

Age Assurance Technology Trial

Document Sensitivity: Public

Stakeholder Advisory Board Minutes

17/06/2025

Becky Burgess

© Commonwealth of Australia

Date: 17/06/2025

Doc. Version: 1

Page **1** of **7**

Funded by



Australian Government

**Department of Infrastructure, Transport,
Regional Development, Communications and the Arts**

Project by





Minutes of the Fifth Stakeholder Advisory Board Meeting held online on Tuesday, 17 June 2025, at 09:00 am AEST

In Attendance:

Professor Jon Rouse APM	Chair
Ajoy Ghosh	Cyber Alchemist
Amber Hawkes	Blue Lantern Consulting
Andrew Hammond	AATT Deputy Project Director
Ben Au	Snap
Cheryl Seeto	Meta
Colm Gannon	ICMEC
Coralie Alison	Collective Shout
Iain Corby	AATT Engagement Lead
Jenny Duxbury	INK & Digi
Maree Crabbe	It's Time We Talked
Peter Violaris	UX Law
Ron Curry	IGEA
Tim Levy	Qoira Limited
Tony Allen	AATT Project Director ACCS
Yvette D'Ath	Independent
Nolan Noeng Rebecca Cotton	Australian Government (Observers)

Apologies:

Susan McLean	Cybersafety Solutions
John Pane	EEF
Conrad Townson*	IFYS
Deborah Young	Independent
Amanda Third	Western Sydney University
Kirra Pendergast*	Safe on Social
Carol Ronken*	Bravehearts
Simon Callaghan	RegTech
Campbell Wilson	Monash University
Susan McLean	Not listed previous minutes???



1. Welcome and Opening Remarks

John Rouse (Chair) welcomed all participants to the fifth meeting of the Stakeholder Advisory Board for the Age Assurance Trial. He noted the strong attendance despite short notice. Quorum was confirmed. John Rouse asked for confirmation of the minutes from the previous meeting. No amendments were suggested, and a motion to approve the minutes was raised, approved by Colm and seconded by Ajoy Ghosh. The minutes were approved and will be published on the website.

2. Presentation of Preliminary Findings

Tony Allen began by acknowledging the short notice of the meeting and expressing appreciation to participants. He introduced the purpose of the session: to present the preliminary findings of the Age Assurance Technology Trial, explain the rationale behind their release, and outline the next steps toward finalising the full report. Tony noted that the trial, though in its final stages, remained a work in progress, particularly regarding internal government approvals and media communications.

He described the scale and complexity of the work, with the final report currently comprising approximately 187,000 words across ten parts. In addition to the main report, a wealth of supplementary data, analysis, and technical documentation would accompany the release. Despite the volume and detail, Tony explained that the decision was made to release twelve high-level, preliminary findings to communicate emerging patterns and insights to stakeholders ahead of the final publication.

Tony emphasised that the purpose of the trial was to assess whether age assurance technology could work in practice, not to make policy recommendations. The question of whether age assurance should be implemented is a matter for government and regulators. The findings being shared were therefore observations, not policy positions.

The process also included a "challenge and validation" phase, during which the analysis and early findings were tested and critiqued by auditors and legal teams. This ensured that the published statements were evidence-based and accurate. Tony reiterated that these findings were subject to change and refinement in the final report, based on further validation and stakeholder feedback.

Tony then outlined the methodology used in the trial. It included collecting and evaluating self-declared "practice statements" from participating vendors, conducting laboratory and school-based testing, mystery shopping exercises, and analysis of technological standards and real-world implementation. The trial involved both children and adults across Australia and aimed to test the feasibility, performance, and user experience of a broad range of technologies. He noted that all physical testing had now been concluded and that the report will not contain any detailed analysis. A key framework used in the assessment was the Technology Readiness Level (TRL) scale. This system ranges from 1 (early-stage concept) to 9 (fully market-ready product). Tony explained that technologies with a TRL of 7 or above were generally found to be suitable for real-world implementation, while those below that threshold required further development.



