

**IN-CAMERA PROCEEDINGS BEFORE**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL ISSUES**

**INQUIRY INTO THE IMPACTS OF HARMFUL PORNOGRAPHY ON  
MENTAL, EMOTIONAL, AND PHYSICAL HEALTH**

<p><b>Roundtables 1 and 2 CORRECTED</b></p>
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**At Jubilee Room, Parliament House, Sydney, on Monday 19 May 2025**

**The Committee met in camera at 15:40.**

**PRESENT**

The Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine (Chair)

The Hon. Susan Carter

Dr Amanda Cohn

The Hon. Bob Nanva

The Hon. Emily Suvaal

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**ROUNDTABLE 1:** Participants nominated by Twenty 10 and the Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People

**The CHAIR:** I'm going to go over how this afternoon is going to progress. As I mentioned in the Parkes Room, stop and ask questions for clarification if it's not clear. I'm Sarah. I'm the Chair of this Committee, which is the Standing Committee on Social Issues. We're really pleased to welcome you here to this private round table for our inquiry into the impacts of harmful pornography on mental, emotional and physical health. We're really pleased that you agreed to be here with us today. To begin, I acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, the traditional custodians of the land on which we're meeting today. I pay my respects to Elders past and present, and celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters of New South Wales. I also acknowledge and pay my respects to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people joining us today.

We have given you some documents to read and we have had a few conversations, but we really want this to be a safe space for everyone today. We ask that we're all respectful to one another. This includes putting our phones away and on silent. I will keep mine with me and on silent in case the people who are online want to ask a question. If you see me looking at my phone, that's what I'm doing. But I ask for no recording, messaging or posting while we are in here having this conversation today. I also want to make sure that we respect the perspectives of others and ensure we don't speak over each other because it's respectful and because it makes the job of Hansard, which takes down what we say, quite difficult. We also have Kate Graham with us today, sitting just behind me. She is here as a counsellor to support you.

Please feel free at any stage to signal that you'd like to have a moment to chat with Kate. We've got a separate room where you can have a chat with her if you feel that you need to. If you want to leave the room to catch your breath, please feel free to do that. In the room today we also have Sarah and Madeleine from the secretariat. You may well have engaged with them in preparing for this. They organised the day and they are here to watch over the process. They're really here to watch over me and make sure I do everything I'm meant to do. They're a bit far away to give me a kick under the table, but they might throw something at me to get my attention. We have Lindsay from AV here to help with our colleagues who are online. We also have Angus and James from Hansard. *Hansard* is the name for the written record of what takes place in here today and in Parliament.

The members of the Committee, who will introduce themselves shortly, will take turns asking questions today. You don't have to answer anything you don't want to. Only speak about things that you're really comfortable about. If there's something you don't want to say out loud, you may jot something down and hand it up to us. We have some members appearing by videoconference. As Susan said, that's because they live far away. They are our regional members, but they still very much want to participate today. The discussion here is confidential, so I ask that you don't share with anyone outside of the room anything that has been said in here, or the names and details of other participants. That's to keep this space safe, as we said before.

As we mentioned outside, the transcript of what you have said will be written down by our Hansard team. They will record and write everything down. To make it easy for them, please speak into the microphone—I think Emily spoke about this outside—and wait for others to finish before you start speaking. In a week or so, you will be sent a copy of the transcript that was written down by Hansard. That transcript will be confidential to the Committee; however, if we decide that we'd like to publish some of the words from the transcript, we will get in touch to ask you for permission.

The reason you are here today is to tell us about harmful pornography from your perspective and, more importantly, ideas for solutions. The Committee, following the end of our inquiry, will write a report. That will include recommendations for the New South Wales Government to consider. The New South Wales Government may choose to accept some of those recommendations. This is really your opportunity to have your say and influence what goes into that report and those recommendations. However, things do go quite slowly, which is sometimes frustrating for all of us. The report will still need to be written and then the Government has three months to consider it. You'll get a copy of the completed report and the Government's response to the report emailed to you.

We should say that we do make recommendations as a committee, but there's no guarantee that all of our recommendations will be adopted as Government policy. We try to make recommendations, having heard all of the evidence that other members of the Government or Parliament have not heard, and we try to put a very considered report together. You might have seen video clips from other inquiries—in fact, there is another one going on today—where members can get quite political. This is not one of those inquiries. We are from across the political spectrum. We are genuinely just here to learn and understand and, where there are issues to be addressed, think of creative ways to do that with your input. I think you can probably sense that within the room.

We know this may be a sensitive topic to talk about with us, the Committee. You've only just met us and, honestly, some members of the Committee feel much the same about topics like this. We want you to feel as comfortable as you can, given that, in talking to us. We are very, very clear that we don't have the answers to everything and we don't understand everything, particularly from a young person's point of view. We might accidentally, even when we're talking to you, say the wrong thing. But there will be no bad intent behind that. As I said, we're just trying to figure things out as well. We do really want to hear what you have to say. Be assured of that. There won't be any judgement from anyone in this room about anything we hear today.

With that rather extensive introduction, while we want this to be relatively informal as we sit around this big table with microphones, we do also understand that this is a really important thing that you're doing, and we do appreciate that. We don't want to diminish that experience for you either. This is a beautiful room in Parliament House. At the end of it, if you would like to take some photos, having been here and done this important thing, we'll make sure there is an opportunity for that as well. We want you to enjoy your time here. With all of that said, we'll go around the table to introduce the Committee members who are here and then we'll go online and introduce the other members who are there.

**Dr AMANDA COHN:** I'm Amanda. My pronouns are she/her. I live down in Albury-Wodonga. I'm a member of the upper House. I represent The Greens. I used to be a GP. That's probably enough about me.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** I'm Susan Carter. As Sarah said, we're from all parties—Labor, The Greens and the Liberals. I'm in the upper House. I'm a reformed lawyer and I've spent a lot of time lecturing at university. I'm really interested in this topic because I think we can't really be serious about building a respectful society unless we start talking about these issues. I'm very grateful that you're all here.

**The CHAIR:** We'll now go to members online.

**The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL:** I'm Emily. I live in Cessnock, in the Hunter Valley, where it's very wet and cold today. Apologies that I'm not there with you all.

**The CHAIR:** It looks cold, Em.

**The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL:** I've got the air conditioning on and everything and it's freezing! I've got two little boys who are four and six. I'm very keen to hear from all of you.

**The CHAIR:** Bob, do you want to introduce yourself?

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** Hi, I'm Bob, a member of the upper House and the Labor Party. I live in Penrith and I'm a former union official. But above and beyond all that, I'm the very nervous parent to four kids, including two teenagers, so this is all hyper relevant to me and I'm really keen to hear what you've got to say.

**The CHAIR:** We may have another Committee member, Sarah Mitchell from the National Party, joining us at some stage. I suspect she is in the midst of picking up and dropping off kids from school right now. So that's us. We might get started. We asked if any of you wanted to make a very brief one-minute statement. There's absolutely no obligation, but I think we did suggest that in our correspondence if anyone wanted to start.

If not, I will kick us off with an introductory question which might draw on your understanding of the experience of your peers as you came through school. We've been talking a lot over the course of this inquiry about young people in particular. It's not exclusively what the inquiry is about, but there's been a lot of talk about young people. One of the things that has been mentioned by almost every witness and in almost every submission is the age when children or young people first access or see pornography. I wondered if you had a sense of that age and when that first happened for you or your peers. Person J, you're nodding. Can I ask you about that?

**PERSON J:** Sure, no worries. I remember it pretty clearly because I was actually in a classroom. I was 12 years old and I'd just entered high school, and the boys at the back of the room were looking at Kim Kardashian's sex tape on their phone. They were like, "Oh, you look like her," and showed me a video. That was definitely my first time, but I definitely remember going to school camp shortly thereafter and there was one spot at the school campground which got internet. All the boys flocked over there and they were downloading, all at the same time, porn, literally. I can't forget that, and we were 12 and 13. So it wasn't me actively searching it out, but definitely something I saw at quite a young age, just being shown.

**The CHAIR:** Does anyone else remember?

**PERSON C:** My parents stopped monitoring or moderating my internet access very young, so I think I was nine the first time I kind of stumbled upon it. I guess I stumbled upon someone telling me where to find it, and I was so curious that I followed the link. I don't have a great sense of when my peers started seeing it because at the time I very much knew that I wasn't meant to be doing it, so I, of course, didn't talk about it with anyone, including my friends.

**The CHAIR:** When you found somewhere, was that on another website?

**PERSON C:** I think it was a YouTube video of someone listing their favourite porn sites. I was like, "I don't know what this means, but they seem to like it".

**PERSON F:** I think mine is quite common to what we were just talking about before. I remember being on the bus, maybe in year 4 or 5, and there were a group of older boys all just giggling and laughing, like, "Oh, my gosh, look at this," and sharing it around to all their mates on the bus. Obviously, when they've got a video playing, you kind of catch the gist of what's happening. There were some younger boys on the bus that would sit up towards the front, where I was sitting at the time, and then they were getting involved. I guess I wasn't actively seeking it out, but was exposed in year 4 or 5. Then I think the first time that I found porn in real life for myself was through social media—people promoting their pages. Not that I necessarily went into it, but it was all on social media, "Oh, my gosh, follow this link and you can see this," or stuff like that.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Was that social media promoting an OnlyFans site, or promoting Pornhub, or what?

**PERSON F:** It was a mixture of both. Mostly on Instagram and Snapchat and stuff like that, it is promoting OnlyFans. However, I've seen some Pornhub stars, or whatever you want to call them, pop up as well. They are wearing their merch and saying, "Come support my page over here."

