



MDDI-IPS FORUM

FOSTERING CHILD-SAFE DIGITAL ENVIRONMENTS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

MDDI-IPS Forum On Fostering Child-Safe Digital Environments on Social Media

Panel 1: Managing Harms on Social Media – Are Bans Inevitable?

By Harkiran Kaur

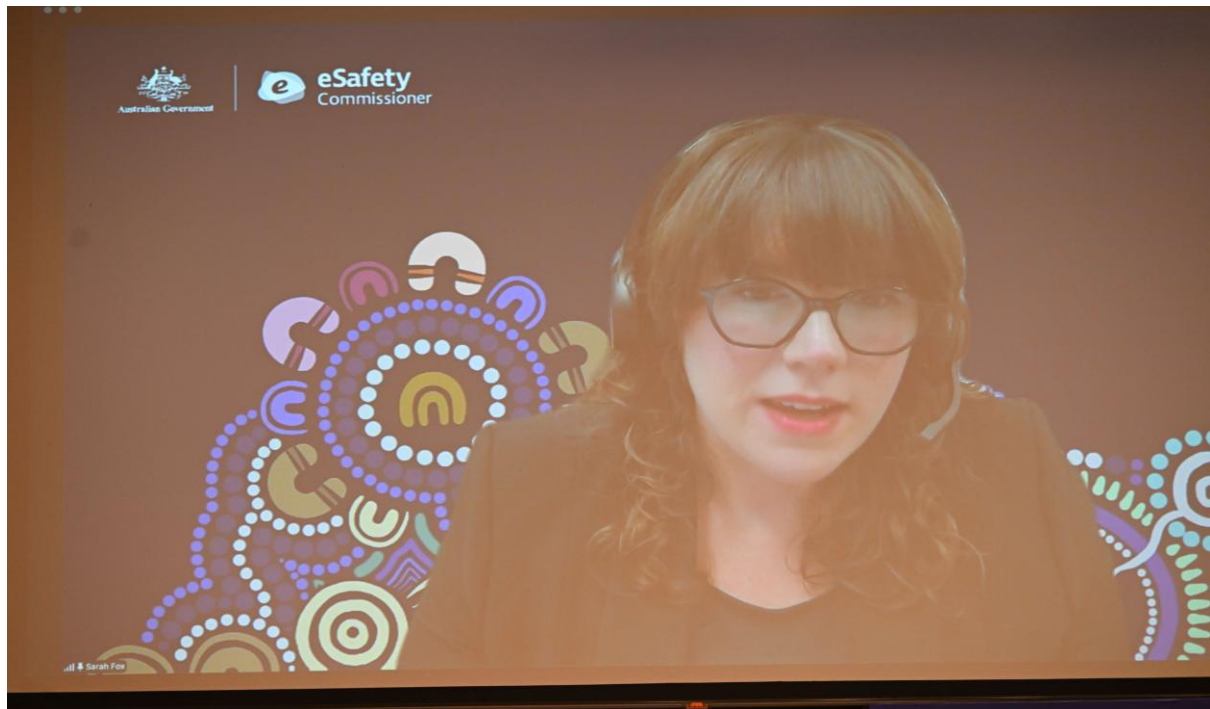
Background

The Ministry of Digital Development and Information and the Institute of Policy Studies jointly held the Forum on Fostering Child-Safe Digital Environments on Social Media on Friday, 17 July 2026. The half-day forum brought together regulators, researchers, industry leaders and community organisations from Singapore, Australia and New Zealand to discuss emerging challenges, share international perspectives and explore policy and practice that can help foster safer online experiences for children.

Panel 1 featured Ms Sarah Fox, Acting Executive Manager of Strategy, Engagement and Research at Australia's eSafety Commissioner; Dr Chew Han Ei, Associate Director (Impact) at Singapore Management University; and Mr Ben Chua, Chief Executive Officer of YouthTechSG. They examined the merits and limitations of social media minimum age restrictions, and how online safety can be balanced with the digital participation and development of children and youths. The panel was moderated by Associate Professor Roy

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Lee, Associate Head of Pillar (Research) and Cheng Tsang Man Early Career Chair Professor at Singapore University of Technology & Design.



Caption for photo: Ms Sarah Fox during Panel 1 of the Forum.



