

If this content brings up difficult feelings, please contact the support services below

Support services



Adult

Lifeline 13 11 14 | Text 0477 13 11 14 (24/7) | lifeline.org.au

13 YARN 13 92 76 | 13yarn.org.au

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service available 24/7

Suicide Call Back Service

1300 659 467 | suicidecallbackservice.org.au

Beyond Blue 1300 224 636 | beyondblue.org.au/forums

StandBy Support After Suicide 1300 727 247

QLife 1800 184 527 | qlife.org.au

LGBTIQ+ service available 3pm - midnight

Mensline 1300 78 99 78 | mensline.org.au

Youth

Kids Helpline 1800 551 800 | kidshelpline.com.au

headspace 1800 650 890 | headspace.org.au

ReachOut reachout.com.au

Other resources

Head to Health Mental Health Portal headtohealth.gov.au

SANE online forums saneforums.org | 1800 187 236 (10am-10pm)

Embrace Multicultural Mental Health embracementalhealth.org.au

National Alcohol and other Drug Hotline 1800 250 185

National Gambling Helpline

1800 858 858 | gamblinghelponline.org.au



From Awareness to Action: Social Media and Youth Suicide Prevention

Dr Louise La Sala
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Orygen, Centre for Youth Mental Health
University of Melbourne

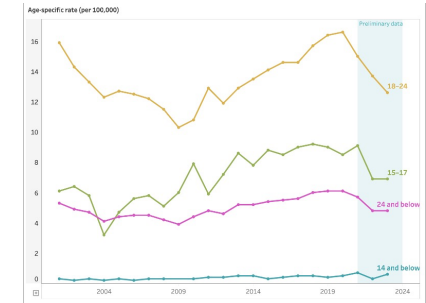
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Youth Suicide in Australia

Suicide is the leading cause of death among young Australians.

Rates are higher in:

- Males (but have been increasing in females)
- First Nation Australians
- LGBTQIA+ young people
- Regional areas compared to capital cities



AIHW, 2024

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3

Overview

1. Youth suicide in Australia
2. Opportunities and challenges of social media
3. Social media as a tool for suicide prevention?
4. Keeping young people safe online

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2

“The mental health of young Australians is rapidly declining”

– Patrick D McGorry, David Coghill and Michael Berk,
Medical Journal of Australia (2023)

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Businessweek | The Big Take

TikTok's Algorithm Keeps Pushing Suicide to Vulnerable Kids

The superpopular and despair to tee

N.J. teen's suicide highlights dangers of social media bullying

The 14-year-old took her own life after

OPINION

My son died after being cyberbullied. Congress must hold social media giants accountable.

Grieving parents like me cannot continue to fight back one case, one

NEWS EXCLUSIVE DETAILS

Homophobic Instagram post destroyed for school

Screen Time Tied to Suicide Risk for its tell of

Aug 30 • Written by Chantelle Bilson

Tweens – But I Social media giants like TikTok, YouTube mental health crisis' school boards claim

British Ruling Pins Blame on Social Media for Teenager's Suicide

News / World

Social Media Contributed to the Death of a 14-Year-Old Girl, a U.K. Court Finds

What is Momo? T to the Death of a 14-Year-old's suicide

Suicide rates for girls are rising. Are smartphones to blame?

Business

Suicide is the second leading cause of death for children aged 10 to 14, an age group prevalent on social media.

By Rachel Jones • 10/03/22 1:52pm

5



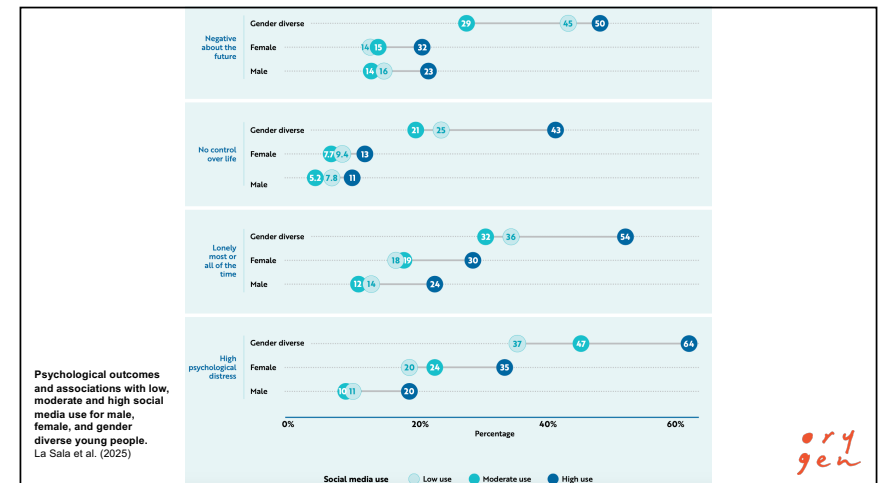
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“Evidence suggests that in many countries, the mental health of young people has been declining over the past two decades, signalling a warning that global megatrends and changes in many societies are increasing mental ill health”

