

The Big Beautiful Ban: Why This Expert Says Blocking Tech Isn't the Silver Bullet

Yasmin London (00:05.08)

Hello and welcome to Spotlight on student digital safety, the Qoria podcast where we unpack the most interesting stories, strategies and learnings on student digital safety for schools, by schools all around the world. I'm your host, Yasmin London, and I am absolutely thrilled to welcome today's Spotlight guest, Julian Riddon. Julian is the head of AI at the Anglican Schools Corporation here in Australia. Welcome, Julian. How are you doing today?

Julian (00:34.413)

I'm doing very well. Thank you for having me.

Yasmin London (00:37.054)

It's so great to have you here. We've had so many different discussions over the last couple of years around student digital safety, been on panels together, and I know that nobody knows AI and the tech landscape and I guess student behavior in schools in general better than you. So I'm super excited to hear.

Julian (00:55.855)

I will push back on that as my bio used to say, I'm not an AI expert, I'm just a guy who uses it a lot. So, but I'm happy to be here and happy to share what insights we have.

Yasmin London (01:07.948)

Yeah, look, I'm sure we're going to delve into a lot of different topics, but really, really excited to talk to you about the practical strategies and the takeaways that our listeners can take from today's conversation. There's always a lot in your bag of tricks. And today we're talking about, I guess, bans in schools when it comes to phone bans, device bans, social media bans. We're actually, we were having a bit of a laugh yesterday, weren't we, about demystifying the big, beautiful bans.

Julian (01:36.495)

Gotta love the big, beautiful ban. Gotta love it.

Yasmin London (01:38.958)

Absolutely. mean, there's lots happening. But I guess it's really important that we contextualize what bans mean, what they, I guess, unintended consequences can sometimes result when it comes to bans. And so I guess I wanted to start with a bit of a question around the fact that bans are often default responses to digital challenges in schools. So when it comes to the common types of bans that you're seeing,

Why do you think that schools feel compelled to implement them as a first response?

Julian (02:11.531)

That's a great way to start this conversation. Bands come into play for different reasons. I think it's worth talking about this before we dive deep. Like many countries around the world, OpenAI released ChatGPT that whole two and a half years ago, scary to think it's two and a half years it's been going, the Department of Education here in Australia, New South Wales in particular and many others banned its use.

Yasmin London (02:29.56)

Gosh, crazy, isn't it?

Julian (02:38.795)

It wasn't banned because it was immediately seen as evil. It wasn't banned because we've already had problems. It was banned to give a bureaucracy time to catch up. We need to understand. We need to understand risk. We need to have understand policy. And that ban wasn't in place for that long. In fact, I think it was just under a year before it was lifted. But sometimes bans are there purely because we as an organization or as a bureaucracy need time to come to grips with something and want to make sure that we're not.

Yasmin London (02:48.974)

you

Julian (03:08.493)

you know, introducing our, I'm going to say the word user, by the way, could be, that could be a student or a teacher or a part of the community, you know, to too much risk. So that's one type of band is we need to breaks on to understand something. The other type of band, which is what I think we're to be talking a lot about today is bands that are there in complex situations where we need to protect our lowest common denominator. Bands are very rarely an answer to a problem.

Yasmin London (03:33.966)

Mm.

Julian (03:37.433)

But bans are a way of protecting those that we would struggle to otherwise protect with policy, with training, with all the things that we're going to unpack today. And in Australia, for those of you coming from internationally, we've got a couple of big bands, one's already in place and one's coming into place. We've got a band on mobile phones, which isn't unique. We've seen that in many places around the world where, you know, we can't control these devices. We actually need to protect.

Two audiences, we need to protect our children, you know, who are being exposed to these, but we also need to protect our teachers who are being filmed in classroom and put online and out of context or in context. So that ban is already in place. The other one we've got coming very shortly, which I'm definitely keen to unpack a little, is we've got a social media ban, is Australia is going to be a world first in this, which is to protect students from exposure.

Yasmin London (04:13.164)

Mm. Mm.

Yasmin London (04:28.034)

Yes.

Julian (04:31.363)

social media is going to be banned for students under the age of 16. Now again, how we implement that policies around it. I'm looking forward to unpacking that in our talk today. But again, that's a ban to protect those who are lowest common denominator, those who need protection. So there two types of bans that I've typically seen in place. I am a fan personally, and I've got to stress that word personally when you have a title.

Personally, I am a fan of the, need to ban something so we get a chance to understand it. Intentionally a short term strategic stop gap and design intentionally for that purpose. Bans on the bigger picture items that we've just been talking about, well, not so much of a fan, not because bans are wrong or evil, but just they're only part of a solution. And again, I know we'll unpack that, so I'll kind of stop it there and throw it back to you.

Yasmin London (05:06.328)

Mm-hmm.

Yasmin London (05:23.948)

Yeah, absolutely. Thinking about the fact that it's about pausing is a really great way to think about bans. mean, I'm not an advocate of bans in of themselves, but when you put it like that, it is helpful, I guess, to contextualize and think about the fact that it's a pause in order to gather our thoughts, to strategize and to put the right next step forward. I think there's often good intent behind bans, but

Let's talk a little bit about what happens when we remove access without the other side of of it, which is the education side. So can you speak to some of the unintended consequences, like we mentioned earlier, driving issues like harm or help seeking behavior further underground? Like what happens when we do this, even if it is for good intentions to try and buy ourselves some time, but still, you know, we're looking at harm that can be caused even by a short term decision like that.