Caption for photo: (From left to right) Mr Ben Chua, Dr Chew Han Ei, and Associate Professor Roy Lee during Panel 1 of the Forum.

Panel 1: Managing Harms on Social Media – Are Bans Inevitable?, Harkiran Kaur, *IPS Update*, (August) 2026

Australia's Online Safety Framework

Ms Fox opened the panel by explaining that Australia's approach has evolved in response to the growing scale and complexity of online harms, particularly those affecting children and young people. She noted that online risks are not evenly distributed, and safeguards must account for those most vulnerable online.

She highlighted that Australia's approach is multi-pronged and is broadly covered under three pillars — prevention, protection and proactive systemic change. These pillars cover public education and awareness initiatives, complaints-based regulatory schemes, mandatory codes and standards, and transparency tools. She also said that eSafety has continued to build relationships with industry representatives over the last decade.

Not a Blanket Ban, But a Time Delay

Ms Fox outlined that Australia's Social Media Minimum Age Act, which came into effect on 10 December 2025, requires age-restricted social media platforms to take reasonable steps to prevent Australians under 16 years old from holding social media accounts. She stated that the Act applies to regulated entities where: (1) the sole or significant purpose is to enable online social interaction; (2) end-users can interact with others; (3) users can post material on the service; and (4) the service includes at least one harmful design feature (e.g., recommender system, infinite scrolling, feedback features or time-limited features).

Ms Fox clarified that the Act is not intended to function as a blanket ban on children's access to social media. Rather, it is designed as a time-delay measure for children to develop real-world connections and build digital literacy skills and online resilience before holding their own social media accounts. Ms Fox noted that the Act was introduced in response to growing concerns about children's exposure to rapidly evolving online harms, including pornography, extremist and misogynistic communities, artificial intelligence-driven personalisation and the broader impacts of social media on children's mental health and well-being. She also raised concerns that platforms' community standards are not consistently enforced, resulting in gaps between promises and outcomes regarding children's well-being.

She further noted that the Act does not apply to all online services. She said that certain services are excluded from its requirements, including messaging services, online gaming platforms, professional networking and development services, and health and education applications. She stated that these exclusions are intended to strike a balance between protecting children from online harms associated with social media use while also allowing continued access to vital services that are essential for communication, education and health.

Implementation of Australia's Social Media Minimum Age Act

Ms Fox noted that the eSafety Commissioner had developed principle-based industry guidance on what constitutes reasonable steps under the Act. She explained that rather than prescribing specific technologies, the guidance focuses on systems, technologies, people, processes, policies and communications that support compliance. She highlighted that the guidance recognises that errors in age assurance processes are inevitable and emphasises that a layered approach and robust review mechanisms can help mitigate these concerns.

Ms Fox also shared that eSafety does not require platforms to verify the ages of every user on their services. Implementing age assurance measures may be considered unreasonable in circumstances where platforms have access to existing data that can enable them to reliably infer a user's age. She further clarified that platforms are prohibited from using government-issued identification or accredited digital identity services as the sole method of verifying a user's age. Under the Act, platforms must provide alternative measures for age verification. In addition, Ms Fox said platforms are not required to retain personal data collected for age checks. Instead, record-keeping requirements should focus on the systems and processes used to support compliance, rather than on user-level data.

Ms Fox shared early observations following the Act coming into effect, noting that there has been some progress, including large-scale account removals of Australians under 16 years old and more visible underage reporting pathways. However, she also observed several poor practices across platforms that raised significant compliance concerns. These included: (1) prompting children to undergo age verification despite having declared that they were under 16 before the Act came into effect; (2) allowing underage children to repeatedly attempt the same age assurance method until they achieved a successful outcome; (3) failing to provide effective and accessible pathways for reporting age-restricted accounts; and (4) implementing insufficient measures to prevent new under-16 accounts from being created.

She further highlighted the growing global recognition that children's digital environments must be safer by design. She noted that governments, regulators and civil society are increasingly aligned on the need for platforms to take greater responsibility for the systems they create and profit from. She pointed to recent developments reflecting this broader momentum, including the G7 leaders' endorsement of safety by design principles for children, progress across the Asia-Pacific region in strengthening protections against child sexual exploitation and abuse, and growing international interest in Australia's social media minimum age obligations. However, she emphasised that the Act is only one tool within a broader regulatory toolkit. She stated that creating safer online environments for children requires a layered, holistic and systemic response underpinned by safety-by-design principles.

