



Social media, smartphones and our kids

Moorabbin Alliance Presentation, November 2024



Today's workshop

1. How social media and smartphones harm our children
2. Principal's perspective
3. Group reflection
4. What we can do together
5. Where to next?



Social media and smartphones: setting the scene



What is Social Media?

Traditional (build and maintain connections): facebook, LinkedIn, X (twitter)

Messaging: WhatsApp, WeChat, Facebook Messenger, Telegram, Snapchat

Image based: Instagram, Pinterest, Snapchat, Reddit

Shared interest: Reddit, Discord, Facebook Groups, Patreon, Slack, OnlyFans

Short-form video: TikTok, Instagram Reels (also on facebook), YouTube shorts

Live streaming: Twitch, Facebook / Instagram Live, TikTok Live, YouTube

Gaming: Xbox Live / PSN, Roblox, Minecraft



Social media and smartphones are big business

Facebook is **4 times bigger** than ANZ, NAB, Westpac, and Commonwealth banks combined

Top global corps. by market cap:

1. Nvidia
2. **Apple - \$5,201B**
3. Microsoft
4. **Google (YouTube) - \$3,322B**
5. Amazon
6. Saudi Aramco
7. **Facebook (instagram, whatsapp) - \$2,255B**

Pinterest, Reddit, and Snapchat are worth \$30B each



Child smartphone ownership by age (2020 data)



The rise of smartphones



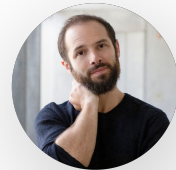


The potential dangers of social media and smartphones to children

Social Media is Addictive by Design

“Behind every screen on your phone, a thousand engineers have worked to make it maximally addicting. Children are particularly susceptible to this kind of manipulative design.”

Aza Raskin
Co-inventor of
'infinite scroll', turned
campaigner





Social Media is Addictive by Design

Examples on social media include:

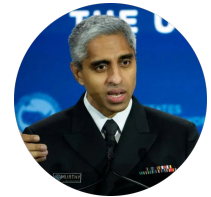
- Likes / shares – acceptance and gratification
- Notifications on what you've missed
- Snapchat streaks

All designed to keep people on for longer. Examples like these trigger our brain's reward centre in a similar way to pokies.

Social Media Increases Anxiety and Depression

“Adolescents who spend more than three hours a day on social media face **double the risk of anxiety and depression symptoms**, and the average daily use in this age group, as of the summer of 2023, was 4.8 hours”

U.S. Surgeon General
Vivek Murthy



USA: emergency room visits for self-harm (aged 10-14)

Rate per 100,000 Population

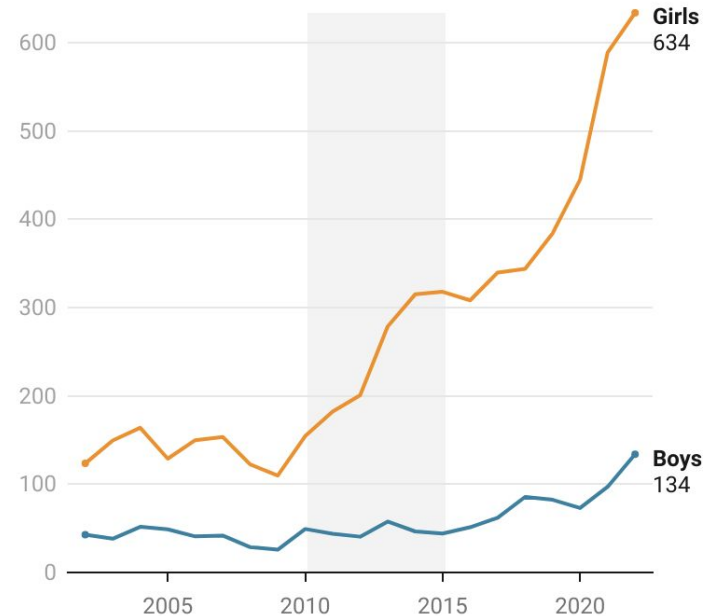


Chart: Zach Rausch • Source: CDC Non-Fatal Injury Reports • Created with Datawrapper