Julian (06:18.735)

Yeah, no, absolutely. And look, I want to give a little bit of context before I answer for those that that don't know me or haven't seen me on a panel before. My background is as a teacher and I actually I used to teach modern and ancient history. So I apologize in advance that I'm going to be using way too many history analogies to historical comments and and and things from the past because, you know, we have a lot to learn from the past. The best example of bands not working is, of course, prohibition. You know, we saw in the US.

Yasmin London (06:33.996)

You

Yasmin London (06:45.102)

Mm.

Julian (06:46.351)

They had an issue with alcohol and an issue with crime that related to it. So of course the best way to fix our issues with alcohol is to ban the access to it. Now of course all that did is, well people liked drinking, people didn't see an issue with drinking so it drove it underground which also then meant it drove it into a new criminality. We had the rise of the mafia in the US and so forth. We won't go deep but it's an example of

Yasmin London (07:04.93)

Yes.

Julian (07:14.991)

If I have to try and give a simplistic answer as I can, bans are really good when you're dealing with simple one-off problems. know, I'm trying to come up with a good example of that off the top of my head and I'm struggling because most things we ban aren't simple one-off problems. Where bans fail is when we have complex societal issues. Alcohol drinking was a societal issue that was tied to many elements, especially in your own

Yasmin London (07:30.924)

Yes.

Julian (07:43.151)

post-war America, and again, we're not gonna sit here and unpack that. But when you have a problem that has a societal cultural connection, a ban will never actually stop it from happening. A ban just drives it elsewhere. And I mentioned that in particular when we talk about our mobile phone and our social media bans here in Australia. Because the thing is these aren't technology problems. They're not a simple problem. We have issues with

Yasmin London (07:56.75)

Yep.

Julian (08:11.267)

bullying, we have issues where it's hard to unpack either. In fact, some ways they're so well connected to each other. Thanks to COVID, we have a whole generation of students now who spent three years living online. It was their only way, it was their social life, it was their school life, it was their personal life. So we had all these children who were kind of raised on devices, unintentionally, the ideas of screen time that largely went out the window. So we had this generation

where this is my digital identity, my physical identity, my social life, my research life, my education life in one place. And now you're saying to me, I can't use it anymore. And these tools that I used to rely on, such as Snapchat for talking with my friends or Instagram and so forth, all of a sudden banned to me. That's not a technological problem we're trying to solve anymore. It's a societal one.

Yasmin London (09:06.988)

Yep.

Julian (09:09.207)

It's hard to go deep into this without knowing that we have a four hour podcast ahead of us, which we don't. But I guess the point I'm trying to make here is that when we talk about anything being banned, a ban should be one part of a more holistic solution. And that's what I'm keen to unpack today. Now, be it social media, be it a mobile phone, or let's just go back, you know, couple of decades with the rise of the internet. We didn't ban the internet even though it created this social upheaval. It's how we unpack that and think about the wider ranging issues. Me personally and me as a member of the Anchor Schools Corporation, I actually am not anti-ban. There are times that this is an important tool in our arsenal, but I have never ever seen a ban as the answer to something. It has to be supported.

by education, by training, by all these other measures that surround it, that will hopefully give the ban some presence and some impact. Otherwise, people will see no need to change and it drives you use underground. So where do we want to start unpacking that? Like there's so much to unpack in that.

Yasmin London (10:22.306)

Yeah.

Well, like I was going to say, there's so many different, different aspects to what you just said that we could unpack, but I want to touch on that word impact because a lot of the time when it comes to stats around bans, we see that, you know, longitudinally there's not actually always better outcomes, you know, that, know, the restriction, for example, of young people not being able to access their phones or their devices in school leads to excessive screen time at home.

And then we start to see obviously concerns around marginalized youth, for example, that are reliant on these communities to connect, to learn about, I guess, a whole range of information that they're not perhaps confident enough to ask a trusted adult in real life. So that ban can increase feelings of isolation, particularly among those vulnerable children. So I guess that impact point is really important while we might say, yes, a ban is going to happen in the short term without

really well thought out thinking and strategy around that it can actually be more damaging and it can impact trust, which is a really important part of the puzzle when it comes to young people and schools. So when it comes to the research about access and trust and student safety, when schools restrict tech versus manager intentionally, what do we then see? So how do we weigh up the good and the bad in that situation?

Julian (11:52.343)

Again, I'm going to have to give more history examples. When we teach history, we talk about the importance of the lens. You know, you can pretty much simplify this as empathy. How do I see this from somebody else's perspective? Because when you look at history through lenses, no one is ever right or ever wrong. It is from their perspective. When we look at bands, again, I have personal views, but I understand the perspective of a bureaucracy. OK, so we have a situation where

Yasmin London (12:04.781)

Mm-hmm.