**The CHAIR:** Does anyone else have anything to add?

**PERSON B:** I don't have too much to add personally, but I never accidentally stumbled across it. That just wasn't something that happened, and I first saw it around 13, I think. I just looked it up, just curious about what it was, but I never accidentally stumbled across it.

**PERSON K:** I can second that as well. The first instance of pornography or sexual material was leaked nudes or leaked sexual videos of people in my year group that would spread. But the first time that I properly watched pornography, it was through seeking it out. I think I was 16, and it was for sex education.

**The CHAIR:** In seeking it for education, is that because school was inadequate? We have heard a lot in our inquiry days about the importance of education, and of course the focus has been what's delivered at school. Not to put you on the spot, but any reflections on that?

**PERSON K:** I went to an Anglican school, as well, so the sex education also kind of started and ended at "it's better to wait till marriage but, if you do it, use a condom". But I think when you're a young person and you're getting involved with sexual experiences for the first time—especially as I'm also a queer young person, so that, as well, wasn't talked about a lot in school either—you want to seem like you know what you're doing. Pornography is a way that you can mimic what you see and learn different things of what to do.

**PERSON E:** I had a very similar experience, where I also didn't really stumble across it. It was more that when I first started having relationships and partners, they would share it with me to be like, "Oh, look at this," and that kind of thing, kind of insinuating stuff of that nature. Also, we would have Discord servers where on those servers you could have bots where you could put commands in. When you would send it through, it would give you porn. A lot of people would kind of abuse this and just spam social chats with pornographic material.

That was probably around year 8 for me, so I was, like, 14. But the first time I came across it I was younger, maybe around 12. A lot of it did fall down to I wanted to know more, because it was a very big topic in that age group. We also did have a lot of nudes being spread around and leaked of other people in my year, and stuff like that, so it's kind of like, "What is this?" Even just being someone that was very online as a child, you see a lot of references to sexual content and stuff like that, especially regarding kink and BDSM. It feels like a whole new world to you, and you're, like, "I want to know more." It's a bit shameful—you definitely feel it—but it was something that made a big impact on my early relationships, definitely.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** I didn't understand some of what you said.

**PERSON E:** That's okay.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** I don't know what a Discord server is, and I don't really know what a bot is. Could you explain that to me?

**PERSON E:** Discord is a platform just used for messaging.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Like WhatsApp?

**PERSON E:** Yes, similar to WhatsApp. They're mostly public servers, so that means that they're kind of on the internet. People can share the invite codes and stuff like that. You share it with your friends, it's supposed to be, and you'll have the space to talk. It's very centred around gaming and popular culture, so a lot of the time it does include—I referred to bots. They're like robots, and they're things that people can code and make online to do whatever they want, whether this be to generate pornographic material, like I said, or even just reply with jokes or anything like that. Yes, that's what I was referring to.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** And the people who do it, are they people who think it's funny to spread the porn, people who are interested in porn, or people who are trying to attract people to porn sites so that they can monetise that interest?

**PERSON E:** I believe there's a whole mix of all those kinds of things. Usually, from my age group, it was people thinking it was funny and kind of like a gag-and-shock factor, but there's definitely adults in that field as well. There's no real restriction. I think they're a lot harsher on it now and there are now more age verification kind of things in place to help stop that. But when I was on there when I was younger, it was kind of easy to access that kind of adult material.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** You said that you saw kink and BDSM.

**PERSON E:** Yes.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** At what sort of age were you seeing that?

**PERSON E:** Probably 11 to 12, and I can say that a lot of my peers saw the same content because we were talking about it.

**PERSON C:** Kind of jumping off of that, pretty much when I started seeing porn, I started seeing kink at the exact same time because a lot of porn sites don't distinguish between the two, much. Like, there will be a lot of vanilla stuff and then there's some vaguely kinky stuff, and the next thing you know it's wild.

**Dr AMANDA COHN:** The question I want to ask is around if you or any of your friends had had any education or conversation with adults about porn before you found it online—whether it was on purpose or by accident? I'm seeing lots of people shaking their heads.

**PERSON F:** I think the biggest problem—and I guess it's going to be a problem forever—is porn and sex. Anything sexual for young people is very taboo, especially in some families, depending on what their beliefs are. Some people might be really open, and some people might not be; but I still guess that, no matter how open you are, at the end of the day you're always told, "We talk about this in our house, but when you go to school don't talk to your friends about this." Some kids can be really educated. I went to school with a couple of people and their parents had books on positive and safe relationships and safe sex, and stuff like that. Then other families, if their parents found out they had a relationship, it's like they're done; they're being travel grounded. I think it's really hard to, I guess, have a system where you can educate without consequences, if that makes sense. I just feel like there's a big, big lack of education.

**PERSON A:** My experience is very, very similar in the sense that I didn't have any conversations with my parents about sex or sexual content. I didn't have much from school. I went to an Anglican school as well and also I came out to my parents as a gay person very young as well. I don't think they really knew what to talk to me about. Anything that I wanted to know about sexual content, I had to seek information myself, and that was also with talking to peers as well about it. I feel like I had no conversations or someone I could talk to at school because it was also very taboo. Any sexual education that we got was very similar in the sense of, "Oh, just be safe. This is how your reproductive system works." Okay, cool.

**Dr AMANDA COHN:** I want to ask one follow-up with Person F on education? So far in this inquiry all the experts are telling us that young people should be taught about what porn is, or how to navigate it before you come across it. Where would you want to get that education from? Who would you trust to have that conversation? Is it in schools? Is it online? Is it some other kind of program?

**PERSON F:** Well, I guess the biggest thing is it's hard to say at a certain age—I've heard this analogy used before, for instance: If you say 10 year olds can cross the road, and anyone under the age of 10 can't have education on how to cross the road, if you don't let children coming up to that age, 10, cross the road on their own or without education, when they turn 10 they're going to go out and get hit, or get in an accident, or whatever. I think the biggest thing is it can't be a certain age—like, you have to be 16 to have education on porn. If you set an age limit, I think people are going to find other ways to access it, maybe more harmful or extreme. If school needs to teach it, it should be taught in—like everyone here I've heard so far, and from my own experience, has said year 7, or even in primary school. I think it needs to be taught from a young age, whether it's censored in some way.

You want this information at a younger age and then, the more you develop or the more you go up in school years or something, then you learn more, or something like that. I think the hardest thing is, as I said, if you say only 10 year olds can cross the road, the younger people are going to be left out and uneducated. So when they get to that age and all of a sudden they can do all this stuff—I think it needs to be slowly introduced, but obviously in a safe way.

**PERSON C:** One thing that my parents did teach me about that I don't think they meant to be related to porn—but that I found very helpful when I did end up coming across porn much younger than they probably ever expected me to—is they were very big on what to do if I found something that I didn't like in a book I was reading, or online. They put a lot of emphasis on the fact that if I didn't like something I could, and should, leave. I should put down the book. I should leave the website. That is always an option that I should be taking if I felt like whatever I was watching wasn't something I was meant to be watching. I think the emphasis on that helped. It made me feel—I don't know if "responsible" is the right word—but more in control of what I saw online. Even when I came across something upsetting, I knew that it was one button, and it was gone. I think that was a good way for me to be introduced to the concept, but then I never really got real time by my parents or in the school to really tell me what to do when I was interested in it and I didn't want to leave. But I feel like that was a good starting point that I appreciated.

**The CHAIR:** Anybody else? We haven't heard from Person L. We will go to Person L and then Person B.

**PERSON L:** Talking about the safe person to deliver information to educate, I was talking about this earlier, but I think it's really powerful. Similarly, I was exposed to porn at school in a non-consensual way—like, boys being boys and being silly in the playground. The only memory I have of being educated of what that was, or what it meant, was very awkward, taboo, funny conversations with PDHPE teachers. I don't think that I was necessarily educated on it, but it was almost a joke of a class, I guess. That's the memory I have on being educated on what that meant.

When I'm thinking about what would have been better, I think of the power of storytelling. I think it works in a lot of areas but hearing from young people who have been negatively impacted by porn, or by nudes, or by non-consensual pornography or harmful pornography, and having them in schools talking to young people, is the most impactful way to reach us. I did some work in mental health and it's a similar thing. It's very hard to talk about and it's very hard to relate to people, but I think when you have someone young standing in front of you talking about a lived experience, especially a negative lived experience, that's a really powerful way to reach young people—another young person. I know there are lots of organisations that do that, but I just wasn't exposed to it at school. In terms of the best way to connect with kids, I think there definitely needs to be a lot of work done on educating teachers how to educate. Even if it's built into the curriculum, it doesn't mean it's going to be delivered in the best way. Also, I think storytelling is really powerful and lived experience.

**PERSON B:** In terms of education, I had a really great education from a third party company when I was in primary school, Interrelate. They came in and it was great having someone who wasn't a teacher talking to us about this stuff because it didn't feel as disconcerting. I remember being told by the person—I was in year 6—about porn and that. I think all I was told was that it was fantasy-based and that what you see is not what is actually depicted. I found that that works really well in terms of sex education, having someone who has a lot of experience in the field—and not a teacher who might not know how to approach the subject—talk about it. You feel more comfortable talking to someone who isn't your teacher about questions that you might have.

**The CHAIR:** That's a good point.

**PERSON D:** I'll go back. I think I was probably first exposed around 10 to online content. That probably actually would have been through—do you know those dodgy sites that you have to Google the question or whatever? They'd be like the forum type—the old forums, not like Reddit—like Ask.com and those sort of dodgy websites, the same sort of sites where you'd see "The one weird trick your doctor doesn't want you to know." I think I first kind of saw some sort of advertisements at that age. That was probably about year 5. Then year 6 was kind of the first time—I went to a Catholic primary school, so that was like the first time there was ever any sort of discussion when it was about nudes being sent amongst primary school students. Police came out and spoke to us all and were telling us "not allowed" and whatnot. That was basically it.

