

KIDS OFF SCREENS

South
Australian
Labor

For the
Future

Foreword

Smartphones and social media are the modern parenting challenges of our time.

Expert evidence shows that social media and excessive screen time harms the development and mental health of our kids.

Conversely, delaying smartphone adoption supports a child's cognitive development and correlates with better mental health.

I have been determined to tackle this complex issue head on.

We have banned mobile phones in schools and led the world by initiating Australia's ban on social media for children.

But one question we have consistently heard is: what alternatives are we making available to South Australian kids, if we don't want them on smartphones and social media?

That's a fair question. If we expect young people to spend less time on devices, we must give them something better in return. This can't just be about restriction — it must be about opportunity.

The Malinauskas Labor Government has listened and will take an ambitious plan to the election to do just that, investing \$75 million to keep our kids off screens, through a program that is designed to get our children active and engaged.

I am proud of the reforms South Australia has led to date, but we know there is more to do.

We will double down on our pursuit by ensuring all South Australian children and young people can live active, healthy and happy lives — where smartphones and social media are not the defining feature of their childhood.



Peter Malinauskas MP
Premier for South Australia



LABOR'S PLAN TO KEEP KIDS OFF SCREENS

1 Free school camps for Year 7 students

2 Keeping our kids active during school time

3 Free activities before and after school

4 Expanding Sports Vouchers to 16 to 18-year-olds

5 Free school holiday come and try sessions

6 Making school facilities more accessible to the community

7 Funding improvements to school facilities for community use

8 Ensuring all new public schools are designed for community use

9 More students volunteering

10 Guaranteeing green space in all new housing developments

The Hon
Peter Malinauskas
Premier of South Australia

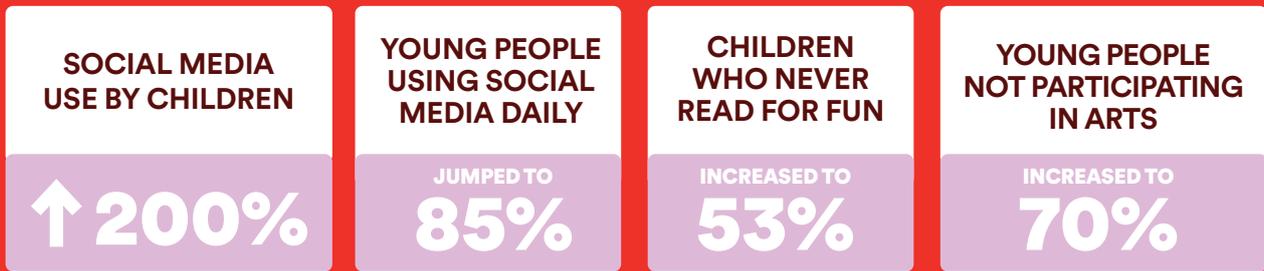
A GLOBAL LEADER ON SOCIAL MEDIA AND SMARTPHONES

Like seatbelts and smoking in the past, every generation has its challenges requiring widespread cultural change and regulation – we believe smartphones and social media, unregulated in the hands of children, is one of the modern challenges of our time.

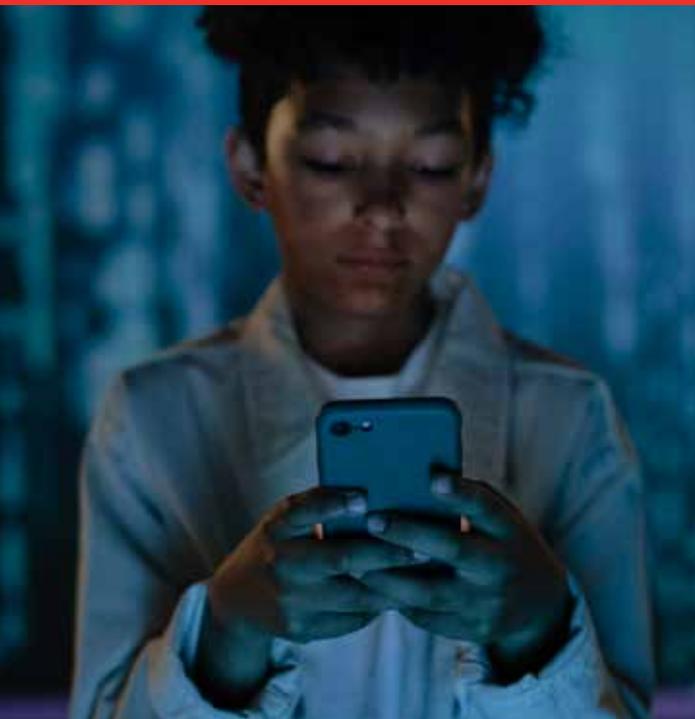
Expert evidence shows that social media and excessive screen time harms the development and mental health of our children and young people.