Julian (12:20.879)

we're seeing youth suicide rates increasing, that we're seeing lots of data that talks about anonymous bullying, we're having issues with rises in cases of bulimia and anorexia because of body image that has been hypersexualized with online identity. No one argues that these things are happening. At the same point, we have the other lens of an individual where, as I was saying at the beginning, especially because of COVID, it's not the only factor, but for me, it's a major one.

Yasmin London (12:48.142)

Mm.

Julian (12:50.531)

where these students spent two and a half to three years where they pretty much only had a digital identity. It's become a large part of how that generation is now growing up. I may not be being bullied or I certainly have a strong enough self-esteem and coping mechanisms and things in place that that has not been an issue for me. But you also can't take away this whole identity of mine that's now part of my core persona. The challenge for us

Yasmin London (12:58.029)

Yes.

Yasmin London (13:16.43)

Mm.

Julian (13:19.275)

in leadership positions is how do we ensure that we meet the needs of society while not disenfranchising the needs of an individual. There is no right answer to that. The more you look after society, the more the individual is harmed. It's a weird statement, but as you unpick it, you can see the obvious logic. The more you support the needs of the individual, then the more we often harm society. It's a balancing act and each culture

Yasmin London (13:28.483)

Mm-hmm.

Yes.

Yasmin London (13:35.918)

Mm-hmm.

Julian (13:48.769)

is trying to find what that balance is that meets their society's expectations. know, and you know, dare I say it, but you know, we look at places like America where it is hyper legalized, you you drop a spoon in front of somebody, there's going to be a lawsuit somewhere over that. Australia, we're not quite that bad yet, but we're showing signs of moving towards there. So therefore, we have a very strong

Yasmin London (13:55.49)

Mm-hmm.

Yasmin London (14:04.515)

Mm.

Yasmin London (14:14.862)

Mm.

Julian (14:16.099)

risk aversion, very strong risk management profile that says, well, I pause myself because if I had to summarize this in the simplest terms, we have a very strong what if mentality. And there are two ways of dealing with what if, if you look at it from a sociological level. What if is, a student has a mobile phone. So what if they are bullied on that device? The two ways you can deal with it.

Yasmin London (14:29.73)
Mm.

Julian (14:45.591)
if you look black and white, which the world isn't, is I can either ban it so that doesn't happen in the first place, or I can try and build mechanisms so they know how to deal with it. And that mechanism might be an enforcement policy, like that person will be arrested, go to court if they've done that, or it's a training policy, so the person that happens to feel safe enough to report. It's so easy to talk about on a podcast in a small five minute bite, but the challenge that we have

Yasmin London (14:59.982)
Mm-hmm.

Julian (15:14.795)
as organizations, when we look at things that are as large as a student's identity and be that identity, physical, digital, cultural, ethnic, from an ethnic background, so many things lead into it. But yeah, as a bureaucracy, you typically only have enough resources to pull one of those levers, where a rational person, a person who is not in that position, who doesn't have to worry about

Yasmin London (15:24.096)
Mm hmm.

Yasmin London (15:37.911)
Yeah.

Julian (15:44.537)
budgets and legal constraints and they just go, well, why can't we do all these things at once? And that's where I want to kind of take us back. Yeah. But where you and I sat on at edutech, edutech's a big conference here in Australia. And who was the principal we had on there? I forget his name. Steven made the fantastic point that with his school and what he tries to do is he invests in trust.

Yasmin London (15:50.764)
Yes. The old armchair expert. Yeah.

Yasmin London (16:04.686)
Steven. Yes.

Julian (16:14.039)
And that's where I kind of want to kind of push our conversation because you mentioned that word as well, is his way of trying to deal with situations in his school have been to build trust

mechanisms and trust processes so that instead of just going, we're going to ban, you want to make sure that, well, no, we're going to have enough trust so that if something goes wrong, we're confident in how to deal with it, the student's confident enough to report it.

Yasmin London (16:14.702)
Mm.

Yasmin London (16:20.492)
Yes.

Yasmin London (16:28.022)
Yes.

Yasmin London (16:37.966)
Mm.

Julian (16:41.833)
And yeah, that's one of the levers to pull that I certainly am in favour of.

Yasmin London (16:45.422)
I think that's a great, great point because my next question to you was really about alternative strategies, right? What rather than blunt bands that, you know, have different impacts on lots of different people, as you say, addressing the person sometimes can damage the society. So what alternative strategies have you seen schools use successfully that everyone listening today could consider? You know, layered approaches, for example,

supervision tools, tools that help student voice, because that trust factor means we need to integrate student voice and it needs to be valued. So what are the mechanisms that schools that you've seen in Australia are using to achieve that?

Julian (17:27.247)
Actually, going back to the beginning because one of the most obvious is actually I find one of the least utilized which is overcoming the fear of starting a discussion. Often you know it's very easy to say this is in the too hard basket, it's very easy to say and again I'm intentionally going to use some kind of what's the word I'm after I can't use words of the sudden contentious vocabulary yeah

Yasmin London (17:38.605)
Mm.

Yasmin London (17:43.447)
Yes.

Yasmin London (17:54.54)

Yes. Yep.