In preparation for this, I was going back through what I had done education-wise and noticed that like literally the only reference to pornography within all of the documents and all the books I could find was about sharing stuff between peers—so it was around sharing nudes of yourself. At the very end of year 10, I would have been—I think year 10 or year 9 was during the lockdown period for me, so it was all online. That really made the PE curriculum really uncomfortable. It meant that the teachers couldn't really create that safe space that they needed to. A lot of boys in particular can take it very seriously.

I remember one incident where—there is a meme of five African American males surrounding someone on a couch, and one of the boys decided to make that their virtual Zoom background or whatever. The PE teacher's response to that was basically—the boys just started laughing and just making up a completely ridiculous story about why it was there. The response from the PE teacher was basically, "Ugh, oh well"—so not to address it, not to recognise it. So it was very much—it wasn't touched within the curriculum. The only reference was just in between each other. I think what it really did do is it allowed, especially when there were groups of boys that were kind of allowed almost—the fact that they could do that in class and make a joke out of it and that he didn't shut them down and there was no sort of conversation around it and there was no education around that, it just really allowed it to kind of spread.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you for sharing. Did you have something you wanted to say?

**PERSON H:** I was just going to say that I really relate to the experience that you had. Moving to the first question, I was sort of exposed to it, I'd say, about nine—potentially earlier. I really relate to what Person F was saying about the curriculum. There's no sort of one right age. Because I think if we're sort of to, say, pick a date when someone's in year 8, from experience and from what a lot of my—I went to a sort of non-selective, all-boys school. It was public. What I had found was that most people had already kind of started using porn regularly up until year 7. It was already a natural part of being a teenager at that point. Really, what it is, you kind of have to catch it early because porn just does fill in the gaps. I've heard it in the discussions that I have with my friends. It was widespread and it was normalised and it was joked about. There was no other kind of competing perspective that would help boys stay informed relative to the process. So I think catching it early is really important because it will fill in the gaps.

**The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL:** A good segue from your answer, Person H. Thinking back to the experience or exposure that you've all had to various forms of pornography, what is the one—or there may be more than one—piece of advice or information or education that you wish you had with the benefit of hindsight?

**PERSON C:** I guess one thing that I wish I had was a better frame of what normal looks like because, at least for me, there were kind of like two perspectives I had on porn or on sex in general. There was the stuff in porn where things like choking and hitting and tying people up were just a normal thing that no-one saw as—I'm not saying kink is bad. I don't think that's what we should teach kids, but it is something that requires a much higher level of trust and knowledge of risk than vanilla sex. But the only other perspective I had on what normal looked like was my 50-year-old PE teacher who was telling us that him and his wife had normal vanilla sex because that was apparently how he thought sex ed worked. It was like, "Okay, so my two options are this super kinky stuff I'm seeing online or this straight, middle-aged man who I assume is not talking on my perspective for a few different reasons." I guess the only reference I had for people who wanted relationships like mine, who look like me and who are closer to my age was porn, so I had no idea of what was reasonable or appropriate for me to be doing at that age.

**PERSON K:** I second that. I don't know the answer to this, but I think this would be a really interesting conversation to have: How do we have sex education that actually talks about what sex looks like for young people? Rather than—absolutely we need consent education, we need education around protection against sexually transmitted infections and against unwanted pregnancies, but there's not much education around how to have sex or what sex actually looks like. I don't know the answer to that, but what we do know is that lots of young people are going to porn to find that stuff out because we don't know that stuff.

There was a book that came out—Yumi Stynes' book came out—and some of the stuff in there was fantastic, but we also saw the major backlash to that. I work at a bookshop and we had to hide that book because it was getting nicked off the shelves in protest. I do think we have a long way to go, but that was an example of safely showing people, "This is how people from heaps of diverse and different backgrounds engage in sexual activity and this is what sex can look like and it doesn't just look like what you see on porn and it also isn't just between a male and a female et cetera." But there was still major backlash to that. In answer to your question, I think young people have to be educated on how and what sex looks like. I don't know what that would be like, whether it's in schools or through books or something, but at the moment what we have is porn.

**PERSON F:** And to go off what Person K was saying, if you don't know what healthy sex looks like, you can feel unsure everyone would understand and you can feel pressure to do what they're doing if you're only seeing this certain content and only seeing what these people are doing or "This is how that person does it. Well, that's what I have to do." You can get in that mindset of "That's how I have to do it", without actually learning the safe way or the consensual, respectful way of having sexual relationships. Also, I think to answer the question as well, if young people do find or access porn, what they would want to be told—I think, as I said before, it can be a very taboo topic. I think people have to be told that it is okay—like, "If you find it, this is what we can do." I'm not 100 per cent sure on that answer but so many young people can feel anxiety, "Is someone going to find me

watching this or is someone going to find me exploring this? Am I going to be in trouble?" Then that comes with guilt and all this type of shame. It can kind of lead down a dark road.

**The CHAIR:** It sounds like what we're hearing is that taboo or shame or guilt is still a big part of why young people aren't getting what they need. Would that be a fair assessment?

**PERSON F:** Yes.

**PERSON M:** I guess just going off that, I feel like that's where the education part comes back in. If you are teaching kids about this and the first time they're exposed to porn is not the first time that they've heard about it or they're not talking with their peers about it and learning from looking stuff up on the Internet. I think if you introduce a concept, it doesn't become so scary and you take away some of that shame and that taboo, so kind of like what Person F was saying, and Person H was saying as well. I think the younger you do introduce these concepts to kids, obviously in an age-appropriate way, I think it would take away a lot of that stigma and shame when kids eventually do come across it, because I feel like you will eventually always come across it somehow, somehow. I think that introducing it earlier, education and being informed about that—even like what Person C was saying about just feeling like you have a sense of autonomy when you're coming across this content and knowing what to do with that I think is really important.

**The CHAIR:** We have quite a lot of parents in the Committee. We've heard also that parents should play a role. It's a hard one, isn't it? I have grown-up kids now, so thankfully we're past that stage of me being seen as responsible. What would you recommend to parents who are thinking about this and worried about a healthy exposure?

**PERSON E:** I had a bit of an interesting experience personally. I was brought up by my grandparents, and I do remember the first time they tried talking to me about it. This was well into my teens. I immediately shut down the conversation. I did not want to have that conversation with them. But looking at my sister, who has children of her own, something that I really felt strongly about and was happy to see in her parenting style was that she really normalised talking about your body and your anatomy and what you have control over, that you have control over yourself and how to be respectful of yourself in a way so that other people respect—like you don't want them to touch you or stuff like that. They're all very young, and so it was just very nice to see her have these conversations once they were able to understand the world around them a little bit more. So if someone comes up to you and you don't like what they're saying or you don't like the way that they're touching you, to know how to respond to that. I think that's the main and most important thing when it comes to talking from a parental kind of role.

For more personal conversations, I found it best to talk to people who weren't my parents, or carers and also my siblings and maybe an aunty or an uncle that I trusted. From a young age they always told me, "If you don't want to talk to your parents or grandparents about this, then come talk to me," and kind of facilitating that relationship that it's not just this nuclear family structure and there is a community around you of people who are there to support you. I think that's what's most important for me.

**The CHAIR:** We will get round to all of you. We will start with Person H.

**PERSON H:** I've had a lot of these conversations with a lot of my friends, and our experiences have been really similar in that the initial exposure to pornography was not out of sexual perversion. We were kids; we had not even started to go through puberty. Part of what makes porn so pervasive and difficult to address is the attached and imbued shame, and it kind of engenders itself into your life. It becomes really difficult to address. If I were a parent, I would try to remove the taboo-ness and the already existing shame that's associated with sex. I'm of the opinion that sex is not inherently a shameful thing, but the issue is if it's shameful and your only source of education is coming from pornography, then there are all those associated harms.

Something that was touched on but I also want to put forward is that I think there is a real established pipeline of the different types of pornography and how it escalates in terms of what you're seeing, what is actually occurring and the colourfulness. I was a firsthand eyewitness account to that. I really saw a lot of the people that I had gone to school with watch more and more really escalating types of pornography in nature, and really, like I said, it was established and it was really in the absence of any other information, or just a recognition that this is not how the world works.

**PERSON J:** I think sort of what Person H was saying about approaching them without a shameful approach, like basically saying, "Porn isn't bad but here's what it is. It is adult entertainment, so it is made for adults, and it is designed to keep you there for as long as possible so that the platform can make money." At the end of the day that's what it is, right? And it's also like, "Do you know those people? Do you know whether they've consented for this material to be there forever?" I don't know if any of you remember when Mia Khalifa became



well-known because she told her story about how she was exploited by the industry. It really made me go, oh my gosh, I totally have no idea what this is all about and it has gone completely over my head.

I think also saying there are also different platforms where you can access porn; it's not all Pornhub. There are some platforms that would say that they're ethical porn. It's an argument of what is ethical porn? Is there ethical porn? But there are less intense pornography sites, less violent ones where they have discussions before they have sex. I'm sure as a parent, you'd prefer your kids not to watch any porn, but if you had to suggest something to them, that's out there. There's also that site MakeLoveNotPorn and it's a porn site that is supposed to be consensual and things like that. Definitely taking the shame out of it and being like, "You're an independent person and you can make your own decisions. Just know that it can be addictive. It can make real sex hard and it can make it really challenging and less pleasurable for you as well." So basically saying, "You're an independent, autonomous person and you can make your own decisions, but here's the information to help you make that decision."

**PERSON D:** Along the same lines is just acknowledge the awkwardness. Be like, "It is awkward, it is a bit different for me to actually discuss this," but acknowledge that it's entertainment, that it's performance and that it's not reflective of reality. Parents, try to lean on the support networks that you have. Don't fearmonger. Try not to fearmonger. It's not the end of the world, and there are other parents going through the same situation as you. As was suggested earlier, it might be a situation where it would be really positive to maybe have someone else's parents have that discussion with you, and you can do like a parents talk or something.