Rethinking Social Media Regulations Beyond Bans

Dr Chew reflected on how societies have historically responded to new technologies and forms of media. Referring to Singapore's past, he noted that long-haired rock musicians and rock music were once viewed as threats to youths and social order. He observed that social media is now perceived in a similar way, as a new source of threat to youths. While acknowledging that social media can cause serious harms, which are often amplified by platform design, he cautioned against allowing public anxiety to determine policy choices before they are informed by scientific evidence.

Dr Chew emphasised that the term "ban" can sometimes oversimplify a complex policy discussion. He explained that a total prohibition, an age assurance requirement, and child-specific product standards are fundamentally different policy interventions, each carrying different benefits, costs and unintended consequences. He also described Singapore's evolving online safety framework as increasingly layered and precise, with different regulatory instruments designed to address different problems. However, he noted that much of

Singapore's legal architecture takes effect only after harm has occurred. The key question, he said, is whether the same approach can be moved upstream into product design.

Focusing on Safer Product Design Rather Than Simply Restricting Access

Dr Chew introduced his first test for a child-safe social media by asking whether we are regulating features or merely controlling children's access. He explained that a sweeping solution, such as a ban, answers only one question: who should be allowed onto the platform. It does not answer the question of what kind of product exists behind that access.

Dr Chew argued that young people do not suddenly become immune to persuasive design features or online risks upon reaching a certain age. Instead, attention should be shifted to the features that shape users' online experiences, such as recommender systems, autoplay functions, infinite scrolling, default privacy settings, and contact settings, which are design choices that can be changed. He noted that platforms already differentiate between users, markets and advertisers, and suggested that similar levels of differentiation could be applied to improve child safety. While recognising that some platforms have introduced age-appropriate features, he stressed that such protections must be accessible and built into the user experience rather than hidden behind optional settings. He also emphasised that age limits are downstream measures focused on access, while safety by design acts upstream by addressing risks before they become embedded in the product.

Reducing Harm, Building Judgement and Shared Responsibility

Dr Chew's second test examined whether interventions are reducing harms or merely moving them elsewhere. He acknowledged that while age provides policymakers with a clear line on which to act, it does not necessarily identify which users are most vulnerable, why they are vulnerable or what happens after access is restricted. He explained that policymakers must consider whether harmful exposure has decreased, whether risk has simply moved elsewhere, and whether youths have lost access to friendship, information or support. He emphasised that protection measures that merely hide risks cannot be considered genuine protection.

His third test focused on whether society is building judgement alongside access. Dr Chew highlighted the importance of gradual access. He stated that digital participation does not have to operate like a light switch — completely off one day and fully on the next. Instead, access can grow gradually alongside maturity and capability. To illustrate this approach, Dr Chew pointed to the parenting practices of Professor Andrew Przybylski, Professor of Human Behaviour and Technology at the University of Oxford, whose research examines how social media and video game platforms shape human motivation and influence users' health and well-being. A leading scholar in this field, Professor Przybylski has published more than 100 peer-reviewed academic and conference papers, which have been cited over 20,000 times in the past decade. Dr Chew explained that Professor Przybylski did not simply restrict his own children's access to technology. Instead, he gradually introduced them to technology through limited functions, unlocking additional features as they matured, and accompanying each new feature with conversation and guidance. Dr Chew emphasised that as young people gain greater access to digital technologies, they need technical literacy, adult guidance, reasoning, judgement and empathy to understand the consequences of creating and amplifying harmful

content. While these skills have traditionally been described as “soft skills”, he argued that in an AI-driven environment, these are critical literacy skills.

Dr Chew concluded by emphasising that online safety requires shared action. He argued that responsibility must be proportionate to power. Actors with the greatest influence over product design and those who have greater control over platform rules should carry heavier obligations.

Ground Insights into Youth Experiences Online

Mr Chua presented preliminary findings from YouthTechSG’s Youth Digital Pulse initiative, also known as Sip n’ Spill, which provides ground-sensing and sentiment analysis based on the views of 166 youths aged 13 to 34 across Singapore. He noted that the overwhelming sentiment among youths was that social media bans are not the preferred approach to addressing online harms. However, he emphasised that this should not be interpreted as indifference towards online risks. He highlighted three key concerns that emerged from the engagements.