– The Lancet Psychiatry Commission on youth mental health (2025)

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8

Suicide Related Content

Content on social media that is either fictional or non-fictional, pre-made or livestreamed, can be audio, video, text, or image and that depicts thoughts about or acts of self-harm or suicide. This includes responses to content posted by others.

Content can be:

Implicit

Explicit

Ambivalent

And can be found:

Actively

Passively

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9

Table 1. Types of suicide-related content seen online

	T1, n (%)	T2, n (%)	T3, n (%)
Graphic descriptions of suicide	78 (29.3)	47 (17.7)	32 (15.1)
Graphic images of suicide	60 (22.6)	34 (12.8)	13 (6.1)
Means or methods of suicide	84 (31.6)	66 (24.8)	41 (19.3)
Plans of suicide	67 (25.2)	50 (18.8)	30 (14.2)
Statements that encourage people to take their own life	63 (23.7)	46 (17.3)	34 (16.0)
Statements that appear to deliberately seek to trigger difficult or distressing emotions in other people	108 (40.6)	74 (27.8)	60 (28.3)
Statements that include suicide pacts or suicide partners	27 (10.2)	17 (6.4)	16 (7.6)
Statements that place blame or make others feel responsible for another person's safety	88 (33.1)	54 (20.3)	41 (19.3)
Statements that provide vulnerable people information about how to end their life	44 (16.5)	29 (10.9)	23 (10.9)
Suicide notes or goodbye notes	68 (25.6)	45 (16.9)	28 (13.2)
None	75 (28.2)	117 (44.0)	94 (44.3)

La Sala et al., 2023

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11

Young people are exposed to mental health-related information ~ every 39 seconds, content about suicide every 2-3 minutes, and information about disordered eating every 8 minutes.

– Center for Countering Digital Hate (2022)

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10

Benefits of Social Media



Stay connected to friends (primary way to communicate with peers)



Meet like-minded others/communicate about shared interests



Seek information & access appropriate help and resources



Support friends



Foster a sense of belonging



Discuss feelings and ideas in a non-stigmatized way

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12

Social media as a *context* that introduces, exacerbates, or alleviates suicide risk



Social media as a *tool* for suicide prevention, intervention, or postvention



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13



Using social media as a tool for suicide prevention, intervention and postvention

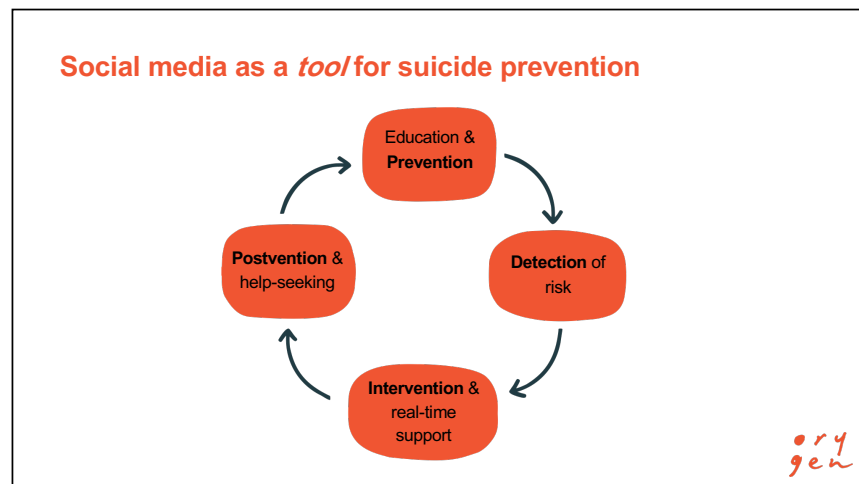


#chatsafe: A young person's guide to communicating safely online about self-harm and suicide