I think the most important thing is acknowledging that it's a performance, and what was kind of touched on is that you are seeing sites normalise certain kinds of content that most people would not consider appropriate. A very common joke that I'm aware of was very pseudo-incestuous, like step—all that sort of stuff content. It becomes so prolific. Similarly, you have really rough and whatnot also become quite prolific. I did not have the conversation with my parents. I feel like a challenge was also—sorry, I'm going quite off topic—when I came out as trans, a lot of their perceptions and a lot of butts of jokes that had been used were about trans women in pornography and that kind of being a sexualised thing. I don't know, there was this air of—I'm really going off topic, sorry. But I feel like even adults could benefit from education.

**The CHAIR:** I think that's a really good point to make. Yes, young people need education, but adults do too.

**Dr AMANDA COHN:** Sarah, there are lots of hands behind you—so you get them on your list.

**The CHAIR:** We are going to Person L and then we are coming to this side, and then I think—

**PERSON F:** And then over here as well, please.

**The CHAIR:** I've got Bob here with a question too. I'll put it to the group: We said we'd go to 4.30 p.m. but we can go 15 minutes longer if you're willing to do so. If any of you have to go, obviously—but if you're willing to, we can expand a bit because we do want keep going if we can. We'll go to Person L and then we'll come down this side.

**PERSON L:** You posed the question earlier about what role do parents play. I think that it's not necessarily parents; it's a role model. It's some sort of role model. It's not necessarily a parent. For me, it wasn't my parents—great parents, but that wasn't the role that they played in my life. I got that education from other role models. But I also feel like in the conversations we're having today—even talking about this topic—we're not talking about the people and the parents who are aware. I think if you're aware subconsciously that you have to have these chats then you're on the right track. I think the conversations we're having today aren't necessarily for those people. We're having the conversations for the people who don't have the role models, and I think that's where the pornography turns from educational pornography or confused pornography to very harmful pornography. I think we have to have the conversations for the people who don't have the role models and don't have the parents who are even thinking about this or considering this. That's the perspective we need to talk about education. I think that's where it becomes very harmful.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Can I ask a quick follow-up on that? If it's role models, not parents, or role models, not teachers, and if we say any adult or sibling that you want to access should be the person, we've developed guardrails around who can talk to kids about this because we're concerned about grooming and abuse and stuff like that. How do we get that balance between anybody you feel comfortable with, when maybe there are people going out of their way to make you feel comfortable talking to them about sex?

**PERSON L:** I think my personal opinion is that it can be done really well through school; it just isn't being done really well through school. I think it's not necessarily that school isn't going to be the place to get taught. For me, in retrospect—and I'm really thinking about where I got my education from—it was not necessarily

even adult role models; it was the people that I was around, like the people I grew up with. I grew up with really good friends and they—it rubbed off on me. That's where I got my education and my perception of pornography from. I honestly think my opinion is that school is the place. School is the place where everyone's there, or the majority of your socioeconomic—whether you have a role model or not, that's where we're going to reach the most students. It's not necessarily what other adults—I think it's school, one hundred per cent. I think we need to work on how it's being educated at school, because I think that's the problem.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Person L.

**PERSON A:** A lot of my experiences, as I said earlier, my parents weren't really involved in. I came out when I was very young, as a young teenager, and so I feel like I didn't really have anywhere to turn to, anyone to talk to. I lived out in the country as well and so I was like, "I don't know what I do, who I can talk to." Also, being out as a young lesbian also invited a lot of people to come up and talk to me about things that I wasn't aware of or uncomfortable about—talking to me about porn, lesbian porn and stereotypes, and asking me questions about things that I didn't know about. They were not a great experiences at all. The stigma and stereotypes around that made things a lot less enjoyable for me. It wasn't until I became an adult that I actually understood what sex looked like for someone like me or how it worked in general. I didn't receive any of that education or how to stop these disrespectful conversations that my peers thought were acceptable to have with me, so also knowing how to have these respectful conversations between peers as well would be really great because it impacted me in ways that I didn't think it could.

**PERSON C:** One thing that I think my parents did really well that helped me understand how to process these topics when I came across porn was that they taught me how to do my own research. When I had a topic and I had a question that I couldn't go to them about, I had a decent idea of how to find reputable sources about it instead of going, "I guess I'll watch more porn." They also were really careful not to shame me for knowing more than they thought I would. I do remember they tried to have "the talk" with me when I was 11 and I was like, "Yeah, guys, I know this. I've been known." I felt comfortable telling that to them and it wasn't seen as a bad thing. I feel like that could've ended in a lot more shame than it did because I already had a lot of—that's always the thing that people always say online: Kids wouldn't know about porn unless something bad happened to them. Nothing bad happened to me and yet I knew about it and I didn't really know how to process that. I think it was good that I didn't have to process that, and also that I was given the ability to go find places for information besides having to either pony up and have the conversation in person or accept that I would never know.

**The CHAIR:** I think we have Person F and Person D, and then Bob.

**PERSON F:** Really quickly, it sounds like what I was going to say is pretty much the exact same as what everyone else said. I think the biggest thing is, if you are a parent and you find your child has been watching porn or has seen it or they ask you about it, bite your tongue. Don't be mad. Don't explode. Don't say, "Oh my gosh, your phone is being taken off you. Why are you watching this?" You have to understand if they come to you first they trust you enough to talk about it. And secondly, if they're hiding it, they obviously don't feel comfortable enough to talk to you about it. Don't shut it down. Keep the conversation going. Check back in. Don't use any form of parental browsers or something like that because children and young people are pretty savvy with technology. If you block them from something, they're going to find another way to access it, whether you like it or not. I think it comes back to education. Don't shut the conversation down. If you shut it down, your kid will never trust you, or won't trust you in that way to talk about porn or sexual relations, as such.

**PERSON D:** I want to quickly add on top of what Person F was saying. If they don't approach you first—maybe because they aren't comfortable with you—that's not on you as a parent. That's on everyone else. That's on the way teens work. I was going to agree with what Person L was saying before, and touch on your point as well—I'm so bad with names.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Susan.

**PERSON D:** Susan, I'm so sorry. I feel like one of the best experiences, or the best two situations—the most memorable ones were in year 11. They had—I don't remember if it's called Life Skills—that super short course that's mandatory that you have to do. It's meant to be around the PE curriculum, where it's health, safe sex, drugs and all that sort of stuff. They had a presenter come out for that. That was super memorable because someone else is talking about this with us. They've got a lived experience of having used dangerous substances in the past. They're talking about how it's harmed them, and they're comfortable talking about it. I feel like a lot of teachers in a lot of scenarios brush it off or they're really uncomfortable talking about it. When you have people that are trained—like Healthy Harold or something—to come out, who are experts in the field, are super comfortable because it's their daily thing, are great at answering those awkward questions and are great at shutting down conversation when it goes haywire, that's what you need.

I think what was suggested was having other young people do it. I think one great example was the R U OK? Day. At our school that became such an amazing thing because it was peer led. I don't think this is a topic that's appropriate for peer-led conversation. I feel like it is a topic, though—the one negative thing I have to say about that person that did come out and speak about the harms of them misusing substances was they were a bit older. They were talking about some of their experiences, which obviously is still valid and whatnot, but they weren't 100 per cent relatable. Having another young adult come out and do it to kind of alleviate the concerns of any child or anything like that—having them come out as a one-time thing.

**PERSON E:** Just a quick note that I wanted to say is that when it comes to sexual education and reproductive health, I think it's really important to make sure that there's no big gap in between talking to different gender groups. With my experience, we did have a chat in year 5, but boys and girls were broken up into two groups. I think the boys went out and played sports. We had a sit-down circle about periods. Even then, it wasn't facilitated that well by the teachers, which is nothing on their behalf; it's just a systematic thing in my opinion. And then once again, in year 11 or year 12, we had another talk where a third party came in and they talked. They split us into boys and girls again. The girls got a very important speech about sexual assault, consent and how to advocate for yourself, but then the boys kind of got yelled at. From what I heard from other boys in that group, they didn't take it in. There's not an equal treating. They don't get the same information that we do and it doesn't come across in the same impactful way.

My partner went to a public school, and they also got split into boys and girls. They were taught how to use condoms. I went to a Catholic school, so we didn't get anything explicit. It was all more, "Don't have sex." His experience was that the girls were taught how to put a condom on a banana and then the boys also could do whatever they want. They didn't get the same information about STDs and how to have safe sex. It's kind of like filling off those gaps and making sure that the education is more equal.

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** Thank you, all. This has been really interesting and useful. At the start of the session, quite a few of you said that your first exposure to pornography was almost involuntarily or "boys being boys". I'm interested to know what tangible impact that had on you or your peers, friends or acquaintances with respect to shaping your ideas around relationships, gender roles, sex, body image and self-esteem. Growing up, did that exposure have a tangible effect on you or did you notice an effect amongst your peers with the prevalence of pornography?

**PERSON J:** Especially that first time that I was shown porn when I was younger, it really sexualised me from a very young age. It was the first time where it was like they all knew something—"they" is all the boys—that we didn't. And then in order to be in on it, we kind of had to lean in. They would often sexualise us because they knew all this stuff about porn and they had watched porn. They would make references to us and we didn't really get it, as girls. And then slowly we did get it. When I first started wearing glasses, they said, "You look like Mia Khalifa." I was like, "I don't even know who that is." Then you google it and find Mia Khalifa is one of the biggest porn creators. For me, it just made me go, "Oh my god. I'm sexualised now. That's who I am." And I was 12. You're forced to grow up very quickly.