First, Mr Chua explained that many youths do not feel confident navigating social media safely during the early stages of adolescence. He pointed out that there is a common assumption that as digital natives, youths should know how to deal with online harms. However, this is not the case. Many youths do not avoid harms because they are well equipped; rather, they simply learn to navigate around them.

Second, he highlighted the normalisation of online harms. While many youths recognise the addictive nature of social media, he noted that some have come to accept negative experiences as the price of digital participation. Third, Mr Chua shared that youths want support and are not opposed to regulation. He explained that while many believe that the government should introduce measures to address online harms, they prefer interventions that help them navigate digital spaces safely rather than simply restricting access. He stressed that the key issue is not whether action should be taken, but whether the measures introduced are precise enough to address the real challenges youths face.

Towards a Layered and Collaborative Online Safety Framework

Mr Chua shared four key solution areas that emerged from youth discussions. First, he emphasised the need for a whole-of-ecosystem approach to online safety. He noted that youths want layered protections that reduce harm while preserving access to connection, learning and identity. Mr Chua further elaborated on the roles that different stakeholders should play in addressing online harms. He said that youths want the government to co-create practical solutions with them from the early stages of policy development, rather than consult them only after decisions have been made. They also called for platforms to adopt safer designs for features that may enable harm or encourage addictive use. For parents, youths want a shift from surveillance to trust, as many would like their parents to be a source of support but may hesitate to share their concerns for fear of punishment or restrictions. For schools, youths want to be taught judgement and not just compliance, as it will equip them with the ability to navigate online spaces independently. Importantly, Mr Chua noted that youths also recognised their own responsibility to learn how to navigate the internet safely.

Second, Mr Chua highlighted the need for greater recognition of how platform design can contribute to online risks. He noted that online harms are not solely caused by user behaviour, as some risks are embedded within the product's architecture. He stressed the importance of addressing design factors that may contribute to harmful experiences and excessive use. Third, Mr Chua emphasised that digital literacy remains fundamental to addressing online harms. While schools already provide cyber wellness and digital literacy modules, many youths found these lessons outdated or too generic. Instead, they called for practical capabilities that are agnostic to technological changes.

Fourth, Mr Chua stressed that policy responses should be proportional to the level of harm. He noted that bans alone are insufficient, with youths favouring targeted friction measures over broad restrictions on their digital participation. He further highlighted youths' concerns about the "cliff effect", whereby delayed access could result in young people entering online spaces without the gradual exposure, judgement and support needed to navigate them effectively. He also emphasised that online communities are central to youth culture, belonging and identity, and that the focus should be on equipping youths with the tools and support needed to participate safely online rather than limiting access.

Question-and-Answer Session

Q: What is the most important lesson that Australia has learned that Singapore should know as we consider measures or legislation?

A: Ms Fox replied that there is no silver bullet for addressing online safety issues. She explained that Australia adopts a holistic approach to online safety regulation. She also emphasised the importance of a layered regulatory approach that extends protections not only to children and young people, but also to other vulnerable groups. In the Australian context, these groups include older Australians, First Nations communities, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and persons with disabilities. Ms Fox highlighted the need to focus on preventative measures such as digital literacy and digital resilience initiatives in schools and community groups. She further stated that the Social Media Minimum Age Act is one tool within a broader toolkit and should not be regarded as a standalone solution. Rather, it should be factored into a broader and more holistic online safety framework.

Q: We recently visited Sydney and Melbourne, where we spoke to a spectrum of people, including children, parents and experts. The overwhelming takeaway was that social media companies simply are not doing enough. What is your advice on that?

A: Ms Fox acknowledged that this is the core of the problem, noting that while regulations can be introduced, meaningful change cannot be achieved until compliance is effectively enforced. She emphasised that behavioural and normative change cannot occur until the core factors of the theory of change have been activated, with compliance serving as a critical component of that process. She said that the current challenge lies in determining how to enforce compliance and encourage platforms to comply so that the broader intended benefits of the Act can be achieved.