Julian (17:55.631)

But you want me to talk about the woke agenda. Now I want to kind of unpack what that means for different people, but the idea that I'm afraid of asking a question because it might offend somebody is often how to interpret that phrase. So often the discussion doesn't happen and that discussion needs to involve your entire community. The community is the student, the community is the teacher, the community is the school leaders, the community is the parent.

Yasmin London (17:58.862)

Mm.

Yasmin London (18:06.135)

Mm.

Mm-hmm.

Julian (18:25.583)

By starting with discussion and understanding where true issues lie is often a missed step and assumptions many of the worst decisions. In my role, I'm happy to share this. I've been, you know, I've joined this organization. The first thing I've been doing is visiting our schools. We have 20 schools inside our network. And I had an assumption that our parents can be really worried about AI use in schools.

Yasmin London (18:33.89)

Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Julian (18:51.053)

And as I spoke to more and more leaders, it actually turned out most of them hadn't heard from parents. I'm not saying parents weren't concerned about AI, but it certainly wasn't high enough on their agenda that they had raised it. They were more worried about other elements of digital literacy and issues.

Yasmin London (18:58.305)

Mmm.

Yasmin London (19:06.624)

Why do you think that is Julian? Is it a lack of awareness?

Julian (19:11.023)

My gut feel, again, there's so much interesting, contradictory data on this. My gut feel is it's a lack of awareness. And you know what, it's not really a problem. I don't see it as a problem,

which ties back to not understanding. So, but it's done me because I was ready to go ahead with a whole big parent enablement piece. I want to start doing this way that many schools use to cyber safety nights once a term. I want to start doing maybe like an AI night.

Yasmin London (19:22.958)

Hmm. Yet.

Yasmin London (19:35.192)

Yeah.

Julian (19:39.887)

But it just turned out that from our parent boy that hadn't been coming through. But that discussion is where that came from. And I still want to have that discussion with parents to actually say, hey, are you aware? So the reason I want to kind go back to that position first is often as we talk about social media and especially as we're talking about this world of AI and what it means for cheating and plagiarism, what it means to, you know, what can a student do or not do with an AI? This is again, something we're unpicking at the moment.

Yasmin London (19:49.304)

Yeah.

Julian (20:09.775)

but the lack of conversation only ever leads to assumptions. So that's the first thing I say, make sure you have the conversation. The biggest take I've taken from leaders that I've spoken to is they're afraid to have the discussion because they're thinking they have to have the answer when they go in. No, in fact, that's quite the point. We don't have the answer. And in fact, what's worse in all the avenues we're talking about in this podcast, there is no right answer. There's only wrong ones.

Yasmin London (20:15.746)

Yes.

Yasmin London (20:28.578)

Mm.

Yasmin London (20:31.98)

Yeah.

Julian (20:38.691)

And I pause on that. When I say there's no right answer, yeah, you know, there is no one right answer. There isn't. And the idea of going in there with any subject matter expert to say, yeah, no, we just do this. We're guaranteed to have fixed everything by tomorrow. Of course not. We don't have a right answer, but we absolutely have wrong answers. Wrong answers are the

answers that take us back more steps and we move forward. Right. A wrong answer is an answer that does damage instead of does good. So the conversation.

Yasmin London (20:39.948)

Yep. And that's the assumption being made, isn't it?

Julian (21:09.709)

Go into it, that's the first thing I say. Don't feel you have to have the answer going into it. Go in knowing that you don't and ask your community to come up with suggestions. So that's where I start. Now, the second part of your question is equally as important, which is yes, there are technologies and systems in place. But before we go there, it's how do we build a culture around what we need to do? And Stephen.

really made a good point about this that really resonated with me on our panel at edutech, which is in corporate terms, we call this change management, right? But in teaching and school terms, it's really how do we bring our whole community along this journey? If we just ban it, it will go elsewhere. And we've seen this, we've banned phones at school. Guess what? They all have something on their wrist that's usually web connected, right?

Yasmin London (22:02.506)

Yeah, exactly.

Julian (22:04.065)

Earning a phone had very little impact. There were always ways around it. Instead, what Stephen was talking about was how do we build a culture where not only do we address the problems as a community and we openly discuss them, it also created a culture where his students weren't afraid to bring issues to them, where often there is a fear, I don't want to mention that I might get in trouble. So

I guess coming to your point earlier about trust, think, regardless of a ban being in place or not being in place, we really see true change, true cultural shift when that discussion builds that degree of trust. And when you've got good discussion and a degree of trust, that's finally where your tools come into play. Which tool? Well, depends where your conversation took you. Maybe it's a tool that says, hey,

Yasmin London (22:41.699)

Mm.

Yasmin London (22:54.2)

work.

Julian (22:59.055)

Our parents really want students to have their own devices because they have different needs. Great, so we're to go a BYOD program. But they also want us to help manage those devices. Our community have said they want the school to help manage. OK, so maybe tools that are out there that allow for remote management of machines not owned by a school. Those tools exist. I'm not here to put them. Do your research. However, another school have a completely different approach. We want BYOD, but we don't want you managing our devices.

Yasmin London (23:17.719)
Mm-hmm.

