




Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Child Protection, Social Media

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services and Minister for Women) (9.41 am): Every single day children and teenagers across Queensland battle the relentless pressure of social media. They are bombarded with carefully curated snapshots of so-called perfect lives, a constant stream of unrealistic beauty standards that create an impossible ideal. In recent weeks we have seen community conversations on this issue reach critical mass, spearheaded by campaigns in the media as the social media giants have continually shirked their responsibility. It is a conversation that is desperately needed because the data is terrifying.

As the Premier has outlined today, self-harm hospitalisation rates for young girls tripled for those under 14 years of age and doubled for teenagers aged 15 to 19 between 2008 and 2021. The Chief Health Officer has today described the rise in these rates as an epidemic and that every young person admitted to hospital for self-harm represents just a fraction of those suffering in silence. Clearly it is time the social media giants step up, act like adults and take responsibility for the harm that social media is causing. Across the world it is fuelling a mental health crisis with relentless pressure leading to body dissatisfaction, eating disorders and suicidal thoughts. We cannot stay silent any longer.

The Miles Labor government has a range of initiatives in place to help. Initiatives like Away for the Day, the eSafety Commissioner's resources and the Dear Mind campaign are a good start and, thanks to our mental health levy, we have invested \$330 million in youth mental health. That is the largest investment in our state's history, but we know there is more to do. Today the Chief Health Officer has published a position statement outlining recommendations to parents about how their children should engage with social media. The recommendations, which are the result of an expert group of psychiatrists and health staff assembled by the Chief Health Officer, include limiting access to social media for children under 14 and being closely involved as older teens begin to be introduced to social media. Importantly, a range of resources and information is available for parents on the Queensland Health website.

Parents need to have open and honest conversations with their children about social media, and we all need to do more to equip young people with the tools they need to navigate this complex world because we know Elon Musk and Mark Zuckerberg will not. These recommendations for parents are part of a broader, vitally important conversation, one on which the future of our children's health depends. Together we can create a future where social media empowers, not endangers, our children.