Radicalisation Drivers in Australia

Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security (PJCIS) Inquiry into the nature and drivers of radicalisation in Australia

October 2026

TEACH US * CONSENT

Acknowledgement of Country

Teach Us Consent acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as the First Peoples and Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we work, and pays respect to their continuing connection to land, waters and culture, cared for over more than 60,000 years.

We acknowledge the systemic violence, including sexual violence, that First Peoples have faced and continue to endure as a direct result of colonisation, and recognise that this history shapes the safety challenges we work to address today.

We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders past and present, and to their stories, traditions and living cultures. We commit to walking alongside First Nations Peoples in building a brighter future, free from violence.

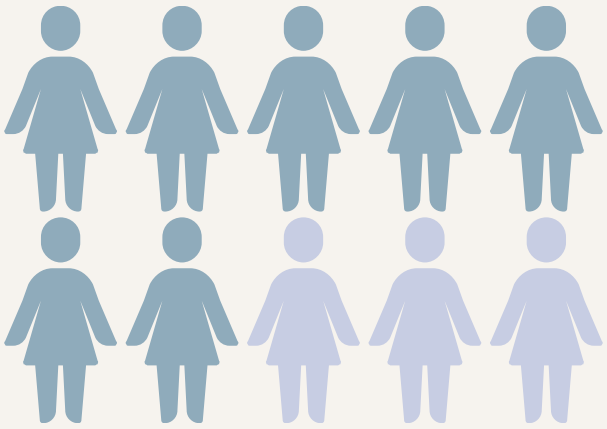


23 minutes

It takes just 23 minutes for a social media account mimicking a 16-18 year old boy to be fed misogynistic content, regardless of the account's viewing preferences.

73% of Gen Z social-media users have misogynistic content online, with 70% saying they believe misogynistic language and content are increasing. This rises to 80% for women.

73%



Recent polling from Teach Us Consent finds that regardless of political views, the vast majority (78%) of Australians think social media users should have full control over what they see online. This represents over 7 in every 10 people.

The Adolescent Man Box Report (2025) found that boys who strongly support restrictive ideas about "being a man" are more likely to cause harm to themselves and others.

The Movember (2025) Report on Young Men in the Digital World found that 38% of the men engaging with masculinities influencers follow their advice. These young men were also significantly more likely to use performance-enhancing or body modifying substances including steroids, nootropics or supplements, and diet pills

Introduction

Teach Us Consent welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Inquiry into the nature and drivers of radicalisation in Australia.

This submission is grounded in the context of the distinct and worsening trajectory of sexual violence in Australia, and an understanding that social media platform design has contributed to this.

Our organisation's submission is informed by our direct work with young people and children aged 13-25 through mass digital consent education, youth-focused research and our Youth Advisory Group(s). In addition to youth engagement, a robust evidence base, ongoing sector consultation, including with tech and social media companies, and Teach Us Consent's Expert Advisory Board contribute to our knowledge base immensely. Collectively, this shapes the policies we call for.

About Teach Us Consent

Teach Us Consent Global Limited is a youth-led, registered Australian charity committed to pioneering consent education to foster healthy relationships and prevent normalised sexual violence, particularly among young people.

In 2025, Teach Us Consent launched the Fix Our Feeds campaign, calling on the Australian Government to require social media platforms to offer an opt-in model for algorithmic feeds, bringing the principle of affirmative and informed consent to people's online experiences. The campaign has drawn over 15,000 signatories to date and has attracted broad cross-sector support, including from public health experts, gender-based violence researchers, men and masculinities experts, prominent world leaders, and young people.

Teach Us Consent continues to advocate for legislative, policy and cultural change alongside mass digital education, with the goal of eradicating normalised sexual violence.

