KNOWING THE FEED ISN'T ENOUGH

Young people, algorithmic news and wellbeing

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Feeds & feelings

Students · Teachers

+ AWARE, BUT STILL AFFECTED

Secondary student

> "Just because we might be aware doesn't mean we're not affected as well. Like, we realise what's happening, but **we still keep going back and watching it.**"

Researcher's note: Awareness doesn't switch off the pull.

+ THE FEED DECIDES WHAT EXISTS

Teacher

> "I brought up the conflict in Gaza, and **25 kids in the class had no idea** what I was talking about."

Researcher's note: A healthy information diet could depend on the feed.

+ LEARNT ON THE FEED, NOT IN CLASS

Secondary student

> "We don't really get much teaching about algorithms. **It's like you just find out for yourself,** or you hear about it through other people."

Researcher's note: Schools aren't yet filling the gap.

+ PUSHING BACK, BUT RARELY

Secondary student

> "I try to **actively seek out different information** from what I normally see … it can support one specific point of view you already have."

Researcher's note: Wellbeing can't rest on teens alone.

Young people describe algorithmic news shaping how they feel, not just what they know.

"It makes you feel like you're being watched."

Secondary student, focus group

THE STUDY

How do young people experience news chosen by recommender algorithms, a form of automated decision-making, and what does it mean for their wellbeing? A qualitative case study of 15-16-year-olds and their teachers in three Victorian secondary schools.

WHAT'S NEW

One of the first Australian accounts of adolescents inside algorithmic news feeds, in their own words. Findings suggest that algorithmic news literacy is more than a skill set: feelings and schooling shape whether young people use what they know.

WHY IT MATTERS

Since December 2025, platforms must stop under-16s holding accounts, partly to buy time for digital literacy. This research shows what that literacy needs:

+ Curriculum that teaches algorithms, not just sources.
+ Youth evidence for online safety policy.

WHO WAS INVOLVED

3 Victorian secondary schools → **[18]** students in focus groups and workshops → **[12]** teachers in focus groups → **[6]** participatory student workshops → ↻ findings shared back with schools

How: schools co-shaped the sessions · students interpreted the patterns in participatory workshops · teachers added the classroom view · findings return to each school

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Quotes are verbatim and de-identified; bold indicates emphasis added.

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Ask me: what concepts should schools teach when it comes to algorithmic news literacy?

ADM + S
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