Julian (23:27.363)
Well, great. Maybe that becoming a program of training. You know, how do we do information nights? How do we do ethics training? How do we do tools training? How can we engage the safety commissioner to get resources from them? How can we work with non-for-profits that provide wonderful incursions on how to deal with cyberbullying? And again, all these systems exist, but you don't want to make the wrong choice. The right choice is the one that fits what your community has told you.

is a problem. So it might sound a bit of cock-out answer, but it's one that I feel is often overlooked when people are focused on the solutioneering without focusing on what the real problem is by having those conversations first.

Yasmin London (23:58.477)
Yeah.

Yasmin London (24:04.994)
Mm.

Yasmin London (24:09.324)
Yeah, what I'm hearing from you is that the right answer really is uncovered through those conversations, that we need to make sure that we're not coming into conversations feeling like we have to be leaders with all of the answers. And I think sometimes when we have that level of vulnerability, it creates that connection between us and the community, like we're all in this together. So I guess it's a mindset shift for leaders who are running strategies and programs like this or looking towards what the school needs to be doing.

The other thing that I wanted to touch on, which I've just written some notes here is when it comes to conversations with parents in particular, or in certain school communities, one of the things that can sometimes be a barrier is conservative communities, know, and communities, I guess, where there is a real spectrum of understanding and that can create hesitancy. And I sat on a panel a little while ago where I heard somebody say even in conservative communities,

rather than, and when I'm talking about this, I'm referencing tricky issues. If we're have to bring up things like pornography or deep fake porn or image-based abuse, those tricky topics, whether it's about bands or not, these are some of the drivers, is to start talking about values rather than just, you know,

talking about the issues because we all as a community often have the same values. want to have integrity, we want to act ethically, we want to build respectful, responsible digital leaders. So it's to, you know, move away from worrying about the issue so much and talking about the values that we have as a school and a community to try and solve these problems. And that can sometimes be quite helpful.

Julian (25:53.839)

And you've really nailed it there though, because again, another subject that I'm quite a fan of in the Australian curriculum is called society and culture. And again, stay with me on this tangent because I want to talk about it briefly. In society and culture, we talk about, well, they've changed it recently, but we used to talk about the PSCET, which is what are all the things that impact us?

are there and they impact the society that they're part of. That society is impacted by the culture that surrounds it. The culture is actually largely built from the environment in which it's in and all of that shapes over time. None of these things solely contribute and yet they all interfere and interact with each other. And so, you know, we look at cultures like the Middle East where they have a very harsh environment and they've had cultures that have existed for a very long time.

The reason I bring up the PSCET is many of the issues that we're talking about today are actually impacted by all of those elements. It's not that we're talking about just a tool. A phone, sadly, is not just a tool and has not been a tool for a long time. When you and I, Yasmin, were young, a phone was a tool. It was a device. Mine still had a rotary dial on it. I could use it to call somebody.

Yasmin London (27:09.645)

Heh.

Julian (27:10.509)

have a conversation, but it was a really crappy line and I certainly couldn't do it long distance. So it didn't change necessarily who I spoke to because I couldn't afford that long distance STD to Penrith because it was just outside of my border in Sydney. Now, so a phone at that point could be claimed as just a piece of technology the same way we could claim a calculator is a piece of technology. It made my maths easier, but it did not have any kind of cultural impact.

Yasmin London (27:19.21)

Yep.

Yasmin London (27:33.038)
functional.

Julian (27:38.681)

But the phone of today, the smartphone, the internet connected phone, the AI tools with all their knowledge and bias and all those things built into it, these are no longer things that we can think about in isolation. And so the challenge of that and the reason I bring this up in relation to your question is they are always going to be formed by the culture in which you operate.

Yasmin London (27:54.318)
Mm.

Julian (28:03.489)

Anglican Schools Corporation, everything we do has an underpinning on the values of Christian education and we're very proud of that. That is who we are and that is why many of the parents will send their child to an Anglican school. I'm not trying to say that you're wrong if you're a different religion, it is just that is a part of our cultural heritage. And by the way, that's very different to when you're dealing with a Department of Education, where all of a sudden you've got multicultural

Yasmin London (28:04.246)
Yes.

Yasmin London (28:22.466)
the culture.

Julian (28:32.079)

That's a very strong part of it. You know, we have multi-cultures in Anglican schools. Absolutely same way you've got multi-cultures in Catholic, but the underpinning of that culture of like, well, but we build out things on Christian beliefs gives us a, an easier answer to the question. I'm obviously, I'm trying to word this carefully, but hopefully you see where I'm coming from. But when you have something to deal with, well, we actually, have students who come from a wide range of backgrounds that have a wide range of challenges, a wide range of learning needs, including

things like English as a second language, our state schools, compulsory, a child's just come here, they actually have no English and they're in our school. When those things get more complex, our answers become more complex. So when you have conservative organizations, the answer isn't for a conservative organization to go, well, we're not gonna be conservative anymore, we're gonna make a really out there decision, because that is the wrong answer for the culture and the environment that they're in.

Yasmin London (29:27.106)

that community.