I think about it now with Gen A, with OnlyFans. No disrespect to sex workers, but I think it must be so intense to have household names and the top influencers in the country be OnlyFans creators. I was looking up to these skinny models as who you need to be as a young girl. Now they're looking up to people who are professional at sex. What kind of pressure would that put on you as a young person now? That's so intense. To have Drake come to Australia and wear a shirt in reference to the Anna Paul beef, I was like, "Oh my gosh. This is so embedded in our culture." You're sexualised just by existing in it. That's just my take. We haven't spoken about OnlyFans, but I feel like it's so central to this chat.

**PERSON F:** To follow on from that, the internet became a thing in the 2000s or whatever. You can see late twenties, early 30s women, and it's BBLs, filler, skinny culture and big boobs. There's nothing wrong if you want to get these plastic surgeries and things done, but you can see that they're becoming more popular because this is what is expected of you to look like from porn. If you want to be an OnlyFans model, you have to look this way. That's really generalising, but that is how, if you want to be an OnlyFans model, you have to look like this or you have to act like this. If you want to be a Pornhub worker or whatever—I don't know what they would be called—you have to look like this. Certain agencies might say, "You need to play the role of this character, so you need to look a certain way," or, "You need to play the role of a younger person, so you need to wear glasses and have braces," or whatever the thing might be. I think you can see the impacts that it's already having on people in their late twenties, early 30s who are doing the sex work at the moment. You can see how much it's impacting their generation already. I imagine slowly as it goes down through age and we grow up more and have access to these things, the same things are just going to happen. History is repeating. It will, I assume, go on.

**PERSON K:** I have a few thoughts. One of the things I was thinking is that not all but a lot of mainstream porn turns women into objects. That is the main narrative that is told throughout porn, and women internalise that in sex. I also think porn, as we've talked about, is a really idealised version of sex, so it changes the way you think about how sex works. That brings in shame when you are actually engaging in sexual activities. I also wanted to mention something that Person D talked about earlier. The categorisation of certain marginalised groups within pornography also tells narratives about those groups too. As Person D referenced with trans people in porn, I also was thinking about lesbians in porn. For myself and other people who I've talked to, it took us a while to be comfortable calling ourselves lesbians because it was such a sexualised term, because it's one of the most searched for porn categories. It's used as entertainment for straight males. That has an impact on us or more marginalised groups, when your identity is used as a sexual, exotic, fun thing for people to enjoy and to watch. Those are my two cents.

**PERSON M:** I was just going to say that I know the question was framed as people exposed to pornography, not necessarily seeking it out, but if you're seeking it out and then having that as your form of sex education, that can also be harmful, kind of like what Person K was saying. If that's what you're viewing and how you're learning what sex is, a lot of it is violent content, misogynistic content and content that plays on racial stereotypes and is very degrading to people. If that's what you're learning that sex looks like, it normalises that and that's your baseline for what a relationship looks like and what sex looks like. It's not a very healthy or safe baseline to have. It can be harmful if you're seeking it out and don't have any understanding, or even knowing that the people in the videos might not be consenting and all that kind of stuff. It can also be harmful if you're seeking it out without any understanding of what the content is.

**PERSON H:** I was going to say that, but I think everyone has really brilliantly put it forward. In my high school, I really just saw that it left teenage boys with such a distorted perception of what sex is and how it works. It hinges on that idea of the objectification of women. Women are things for pleasure rather than participants. They're also people in sex. It led to an understanding of sex that was so derived from unrealistic expectations. People talk about the pressure that was felt on them from those unrealistic expectations. I can tell you the other side—men expecting that going into relationships.

I understand that speaking colloquially is not the best for research purposes, but I think of when I was in year 12. One of my students in year 9 had presumably watched porn. He'd come from a household that was very—you did not talk about sex at all. They were very reserved. He had followed one of our teachers home having seen porn. I'm sure people are familiar with the different storylines that all hinge on the idea of women wanting sex and being objects. That's the grounds for which he had followed a teacher home. He was in year 9—we're talking 13 or 14. That's to give you an understanding of just how powerful porn can be as information that can really inform what sex is and what is appropriate and what is not.

**The CHAIR:** I'm going to give Person C the very shortest of last words, because we have gone over our overtime.

**PERSON C:** This is just something that came to mind with what Person K and Person M were saying. An issue that I know, specifically within kink and kink-adjacent communities, is really targeted at our age group. There are a lot of people who think they're having safe sex because they use a condom, but they're also emulating things in porn that previously would have been solidly in the realm of kink where you need to do more research. Now we've become basically vanilla. People don't do the research and don't know what they're doing is dangerous, like choking. They think, "I saw it in this porn and it was vanilla, so it's fine," but it's not; or "I just want to be handcuffed and not properly tied up, so it's not kink," but not realising how many very important nerves are in your wrists. I think that's also where a lot of safe sex conversations are almost missing the point of what dangerous things people are going to emulate because they think they're being safe because they use a condom. Porn has added so many more things into what sex looks like.

**The CHAIR:** That's a really good point. Sadly, we have run out of time. Thank you so very much for being willing to be here and share so freely and frankly with us. It is incredibly important that we had this conversation and had you involved. What a wonderful, articulate group of young people. We're very privileged to have had you here. Thank you so much. We hope to see you here again in some other capacity. If there are questions or anything else, please feel free to reach out to Sarah or to me. We've got Kate here as well if you need to have a bit of a chat afterwards. I cannot thank you enough. We appreciate it.

**(The participants withdrew.)**

**(Short adjournment)**

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**ROUNDTABLE 2:** Participants nominated by Top Blokes

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**The CHAIR:** I'll go through an intro about how things work and who is in the room. Even while I'm doing that, if you have any questions or you want me to explain something a bit more, then please feel free to do that. I think we've thought about everything and anticipated any questions, but at any stage please jump in and let me know. I'm Sarah, and I am the Chair of this social issues Committee. We are really pleased to welcome you this afternoon to this private round table about our inquiry into the impacts of harmful pornography on mental, emotional and physical health. We thank you for agreeing to meet with us today.

I acknowledge at the beginning the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, the traditional custodians of the lands on which we're meeting today. I pay my respects to Elders past and present. I celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters of New South Wales. I also acknowledge and pay my respects to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people joining us today. For this to be a safe space for everyone, I ask that we are respectful of one another. This includes putting our phones on silent. There is no recording, messaging or posting to take place. In saying that, I'm going to be looking at my phone because the members who are online will let me know if they've got particular questions to ask. Please forgive me for doing that. It's just to make sure that I do not leave them out when we get to them.

We have Kate Graham here. She is a counsellor to support you. Please feel free to signal to Kate if you want to go have a chat to her at any stage. We have a separate room if you want to go have a chat or if you just want to leave because you need a bit of space. Please feel free to do that as you want to. Sarah and Madeleine from the secretariat are also here. You probably would have engaged with Sarah when getting ready for today. They organised the day for us and for you. My notes say they're here to watch over the process, but I know they're here to make sure that I do what I'm meant to do. We also have Lindsay from AV in the corner, and Angus and James from Hansard. Hansard is the written recording of everything that we say in here today.

The members of the Committee will take turns asking you questions. You don't have to answer anything that you don't want to. Only speak about anything that you are comfortable talking about. If there is something you don't want to say out loud, you can write it down on the notes in front of you with your first name and leave it for us. We can still include it in today's discussion. You don't have to say it out loud if you don't want to. Some members, who will introduce themselves in a second, are here by videoconference. The discussion in here is confidential, and therefore we are asking that you don't share anything that's said in here, or the names and details of other participants, with anyone outside this room to make sure that this is a safe space.

Your words, which are in the transcript that we talked about, will be written down by Angus and James over there. They will record and write down everything that we say. To make it easier for them, could you please talk into your microphones? If we could also try and speak one at a time, because often this makes it a little harder. In the normal to-and-fro of conversations, you can speak a bit over each other. We try and help Hansard by speaking one at a time. The transcript will be confidential to the members of this Committee. However, the Committee may decide it would like to publish some of the words from the transcript we get from today. If so, we'll get in touch with you to get your permission for that.

The reason we're here today, as I mentioned before, is to talk about harmful pornography from your perspective. More important for us are ideas about solutions to reduce those harms. This Committee will write a report which will include recommendations for the New South Wales Government to consider. We write a report, and we give it to the Government. The Government looks at it and says, "We agree with some of those recommendations," or "We don't agree." Not everything that we as a Committee think might be a good idea will necessarily make it into Government policy, but some of it well. Today is your opportunity to have your ideas feed into that process. We're really pleased to have you as part of it.

You may have seen video clips from Parliament or other committees where it is quite political, and where committee members might be a bit confrontational with each other. This is not one of those inquiries. Some of us are from the same political party, but we have a range of political views and parties represented in the room. We're all here for the same reason—to try and better understand the experience of younger people when it comes to issues around pornography. We're really just here to hear from you. I know that this is a sensitive topic to talk about with us, a committee of people who you've only just met. We can give you scones and lollies, but you still have only just met us so we can understand that you could be a bit uncomfortable.

Sometimes, as committee members, we might feel the same, but we want you to feel as free as you can in a Harry Potter-esque room to say whatever it is you think is important for us to know. You should know that there will be absolutely no judgement from those of us listening to anything that we hear today. I think that's about it from me. I might go around the Committee so they can introduce themselves. We might start with the people in the room.