South Australian research during 2019 - 2022 found that children are dropping sport, reading, music, and the arts - as social media use soars:



Source: Mi Zhou, MS; Carol Maher, PhD; Sally Brinkman, PhD et al, UniSA



The younger someone is when they receive their first smartphone, the worse their mental health outcomes tend to be in adulthood.

Conversely, later smartphone adoption correlates with better mental health. The average mental wellbeing scores were significantly higher for those who got their first smartphone at age 18, versus age 10 or 11.

Source: Not-for-profit research organisation Sapiens Labs' 2024 Mental State of the World Report.

Delaying smartphone ownership supports a child's cognitive development and learning, allowing them to build academic confidence and executive functioning skills, as well as strengthen focus and attention span without the constant pull of a device.

Smartphone delay provides more time for your child to experience the real world – supporting healthy development.

Source: Beland, L. P., & Murphy, R. (2016), London School of Economics.



DELIVERING FOR OUR YOUNG PEOPLE

✓ DELIVERED



Banned mobile phones in all public high schools

All students in our South Australian public schools are now required to keep their mobile phones switched off and out of sight during school hours - making our schools safer by tackling social media harassment and violence and allowing our kids to focus on their learning, friendships and keeping active.

The ban has resulted in substantial improvements in student behaviour. A 12-month review of the ban found 93% of leaders reported a decrease in staff time spent following up issues with phones and social media.

✓ DELIVERED



Youth Action Plan

We have launched the Youth Action Plan which sets out a roadmap for how we can support young people in our communities to grow and thrive.

✓ DELIVERED



Led the global-leading social media ban for under 16s

South Australia led the nation and the world in preparing legislation which created the model for the Australian Government's world-leading ban on social media, enforcing a minimum age of 16 years across the country.

✓ DELIVERED



Sports Vouchers Expansion

We have delivered significant cost of living relief and increased access to extra-curricular activities through our expansion of the Sports Vouchers Plus Program. We have doubled the vouchers to \$200 per year, and expanded the eligible activities to include music lessons, dance and active recreation.

✓ DELIVERED



Funded Wait Mate

In yet another Australian first, South Australia is leading the way to make childhood smartphone free. We are investing \$6.5 million to make the Wait Mate program available to every public and private school in the state, supporting parents to unite and delay the introduction of smartphones for their kids.

✓ DELIVERED



Civics Education

We have delivered a series of nation-leading reforms to boost civics and citizenship education in our schools. These reforms ensure that there is a dedicated civics and citizenship teacher in every school with secondary enrolments, while increasing the level of civics content available for students. We also introduced the state's first ever Active Citizenship Convention in 2025.

✓ **DELIVERED**



Better online safety education

We have reformed the school curriculum, with our kids now being taught about online safety and the dangers of social media, including cyberbullying, body image, and mental health and wellbeing. There's also new content on coercive control, strategies for detecting deepfakes, understanding artificial intelligence and the impact of negative online influencers.

✓ **DELIVERED**



Anti-bullying initiatives

We have invested heavily in anti-bullying initiatives in schools, including \$50 million into mental health and allied health supports on-site to make our schools safer, complementing initiatives to limit the amount of time students spend on their phones.

South Australia was at the forefront of what has become a global movement to ban social media for under 16-year-olds.

CNET
Australia Bans Social Media for Kids Under 16. Which Sites Are Blocked?

The New York Times
Australia begins enforcing world-first teen social media ban

Los Angeles Times
Australia Bans Social Media for Kids Under 16. Which Sites Are Blocked?

euronews.
Australia banned social media for under-16s. Could Denmark do the same?

ALJAZEERA
TikTok, Instagram ban for Australian kids heralds global curbs

NEW YORK POST
Australia bans YouTube accounts for children under 16

FREE SCHOOL CAMPS

FOR ALL YEAR 7 STUDENTS AT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

School camps can be life changing – especially early in high school. They're not just a few days away from the classroom. They provide students with a chance to experience life away from the comfort of home. They build resilience, independence, teamwork and social skills. And they help kids make new friends.

But not all schools currently offer camps. They can also be cost-prohibitive for families.

That's why the Malinauskas Labor Government will provide all Year 7 students in public schools a free school camp up to 4 days and 3 nights.