The state of radicalisation in Australia

1. Australia is facing a growing and accelerating radicalisation threat. The 2025 Counter-Terrorism and Violent Extremism Strategy, *A Safer Australia*, acknowledged that "a growing number of Australians are being radicalised to violence, and radicalised to violence more quickly." This national strategy identifies young people as particularly susceptible to radicalisation.
2. This is reflected directly in Australia's counter-extremism caseload. As reported by Home Affairs (2025) in Meger (2026), there are currently over 200 active participants in countering violent extremism programs in Australia, of whom two-thirds are aged between 10 and 24, and all of whom are male.
3. However, Australia's national security frameworks do not yet formally recognise what research has found to be the single strongest predictor of this radicalisation. A 2026 University of Melbourne study of 1,122 young Australians aged 13-17 and 2,307 adults found that attitudes permissive of violence against women were the dominant predictor of violent extremist attitudes across every ideological formation measured, from incel ideology to white supremacist and religious extremism.

4. The scale of such concerning attitudes among Australian young people is significant. The same *study* found that roughly one in three teenage boys express misogynistic attitudes, mistrust of women, and a belief in traditional gender roles, showing a correlation with 26% of teenage boys who agree with right-wing extremist attitudes and 27% who agree with white supremacist attitudes.

Algorithmic amplification of extreme misogyny

5. This section responds directly to the Committee's focus on the role of algorithms in amplifying extremist content. Teach Us Consent's evidence and research indicate that recommender algorithms are not an incidental backdrop to radicalisation in Australia but are instead a primary delivery mechanism. Further, the content they most effectively amplify is misogynistic in nature.
6. Young people are disproportionately passive consumers of algorithmically curated content. Research finds that young people aged 12–17 watch whatever the algorithm recommends without actively seeking content out and that there is a fundamental limit to the agency young people can exercise over what they see. This element of passivity is the product of platform design, as algorithmic recommendation systems are built to maximise engagement, not protect their users.
7. The University of Melbourne's 2026 study finds that engagement with gendered "manfluencer" content was the single strongest online predictor of general misogyny and showed the strongest online association with attitudes normalising violence against women.
8. Exposure to such content is now near-universal among young Australians - 88% of boys and 90% of girls report regular engagement with gendered "manfluencer" or "femfluencer" content, though girls were considerably more likely to describe the content they encountered as pro-feminist (76%) than boys (38%).
9. This is not a static or declining trend, but an intensifying one among the youngest cohort. Gen Z and Millennial male respondents, and Gen Z female respondents, were the most likely of any generation surveyed to agree with all forms of violent extremist attitudes measured.
10. Further, hostility toward gender equality itself is now widespread among young Australian men. Between 30% and 35% of boys and men of all ages believe gender equality measures have "gone too far", and 24-29% believe feminism is a "hate movement". Among Gen Z men specifically, 23% believe feminism should be resisted "with violence" if necessary. This finding is consistent with the University of Melbourne's earlier 2024 report, which found support for anti-feminist violent extremism was highest amongst 18–29-year-olds, 19% of whom agreed with the legitimacy of violence to resist feminism, and that attitudes about gender role adherence made a respondent 4.86 times more likely to support religious violent extremism, and 5.28 times more likely to support white supremacist violent extremism.
11. Teach Us Consent notes the harmful repercussions the consumption of this content has for young men and boys as well. Movember's 2025 research states: "Young men who watched these influencers were more likely to report worse mental health outcomes, a reduced willingness to make their mental health a priority, and a higher rate of risk-taking (such as steroid use or exercising while injured)".

12. The Adolescent Man Box Report (2025) found that boys who strongly support restrictive ideas about "being a man" are more likely to cause harm to themselves and others.
13. The relationship between online behaviour and violent extremism is "substantially explained by misogynistic attitudes and VAW attitudes that online behaviours cultivate." This suggests that algorithmic recommender systems are not incidental to radicalisation, but rather a mechanisms through which it occurs.
14. This is corroborated by further research. A 2024 UCL Institute of Education and University of Kent study, which tracked TikTok accounts built to mimic teenage boy archetypes, found misogynistic content escalated from 13% to 56% of recommended videos within five to seven days of otherwise ordinary engagement. Reset Tech Australia's 2022 research, *Algorithms as a Weapon Against Women*, found the same escalatory pattern on a different platform closer to home: across 10 experimental YouTube accounts, engaging with videos antagonistic toward women and feminism reliably led to the recommendation of increasingly overt manosphere and incel content.
15. This pattern is consistent with what Australia's own security agencies are observing. ASIO has reported a marked rise in young Australians being radicalised online, with minors increasingly appearing in counter-terrorism caseloads and incel ideology identified alongside white nationalist material.
16. Teach Us Consent's own audience data reflects the same pattern at a community level. In a poll put to Teach Us Consent's 80,000+ Instagram audience, we asked: "Do you know someone who has been radicalised by the algorithm?" 63% of respondents answered "yes" and shared the following testimonies:
    a. "My brothers started quoting sexist and derogatory male influencers from social media."
    b. "I've had to stop having real conversations with my brother."
    c. "My ex-bf started consuming more and more red pill media. Eventually broke up with him."
    d. "Young men 18-24 I used to work with in construction. Mistrust, hateful toward women."