Dr Chew reflected that when Australian parents say social media companies are not doing enough, it is important to clarify what “not enough” means. He questioned whether it refers to young people still having accounts on platforms, or whether online harms have actually been reduced. He explained that while enforcement measures may improve over the next few months or year, removing accounts does not necessarily mean that the harm is no longer occurring. Rather, it may simply mean that the harm is no longer visible on the platforms observed by parents and older users.

Dr Chew also shared that when discussing enforcement, there is a need to consider privacy and security concerns. He explained that if enforcement is pursued too aggressively, it could create significant amounts of data containing young users’ private information. He raised concerns that collecting data through multiple layers of verification could create a centralised repository of young people’s data. He further cited early research suggesting that technology companies conducting age assurance may retain such data for longer than necessary in order to demonstrate compliance to regulators. Dr Chew highlighted the need to balance enforcement efforts with privacy and security considerations.

Mr Chua responded that if a solution creates more risk than the original behaviour, then the problem has not been solved. He cautioned that if young people are pushed too hard through enforcement or restrictions, they may find ways around these measures. This could drive their activities underground or into spaces that are neither visible nor controlled; and in turn, could create greater risks than if they remained on platforms that are willing to engage and support young people.

Dr Chew added that young people are very innovative when it comes to circumventing restrictions. He highlighted that the most common approach is using an older sibling’s account. Additionally, Associate Professor Lee raised the need to consider what success would look like, noting that while having age restrictions could result in fewer youths on the platform, it does not necessarily mean that online environments are safer for them. He emphasised that this is an area that may require further exploration.

Q: Could the panellists share their perspectives on how social media affects young children’s brain development, addiction and the network effects of social media?

A: Ms Fox responded that eSafety has an in-house research function that regularly produces research reports examining these issues. She shared that, in the coming weeks, new research will be published on the impacts of AI systems and AI companions on children aged 10 to 17. She also noted that the EU Special Panel recently released a report considering measures similar to the Act, as well as other forms of social media restrictions. She shared that the report breaks down the impacts of online interactions across different age categories.

Dr Chew said that if he had to identify an age threshold, it would be around 12 to 13 years old. He noted that this is broadly consistent with the Ministry of Health’s screen time guidelines, which recommend no screen time for children under 18 months old, followed by gradual access as children grow older. He shared that research from child psychologists and paediatricians indicates that children up to 12 or 13 years old are generally better off engaging in in-person activities, rather than spending excessive time on screens.

Dr Chew also pointed out that most social media platforms set their minimum age requirement at 12 or 13 years old. Given that platforms themselves recognise that children in this age group should not be using their services, he noted that this reflects a recognition that children require a different social media and online experience. He added that the more negotiated space is the 15- to 18-year-old group. Drawing on both research and his observations, Dr Chew noted that when speaking to teenagers aged 14 to 16, many say they understand intellectually that social media presents a curated “highlight reel” rather than reality. However, he observed that despite being digitally literate, many of these teenagers find it difficult to disengage emotionally. They continue to engage in social comparison, experience FOMO (“fear of missing out”) over the exciting activities they see online, and are affected by content relating to global instability.

Mr Chua reiterated Dr Chew’s point that most social media platforms are intended for users aged 12 and above. He said that when children below the minimum age threshold use these platforms, there is little that the platforms can do to address the impacts on those children. Drawing on sentiments gathered through the Sip n’ Spill initiative, Mr Chua observed that youths aged 13 and above are aware of the harms they face online. They recognise that they are becoming addicted and are accessing materials that may be potentially harmful to them. He also shared that some youths had shifted to other platforms because the platforms they previously used were too toxic or negative, or that the tools available on those platforms were insufficient to address the harms they experienced.

Dr Chew added that the extent of vulnerability is dependent on the youth’s maturity level. He noted that, given these individual differences, it would be difficult to design a single experience or assign scores to young people to determine whether they are vulnerable and therefore require a different social media experience. He emphasised that the solution should move upstream towards platform design, with safer features specifically designed for young people. Dr Chew also shared findings from his research involving conversations with older Singaporeans, who felt that social comparisons and FOMO primarily affect young people. He explained that older Singaporeans felt more secure and comfortable with their self-image, making them less susceptible to these pressures.