The free school camps will:

- Be a universal experience for 12,600 Year 7 public school students
- Give kids phone free time to learn new skills, make friends and be active
- Roll-out to commence in 2027, with a staged implementation

For some students, school camp might be their only real opportunity to experience the outdoors. Camps help level the playing field, giving all kids a chance to be active, build confidence and connect with others beyond their home and school environment.

We want every child to have the chance to experience this.

To ensure there is an available pipeline of qualified workers for school camps, we will work with TAFE to explore the introduction of the Certificate III in Outdoor Leadership in South Australia.





KEEPING OUR KIDS ACTIVE DURING SCHOOL TIME

Kids spend a lot of their school time sitting. But not all learning needs to be done at a desk.

The Malinauskas Labor Government is taking a plan to the election to introduce a mandatory requirement of 150 minutes active learning per week for all public school students from reception to Year 9.

A new policy and resources will help support teachers to help students be more physically active throughout the school day. This can be through sport and physical education, performing arts, or making regular lessons more active by:

- Active learning breaks and movement challenges to reduce sitting time in the classroom
- Integrating physical activity in class and across subjects
- School garden activities
- Short physical exercises to energise students
- Ideas for whole-school physical engagement
- School camps/excursions involving physical activity

We are also committed to **reducing screen time for students** by introducing a new policy and resources for public schools and preschools to regulate the use of technology in the classroom.

FREE ACTIVITIES BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL

It should be as easy as possible for families to integrate extracurricular activities into their busy working lives.

Parents are more likely to sign their children up to sport or music lessons when they are held at their child's school, limiting extra time running around to different venues.

The Malinauskas Labor Government is taking a plan to the election to provide every public primary school student one term of organised, before or after-school activities, free of charge – every year.

Under our plan, we will offer grants for external partners to provide more organised sport, music and arts activities before and after school, for all public primary school students.

Individual schools will be able to tailor activities based on student interests, their local community and what facilities they have.

- More activities than ever before available to all public primary school students
- This is on top of the Sports Voucher program currently offered
- Following a call for tenders during 2026-27, activities to commence roll out during Semester 2, 2027

This initiative will get more South Australian kids active and provide them with opportunities to try different things – developing new skills but most importantly staying off technology for longer outside of school.



EXPANDING SPORTS VOUCHERS

TO INCLUDE 16-18 YEAR OLDS

It's all too common for kids reaching the end of their school years to drop extracurricular activities like sports and music to focus on their studies. Costs can also increase the older you get. But keeping our kids' bodies active, keeps their minds in top shape.

That's why the Malinauskas Labor Government is taking a plan to the election to expand the current Sports Vouchers Plus program to include 16 to 18-year-olds for the first time.

- Provide 2 x \$100 vouchers per child each year, now also for 16 to 18-year-olds
- Cover the cost of sport, active recreation and music fees
- Ease cost of living pressure for families

This commitment builds on our existing program, where we doubled the value of the voucher to \$200, and expanded the eligible activities to include dance, music lessons, swimming, scouts and guides.

In 2025, almost 200,000 vouchers were claimed through 1,475 providers. Top activities were swimming, Australian rules, soccer, netball, basketball and gymnastics. Expanding the program will give teens the chance to continue their chosen activity while they round out their school years.



**Sports
Vouchers
Plus**



FREE SCHOOL HOLIDAY COME-AND-TRY SESSIONS

Sometimes kids don't know what sport or activities they might like. We want to give South Australian kids every opportunity to try a new activity without committing to a whole season or term.

The Malinauskas Labor Government is taking a plan to the election to establish the *Try.Play.Belong* program, allowing children aged 3-16 to attend come-and-try sports and activities sessions during the school holidays – free of charge.

- Activities hosted by local sporting and recreation clubs
- An additional option for families while parents are working
- More opportunities for clubs to recruit participants

This will provide more opportunities for young South Australians to engage with their local communities and keep physically active - and perhaps even motivate our next generation of sporting superstars!



MAKING SCHOOL FACILITIES MORE ACCESSIBLE TO THE COMMUNITY

We have some incredible public school facilities in South Australia. Unfortunately, often due to lack of coordination and ease of access, many of them sit idle outside of school hours. We also know that sports and community clubs are in desperate need for more places to play, train or hold events.

Public schools are publicly owned for the benefit of South Australians, and that should extend beyond the school day.

The Malinauskas Labor Government is taking a plan to the election to require all public schools to make facilities available to sport, recreation and community groups, when not being used out-of-hours.

We will introduce legislation into Parliament to enshrine this requirement into law.

The legislation will also include a requirement that all new public schools are designed and built to facilitate community use as part of their purpose from day one. We know that when the broader community is considered during the planning phase, integration of student and community activities will become seamless and standard.