**Dr AMANDA COHN:** My name is Amanda Cohn. I represent The Greens in the upper House. I live down in Albury Wodonga, and I used to be a GP before I was elected. I'm really glad that you're here with the kinds of questions that the Committee has been asking. We've had lots of experts, parents, teachers and researchers come and tell us what we should be doing for young people. Actually hearing directly from you I think is the most important part of this inquiry, so thank you for being here.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** I'm Susan. I'm also in the upper House. I live in Sydney. My background is that I was a lawyer and a university lecturer before I came in here. I'm really grateful that you've taken time out of your days to come in and talk to us. We've tried to develop solutions that work for everybody but unless we hear directly what's important to you, we can't do that. So thank you.

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** I'm Bob. I represent Labor in the upper House. I used to be a former union official. I don't want to repeat what everyone else said but I'm so glad you're here. It's good to hear from the real experts on an issue as important as this.

**The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL:** My name is Emily. I am also a Labor Government member in the upper House. I've been in Parliament for about two years now. Before that I was a nurse. I live up in the Hunter Valley, which is part of the reason why I can't be there with you all today, although I wish I was. It's always much nicer to be and interact with people in person. It's certainly my preference. I've got two young boys, who are four and six, which is part of the reason why I'm not there in person with you today. Thank you all very much for making the effort to be there. I look forward to listening and learning from you.

**The CHAIR:** Just before we begin—we didn't get a chance to have a big chat beforehand—are there any questions arising for how the afternoon will run? No. I've already said it can be a difficult topic to talk about. Does anyone want to make an opening comment or is there anyone with any thoughts they've had leading up to today that they want to share with us to begin with?

**PERSON R:** Sure, I'll say something. I'll begin pretty much by saying, when you opened up you said the effects of "harmful pornography", I think it's important to state that all pornography is harmful. Whether you think it is or not, I think that's the reality of the situation at hand. It's tough. I want to share a bit of a testimony and sense of how it's affected my life. In saying that, I don't like to have it in my heart at all. From about 15 years old is when I really got exposed to this. Honestly, it was probably like a weekly thing. It's something that I tend to reach out for. It's just something because I was bored.

You might think you're young and having a bit of fun—fair enough, I understand that. But as you get a bit older, you see the negative effects, ones stemming from the perception you have on women, and that's a big thing. Even to this day, I see a beautiful woman and my mind naturally drifts. It's something that I'm working on. It's not something that I like to have in my life at all. I only know that it stems further than that as well. To say that this conversation will remove pornography from society—it's not going to happen. It's so deeply rooted in society, and it's not going to go anywhere. It's more important to be comfortable to have conversations like this with kids—whoever it might be—because these problems are not going to stop. It only comes by awareness, to really make a change.

**The CHAIR:** Thanks, Person R. Anyone else?

**PERSON N:** Yes. I would like to say I really appreciate the rawness of Person R's testimony. I feel as if all of us here, whether male or female—pornography has existed. But particularly for us young men, I'm sure we've almost, in a way, shared in Person R's turmoil. We've had this. We've been imprisoned by ourselves. I think that might be a good way to put it. I wanted to say I do really appreciate the rawness of that sort of testimony. Before we came down here, Joanne had played almost like the devil's advocate and proposed a very interesting question that I do want to ask everyone here. I do wholeheartedly agree that pornography is a very harmful substance, but is there anything positive at all that anyone can learn from it? Does anyone think so?

**The CHAIR:** That's a great question—a really good question. What are the possible positives?

**PERSON N:** Although I personally don't agree with it, people may be able to learn, like, biological functions. I'm sorry, I don't know any better words to say it.

**The CHAIR:** That's okay. So what we've heard discussed previously: It's a form of sex education. Does anyone else have any reactions to that or their own opening thoughts?

**PERSON S:** I do think that I agree with Person R that a lot—the vast majority—of pornography is harmful. I think that pornography is not essential in the process of learning for sexual health. Humans have procreated for thousands of years before pornography and digital means of viewing other explicit things. That didn't exist before, so I think it's more about reducing its distribution and who can access it, which will make the real difference for this particular stage in people's lives.

**PERSON N:** I guess on the topic of culpability, you're absolutely right. I think us young men aren't necessarily responsible for the evil of it. I think—sorry, bear with me while I collect my thoughts. Thank you, guys.

**The CHAIR:** That's okay. Anyone else?

**PERSON P:** , it's just too easily accessible for everyone to have because it's essentially on your phone. You can search it up; it's so simple. There's no way of stopping anyone from accessing it, basically. In my opinion, it's such a bad thing to have in our life because it can affect our mental wellbeing and also our physical wellbeing as well, being so engrossed in something that's just pixelated and on a screen that isn't real. It can also change our views on how we see women as a whole.

**PERSON Q:** Yes, I just want to touch on something that Person N touched on there. He used the word "substance" and I loved the way he used that. When we think of substances, we think of maybe drugs, alcohol and things like that—things that do have chemical effects on the brain. When we go through the uses, the main usage of why people watch pornography is to self-pleasure. That comes with that good sense of feeling and building that connection between if I need a release and if I need something like that, it's a good go-to because it's very convenient. It's there, like we were talking about. The accessibility is so wide on the internet. It's very accessible and it becomes that go-to release and builds that connection in a young man's mind where it's almost a form of addiction.

When we look at things like if someone was to be hypothetically smoking weed or doing other things like that, it's looked upon negatively. It's a negative addiction and it shouldn't be happening. But those conversations about the addiction around pornography just don't seem to even happen potentially in the household or at school. At school we're taught that if we do these things, take these sorts of substances and indulge in different things, it has the potential to lead to addiction and different things like that. Our parents will openly tell us that as we're growing up through life. But with pornography there's no education on that addiction and substance that you alluded to and how it does chemically alter the brain for that period of time when you're enjoying it and having that pleasure. Building the connection is such a root of why I feel like there's such a negative course, because it's building such an accessible, easy release.

**The CHAIR:** You talk about education or exposure. Where do you learn about this as young men? Where do you learn about pornography? Where does your sex education come from? And what age are you? Was that you, Person P, ready to answer?

**PERSON P:** Yes, that was me. Where I actually started learning it would have been Top Blokes, which was the first time I started learning about it properly. During school I felt like that sort of topic was brushed under the rug. They wouldn't talk about it much at school because they didn't have a lot of info about it. With Top Blokes I feel like I learned about it a lot more, including a lot more about sexual health, sexual education and also how the brain functions. When we are addicted or cling onto something like that, it just makes us rewire the way we perceive things or how we view other people in general.

**The CHAIR:** Person T, were you going to say something? I feel like I missed you.

**PERSON T:** I feel like it's not talked about enough in school. We talk about the biological stuff but not enough about consent and that sort of stuff. Top Blokes would go over it a lot, but in school and PDHPE we don't really talk about the harm of pornography and that sort of stuff.

**PERSON Q:** When you're talking around that exposure and education, the biggest thing was this thing in my pocket. The accessibility to pull it out and to go onto Safari or something like that is so much easier than potentially, like you were saying, going and asking that PE teacher that question or being in that Top Blokes program and putting your hand up. You think, "I can go home and google that." Then that leads down a bunch of other different holes that, if we get into them, can be really negative. That's where I come from. My biggest influences in education were the internet and my phone and how accessible and easy it was. It really educated me.

**PERSON T:** I agree.

**PERSON S:** I'm in the odd spot where I haven't done the Top Blokes program but I'm still joining them, and I'm grateful that I was nominated to be part of this inquiry. I didn't really learn much in school about pornography at all. There was a lot about consent, and one of the impacts of pornography is that they don't show consent. At least we got taught that. The curriculum also contained alcohol, smoking and illicit drugs and all that. The curriculum was also lagging behind. It's also evident from the fact that the Federal Government only just passed the law about the under-16s ban from social media. That's quite late because it has been around for a really long time. In my opinion, pornography is one of the least regulated industries. It's important to recognise that it's an industry that is not meant for sexual health or for the general public to learn about that. It's for entertainment and to make profit. To make profit, they need to make it addictive. So we've kind of twisted it to seem as if it's for learning purposes, and it's definitely not.

**PERSON Q:** It's that way that someone gets into that addictive state of finding ways to cope and those mechanisms of "This is okay." That's why they maybe turn to "It's an educational tool" or "I'm learning something." They're trying to flip it to make it sound like that's a positive thing instead of focusing on the negative things. That's where I feel it's starting to go into that really addictive stage of showing those signs of addiction and reluctance to accept that there are negative effects going on there.

**PERSON N:** Person S and Person Q, you guys raised very critical points that align with what I had wanted to mention before. you guys touched on how we aren't necessarily responsible for producing it but it's a thing we view as young men. On that topic of responsibility, you're right: It's an addiction but, in a way, it has been ingrained into us. Like you mentioned with mobile phones, you're right: I could just bring up my mobile phone right now. It's probably the greatest teacher for our generation and the youngest ones as well. I don't really speak on behalf of my entire generation, but most of us, and especially the younger generations, have learnt off tablets or mobile phones. I feel as if in this online, contemporary world, pornography has been ingrained and produced as an aid to loneliness. It's almost highlighted as the solution, because it touches not only on a physical, sexual necessity level but also on an internal spiritual level—the desire to connect with somebody. Unfortunately, it has almost been highlighted or praised as our connection. It's our connector. Do I make sense? I hope I do.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, of course.

**PERSON R:** Can I raise a quick point? Going off being ingrained and the connection aspect, I can speak for all the boys here and I'm very much highlighting myself having this: We all share a wicked half, essentially. What I mean by that is there are things that we lust after and that we might desire. Deep down is that conviction in your heart, knowing it's not right—and I know it's not right—but for some reason you still fall into it. I think it is a very serious thing that is brushed over, unlike what was taught at school. All I was taught was that you had to put a condom on, contraceptive. That was literally it. And school should have an obligation to teach us the right things, and I feel like a lot of that is missed, to be honest. Can't put all the blame on the Government and the school, but I think it comes down to the parents to also be informed and have the courage to open up and to speak to their kids, because it's very serious.