Julian (29:29.039)

They need the time to make that transition. All right, that's where this PSC comes in. Where when you're in a more of a directed environment, okay, well, our culture is a bit more unified because of certain elements. So we actually might need less time to do this. Why the ramble? This is really hard to unpack. As leaders, we need to be aware that we can't think of these as technology problems with technology solutions. These are

cultural issues that will take time and investment to fix. There is no one lever that will do it. A ban will absolutely help lower our risk profile and make sure that we protect those who are most at risk. No one can argue that. It's true. But the harm it might also do or where it drives it somewhere else can't be considered an isolation either. Okay, great. So how do we support

Yasmin London (30:23.565)

Mm-hmm.

Julian (30:25.311)

those other people will grant maybe it's a training program, maybe it's a collection of policies that we need to write around what we would consider safe use, it's to make sure we, you know, what you used to do, Yasmin, you know, let's bring a police person in who can actually come and talk to our students and make them aware of the challenge. I wish I could sit here and say, hey, again, you here's a perfect answer, do what Julian said and we're solved.

But all I would actually encourage you to do is to make sure you engage that community, build trust, and come up with a collection of levers that allow you to support whatever implementation methodology, ban, no ban, that you've chosen to do. If you can do that, I guess my closing point on this, and again, I'm happy for you to kind of challenge this, the problems we're talking about today, none of these actually have

Yasmin London (31:09.102)

Mm-hmm.

Julian (31:20.435)

destination and and I don't like saying that you know we we aren't going to go by this point we've solved it it's an evolving situation this is a journey and it's a journey of twists and turns it's a journey of constantly shifting sands as our technologies continue to constantly shift on us and our culture around us continues to adapt as well so closing point from me at the end of this

Yasmin London (31:24.878)

Mm.

Yasmin London (31:28.748)

Yeah.

Yasmin London (31:36.814)

Mm.

Julian (31:45.869)

way too long ramble is to think about this as a journey and not a destination. We know we want to protect our community. Again, I use that term, not student, not teacher, not parent. We are responsible for our whole community. How do we best work with them on this journey to ensure we get an outcome that is more steps forward than back and that helps more people than it hurts? And if we can achieve those objectives and continue to work on it.

Yasmin London (31:53.506)

Mm.

Yasmin London (32:09.283)

Yeah.

Julian (32:13.059)

then that's the, I think, as close as we'll get to a right answer.

Yasmin London (32:17.442)

Well, I think what I'm hearing from you is that this is a journey of behavioral change and adaptation and those things for most people. I think, you know, I can stick my hand up and say, it's me. I'm sure it's probably you. It makes us uncomfortable. like certainty as human beings. We're built, you know, that way we like to know what the journey forward looks like. And ultimately the only certainty with it is that there will be continual change. And so that's where we have to.

think about the processes around things like bands as a community led approach and informing our community, knowing our stakeholders, understanding our culture as a school. So you've talked about conversations and the fact that, you know, there is technology that can help help schools manage this, but what's the next step? once a school's had that conversation and I'm putting the pressure on here, but what's the next step after that?

Julian (33:12.963)

Yeah.

Look, talk is hard, but harder is implementation. Once you've had the discussion and you've made a decision, you're set as a community on what is we need to achieve. The only answer I have on that is constant iteration. One of the mistakes of prohibition was that they became so invested in it that, well, we can't go back now. In fact, by the time they...

Yasmin London (33:23.212)
Mm.

Yasmin London (33:30.04)
Mm-hmm.

Yasmin London (33:35.661)
Mm-hmm.

Yasmin London (33:41.592)
Mm.

Julian (33:45.795)
started going, this isn't right. They had hit such a high level of criminality. I'm not saying that what you can do is going to lead to high level criminality. But know, an investment that this is the solution and kind of a need to double down on it, I think is often where we.

Yasmin London (33:51.882)
Mm-hmm.

Yasmin London (33:57.986)
Yeah. Hmm. What's buy-in, isn't it? It's making sure that once we've consulted and we've decided on this, this path forward, it's making sure that we have buy-in and revalidating that buy-in as well from all stakeholders.

Julian (34:13.761)
And that could again, depending on the size of organization, maybe that's a survey, maybe that's an information night, maybe it's classroom based discussion. There are so many different ways, but constantly evaluating where you are and not being afraid to pivot. Now again, easier said than done. And again, the ability to pivot changes based on the size of an organization. When we're talking about nationwide bands, that's hard to pivot. But

Yasmin London (34:17.687)
Mm.

Yasmin London (34:22.638)
Mm.

Yasmin London (34:40.12)
Mm-hmm.

Julian (34:43.577)

being focused on again, not thinking of the destination is we want safety. That is the certainty that we're after. You you were saying, we like certainty. I don't think the certainty is the action. I think the certainty is the output. We want our child to be safe. We want to know that we are providing a good environment, not a bad environment for our population to be within.

Yasmin London (34:49.197)

Yes.

Yasmin London (35:00.494)

Mm.

Julian (35:11.171)

So that is a certainty, your certainty is your goal. Your certainty is where as an organization you want to be. Because once you have that destination in mind, it's much easier to get out your roadmap and go, how do I get there? And there might be a couple of detours on the way, there might be a couple of unexpected potholes, but your destination is your certainty.

Yasmin London (35:12.952)

Mm-hmm.