Tony presented the twelve preliminary findings, noting that the full text of these would be released later in the week. The first was a confirmation that age assurance systems can be deployed effectively within the Australian context. Multiple systems demonstrated privacy, security, and usability, and no fundamental technological barriers were identified that would prevent deployment. Technologies with TRL levels of 7 and above were successfully integrated into user journeys, though ease of use varied. Tony highlighted that vendors' practice statements were generally accurate for TRL 7+ systems. It was found that no one-size-fits-all but a wide variety of approaches suited to different use cases.

On data privacy, the findings indicated a strong commitment to "privacy by design" principles among trial participants. The report observed that third-party providers tended to maintain a clearer separation of data collection and usage responsibilities than proprietary or embedded systems within platforms.

Testing showed that age assurance systems broadly performed consistently across demographic groups. Importantly, no performance deficits were found for Indigenous or multicultural communities, despite technologies not being tested on these communities.

While parental control technologies were acknowledged as effective at the point of introduction, the report noted limited evidence of their adaptability to children's evolving capacities, particularly during adolescence.

Security testing revealed that systems were generally robust and aligned with information security standards. Developers had taken steps to mitigate spoofing and AI-generated forgeries. However, Tony warned that the threat landscape continues to evolve, and these systems must be constantly monitored and updated.

Tony highlighted an observation related to data retention practices. In the absence of clear regulatory guidance, some providers were found to be over-collecting and retaining data in anticipation of potential regulatory requirements. This raised privacy concerns due to the unnecessary and disproportionate nature of the retained data.

Finally, the trial confirmed that the standards-based approach using ISO 27566 and IEEE 2089.1 provides a strong foundation for future accreditation and certification in Australia's age assurance sector.

3. Next Steps

Tony provided an overview of the communications plan. On Thursday, the findings would be shared with the media and the SAB under embargo. A formal online briefing would be held on Friday, which the Board were invited to and the embargo would lift at 2:00 PM that day. Practice statements from all participants would also be made public.

The final report would be submitted in draft to the government by the end of June. It is undergoing final editing, due diligence, and fairness checks. Its release would depend on approval from the Minister for Communications. Once cleared, the report would be made available both in print and



online, with ISBNs and legal deposit ensured. A substantial dataset, with personal information excluded, would also be published via the Open Science Foundation for independent research.

He also explained that while the Final Report is going to the government by the end of June, its publication will be a matter for the Minister. There will also be a procedural fairness process before that publication for all the participants to review the part of the report that refers to them.

He reaffirmed that the policy of openness by default and offered to provide further briefings to trade bodies and key stakeholders before Friday.

Jon Rouse thanked Tony for the presentation, acknowledging the scope of work completed in a short time. He then opened the floor to questions from stakeholders.

4. Questions and Comments

Tim (Qoria) raised concerns about how limitations in parental controls were determined, noting that Qoria's solution wasn't tested despite being offered. He worried this could misrepresent the industry and urged that circumvention risks and system reliability be addressed in the report. He also questioned the robustness of findings on buffer age strategies, referencing challenges highlighted in a *Times* interview with Iain.

Tony Allen clarified that all 53 participants had practice statements reviewed and were interviewed. Technologies were tested in varied ways, via children, adults, lab settings, or policy review, depending on their maturity. He confirmed all systems were tested for spoofing risks and that performance data, including error rates across age groups, would be detailed in the final report.

Tim reiterated his concern that strong conclusions were drawn despite some technologies, like Qoria's, not being hands-on tested. Tony responded that all technologies were included in the evaluation framework, even if not all were tested identically. He emphasised the project's role was not to make recommendations, but to assess what's technically possible.

Jenny Duxbury echoed Tim's concerns on parental controls and highlighted the value they offer in tailoring digital experiences. Her main concern was the report's conclusions on privacy, specifically, that third-party age assurance providers were deemed more privacy-conscious than proprietary systems. She questioned whether observed data retention might reflect caution due to regulatory uncertainty, not negligence.

