



By: TA | AP Brief

Australia sharing tips on curbing social media for children before age limit starts



The Australian government has begun a public education campaign with tips on how to wean children off social media ahead of a world-first national 16-year age **limit** taking effect in December.

Australian eSafety Commissioner Julie Inman Grant said Friday that information on her agency's website, esafety.gov.au, explained the new laws and how to navigate them.

Starting Dec. 10, platforms including Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, X and YouTube could be fined up to 50 million Australian dollars (\$33 million) if they don't take reasonable steps to prevent Australians younger than 16 from holding accounts.

Messages raising awareness will also be shared starting Sunday across digital channels, television, radio and billboards.

"We want children to have childhoods. We want parents to have peace of mind and we want young people — young Australians — to have three more years to learn who they are before platforms assume who they are," Communications Minister Anika Wells told reporters, referring to the current de facto 13-year age limit for social media accounts based on U.S. privacy legislation.

The Australian age restrictions have already proved **polarizing**, with some experts warning the changes will harm as well as protect children.

More than 140 Australian and international academics signed an open **letter** to the government last year opposing a social media age limit as "too blunt an instrument to address risks effectively."

Despite that warning, the laws **passed** with resounding support last year. The platforms had a year to figure out how to comply without foolproof technology available to verify ages.

Inman Grant said the social media age restriction would be a "very monumental event for a lot of young people."

Her agency offered checklists and conversation starters about ways to make the transition, such as following an online influencer through a website rather than a social media account, she said.

"How do we start weaning them from social media now so it isn't a shock on Dec. 10? How do we help them download their archives and their memories and how do we make sure that they're in touch with friends and are aware of mental health support if they're feeling down when they're not tethered to their phones over the holiday period?" she added.

Shared concerns

Australia's move is being watched closely by countries that share concerns about social media impacts on young children.

Denmark's Ambassador to Australia Ingrid Dahl-Madsen said her government would use its current presidency of the Council of the European Union to push the agenda of protecting children from social media harms.

"This is something that is a global challenge and we are all looking at how we can manage it best and we are looking to Australia and we will be looking at what Australia does," Dahl-Madsen told Australian Broadcasting Corp. in Melbourne on Monday.

"It's so important that Australia and Denmark and the EU — we share lessons, we compare experiences and we can push forward hopefully practical progress on this," she added. It was about "protecting our children in this digital world that is increasingly complicated."

The Danish government last week proposed legislating an age limit of 15. But Dahl-Madsen said Denmark would consider letting parents exempt their children who were 13-14. Australia has no similar exemption.