Julian (35:34.679)

Sometimes as you're heading towards a place, I hate to try and make up an example on the spot, but let's try it anyway. We really felt like Chinese tonight. So we've all gotten to the car and we've headed out, we're doing the drive to the Chinese restaurant and halfway there, someone says, you know, why don't I actually, I think I've changed my mind. I want to go Thai. Well, we can either make that person upset or maybe let's just quickly, does anybody else feel like Thai? I'd like Thai as well. Okay, great. So we're gonna change our destination. It is such a.

Yasmin London (35:56.77)

Adept.

Julian (36:02.391)

Stupid analogy for me to make up on the spot, but the idea...

Yasmin London (36:04.846)

But it's happened to probably every person listening to this podcast at one point or not in their lives.

Julian (36:09.541)

we've been there, this is why you have notes, people. No, but don't be afraid of revisiting, don't be afraid of constantly speaking to your audience, and don't be afraid of, if there is an overall feel of a need of change of destination, of not being afraid of the pivot. If you're a smaller

organization, one school, four schools, five schools, that's very easy to do, surprisingly. The larger the organization,

Yasmin London (36:13.686)
Ha!

Yasmin London (36:26.389)
Mm. Mm.

Yasmin London (36:35.01)
Yep. Yep.

Julian (36:38.615)
Yes, the more challenging that becomes. But again, we are seeing, you know, in Australia, the New South Government is doing constant evaluation. Some may or may not argue that that's being listened to. I'm not here to unpick the politics of that. But they are at least asking questions, which to me suggest an investment in is this working? Do we need to take another path? And that is the good faith that I have to have as a member of these organisations to say, look, they're asking. So I have to assume that they're listening.

Yasmin London (36:48.194)
Yes.

Yasmin London (36:55.97)
Yes.

Yasmin London (37:03.853)
Yeah.

Julian (37:08.183)
So that really is it. Your certainty is your destination, is where you want to be. Don't be afraid to keep the discussion going and don't be afraid to pivot if that's where your community needs to go to ensure you keep the trust.

Yasmin London (37:08.812)
Yeah.

Yasmin London (37:13.229)
Yes.

Yasmin London (37:19.052)
Yeah. And be a believer that success isn't always linear, it? And that's part of the journey is, is those failures, is those lessons and learnings that often are that absolute gold, you know, further

down the track, you can't always predict where or when it will be helpful, but certainly the lessons of the mistakes are really important. The last sort of question on this sort of buy-in journey, I wanted to sort of touch on, or I guess it's more of a stakeholder, is students.

You know, how do we make sure that, you know, if we're a school that's implemented a ban, how do we make sure that they don't just comply with digital boundaries, but also truly understand them? It's a different conversation for kids. They're curious. They've got the tools and abilities to bypass a lot of these bans. And we've seen that happen, particularly here already in Australia with the social media ban starting. Well, it's coming. It's not in place yet, but how do we get their buy-in?

You know, parents want safety. We've talked about that. Kids want exploration. So how do we match the two together?

Julian (38:26.347)

Information, knowledge is power. You know, it is such an overused comment or quote, but it is so true. The difference, I hate saying this, because I'm so old as I hear myself saying this, is, well, I've been there, I've lived a life, I have experience that you don't have. Boy, younger me would have hated hearing that. And he'd be right to hate hearing that. But it is the reality.

Yasmin London (38:48.768)

Mm. Yep.

Julian (38:52.505)

People don't know what they don't know. It is the biggest challenge that we all have. I think that, you know, once a ban has been chosen, still need to, again, you know, assuming that's been made from the right place for a destination we're targeting, we need to ensure that people are informed of why are we doing this. And again, this isn't new. This should not be an epiphany for anybody, you know.

When the internet came out, used to do Cyprus, Cyprus safety nights telling students not to access information online. You know, I used to love scaring the bejesus out of parents at Cyprus safety nights at my school when I'd say, does anybody have a child who's on MySpace? Sorry, I'm showing my age here. And I'd open up MySpace account and then, using legal tools, reverse engineer, oh, can see they said this, which means I know they.

live here, which means, oh, if I go to the bus website, I can see which bus they take home. I'm going to bring up Google Maps and see where the bus stop is. So if I hide behind this tree at this time and tell them how much I love Metallica, they're going to follow me. And like those sessions used to, I enjoyed doing them way too much. But that information was how we got the parents on side and then how we also got the child on site because they did not know what they did not know. They were working from their own lens, from their limited knowledge.

Yasmin London (39:55.278)

I used to do the same thing in the police force.

Julian (40:12.473)

So as we talk about the issues of mobile phone use, the issues of too much screen time, which by the way, there is no issues with the data and the research here. We do know that overuse of screen is not good for us. We know that if we stare at a screen for too long, there are a whole bunch of issues that we have. We do know there are issues with oversaturation with any kind of social network, be that a physical or a digital network, but the data around that is pretty established.

But how do we make sure we can communicate that so that we bring, and again, I'm gonna use the word users, I push back on you, Yasmin, is this isn't actually a child issue. We have the same issues with teachers when we introduce that you can't use this tool. We're saying you can't use this tool not because we hate you, it's because there are issues with that tool and maybe where its data goes. We talk AI, I don't ever want a teacher uploading all their marks into OpenAI on the free version because it will learn from that data.