**The CHAIR:** Just before we go to Susan, there's just something I want to raise in what we've talked about so far. I'm just wondering if there's a risk and if you feel this, because we're aware of the harms of pornography—indeed, that's what we've been looking at. Is there a risk that we maybe then create more shame just about sexuality and sex generally? I'm just wondering. Is there a danger as well of that? Do you feel that? Or do you feel that you're able to navigate that?



**PERSON T:** I feel like we should just talk about it more openly in general, even with family, friends, and not hide it as much as it is, because it's quite a natural process. Reproduction is what we're here for, basically.

**PERSON R:** Could you rephrase that question really quickly?

**The CHAIR:** I'm just wondering, particularly with young men, because we are rightfully concerned about the harms of pornography, that we might accidentally then make any consideration of sex be more about shame or to have more shame or guilt. I'm just wondering if that's something.

**PERSON R:** It's a false perception of sex. That's the thing we're getting at. Porn is not real at all. I'm not sure if you've seen some of the titles of that. It's going to sound bad, but it's like "little sister and I doing this, doing that". Even that is pointing towards someone young, and that's disgusting. It twists the mind. If more young people are raised on this, they're going to conform to this thing and think that's right. Sex in itself is not a bad thing. It's a reproduction thing. It should be with someone, where your faith is, in the bounds of marriage or in the bounds of love. And love is not a chemical feeling. It's action. It's someone you can truly be with, want to talk to, have a genuine relationship, have a family with them. It's a deep, deep desire for stuff like that. Porn just twists that and flips the love on its head and makes it something completely different. It's worshipping a false idol, and it's not something that we need.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Just something I wonder what you're thinking about, and this has occurred to me, listening to all of you talk. We've heard a lot that pornography has a use and it's used by young people as sex education. And I'm just wondering, listening to your thoughts, is pornography something that teaches you what other people do with each other or can do with each other sexually but doesn't teach you about how you behave sexually with somebody inside a relationship? Does it educate about what's possible, but does it actually get in the way of sex inside a relationship?

**PERSON P:** With that point, I feel like the way that we can perceive our partner, so to say, could be, as other people have been saying, false idolisation. We could want to do something with someone that is really weird to do. It's like you're perceiving your partner as some sort of object. I feel like there's false idolisation in that and we should be perceiving our partners in a more loving and caring way. And pornography, I feel like, as a whole, isn't an educational thing, because what other people do with other people is their own business. If they want to publish it, that's what they can do. But, as a whole, it's not right. Pornography as a whole isn't right. You're falsely idolising expectations on either men or women.

**PERSON T:** With what Susan had to say, I feel like it only gives half the story. You never see them giving consent or loving each other much but just more the actual actions, only the physical stuff. But, in a relationship, it's a lot more than that. You actually love each other. You give consent, obviously. It's only the actions of what they're doing but not the greater part of the relationship.

**PERSON N:** I wanted to go back to that previous statement about whether pornography introduces a sort of shame to sex, as well as tapping onto Person P and I think the most honest answer to that sort of question is yes. It's a boiling pot of insecurity. That's the best way that I could say it. I think pornography is a large boiling pot of insecurity, because it definitely ties into a man's sexual performance. From what we see on screen to the actual performance of sex—you're right. We don't see the beforehand. We never see consent before the sex. But also, even beyond that, we don't see what the man's doing. He does, more than likely, take vitamins or any other enhancers to make those videos. But, in a very realistic scenario, you're not going to be taking vitamins or pills to enhance your performance or growth, and you wouldn't do that. I think pornography introduces a sort of insecurity on the way a man performs during sex.

On that idea of performance and what the video shows, it shows a sort of "if not, then why not" situation, and I think, when it brings up "if not, then why not", it places more of an emphasis on dominance. I feel as if, once the pornography video is showing the man dominating the woman, once you see that kind of idea of dominance coming forward, that almost comes full circle, then back to performance. And then, as the young man's watching a man dominate another woman, that makes them even more insecure: "Why can't I do that? My performance isn't that good. I can't dominate. Therefore I'm lesser" or "I can't dominate like that. Therefore I'm inferior." And I feel as if, once you do down that rabbit hole—I apologise for bringing up this topic. It's very

disgusting to me as well. I despise it. But I feel as if that could even open a door to abuse, assault, rape, because then that's the man broken wanting to assert his dominance, wanting to feel like he's in control.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you for that, Person N. Bob, did you have a question?

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** Yes. Thanks, Sarah. Thanks, guys, for the evidence that you've given so far. There's a lot that we see online, even on television, where you can differentiate between fiction and reality. You know instinctively the difference. I'm really interested in your thoughts on whether or not governments are over-egging or underestimating the problem with respect to pornography specifically, and any impact that it has on how guys think about relationships and think about girls. I'm interested in whether or not you have observed in yourselves or with your mates a change in how they perceive relationships or women as a result of watching this stuff, where they can't differentiate between what is real and what is not and you think that you've got to step back, take a breath and come back to reality about things. Do you have any observations around any of that where you have actually seen the impact?

**PERSON Q:** Yes, the keywords you said there were to "bring yourself back to reality". I find that going and indulging in all of these sorts of things, like we were talking about with the phone and the internet, is such an educational tool in building what we know and what we believe. I know that we talk about having those thoughts that we probably shouldn't be perceiving and stuff like that and it's hard to sometimes sit back and take that reset and go, "Maybe I shouldn't be thinking that", because it's what you have been educated and it's what you have taught yourself. That is the normal in your brain. It's things like education and programs and stuff like that that help shift those perspectives and plant that seed so that they can grow that idea of "This might not be the best thing for me." I find that it's hard to reset in that moment because that's what you believe is real and that's what you believe is true because that's what you have educated yourself to believe and need in some circumstances.

**PERSON P:** With what you were saying about how either males or females perceive other people, I have noticed a lot with kids at school that they perceive girls as an object sort of thing. Say if girls have large accessories on themselves and on their body, like they might have a big butt or big breasts or something, they are like, "I would so do her", and stuff like that. It has just made me really think that we see each other as objects around our age and in our generation. Most people are usually used. There is a stigma that certain things are meant to happen during sex and that but also, as Person N was saying, it can also create violent tendencies as well, like being the aggressor or the dominant person. It can create abusive or even anger issues. That is what it can cause. But also, with what Person Q was saying about an outlet, a lot of people use it as an outlet, I would say, for mental health because they have nothing else that they can do or they feel like they can't talk about it and so they use pornography as an outlet, which would also create even more problems.

**The CHAIR:** Is there anyone who hasn't spoken who wants to contribute?

**PERSON Y:** Touching on what Person P said about what you hear in school around your mates, that has been happening for a while for me. I was exposed to that since primary school. What's interesting to me is that you think about that and you're like, damn, in primary school we are way too young to be thinking about that kind of stuff and too young to be talking about that stuff. But at the end of the day—I can speak for most of us here, probably—that's when I was exposed to pornography, in primary school and when I was young and coming up on my teens. I only started learning about pornography in Top Blokes. There was no course content that covered it, which is a crazy gap in my life where I was being exposed to pornography. I get to high school and I've developed all these relationships and I'm only discovering that this is bad for me and all these negative effects. When you are young and you have been exposed to that, you can make excuses in your head because it's addicting and then, in turn, that can negatively affect your relationships. You get older and you only start to realise the kind of effects that it has.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Person Y. I appreciate that.

**PERSON S:** People often can't educate themselves before they get exposed to pornography. I think the mere fact that people can view it accidentally is just wrong. I'd also like to mention that COVID-19 was a time of isolation and loneliness for many people and people falsely paired loneliness with pornography to get a feeling of escapism or to fix the loneliness or the feelings that they had. Relating to Bob's question, I think it is underestimated and not represented highly enough in government. It's definitely not regulated as much as vaping or tobacco or gambling or drugs. Vaping was also just cracked down on by the Federal Government not long ago, only for pharmaceutical purposes now. Regarding its impacts, it definitely interferes with other domains like your academic performance, especially people with conditions that they might have regarding their sexual health or if they have issues. When they see pornography, they feel even worse about themselves. That's it for now.

**Dr AMANDA COHN:** There have been a lot of people that have talked to the Committee about wanting to do more education with young people and experts and organisations that are wanting young people to understand. One example of this conversation is that pornography often doesn't show a good consent process. What are the best ways for those educators to reach young people or to create a safe space to be able to talk about pornography? Is it schools? Is it teaching parents how to do it? Is it other people in your lives? Is it another organisation like Top Blokes? What's your advice?

**PERSON T:** I feel like parents and schools are good, but when you're in a school environment with lots of your mates, it's generally not taken very seriously. If it's just boys in the hall or a classroom with lots of students, it won't really be taken in properly. Maybe smaller groups of people and parents enforcing that as well.

**PERSON Q:** It needs to be a holistic approach. If we think about how suicide was perceived years ago and how there was this stigma and taboo around it, conversations around that sort of thing weren't happening because it was seen as a negative connotation and it was a bad thing. I feel pornography has taken that sort of hold as well, now, where it's a taboo. It's got a lot of taboo around it. It's got a lot of stigma around it. To have those conversations, whether it's with your parents, with a teacher, with someone—a teacher who is an educator and supposed to be an educator in these sorts of fields of things. It's only when external things like Top Blokes can come in and educate the young people.

Even then, it's now up to us young people to go out and have to educate the people around us. I feel it's probably a lot of weight to have on a young bloke's shoulders, to go out there and have to educate all his mates around the harmful effects of pornography. So attacking it as sort of destigmatising it and de-tabooing it, in a way—even though that's probably not a word—but destigmatising it and getting rid of those sorts of clouds around it, because everyone knows what pornography is. Most people have seen or viewed pornography in their life, so why is it such a taboo thing to have a conversation about when it is causing all these negative effects, physically and mentally?