In some cases, existing facilities in schools are difficult to access or not fit-for-purpose for sports clubs and community groups.

That's why we will establish a \$13 million fund, over four years, for upgrades to school facilities which will promote easier access and reduce the burden on schools.

That could mean new lighting, adding external entrances with electronic access, a new water fountain, or minor upgrades to existing facilities.

A centralised booking system will help clubs and schools to coordinate access to facilities to ease the burden on already busy school administration teams.



MORE STUDENTS VOLUNTEERING

Volunteering gives young people a sense of belonging, helps them develop social skills, show kindness, and importantly, make a significant contribution to our community.

In 2023, Volunteering SA&NT, supported by the Malinauskas Labor Government, launched a Student Volunteer Award pilot for secondary school students, with the aim of encouraging more young people to take up volunteering in their local communities.

Under this initiative, students from thirteen high schools across South Australia used an easy-to-use app to track and celebrate voluntary service with badges creating healthy competition, and resume-ready summaries.

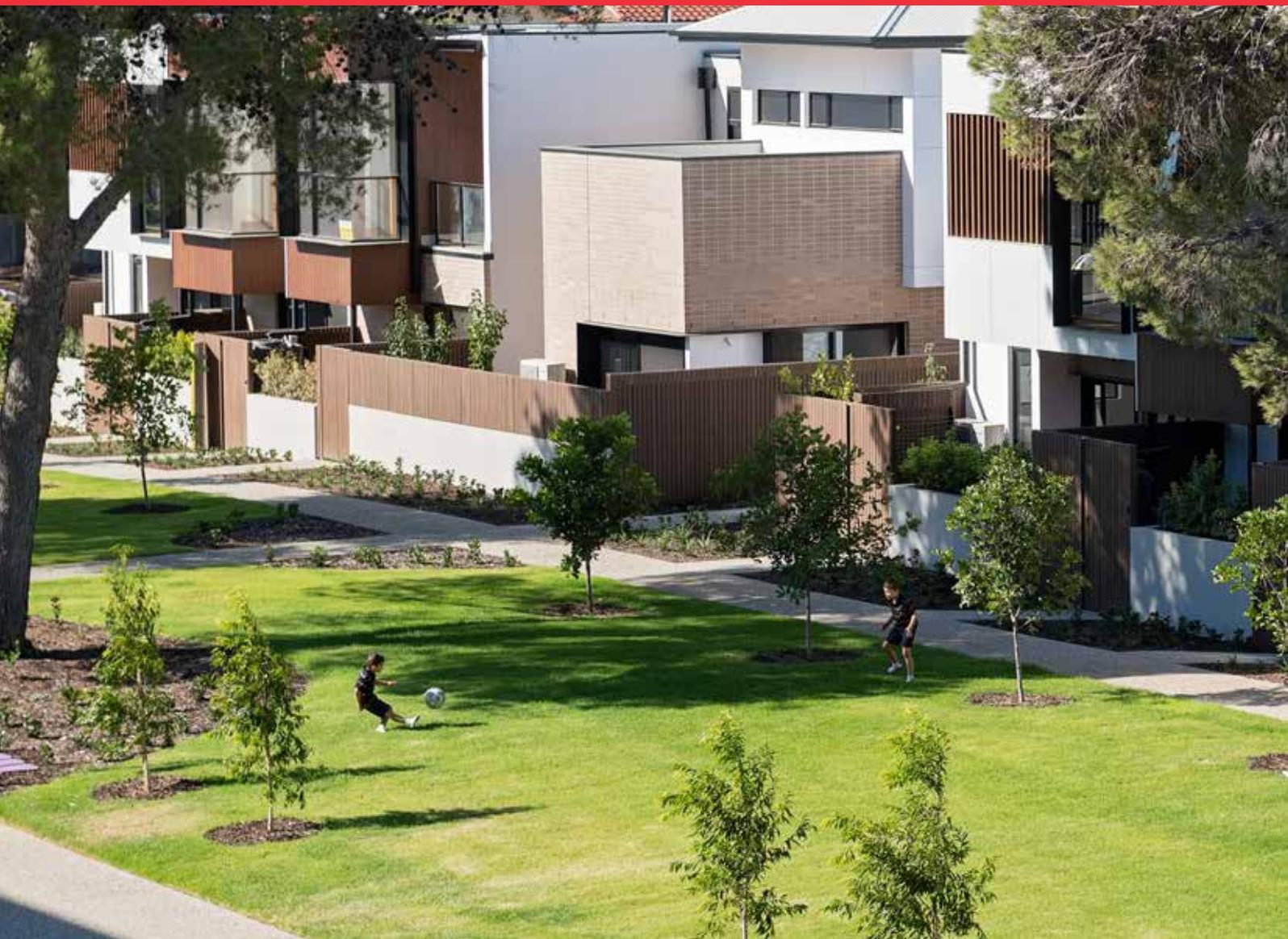
The program has had amazing success, providing a pathway for students to build new skills, connect with community and drive wellbeing – away from screens to being out in the community.