Australia: Overnight Mental Health Hospitalisations

Rate per 100,000 Population

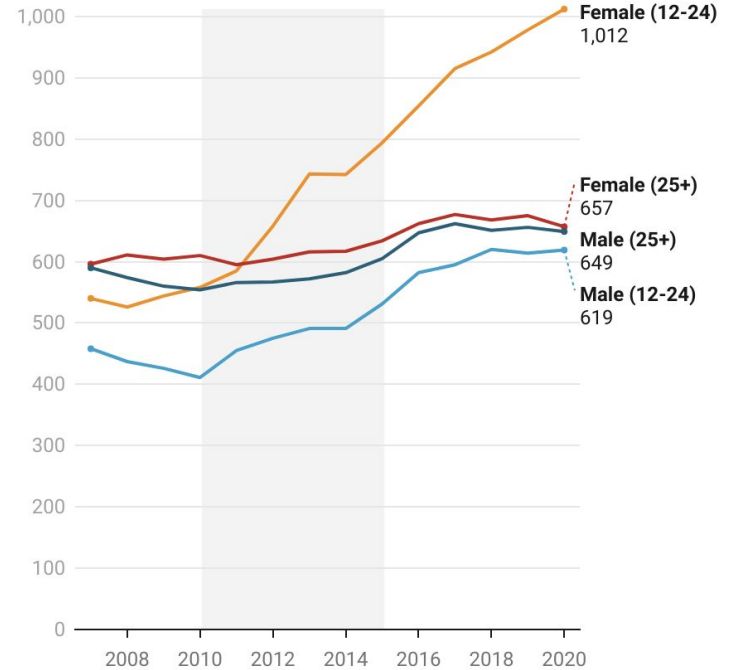


Chart: Zach Rausch • Source: Australia's Health • Created with Datawrapper



Harmful content

Having unrestricted access to the internet in your pocket creates a gateway to extreme content and viewpoints that we'd never dream of exposing children to in real life.



Principal's perspective



Group Reflection

- What do you want and hope for your children?
- Choose a card that represents your feelings and thoughts
- Turn to the person or people near you and have a quick chat
- There is no right or wrong here – just an opportunity to reflect



Parents wish things were different

94% of
primary school
parents think
smartphones
are harmful


Parentkind nationwide poll
of 2,496 people, April 24

70% of
parents think
family life is
impacted by
smartphones

HMD poll of 10,000
parents, June 24

60% of
Aussie parents
are concerned
about their
teens' social
media use

ReachOut survey, Feb
2024

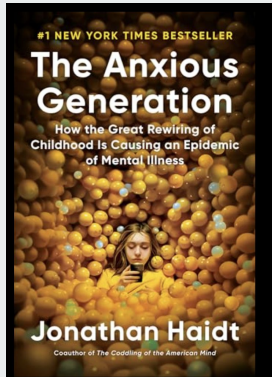


Everyone's got one because everyone's got one

Peer pressure felt by children and parents

- Most parents believe smartphones are harmful, yet almost all Australian children have them by the time they start year 7
- Resisting becomes almost impossible when children's social lives migrate online

The Four New Norms To Free the Anxious Generation



1. No smartphones before age 14
2. No social media before 16
3. Phone-free schools
4. More independence, free play, and responsibility in the real world.



Collective action: we all have a role to play



Gov.
regulation



Tech
companies



Schools



Parents



A growing movement in Australia

The Heads Up Alliance is a growing movement of Australian families delaying social media and smartphones for their children until at least the end of year 8.

The idea is that parents at the local level (usually through schools) can work together to influence change. Through collective action:

- kids can see they aren't the only one without a smartphone or a social media account.
- they are encouraged to do more play in the real world and spend less time online

The Moorabbin Alliance seeks to be part of this movement at the local level.

Moorabbin Alliance - how to get involved

1. Sign up to the Moorabbin Alliance whatsapp group (QR code on right) where we can all share information and reach each other
2. Discuss with your partners and families what is important to you and your family (screen use agreement)
3. Raise awareness and have conversations about the issues discussed today within your networks
4. Explore with your child's friendship circle if there are other parents who share the same concerns
5. Self-organise - form sub-groups to develop more opportunities for play in the real world





Resources and references

Listen to the founder of the Heads Up Alliance and his daughter:

<https://www.abc.net.au/listen/programs/lifematters/heads-up-alliance-dany-elachi-aalia-elachi-haidt/104013950>

Read the Prime Minister's address on committing to a social media ban for children under 16:

<https://www.pm.gov.au/media/press-conference-parliament-house-canberra-31>

Watch Facebook Whistleblower on 7.30 report:

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-08-07/facebook-whistleblower-frances-haugen-social-media-laws/104190056>

Watch social media insiders on Four Corners - an internal investigation of the harms caused by the social media experiment::

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-11-04/social-media-whistleblowers-insiders-safeguards-disinformation/104547868>



Resources and references

Heads up Alliance <https://linktr.ee/theheadsupalliance>

Watch Dany Elachi's opening statement to the Parliamentary Committee:

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?si=ctKWA58Fc0TYUfol&v=7eFTM9pS74c&feature=youtu.be>

Jonathan Haidt's website: <https://www.anxiousgeneration.com/>

Get a copy of Jonathan Haidt's book - 'The Anxious Generation' - can be found online but also at stores like Kmart and Big W e.g.

<https://www.bigw.com.au/product/the-anxious-generation-by-jonathan-haidt/p/902944?srsId=AfmBOoplrCP0HPiSPvhuSIN4n12xMFDyhALGZSolkbZTskjpTj1QrsN>

Read the 2024 [**Report of the legal examination into banning children's access to social media**](#)

[US Surgeon General Wants a Warning Label for Social Media](#)

[The rise of dopamine culture](#)