

RESEARCH BASED TEMPLATE

Submissions must not exceed 300 words (excluding title & authors). The document **must not** be password protected or saved as read only as this may result in your abstract failing to upload successfully. Use Arial 12 point type only. Please structure your submission using the subheadings below. If the abstract does not fit the headings, please put full abstract beneath introduction and we will remove the headings once submitted.

Session 9B: Youth-Led Accountability in a Changing Climate and Digital World

Abstract

Title:

Accountability to young people is a duty of care — or is it?

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Background:

Since the Convention on the Rights of the Child was ratified, there have been increasing efforts to consider – and meet - young people’s needs within a health care system that is not designed for them. The impact of ‘mega forces’ - such as social media, and climate change – which directly impact the health of young people, amplify the need to ask how systems, such as health, can be accountable to young people’s needs.

The language of a ‘Duty of Care’ has become common in Australian political debates associated with young people to try and address the impacts of mega forces and mitigate the harms they produce. Yet, the policy effects of this concept have been extremely uneven – with important lessons for attempts to enhance accountability to young people in health.

Methods:

This paper explores the different ways the concept of duty of care was used by Australian governments (2020-25). The first case we use was the strategic litigation climate change that segued into the *Climate Change Amendment (Duty of Care and Intergenerational Climate Equity)* Bill 2023 spearheaded by Senator Pocock. The second case relates to government social media ban for those under 16.

Results:

We identify some highly problematic features of the use of Duty of Care. These include undermining the agency and rights of children and young people, adoption of moral, not legal terminology to avoid legal precedence and disregard for scientific evidence.

Conclusion:

Duty of Care is a concept that could enhance accountability to young people in health, but only if it is used to rethink at a systems level, how to enhance the agency and rights of young people in health policy, service design and experiences of care.

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Disclosure of Interest Statement:

none

Biography of Research Team

Phillippa Collin

Professor Collin is an interdisciplinary social scientist researching youth experience, digital technologies, mental/health, wellbeing, and social change. She has an extensive track record in child, youth-centred and intergenerational research, program design, evaluation and advocacy using realistic evaluation, program logic, participatory and co-design approaches.

Judith Bessant

Judith Bessant is a Distinguished Professor at RMIT University. Her fields of research include youth studies, sociology anthropology, politics, history, technology-media studies, planetary and public health and youth participation.

Nina Montero

Nina Montero holds a Masters of Arts from the University of Melbourne and is a Research Assistant at the Young and Resilient Research Centre, working on the New Possibilities project.