**PERSON Q:** Following on from that, it's being weaponised now against young men. People know how it is such an addictive thing. Pornography and those sorts of images that can really lure young men in are now being weaponised, and young men are now being exploited in stuff like this and taken advantage of due to these sorts of things, and being led into maybe sending explicit pictures to receive explicit pictures back, and these things that then are being thrown back in their face. This isn't even a real person; it's a scammer that they've been talking to. Now they're being exploited for money and all these different things because of that addiction and that want and that seek for connection, like we were talking about.

If you have someone who is maybe pretty good looking messaging you, saying, "Hey, how are you," and all these different things, realistically seeking that connection, it's going to lure you in to the point where, okay, it kind of goes down that path. Maybe you are sort of sharing those pornographic images and stuff like that, and it can turn around to be a scammer who turns around and maybe exploits you, or something like that. It's a thing now that's growing into a thing that people are using to weaponise against young men in that regard, as well. I feel it's a massive problem.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Bob, I can see your hand up.

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** I want to just pick up on that point—sorry, I didn't see the name. talking about that six-year gap where you were exposed to the porn but you don't have that other education or grounding. Does that exposure over all that time effectively normalise what you're seeing as being appropriate in a relationship, or appropriate in terms of how you treat women? Because you don't have that other voice in your ear—other education about what is appropriate and what is normal. Given how young people are now when they're exposed to this stuff, do you think education programs should be brought forward a lot earlier so that there is that other voice in your ear or in your head before you get exposed to this stuff?

**PERSON Q:** For sure. I would have liked a nice little analogy to chuck in there. Hypothetically, if someone grew up with racist parents and for the first six years of their life, that's all they knew—that's all they learnt and were told and fed that sort of information—odds are when they grow up they might have some maybe questionable tendencies and stuff like that with their perceptions and views on people. That's how porn can be the same. If we talk about that six-year grey area where there's no education—we're going in and educating ourselves—it believes these sorts of perceptions and these things of women, or how to have sexual intercourse and all these different sorts of things. It's building those things up, just how a parent might pass over some traits or opinions or values—stuff like that. It's just us building our own of what we can see and what we can view, and taking bits of that and thinking, "Okay, I'm going to take that into the world. I'm going to take that out into the world because I think that might be an effective strategy in building that connection." You get stuff like that.

**PERSON W:** I feel like the abnormality around it is why it's so normal. Like what were saying, you go into a room and you try and teach a bunch of 12-year-olds about sex and porn and everything, their parents aren't going to like that. But if their parents do give consent for their kids to know about that, and a group of parents don't give their kids consent to learn about that, the kids that were in the meeting or whatever and the kids that did learn about it are going to take certain points and just leave that room and go and tell the other kids, whose parents didn't give consent, about what was said in the room—not properly. It's just going to take away some things. Like what was saying earlier about micro-porn or whatever, how normal it is online, it kind of creates a chase for lust over love as you start looking for women for their bodies more than personalities, or you're not really looking for a partner for their personality or for things to—I don't know how to word it, sorry.

**The CHAIR:** You're doing well.

**PERSON W:** You're not really looking for love; you're looking for a person because you've seen things and you've grown to like that something more than this. It made a lot more sense in my head, sorry.

**The CHAIR:** No, it makes sense.

**PERSON W:** I feel like trying to educate kids—education is a really hard thing to do because you can't just jump straight into something, because some people might know more about it than others. Some people may have never heard about it. You might just be jumping into something where kids have no idea what you're talking about, and other kids may have all the idea what you're talking about because they've been exposed to it. It just kind of creates a lot more problems than it may have fixed, if that makes sense.

**PERSON T:** I was exposed in year 7 from a mate with older brothers, and I don't think it was talked about at all until year 9. Even though that's not that six-year gap, it's still a decent enough gap. Even in school, it was just very normalised around mates. A mate would go to the bathroom and search up something inappropriate on his computer and, even if you were lucky and you weren't exposed to it, it's still very normalised and no-one really talks about the negatives or anything like that. Even though it's bad to expose people who weren't exposed to it at a young age, I still feel like it's more beneficial to tell people the bad things about it, even if they don't know that it's bad yet.

**PERSON Q:** I feel like it's the same with how, going through school, you might be sitting in PE class and they tell you, "Don't do drugs. That's bad." But that doesn't mean eventually someone is going to go and try drugs. It's just giving them that information to provide, "Look, here are the bad effects of what can happen if you do go and indulge in this sort of thing." I bring it back to the taboo and the stigma around something that we all know exists. A lot of us have probably seen or viewed it at least once in our lives, yet parents and educators are still afraid to have conversations about it when, realistically, it's something that happens in everyday life. It's giving the parents and the educators and people who are role models for the young people the tools and the education on how to pass that down. We would sit in PE class and they would say, "Don't do drugs. Don't do these things." Hypothetically, them giving us that information doesn't mean we're going to go and try all of these different things. It's giving us that seed so we can grow that tree in our own minds, if that makes some sort of sense.

**PERSON Y:** As far as education goes and trying to educate young kids on that point, we can't really pinpoint for everyone when they're first exposed to porn. It's a unique experience for everyone, so it would be hard to—as said, if you're educated about something you don't know about, and if you're a young kid and you have not been exposed to porn yet or if someone is educating you about it, maybe it opens up a sense of curiosity, and maybe that's your first way to be exposed to it. For me, personally, I think it's more about how we can start restricting it. Why is porn even legal? Do you know what I mean, because I feel like it has no positive effects? I feel like it's just an obscene entertainment industry. That's just my two cents.

**The CHAIR:** I see Person T with his hand up. I'm going to go to Person T. We have gone a little bit over time, but I want to give everyone an opportunity if there is anything else they want to bring to our attention.



**PERSON T:** About the restriction stuff, I feel like it should be available to certain people because, if it's not available, people will just find ways to get it anyway, like through the black market or whatever. But they should restrict it more so it's harder to get, because a five-year-old kid that searches up the wrong letters should not get access to a website of that sort of stuff, especially promoting it on social media like Instagram and all of the OnlyFans models. They should not be able to promote their bodies with minimal clothing to make extremely large amounts of money and try and trick young people to pay their whole savings and everything for this potential meet-up or inappropriate things.

**PERSON Y:** Yes, on YouTube age-restricted videos you have to show proof of ID but, on porn sites, you just go in and it's like, "I'm 18." That's interesting to me.

**PERSON S:** I don't think we need to learn about it if it's restricted, and when it is available at schools and particularly in social groups, it's a cycle of discussing it with your peers, then accidental exposure, then becoming addicted to it, and then it just becomes part of the conversation. Regarding the law, producers of pornography don't have any incentive to regulate the distribution or what demographics access it. I think the New South Wales Parliament and Federal Parliament need to bring it into the public sphere so it's not a stigmatised issue. These producers can produce any content that they like. There's only really basic, normalised standards. There is nothing on paper in any legislation, so I think it's really important to introduce standards. Like said about age verification and biometric security, just like the under-16 social media ban they're trialling with the eSafety Commissioner, they can just extend that to pornography as well, for under-18s not being able to access it.

**The CHAIR:** We are going to go to Person P and Person R and then, unfortunately, we're going to have to end.

**PERSON P:** With what Person T was saying before about our influences at school, I feel like in high school they should be starting to introduce the negative sides of porn but also, with the influence, they should be making sure that you're with people that you're not friends with so they don't impact the way you perceive porn—so you're around people you might not know at all in your year and you're in one classroom talking with someone who is educated on it. Just bringing that in would probably help, so you're not with friends who are making a joke or a scene about it.

**The CHAIR:** That peer aspect is important.

**PERSON R:** I think we can all agree that even with all this stuff in place, people are going to do what they're going to do. That's the point of free will. People are going to do it. It comes down to the school and parents to teach something which I Person T definitely hold close to my heart. I'm going to teach my kids the right principles and let them govern themselves. It's as simple as that. The general consensus is also that we need to remove the indoctrination surrounding pornography. We are taught things that are not true about pornography, and we need to inform parents and schools about what pornography really does and its harmful effects. I think that's something we can all agree on. That's pretty much it.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you all very much. I'm sorry we kept you over time, but it was because you had so many interesting things to say. We've had several days of witnesses to this inquiry and a couple of round tables this afternoon, which honestly have been extremely impactful. They will be really important when we come to consider the recommendations we make. Please know that you've made a really important contribution to the

process here today and the deliberations we will make. We are really privileged to have such articulate young men come along to help us with this inquiry. Thank you once again for being involved and for giving us your time this afternoon. The secretariat will be in touch when the transcript becomes available.

**PERSON N:** May I provide a closing statement as well?

**The CHAIR:** Sorry, Person N. Yes, of course.

**PERSON N:** I mentioned this in a Zoom quite a while ago, but I want to reiterate it. As young men, we are the first generation to be raised on devices—or at least half of our lives were on devices. For the next generation, their whole life has been on a device. I don't hate my parents and I don't blame them for not supervising me more on my devices—I don't hate them for that—because they didn't know. They were not aware at all of the dangers that my iPad could give me, but we are. I think we're the byproduct of that. I think it is our obligation in the future with our children to then not make that same mistake. We've learnt from their mistakes. There is an Arabic proverb that if a donkey walks into a wall, he will not do it again. By that logic, if you make the same mistake twice, you have the same intelligence as a donkey. We have the rest of our lives ahead of us, no matter how long that is. We have that time to change our lives. But in the future, when we enter that second chapter as parents, we have the ability to change our children's lives too. I just wanted to close with that.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you so much for that, Person N. I appreciate that. Again, I appreciate all of you being here.

**(The participants withdrew.)**

**The Committee adjourned at 18:15.**