

19 June 2025

Department of Education

Submission to the Anti-Bullying Rapid Review

UNICEF Australia welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Anti-Bullying Rapid Review. We strongly support the Government's commitment to developing a consistent national standard for responding to bullying in schools. Additionally, we suggest the Review recognises that the lines between offline and online experiences are increasingly blurred for children and young people – what happens in the online world affects the offline. Any national response must reflect this reality.

A national anti-bullying strategy is one of the policy priorities UNICEF Australia advocated for throughout the federal election period. We believe this Review presents a critical opportunity to deliver on that commitment and ensure every child in Australia is protected from bullying—wherever it occurs.

While the Review's current scope focuses on bullying within school settings, we believe that stronger action is also urgently needed in the online world to effectively tackle bullying in all its forms. Children do not experience bullying in silos—what happens online often spills into the classroom and vice versa. A holistic approach is essential.

To that end, we recommend the following be considered in a national approach to tackling bullying:

- Recognise that social media is only one part of the equation - online bullying occurs across a range of platforms and digital environments, including gaming and messaging apps. A narrow focus on social media risks missing the broader ecosystem in which children interact.
- Pursue broader reforms to the Online Safety Act - the Act must be strengthened in line with the findings of its [review](#) to ensure it adequately protects children from online harms, including bullying, harassment, and exposure to harmful content. This includes stronger accountability mechanisms for digital platforms and clearer pathways for redress.
- Invest in digital literacy and safety education - we need to get age-appropriate, evidence-based resources into the hands of students, teachers, and families to help them safely navigate the online world. These resources must be embedded in the curriculum and supported by professional development for educators.
- Centre children's voices in policy and practice - children and young people are experts in their own lives. Their insights must inform the design, implementation, and evaluation of anti-bullying strategies—both online and offline. Mechanisms for meaningful participation should be built into any national standard.

A unified national strategy that bridges the online and offline worlds will provide clearer guidance and stronger protections for all children, regardless of where they go to school or how they connect with others. We look forward to working with the Government to ensure every child in Australia feels safe, supported, and heard.

Katie Maskiell
Head of Child Rights Policy and Advocacy
UNICEF Australia