Edition two



15



14

Contents

1. General tips
2. Creating self-harm & suicide content
3. Consuming content others have created
4. Livestreams of self-harm & suicidal acts
5. Games, pacts & hoaxes
6. Self-harm & suicide communities
7. Bereavement & communicating about someone who has died by suicide
8. Guidance for influencers



Scan the QR code to download edition two of the #chatsafe guidelines

#chatsafe: A young person's guide to communicating safely online about self-harm and suicide

Edition two



16

Safely posting about your own story

Safely posting about your story of self-harm or suicide can be helpful for you and others. Safe stories can normalise experiences, instill hope, and encourage help-seeking. Unsafe stories can make self-harm or suicide seem like coping strategies or solutions, cause emotional distress, lead to copycat behaviour (mimicking others), or worsen existing behaviour.

Help, hope, and recovery

When posting about your own experiences, emphasise help, hope, and recovery. For example, include:

- Things that stopped you from acting on your thoughts or urges.
- The people, places, strategies, and personal strengths that helped you cope.
- Things you have achieved.
- Experiences of positive help-seeking, for example, talking to a friend.
- That recovery is an up and down process and can look different for everyone.
- Messages that encourage help-seeking.
- Links to helplines.

Has a friend's post made you worried they might be feeling suicidal?

If you think the person is in immediate danger

Immediate risk means that someone is at an immediate or impending risk of death or substantial physical injury. In this situation, it is important that the person gets help quickly. Getting them help is more important than any promises to keep things secret.

Contact emergency services (000)

- If you are not already engaged in conversation, they are not open to receiving help, or there is no time to spare, then call emergency services immediately.
- If you are already engaged in conversation with the person, and it is appropriate, you could encourage them to call emergency services.
- If you call emergency services, it is helpful to take screenshots or screen record the content, so that you can share these, if needed.
- After emergency services have been contacted, and if it is possible, then contact the person's friends or family and let them know what has happened.

Communicating about someone who has died

It is respectful to get permission from the family of the deceased before announcing someone's death.

To reduce negative effects on others, make it clear that there is likely to be detailed information and images of people who have died. This is particularly important for certain cultural groups and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

If you need help managing the social media accounts of someone who has died, please see the relevant platforms' help centers. You may have the option of memorialising, deactivating, or deleting the account.

Helpful things you could include in your content:

- Posting and sharing only what you know to be true. For example, that the person has died, without sharing any graphic details about how and where. *Avoid speculation about how and why the death to one even sense of what help facilitate the grief helpful to do this people or profits.*

When a suicide has happened in your community, it can be hard to know how to talk about it online.

17

#chatsafe for educators: How educators can support safe online communication about self-harm and suicide

#chatsafe for parents and carers: supporting young people to communicate safely online about self-harm and suicide

#chatsafe for communities: Using social media for suicide prevention and postvention

QR code:

19

#chatsafe

guidelines like this are incredibly necessary

Talking online about suicide? The language you use matters.

reaching out to someone? remember you are not alone

Let them know they can talk to someone

#selfcare

#chatsafe

sharing your story of hope and recovery could save someone's life

a positive message that matters

#chatsafe

18

When a suicide has happened in your community, it can be hard to know how to talk about it online.

Consider using a content warning before posting about suicide

If you've lost someone to suicide, you're likely to be experiencing lots of different feelings.