Associate Professor Lee questioned whether age is the best proxy for vulnerability. He asked whether a risk-based approach, which focuses on platform features, content types and individuals’ circumstances, would be a better approach. He also proposed having an assessment or test to determine whether an individual may be vulnerable. He noted that these approaches could be explored as alternatives to age-based criteria and potentially serve as new tools to address online harms.

Q: What do we define as a child-safe environment and how safe should it look like?

A: Dr Chew highlighted the need for greater friction in features such as autoplay and infinite scrolling to reduce doomscrolling and content overconsumption. He said that introducing such friction could help manage these behaviours not only among young people, but also across other user groups. Dr Chew emphasised that creating a child-safe environment also means reducing risky contact on platforms. He expressed concerns about interactions between young users and strangers and suggested considering how recommendation systems could be designed to prevent teen accounts from being recommended to strangers, and vice-versa.

He also highlighted the importance of trusted adults in supporting children's online experience. He referenced a recent government advertisement as part of the Screen Smart from the Start movement, which showed a child asking a parent about something questionable they had encountered online. Dr Chew emphasised that a child-safe environment does not mean children should navigate online spaces alone. Instead, it should be an environment where children have trusted adults supporting them throughout their online journey.

Mr Chua noted that creating a child-safe environment should not mean restricting children entirely from the digital space. He said that while the instinct may be to keep children completely safe by limiting their exposure, the question is whether such an approach is practical in the long term. He explained that if young people are restricted from digital spaces, they may eventually enter these environments without having the experience needed to navigate them effectively. He agreed with Dr Chew's point that the focus should be on reducing risks and mitigating harms as much as possible. Mr Chua emphasised that it should also involve building resilience and judgement over time. While young people may encounter harms, it is important that they learn how to navigate these spaces with confidence and safety. He cautioned that isolating young people may prevent them from developing the necessary skills to cope with challenges they may encounter online.

Q: Five years from now, what indicators would convince you that Singapore or Australia has genuinely become a safer digital environment for children?

A: Ms Fox answered that an evaluation is being undertaken through a two-year longitudinal study to measure the short-, medium-, and long-term impacts of the Social Media Minimum Age Act on children, families and the broader community. She explained that the study will examine a range of outcomes, including children's and parents' knowledge and attitudes towards social media use and the Act itself. It will also examine children's online safety and well-being, the impact on family and social connections, and how platforms are implementing and complying with existing requirements.

Ms Fox shared that the first wave of data from the study would be published in upcoming reports. She emphasised that the evaluation would examine and assess not only the intended consequences of the Act, but also its potential unintended consequences, so that the policy can be adapted over time. Ms Fox concluded that it is difficult to determine what ultimate success will look like five years from now. However, she highlighted the importance of continuing to evaluate and assess the policy to ensure that the measures implemented are strengthening safeguards for children online.

Q: Since platforms, which are the main actors, have the main priority of monetary profit, how would a government of any country — including less economically developed countries and those with lesser populations — make these international companies comply with terms that change their application features without affecting their main goal of profit?

A: Dr Chew said that if he were in the position of a social media company, he might consider that, given Singapore's relatively small market size in Southeast Asia and its status as one of the strongest regulators, it may not make business sense to customise experiences specifically for the country. Dr Chew explained that Singapore's current model is to calibrate

solutions through a collaborative approach, involving discussions on what is feasible to implement, informed by research and community perspectives. He said that various stakeholders work together to explore possible measures in areas such as platform features, age assurance and digital literacy. He added that if the approach were driven purely by competition, smaller markets would be at a disadvantage as their bargaining positions may be weaker.

Ms Fox responded that it ultimately comes down to the concept of regulatory coherence. She highlighted that individual jurisdictions are unlikely to have the power to create international normative change on their own, and that expecting one jurisdiction to achieve this alone is unrealistic. She emphasised the importance of countries working together to achieve shared outcomes from online platforms, arguing that consistent expectations across jurisdictions make compliance economically imperative.

She pointed to the Global Online Safety Regulators Network as an example of regulatory coherence. It is a forum that brings together independent online safety regulators from around the world. Ms Fox further observed that even larger jurisdictions face challenges when acting alone. Referring to the UK's experience following the introduction of the online safety rules for services with pornographic content, she noted that some platforms responded by geo-blocking their services instead of taking steps to protect users when using their services, demonstrating the limitations of isolated regulatory action.

