

## Media Release

28 January, 2026

### **New data reveals parents demand action to protect kids from big tech**

As millions of Australian children log on for the start of the new school year, new data reveals that parents have overwhelmingly lost faith in technology companies to protect their children's privacy, with the vast majority calling on the Federal Government to intervene.

Research released today by the Alannah & Madeline Foundation includes a survey of over 1,000 parents of primary school-aged children. It paints a picture of Australian parents who are deeply concerned about how tech companies obtain and use their children's data, and are demanding higher standards to safeguard children's privacy online.

#### **Key findings include:**

- Government must step in: Nearly 8 in 10 parents (78%) believe it is the Australian Government's responsibility to set the standards and rules for protecting children's data, with a strong majority (76%) saying governments should be able to fine and charge companies that do not protect children's data.
- Trust has collapsed: Trust in technology companies (such as Meta) sits at a dismal 4.5 out of 10. By contrast, parents trust schools (6.9) and the medical sector (6.5) significantly more with their children's information.
- The 'self-regulation' era is over: Only 28 per cent of parents believe tech companies should be responsible for setting their own industry standards.

The new data underscores the urgent need for the Federal Government to act beyond the social media age limit, which only addresses a fraction of the issues facing children and families. The Alannah & Madeline Foundation is calling on the Government to ensure that:

1. Children's privacy is protected at a systems level through data minimisation and 'privacy by default'.
2. Companies are prohibited from trading in children's personal information or directing targeted marketing at children unless it is in the best interests of the child.
3. Industry be required to demonstrate it has taken reasonable steps to identify, prevent and mitigate harm to children through their handling of personal information.

Dr Jessie Mitchell, Alannah & Madeline Foundation Advocacy Manager said:



“With digital devices playing a significant role across so many aspects of our lives, parents are under immense pressure to allow their children to be online for education and social connection, but many feel uninformed about how to do this while protecting their privacy.

“The message from Australian families is loud and clear: the days of expecting tech giants to mark their own homework are over. Parents do not trust these companies to act in the best interests of children, and they are looking to the Government to enforce a safety net.”

This report identifies a specific wish-list of protections that parents view as non-negotiable minimum standards. The majority of parents agree that the following should be mandatory:

- Privacy by default: Children’s accounts should be automatically set to the highest possible privacy setting (72%).
- End the addiction: A ban on algorithms that promote unhealthy usage patterns among children (66%).
- Stop the tracking: Removal of companies’ location tracking for children (60%).
- Clearer terms: Tech companies must simplify the complex legal language of Terms & Conditions (70%).
- Data rights: The ability to check what data is held on their child and correct or delete it (65%).

Alannah & Madeline Foundation’s Director of Policy & Prevention Ariana Kurzeme said:

“Currently, we have a situation where parents are expected to be experts in data privacy, deciphering complex legal terms while trying to get their children ready for school. It is an impossible burden.”

“The report shows that while awareness of the proposed Children’s Online Privacy Code is currently low, once parents understand the concept, support is overwhelmingly high.

“This school year, we are calling on the policy makers to listen to families. We need enforceable standards that ensure technology is designed with the best interests of children as the primary priority – not profit.”

This research was generously supported by our partners the Ross Trust and undertaken by Lewers Research.

**For further information please contact:**

**Lana Burton** - Head of Marketing, Alannah & Madeline Foundation  
0499 202 001 or [media@amf.org.au](mailto:media@amf.org.au)

*\*Please note that while this research was conducted before the Federal Government’s social media age limit was implemented in December 2025, it had already been announced.*

---

**About the Alannah & Madeline Foundation**



*The Alannah & Madeline Foundation was founded 28 years ago by Walter Mikac AM, and a small group of volunteers in memory of Walter’s young daughters Alannah and Madeline, aged just six and three, who tragically lost their lives along with their mother and 32 others at Port Arthur in Tasmania on 28 April 1996. The Foundation was established with the belief that “all children and young people should be able to live a happy and safe life, free from violence and trauma.” Our mission continues today through our Care, Prevention and Advocacy programs – we fight for their right to be safe, so their future is strong. [www.alannahandmadeline.org.au](http://www.alannahandmadeline.org.au)*