Tony responded that third-party systems often showed clearer data boundaries due to their separation from core services. He acknowledged that over-retention might reflect uncertainty, and the report made no judgments, only observations. Jenny questioned whether this framing was sufficiently objective.

Colm Gannon asked for specifics on how many technologies were tested in different environments including lab, mystery shopping and schools. Tony said 61–62 technologies were evaluated from 53 companies. Not all could be tested directly due to maturity, but nearly all vendors participated in interviews. Child testing involved more technologies than media reports suggested. Final numbers would be included in the report and published on the website.



Iain clarified that “trial” and “test” should not be conflated. Some solutions required field testing; others with well-documented technical specifications could be evaluated via documentation and vendor interviews alone, consistent with standard conformity assessment practices. He emphasised that vendor interviews were often the most critical evaluation component.

Colm further warned that the language used in describing “practical testing” might be misinterpreted by the public as implying that all solutions were tested in live, real-world settings. He urged the team to be careful about how findings were framed to avoid eroding public trust. Tony agreed with the importance of clarity and reiterated that not all technologies could be tested equally due to varying levels of maturity.

Colm raised a concern about the publication of testing data via the Open Science Foundation. He cautioned that making too much technical information publicly available could assist bad actors seeking to circumvent age assurance systems. Tony confirmed that sensitive details would be excluded.

Amber Hawkes asked for clarification on the process for reviewing the final report. She noted that earlier in the meeting, Tony had suggested the Stakeholder Advisory Board might receive Part A of the report in a few weeks, with the rest following later. Tony explained that the timing ultimately depended on the Minister for Communications. The draft report would be submitted to the government by the end of June, and its release would follow production, typesetting, and formal approvals. He acknowledged the urgency to publish before September deadlines but emphasised accuracy over speed.

Amber also reiterated the concerns on parental controls, she asked where the observation about limitations came from. Tony explained that it was based on vendor interviews, practice statements, privacy policies, mystery shopping, and parent and children’s feedback. He reiterated that the concern was with how well such systems adapted to the evolving maturity of children, not with their core effectiveness.

Ajoy asked if Tony’s remarks about platform, provider privacy separation implied a recommendation. Tony clarified no specific recommendations would be made, but noted such separation, or clearer internal transparency, could help build trust.

Ajoy also asked if the SAB could formally comment on the report. Tony said while board members could speak publicly post-embargo, the SAB wasn’t established to issue collective statements. Feedback raised in meetings would be acknowledged in the report. Iain added that members’ reflections could also be published on the project website. Members of the board are welcome to send comments to Jon Rouse (Chair).

Colm asked whether the final report would carry an ISBN. Tony confirmed that each of the ten parts of the report would have its own ISBN, and all would be lodged in Australia’s legal deposit system with libraries, universities, and courts. This would make them fully citable as formal research materials. The reports would be available both in printed form and as digital publications.

Ben from Snap had submitted a question earlier in the chat asking if mystery shopping had been completed. Tony confirmed that all testing, including mystery shopping, was now complete. Ben had also asked whether the SAB would be allowed to review the draft report. Tony said this remained at the discretion of the Minister for Communications,



5. Closing

Jon and Tony thanked all participants for their robust and useful contributions. Tony noted that the team welcomed continued feedback, particularly in the days following the release of the twelve preliminary findings. Iain reiterated that the final conclusions may change between now and the final report and added that based on the concerns raised during the session, the team would re-examine the wording of some findings to ensure clarity and avoid misrepresentation.

Jon Rouse concluded by confirming that the broader stakeholder group would reconvene on Friday morning at 10:00 AM. Iain said a separate follow-up session for this board would likely be held in the coming weeks to review the final report once released.

The meeting was formally concluded at 10:08 am AEST