Classroom impacts of the manosphere pipeline

17. Teachers are now reporting witnessing manosphere-adjacent attitudes, behaviours and vocabulary in their classrooms across primary and secondary education. In a survey of over 500 Australian teachers, the most frequently cited form of student extremism was explicitly gender-based, with boys expressing or enacting misogynistic attitudes drawn directly from manosphere ideology, with Andrew Tate named repeatedly and explicitly as a reference point for student rhetoric and behaviour.
18. The reported effects of this trend are concerning in both severity and age of onset. Teachers described a consistent pattern of "differential authority" - students complying with male teachers' instructions while refusing or undermining the same instructions from female colleagues - alongside explicitly sexualised and demeaning language directed at female teachers and students, and in a smaller but significant number of cases, physical intimidation and threats.
19. Critically, this is not confined to older students. Teachers reported manosphere-linked attitudes and language emerging in children as young as Year 5 and 6 (10–11 years old), with gender-based exclusion behaviours observed as early as Year 1 and 2. Teachers consistently described feeling under-resourced and unsupported in responding to this behaviour.

Algorithm Reform in the Digital Duty of Care

20. Addressing the harms exacerbated by algorithmic feeds, including but not limited to misogynistic and radical content, requires intervention at the system level. Teach Us Consent recommends an opt-in model for algorithmic feeds - the central ask of our Fix Our Feeds campaign.
21. An opt-in model requires platforms to obtain active consent before serving algorithmically curated content, rather than defaulting users - and particularly young people - into feeds that recommend content based on their personal data. The evidence in this submission clearly sets out the pipeline this creates: exposure shapes attitudes, attitudes drive violence against women, and violence against women is, as demonstrated above, the strongest predictor of radicalisation into extremism more broadly. Exposure should therefore require consent, not be assumed by default.
22. The purpose of this policy is to directly target the algorithmic recommender systems that are responsible for the mass and predatory dissemination of content that creates harm. Key features of opt-in algorithms include:
    a. This policy is content-neutral in that it doesn't seek to remove or censor content. Rather, it acknowledges that, while online content can be innately harmful, it is the recommender systems themselves, powered by algorithms, that create the pathways for radicalisation, among other harms.
    b. Preferences would be fixed until intentionally changed by the user. An opt-in feature would allow users to change their preference at any point and across platforms. We propose users should be able to turn their algorithms on and off at will, and that this preference should be fixed until users change it.
    c. An opt-in feature is based on the principles of consent. An opt-in algorithm would provide people who use social media with greater autonomy over how they consume content. In practice, 'opting-in' to an algorithm would require the platforms to ask for informed and affirmative consent to use our behavioural data to inform algorithms and shape the content we see. For the first time, we would be offered a genuine choice between content curated by social media platforms based on algorithms, or content from accounts we follow only and without recommender content.
23. Teach Us Consent supports the Government's My Feed, My Way initiative and the proposed legislative instrument that will give effect to this initiative. We are glad to see the draft user empowerment tool determination adopt an opt-in model with components that will prevent malicious compliance of tech companies and help provide Australians with meaningful choice, including that the user:
    a. is actively prompted, through a push notification or other proactive measure,
    b. is able to easily change their default feed preference at any time,
    c. has their preference saved when closing and re-opening the app,
    d. is able to use all app features without any disincentive; and
    e. is not prompted or encouraged to enter a recommendation feed if a following-driven feed is chosen.
24. Teach Us Consent supports how these specifications are reflected in the minimum standards for user empowerment tools and reiterates the importance of preventing platforms from funneling users back into a recommendation algorithm feed.
25. Teach Us Consent urges the Committee to recommend that the proposed legislative instrument and the overarching Digital Duty of Care Bill is passed.



