiencing emotional distress with access to 24-hour crisis support and suicide prevention services. They are committed to empowering Australians to be suicide-safe.

Lifestart

1800 953 390

lifestart.org.au

Lifestart supports young people living with a disability. It also helps communities to become more inclusive. This organisation is a registered National Disability Insurance Scheme provider offering flexible, person-centred support.

MYAN

multicultural youth advocacy network (australia)

myan.org.au

Multicultural Youth Advisory Network engages young people from around Australia from refugee and migrant backgrounds. Find out more about its work including the National Youth Ambassadors Network by visiting myan.org.au where you can be connected to your local state body.

QLIFE

1800 184 527

qlife.org.au

QLife provides anonymous and free LGBTIQ+ peer support and referral for people in Australia wanting to talk about sexuality, identify, gender, bodies, feelings or relationships.

raisingchildren.net.au

the australian parenting website

raisingchildren.net.au

This website is designed for Australian parents, teachers and carers. It provides up-to-date, evidence-based, scientifically validated information about raising children up to 18 years and tips for parents and carers to look after themselves.

REACHOUT

reachout.com

You can also join a ReachOut Online Community forum that is free, anonymous and available 24/7 for people aged 14-25 in Australia.

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