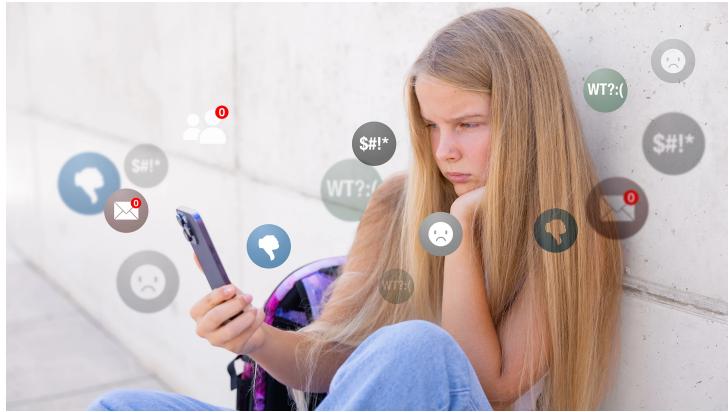


## Australia Bans Social Media Access for Children Under Sixteen



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Australia will implement a world-first ban on social media use for children under 16, effective from 10 December. Social media companies will be required to take “reasonable steps” to prevent under-16s from creating accounts and to deactivate or remove existing accounts.

The government said the policy aims to reduce pressures and risks posed by social media, including content that can harm children’s health and wellbeing. A study commissioned earlier

this year found that 96% of children aged 10–15 use social media, with seven in ten exposed to harmful content such as misogynistic material, violent videos, eating disorder promotion, and suicide-related content. One in seven reported grooming-type behavior, while over half experienced cyberbullying.

The ban covers platforms including Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Threads, TikTok, X, YouTube, Reddit, Kick, and Twitch. Age assurance technologies, such as government IDs, facial recognition, and behavioral inference, will be used to enforce the ban. Companies face fines of up to AUD 49.5 million for serious or repeated breaches. Children and parents will not be penalized. While Meta has begun closing teen accounts ahead of the ban, Snapchat and other platforms are exploring verification methods. Critics warn the ban may not fully prevent harm, could isolate teens, and raise privacy concerns due to large-scale data collection.

Communications Minister Annika Wells acknowledged that the implementation may not be perfect, but the government says strong protections are in place for personal information, which must be destroyed after age verification.

Australia's move is unprecedented globally, with other countries considering similar measures. The ban aims to prioritize children's safety, limit exposure to harmful content, and foster responsible social media use, while sparking debate on the balance between digital access,

privacy, and protection.