User empowerment and accountability

26. The evidence set out above establishes that algorithmic recommender systems are one of the most effective radicalisation mechanisms for Australians. It follows that genuine user control over those systems - not merely content moderation after the fact - is one of the most direct and immediately actionable levers available to the Committee. This section examines Australia's own reform in progress alongside comparable measures from the United States and the United Kingdom, to demonstrate that meaningful user empowerment is both achievable and, in the UK's case, a direct lesson learned from a real radicalisation crisis.

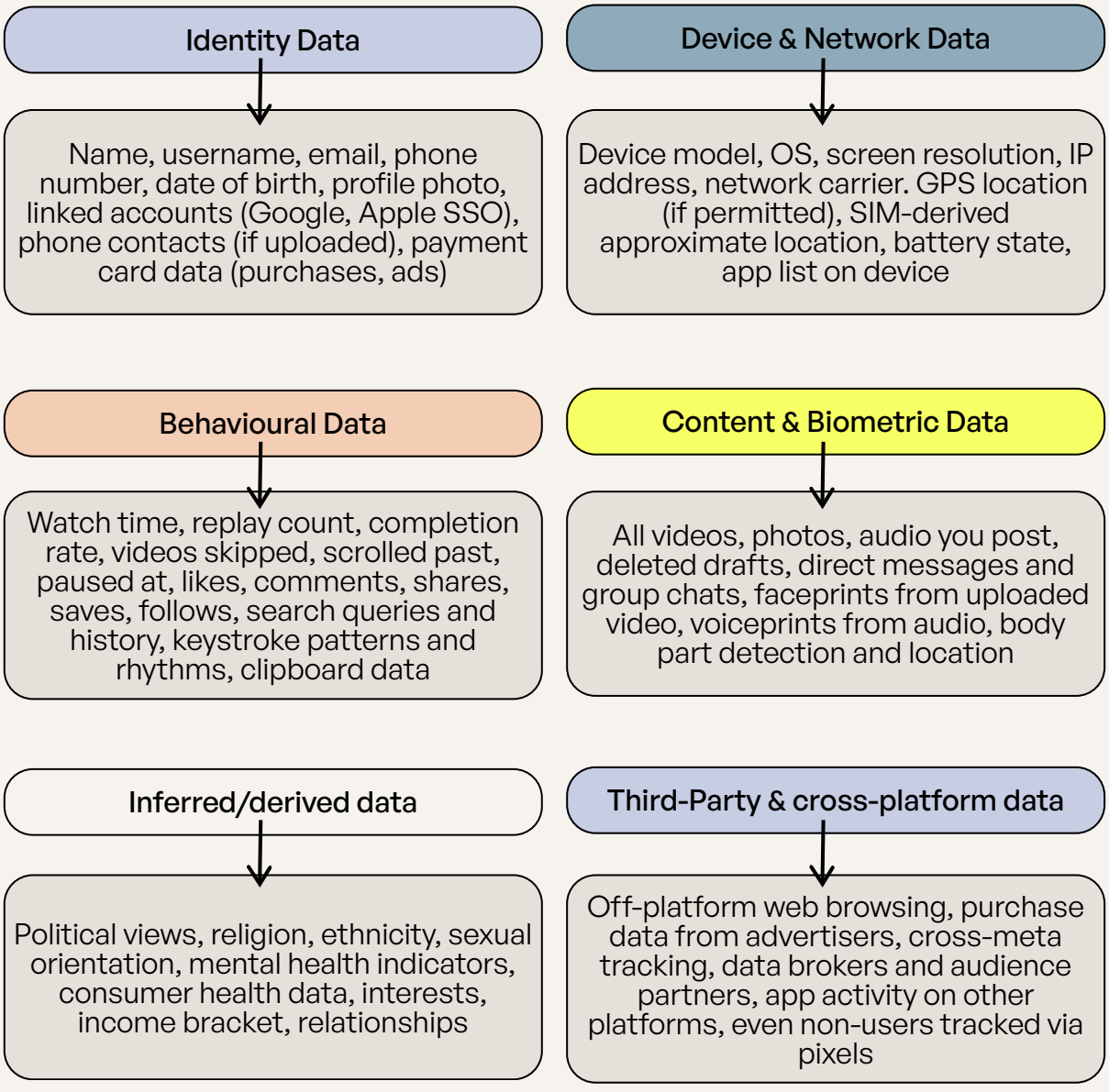
United States: New York's SAFE for Kids Act