Through a \$1 million grant to Volunteering SA&NT over four years, the Malinauskas Labor Government will expand the Student Volunteer Award Program to all school students across all sectors, allowing young people to gain valuable skills and experience and gain SACE credits in year 11.

In partnership with Volunteering SA&NT, a new portal will be created to connect students and volunteering opportunities at school. The program will be offered to all secondary students across South Australia from 2027.



Volunteering SA&NT



GUARANTEEING GREEN SPACE IN ALL NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS

Children need outdoor places to run and play. With modern housing design generally more focused on living space than garden area, there are fewer backyards suitable for active time.

The Malinauskas Labor Government will act now to preserve green space as we unlock new housing allotments across Greater Adelaide.

- Amend legislation to ensure that all new developments provide 12.5 percent of useable open and green space in the planning process.
- This can include major sports parks and playgrounds, pocket parks, walking and bike paths, ensuring future suburbs are set up for outdoor activities and community connection.

IT'S BEEN A BUSY 4 YEARS

From grassroots sport and recreation, to high-performance sporting events, the Malinauskas Labor Government has been serious about supporting all South Australians to be healthy and active.

We have invested in opportunities to support our children and young people and to help our elite athletes perform at their very best.

We have delivered world-class facilities, like the new South Australian Sports Institute and the new Adelaide Aquatic Centre, and funded programs for our community sports clubs to increase their participation and develop their infrastructure.

These lasting investments will ensure that all South Australians can be active in their communities.



New South Australian Sports Institute Facilities

The Malinauskas Labor Government completed the new SASI HQ, which is now one of the country's best high-performance sports facilities.

Importantly, it is co-located with the Australian Centre for Sports Aerodynamics, Beach Volleyball National Training Centre, SA Athletics Stadium and SA Netball Centre.

This \$88 million facility will help the state's elite athletes achieve success.

Sports Vouchers Plus

We have expanded the Sports Vouchers program to give families greater flexibility and cost of living relief.

Families can now claim two \$100 vouchers per child per year and we have expanded the activities to include dance, music lessons and other forms of active recreation.

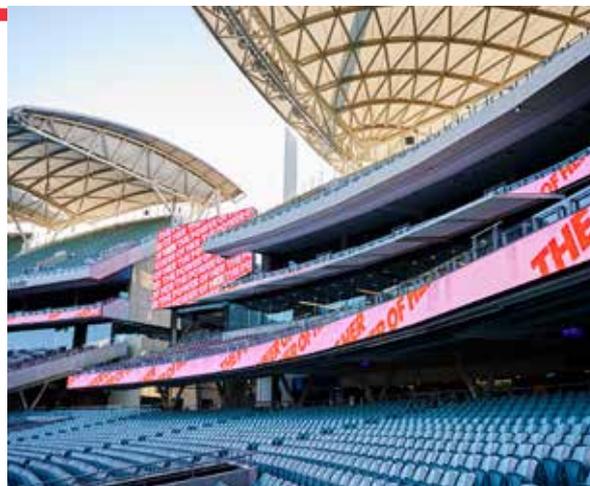
New Adelaide Aquatic Centre

In 2022 the Malinauskas Labor Government pledged to build a new world class aquatic centre, right in the heart of Adelaide.

And we have delivered.

The landmark \$135 million Adelaide Aquatic Centre is now open. It is a world-class facility that includes indoor and outdoor pool areas, four water slides, splash zones, diving facilities, sauna and steam rooms, inclusive and accessible spaces, cafe and retail spaces.

This generational investment will provide a space for all South Australians to enjoy now and for the future.



Power of Her Funding

We know the importance of spaces, programs and equipment that encourage participation and meet needs of South Australian girls and women.

Through the Power of Her Leadership Symposium, and the dedicated \$18 million Power of Her – Infrastructure and Participation Program, the Malinauskas Labor Government is increasing the participation of women and girls in sport.



Community and Recreation Funding

The Malinauskas Labor Government has delivered more than \$270 million to support local clubs, sporting organisations and individuals.

This investment has supported initiatives including the Active Club Program, the Community Recreation and Sports Facilities Program and the SASI High Performance Program.

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