Fixing Our Feeds: User Empowerment Tools Determination Consultation

Teach Us Consent's Submission to the Consultation into the Exposure Draft of the Online Safety (User Empowerment Tools) Determination 2026

November 2026

TEACH US
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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.

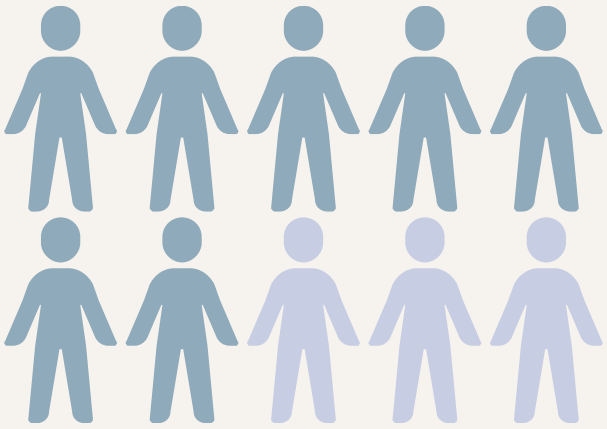


23 minutes

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 exposure draft of the Online Safety (User Empowerment Tools) Determination 2026.

Teach Us Consent supports the draft determination, which will provide Australians with choice on the content in their social media feeds.

This has been the ask behind our Fix Our Feeds campaign: that people can opt-in to recommendation algorithms, with platforms required to proactively notify them of that choice; that the tools are accessible, easy to use and prominently available; that the choice sticks, with platforms unable to revert users back to a default every time they open the app; and that a following-based feed isn't harder to navigate than an algorithmic one.

In this submission, we outline our support for these specifications in the draft user empowerment tool and propose recommendations to make the opt-in model stronger.

About Teach Us Consent

Teach Us Consent Global Limited is a youth-led, registered Australian charity committed to pioneering consent education and systems-changing policies so people can 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, importantly, 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.

Support for the draft determination

Research consistently demonstrates that recommendation algorithms actively amplify harmful content to young users, often within minutes of initial exposure. This includes self-harm, disordered eating, and sexually explicit content being recommended, as well as misogynistic and "manosphere" content with adverse effects on people who use social media - especially children and young people.

Addressing this pattern is at the core of what Teach Us Consent's Fix Our Feeds campaign is seeking to change - an opt-in model that requires platforms to obtain active consent before accessing users' behavioural data to serve them algorithmically curated content.

Crucially, the user empowerment tool intentionally regulates the design of social media platforms, as opposed to content. This deliberate decision targets the predatory nature of algorithmic recommender feeds, not content.

As it stands, the draft user empowerment tool determination includes key elements that would help ensure tech companies comply, and that people who use these platforms are empowered. The draft tool compels tech companies to:

- actively prompt users to consider whether they want an algorithmically driven feed, through a push notification or other proactive measure,
- ensure users can easily change their default feed preference at any time,
- ensure user preferences are saved when closing and re-opening the app,
- ensure users can use all app features without any disincentive such as dark patterns; and
- ensure users are not prompted or encouraged to enter a recommendation feed if a following-driven feed is chosen.

Teach Us Consent supports how these specifications are reflected in the minimum standards for user empowerment tools and reiterate the importance of preventing platforms from funneling users back into a recommendation algorithm feed by incorporating dark patterns that add friction to algorithm-free experiences.

To make the reform stronger, Teach Us Consent has been advocating for a full opt-in model, where the default feed is following-only, and you have full control over whether you opt-in to a recommendation algorithm feed.

Opt-in brings the same standard of consent to our online experiences that we expect in every other part of our lives: ask first. It makes it so the choice belongs to the individual from the very beginning.

Opt-in algorithms would fundamentally provide a safer entry point into social media for 16-year-olds, curbing the rates at which they are force-fed harmful content when they sign up for the first time.

Teach Us Consent advocates for a strong opt-in model where the default feed is following-only, and Australians have a genuine choice whether platforms can use their personal data to shape what they see online. This measure is designed to support users' affirmative and informed consent and restore choice, transparency, and safety to our digital lives.



Conclusion

Teach Us Consent supports the draft user empowerment tool determination, which adopts the key asks of our Fix Our Feeds campaign to ensure that Australians have genuine choice over the content on their screens and are not disincentivised for choosing a following-only feed.

The draft determination directly addresses the malicious compliance we've seen from tech companies in other jurisdictions, notably the EU, where platforms found ways to technically comply with weaker rules while defeating their purpose in practice.