27. New York's Stop Addictive Feeds Exploitation (SAFE) for Kids Act, signed into law in 2024 with final implementing rules published in July 2026, prohibits any algorithmically personalised feed being shown to a user under 18 by default, requiring an affirmative parental opt-in before personalised recommendation is activated at all. In the absence of an algorithm, minors receive a chronological feed of content only from accounts they follow.
28. This model is also instructive both in scope and enforcement. Instead of naming specific platforms, the law applies to any service that displays user-generated content for social interaction, uses algorithmically personalised feeds, and derives 20% or more of its user traffic from these feeds. This threshold-based definition is designed to automatically capture new or emerging platforms, without requiring the law to be amended every time. Further, this is supported by a right of action, whereby the state Attorney-General, as well as individual users or parents, can bring civil claims in a direct manner against a non-compliant platform, with damages up to $5000 per violation.
29. The Act has attracted overwhelming public support. New York polling found that 63% of voters supported the SAFE for Kids Act, including 52% of Republican voters. Teach Us Consent notes that Australian polling shows comparably strong public interest in platform accountability.
30. The Australia Institute research (September 2026) found that 93% of Australians believe platforms should be legally required to provide a safe online environment, and 83% support financial penalties for companies that breach this duty. Further, 72% agree that if an individual has suffered physical or mental health harm from content on an online platform, they should be able to seek compensation from the platform. These findings span across all voting intentions, including four in five (79%) Labor voters, seven in ten (69%) Coalition voters, six in ten One Nation voters (62%) and four in five (82%) Greens voters.
31. Teach Us Consent submits that the Committee should recommend Australia adopt an equivalent private right of action alongside the 'My Feed, My Way' implementation, so that Australians are not left solely dependent on eSafety's capacity to act on their behalf.
32. Teach Us Consent submits that this presents a clear case for an opt-in model. Rather than relying on a regulator or platform to correctly identify and remove harmful content within the small window in which damage occurs, an opt-in model prevents the amplification mechanism from operating on a user by default in the first place. It is a structural safeguard rather than a reactive one and does not depend on any single piece of content being correctly flagged as harmful before harm occurs.