To illustrate how international coherence can drive industry-wide change, Ms Fox drew on the example of car safety. She referred to a report by Ralph Nader in the 1960s, which highlighted that people were being harmed in cars. The report outlined basic safety expectations that could be implemented such as seatbelts which could create normative change and improve safety outcomes. Despite initial claims that such requirements would dismantle the car industry, consumers today rely on safety ratings when purchasing new cars. Cars are also marketed on the basis that they make families and communities safer. Ms Fox argued that the focus should be on shifting the dynamic: moving from asking how users themselves can be safer online to platforms communicating how they will protect users.

Mr Chua reflected on discussions he had at the recent World Economic Forum, where many young people raised the question of how platforms could be encouraged to comply and play a greater role in addressing online harms. Mr Chua said that when he shared Singapore's collaborative approach to online safety, he observed that many of the young people he spoke with were surprised, as they were more accustomed to advocacy approaches that are highly confrontational. He argued that such approaches do not always adequately recognise that these platforms are for-profit enterprises.

Mr Chua agreed with Ms Fox on the importance of building international consensus. He said that if young people around the world were united in calling for the same online safety outcomes, there would be significant potential to build common global consensus around platform safety standards. Using the analogy of seatbelts, he suggested that platforms should incorporate safeguards and safety features that function like seatbelts, protecting young people as they navigate the digital world. Mr Chua concluded that while platforms should be

treated fairly, there is a need to build additional levers and find international consensus to ensure that fairness is also extended to young people.

Building on Mr Chua's point, Dr Chew emphasised that over the years, collective action has moved the needle in certain areas. He pointed to child sexual abuse material as an example where there is a clear and widely acceptable standard. He noted that platforms themselves recognise that hosting malicious actors or such harmful content would result in significant reputational and business consequences, as users would not want to use platforms where such activities are taking place. Dr Chew explained that progress in this area was driven by collective action involving platforms, regulators and international cooperation to identify perpetrators and hold them accountable. He noted that collective action continues to play an important role in shaping platform behaviour and driving meaningful improvements.

Mr Chua encouraged young people to recognise that every voice matters if they want to drive collective action. He said that young people should not see themselves as passive users but recognise that they have a stake in shaping outcomes in the digital environment. He noted that there are avenues to speak out, be heard, engage with youths from different countries and learn from their experiences.

Associate Professor Lee said that the fact that everyone present in the audience was participating in these dialogues sends a strong signal to platforms that people care about these issues. He emphasised that users are the customers of these platforms, and that concerns over these issues could affect platforms' bottom line. He also noted that discussions have often focused on bans, restrictions and building guardrails, which may create the impression of an adversarial relationship with platforms. However, he suggested that platforms may need to shift their thinking by viewing these measures as positive features that can make their services more attractive, rather than as restrictions or additional layers of governance.

Q: What is the single most important action that various stakeholders, governments, platforms or the community should take in the next 12 months to basically improve online safety?

A: Ms Fox answered that one policy mistake to avoid is assuming that there is a one-stop solution or silver bullet. She said that all efforts to improve online safety should be considered within a holistic framework. She highlighted the importance of considering different regulatory tools and frameworks available to enhance protections for children online. She further stated that beyond regulation, it is also important to look at education, prevention and engagement with families and young people to determine how outcomes can be improved across the entire lifecycle.

Dr Chew said that when considering the range of existing online safety measures, many of them already address issues downstream. He suggested that the focus should be on how legislation and discussions can move upstream towards features such as recommender systems, privacy settings, adult and child contact, and reporting pathways.

Mr Chua emphasised the importance of engaging young people and understanding what they think, what they want, and how they view online safety issues. He encouraged young people in the audience to speak up and participate in discussions about online safety, noting that

restrictions will still be introduced and that they may have to accept outcomes that do not reflect their views if they do not make their voices heard.

Mr Chua also shared that his team has been engaging with young people to understand their perspectives and expressed hope that more young people would participate in these discussions. He noted that such engagement does not depend on whether young people are interested in policy or online safety. However, as these issues affect their everyday lives, he emphasised that young people need to make their views heard and play a role in shaping conversations that affect them.

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