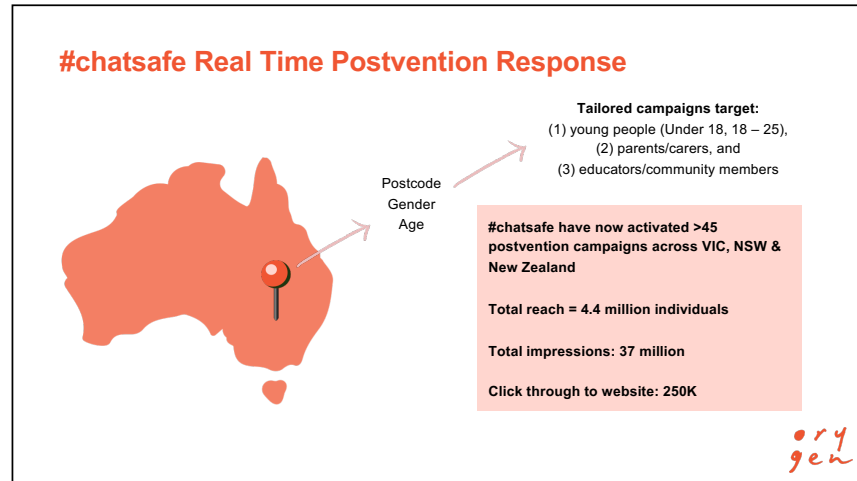
Has a friend's post made you worried they might be feeling suicidal?

If you would like to share online your personal experience with suicide

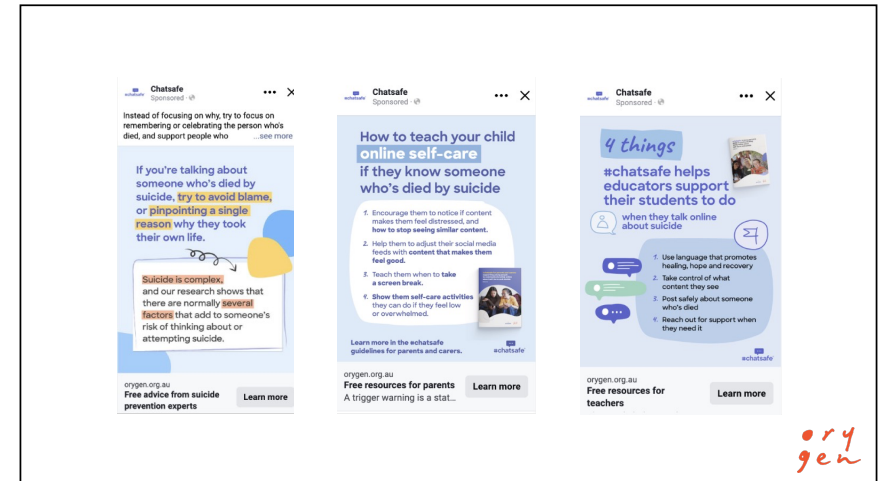
How to create safe online memorials to remember someone who has died by suicide

Swipe to see some #chatsafe tips

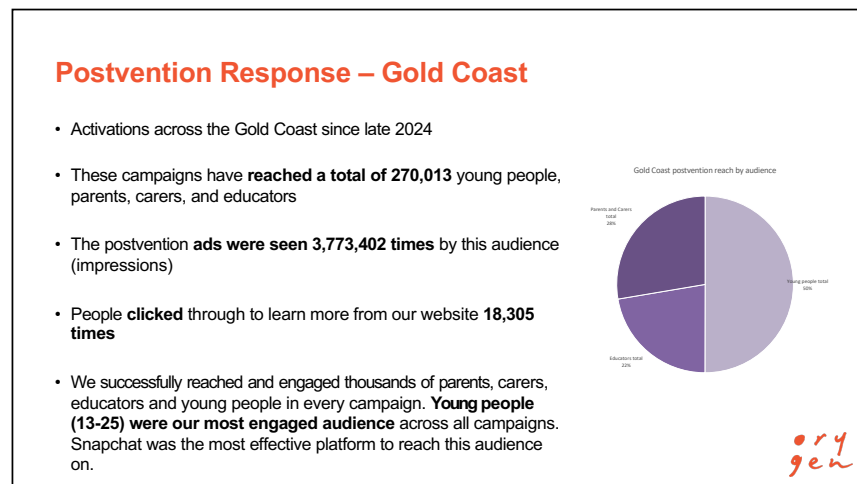
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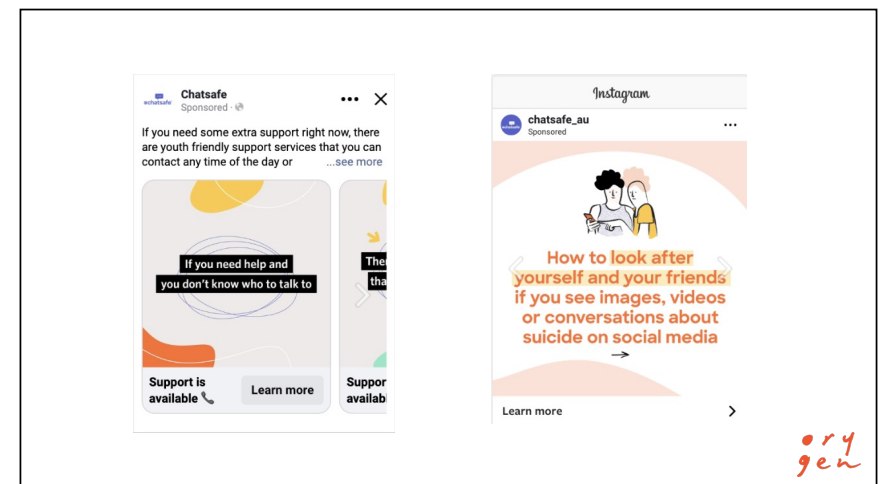
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22