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

Identity Data

Name, username, email, phone number, date of birth, profile photo, linked accounts (Google, Apple SSO), phone contacts (if uploaded), payment card data (purchases, ads)

Device & Network Data

Device model, OS, screen resolution, IP address, network carrier. GPS location (if permitted), SIM-derived approximate location, battery state, app list on device

Behavioural Data

Watch time, replay count, completion rate, videos skipped, scrolled past, paused at, likes, comments, shares, saves, follows, search queries and history, keystroke patterns and rhythms, clipboard data

Content & Biometric Data

All videos, photos, audio you post, deleted drafts, direct messages and group chats, faceprints from uploaded video, voiceprints from audio, body part detection and location

Inferred/derived data

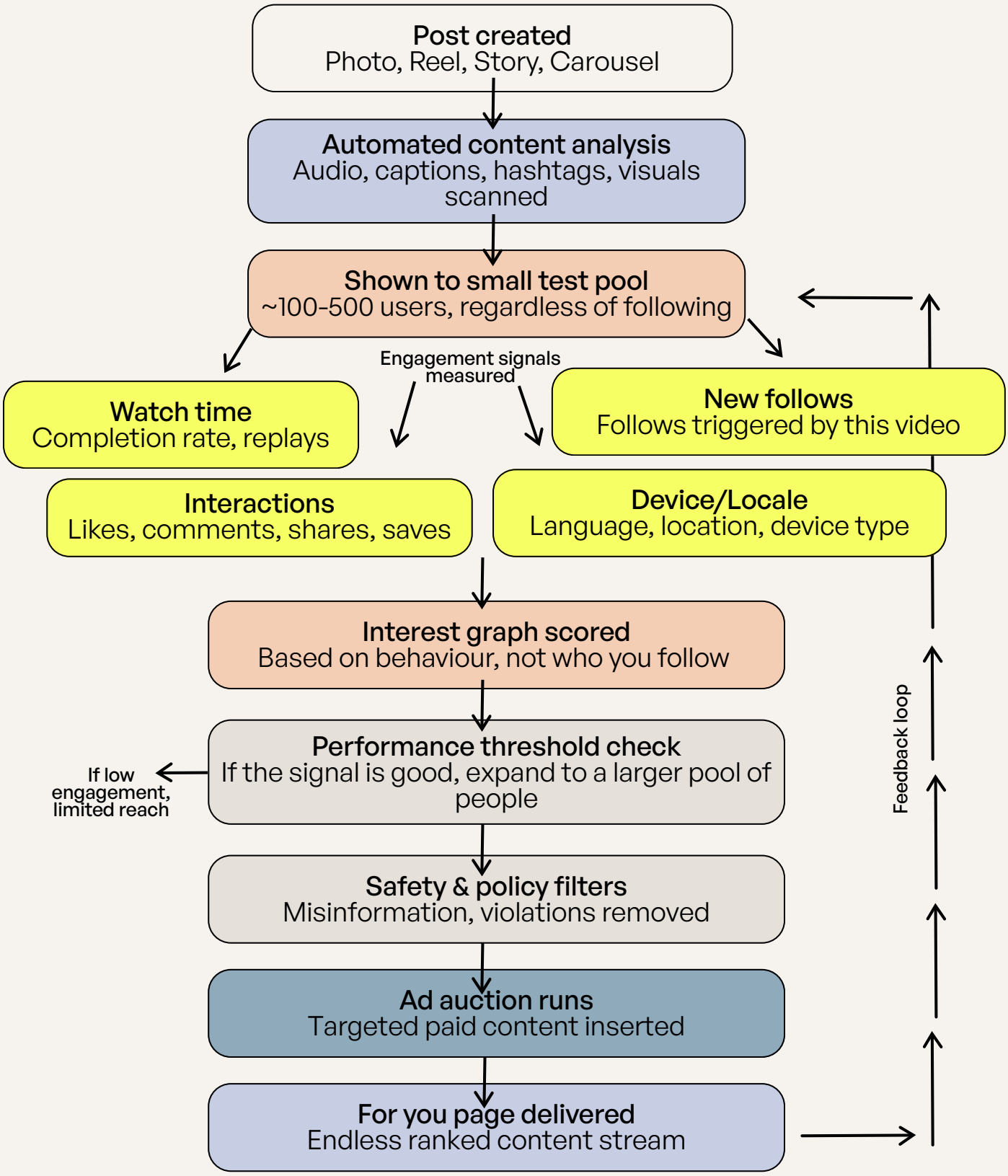
Political views, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, mental health indicators, consumer health data, interests, income bracket, relationships

Third-Party & cross-platform data

Off-platform web browsing, purchase data from advertisers, cross-meta tracking, data brokers and audience partners, app activity on other platforms, even non-users tracked via pixels

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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