

## Privacy Act Review Report Showing Promise for Safeguarding Children's Data

Thursday 16 February 2023

Centre for Digital Wellbeing welcomes the Attorney-General's update report into the Privacy Act Review.

The Privacy Act Review Report is the culmination of two years of extensive consultation and review of the Privacy Act 1988. It contains 116 proposed reforms which aim to strengthen the protection of personal information and control that individuals have over their information.

The report strongly acknowledges the need to provide specific protections for children, to support them to have more control over their personal information, and to support children and young people to access online spaces in a safe way.

"We at Centre for Digital Wellbeing have been strongly advocating for policy changes that protect children and young people from the risks associated with the unregulated collection of their data through social media and other online use," Ms Carla Wilshire OAM from the Centre for Digital Wellbeing said.

"The Privacy Act Review Report sends a powerful message that we need safeguards in place to protect young Australians from being targeted by entities with advertising, disinformation, and inappropriate content. Rules limiting how data of people under 18 is collected and used is a critical part of that," Ms Wilshire added.

Big tech companies have increasingly gained power and influence over the lives of Australians. While governments and civil society have a role to play and a duty in responding to the challenges and harmful effects presented by social media and other online platforms, so do the tech companies that profit off our data.

Chair of Centre for Digital Wellbeing, Ms Chloe Shorten, commended the Privacy Act Review Report: "We need to let kids be kids and not have the embarrassments and missteps of growing pains follow them around, haunting them, for the rest of their lives as Big Tech's awesome ability to store and retrieve data, hopefully unwittingly, enables," Ms Shorten said.

"With great power comes great responsibility. Big Tech's natural monopolies in certain key areas of our digital lives have made them significant profits," Ms Shorten continued.

"Their duty to protect the communities from which they profit, the communities they say they serve, must become more obviously respected", Ms Shorten added.

All over the world citizens are increasingly seeing improvements to safeguard people from the excesses of data exploitation. The Privacy Act Review Report notes that countries such as the UK are already taking action by developing a children's privacy code.

"The Europeans have taken some steps forward, and it's terrific that our Attorney General, Mark Dreyfus MP, is taking Australians' privacy rights very seriously," Ms Shorten 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.

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