Conclusion

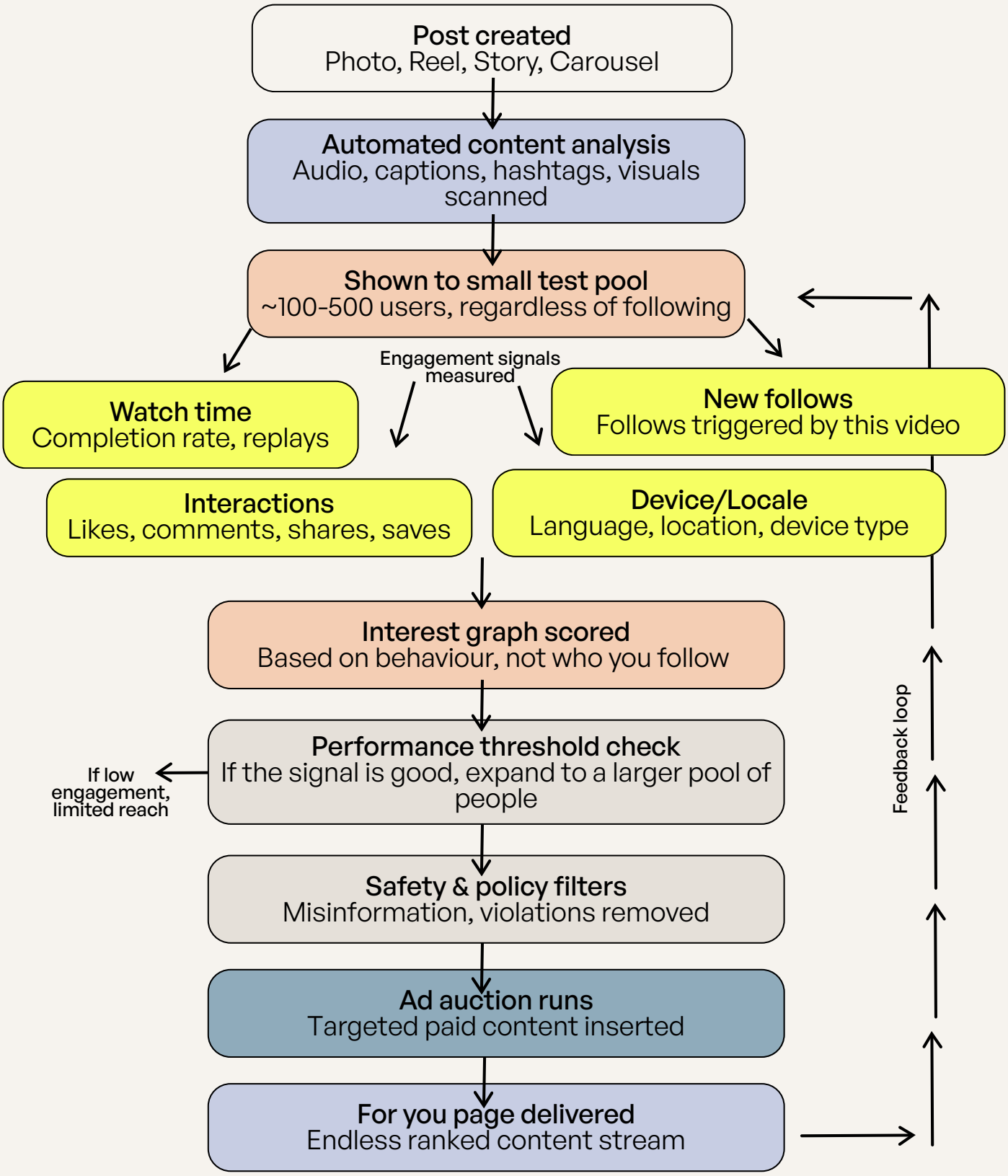
33. The radicalisation threat in Australia is accelerating, and it is being exacerbated by predatory algorithmic recommender feeds on online platforms. This submission demonstrates that attitudes permissive of violence against women are a strong predictor of other forms of extremism. It also shows that recommender algorithms, which are designed to maximise engagement, are a primary way through these radical misogynistic attitudes are perpetuated, especially for young people.
34. Content moderation alone cannot resolve a problem that is, by nature, a platform design issue. Teach Us Consent therefore urges the Committee to recommend:
    a. Opt-in algorithmic feeds through the Digital Duty of Care. Platforms should obtain informed and affirmative consent before serving algorithmically curated content, with preferences that are fixed until the person using the platform changes them. This is a content-neutral, structural safeguard.
    b. Implementation of 'My Feed, My Way'. The proposed legislative instrument and the Digital Duty of Care Bill should be passed.
    c. A private right of action. Following the New York SAFE for Kids Act, Australians should be able to bring claims directly against non-compliant platforms, rather than depending solely on regulator capacity.

Attachment A: The data social media companies collect from us to inform their algorithms



Note: this information collection does not specifically relate to every single social media platform, but broadly reflects the data collected across Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp and other mainstream platforms.

Attachment B: A visual interpretation of an algorithm



Algorithmic recommender systems are rarely made available to the public. This visual interpretation does not claim to be entirely accurate, and is based upon the information we know from the TikTok Newsroom (2020) and public experience/commentary.

Analysis | Interest graph | Signals | Filters | Ads


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