

Centre for Digital Wellbeing welcomes NSW Labor's policy on the use of mobile phones in classrooms

Friday 2 September 2022

Centre for Digital Wellbeing welcomes the announcement by the NSW Opposition Leader Chris Minns of NSW Labor's commitment to restricting the use of mobile phones in NSW public high school classrooms and introducing a comprehensive e-safety and digital literacy program, if elected.

Ms Carla Wilshire OAM from the Centre for Digital Wellbeing commended the proposed policy to tackle the negative impacts of digital engagement on children's health and wellbeing.

"We welcome the thoughtful and comprehensive nature of the digital literacy and wellbeing strategy proposed by the NSW Opposition Leader. Focusing on online ethical behaviours, critical thinking skills and data privacy for children and young adults is a critical step in the right direction," Ms Wilshire said.

Recent research suggests that younger individuals may be more vulnerable to potential negative impacts of social media given the emphasis on social connectedness during adolescence. This demonstrates the need for a focused and supportive policy response.

"The restriction on the use of mobile phones, coupled with the broader strategy, will be grounded in the evidence-based world's best practice and will seek to address cyberbullying, reduce classroom distractions and assist students to learn the skills they need for a digital world," Ms Wilshire added.

"We know that technology and social media can have detrimental impacts on developing minds, with research identifying strong correlations between extensive use of technology and increased depression, anxiety and suicidal ideations," Ms Wilshire continued.

"Today's students have been fully immersed in technology throughout their lifetimes. This strategy will encourage students to learn in a supportive and focused classroom environment and to develop a healthy relationship with technology," Ms Wilshire concluded.

Psychologist, creator of Digital Nutrition, and member of the Centre for Digital Wellbeing Advisory Council, Jocelyn Brewer, supports creating a clear framework for the use of smartphones in classrooms to encourage positive learning habits among young people:

"With more immersive technologies such as Web3 and the metaverse on their way, it is vital that governments commit to explicit instruction of the skills that support responsible, healthier use of digital technologies."

"By focusing on digital and media literacy, we are equipping young people with critical, emerging skills that will be required for success in a highly tech-saturated/web3 world," Ms Brewer said.

"We are empowering young people to identify and report misinformation, to understand the design of technology that drives unhealthy habits, and to adopt ethical behaviours in online spaces will be critical," Ms Brewer concluded.

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About the Centre for Digital Wellbeing

The Centre for Digital Wellbeing is a policy research centre focusing on social media's impact on mental health and wellbeing, safety and social cohesion in the Australian community. The Centre for Digital Wellbeing brings together a network of health, mental health, digital technology, and policy experts to facilitate critical discussions on social media's impact on mental health and social cohesion, formulate policy responses and develop resources that assist users to better engage in healthy digital practices.

The Centre for Digital Wellbeing facilitates research about the impact of social media, formulates policy solutions to ensure that the development and use of social media and other online platforms are human-centred, and develops tools to assist users to better engage in healthy digital practices. The Centre for Digital Wellbeing has a particular focus on youth.

Media Contact Details

Carla Wilshire: 0409 363 888

Centre for Digital Wellbeing

Website: <https://digitalwellbeing.org.au>

Contact: secretariat@digitalwellbeing.org.au