24

When it comes to suicide-related content online, who is responsible for keeping young people safe? What more should we be doing?

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25

Social Media Minimum Age Restrictions

October 2024

Joint Select Committee on Social Media and Australian Society

Social media: the good, the bad, and the ugly

Final report

May 2025

Social media age restrictions consultation

eSafety is consulting on the best way to implement social media age restrictions for under-16s.

As a first step, we have called for members of the Australian community, experts and online service providers to express their interest in being consulted on implementation of the age restrictions, including the guidelines that certain social media platforms will have to follow when the new law comes into effect.

Expressions of interest closed on 18 May 2025.

November 2024

Social media minimum age legislation passed

4 October 2024

4 December 2024

New legislation has passed through Parliament, setting a minimum age limit for social media platforms including Snapchat, TikTok, Facebook, Instagram and X.

December 2025

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11 December 2025

Age restrictions to take effect by this date.

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27



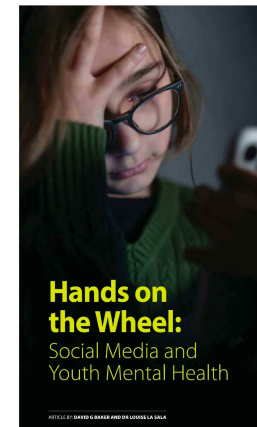
Online Safety When Considering Self-Harm and Suicide-Related Content: Qualitative Focus Group Study With Young People, Policy Makers, and Social Media Industry Professionals

Louise La Sala^{1,2} , Amanda Sabo^{1,2} , Maria Michail^{2,3} , Pinar Thorn^{1,2} , Michelle Lambdin^{1,2} , Vivienne Browne¹ , Jo Robinson^{1,2} 



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26



Hands on the Wheel: Social Media and Youth Mental Health

ARTICLE BY DAVID EL BAKER AND DR LOUISE LA SALA

THIS IS THE EQUIVALENT OF SIMPLY GIVING
THEM THE KEYS TO THE FAMILY CAR ON THEIR
16TH BIRTHDAY AND HOPING FOR THE BEST



“
FEW PEOPLE TODAY WOULD
BUY A CAR WITHOUT AIRBAGS
OR ADVANCED BRAKING, YET
WE ROUTINELY DOWNLOAD
SOCIAL MEDIA APPS WITHOUT
KNOWING WHAT PROTECTIONS
ARE IN PLACE

Both parents and young people are not equipped to have meaningful conversations about digital literacy and online safety

The unintended consequences of this ban cannot be overlooked or dismissed, particularly for those from marginalised groups who rely on these platforms for connection

28

Conclusion

1. Social media has important implications for youth mental health and suicide prevention.
2. Social media **provide an opportunity for us to reach young people** and provide high-quality support.
3. Our studies show that **it can be safe to use social media for suicide prevention**, including with more vulnerable populations.
4. **Age restrictions for social media will not make these problems go away** – it is important that we understand both the harms and benefits of social media for young people, and advocate for **safer social media platforms**.
5. **Young people must be part of the solution.**
6. Conversations about online experiences and online safety are important. **We all have a role to play.**

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29



Thank you

 louise.lasala@orygen.org.au

 Louise La Sala

 chatsafe_au

30