Yasmin London (40:51.426)

Okay.

Yasmin London (41:00.216)

Mm-hmm.

Julian (41:08.823)

Most of my teachers knew that because they never read a term and condition. They're not evil. They're not wrong. It's just a not knowing what you don't know. So as we talk about, you know, implementing the, the phone band, right? So we need to make sure I actually know why are we doing this? What is the risks of this? What are going to be the benefits of you of this?

Yasmin London (41:09.23)

Yeah. Yeah. They're just busy.

Julian (41:32.459)

we need to ensure that we bring them along because then there'll be a better chance of understanding so they can see it from a lens they weren't familiar with and a better chance of them having a degree of acceptance. I'm using those terms very carefully, you'll never be 100%, they are still young, they still have a different life experience, but don't assume that they're automatically on this journey with you. And we can use that and again, I will name drop if you're in Australia, which I know much of our audience is.

Yasmin London (41:48.457)

Mm. Mm.

Yasmin London (41:53.71)
Yeah, I think that's great point.

Julian (41:59.897)
the e-Safety Commissioner website is fantastic. It's got a whole bunch of resources that you can use with children. If you go online, there are a whole bunch of non-for-profits that will specialize in certain key problem areas, be it issues with social identity or issues with bullying or issues with body dysmorphia. Again, there are fantastic resources out there that we can use to inform. And let me just finish up by saying why I know this works.

Yasmin London (42:06.19)
Mm-hmm.

Julian (42:29.249)
I can't tell you how excited I was at EduTech in Australia, again, big education conference, when I saw Harold the giraffe in a distant and I had to run over and hug a poor person in a large giraffe outfit. For those overseas, every Australian student 40, 50 years ago, we used to go for an excursion that was government funded, which it all taught us about, you know, health, know,

Yasmin London (42:55.01)
Healthy lifestyles. Happy Harold. Healthy Harold it was.

Julian (42:57.807)
Harold. Every Australian listening to this knows Happy Harold. But the impact it had was significant to the point that as a grown adult I had to go and hug a person dressed up as this giraffe. And it did impact my healthy eating and healthy habits as a child because it was one of those rare cases of yes here is a program that looked at an issue in culture that identified a cause, that figured out how to communicate it to bring that audience on the journey.

Yasmin London (43:05.998)
Hmm.

Yasmin London (43:12.398)
Mm.

Julian (43:27.849)
let's not forget the lessons we've learned from that. I'm not saying we should have a person dressed up as a large phone. That may not be the answer here, but we do have proven examples of how we can educate and how we can do it in a way that's accepting to that audience that brings them along for the ride. Finish up on a quote. It's one of my favorite quotes that's often misused. Diplomacy is the art of telling somebody to go to hell in such a way that they look forward to the trip. It is one of my

favorite quotes. It can be seen as a negative or what mean you tell me to go to hell? That's not the point of the quote. The point is, I think that what you're saying is not the right answer. I'm going to position you an answer in such a way that you go, that's really cool. I want to check that out. I've told you no, but in such a way that you're going to check this out because you are genuinely interested. And that, for me, has always been through the use of knowledge. The more knowledge I can share, I hadn't thought about it that way.

so if we do that, then this won't happen. great. Okay. Let me check that out. That is what that quote for me means at its core is how do we bring these people on for the ride? How do we use diplomacy to bring them the way that we want them to come? If we do that alongside bands that we're implementing for right reasons, again, we do, I'm happy to say it's on the record and my pro anti-ban, I sit on a fence because it's how it's implemented, but do we have an issue with phones in schools?

Yasmin London (44:29.39)
Yeah. Yeah.

Julian (44:56.131)
Yes. Do we have an issue with the adoption of AI and how we use it safely and effectively? Yes. Do we need to make sure we better informed to make sure people make the right decisions? Yes. And might have been may or may not be in the best position of that. Well, that's where we speak to our community. And that's probably the best way for me to finish that up.

Yasmin London (45:16.842)
I absolutely love that, Julian. And that quote makes me laugh. But really, if I was to sum up this conversation in one word, the word that keeps coming back into my mind is curiosity and connection and bringing people along that journey. you know, making sure that we address each stakeholder where they are, try to make sure that we remember our environment and the values and the culture in which we play.

to make sure that we understand that it's okay to pivot, it's not a failure, it's absolutely a learning and that curiosity applies to us as school leaders as well. So I think that's amazing, some really, really great information. Thank you so much for sharing all of that with us today. One of the things I always end with in these podcasts is a thank you, but also I guess a quote that we live and breathe here at Qoria, which is as the digital world evolves, so do we. And it's people like you, Julian, that help us, audiences, school leaders, IT directors, pastoral care specialists, everybody around the world do just that. So thank you so much again for joining us.

Julian (46:24.6)
Thank you for having me. I don't know if I've given any answers, but hopefully I've given some food for thought. So thank you for having me and thank you everybody for listening.



on **Student** Digital Safety

Yasmin London (46:34.625)

Amazing. Thanks, everyone.