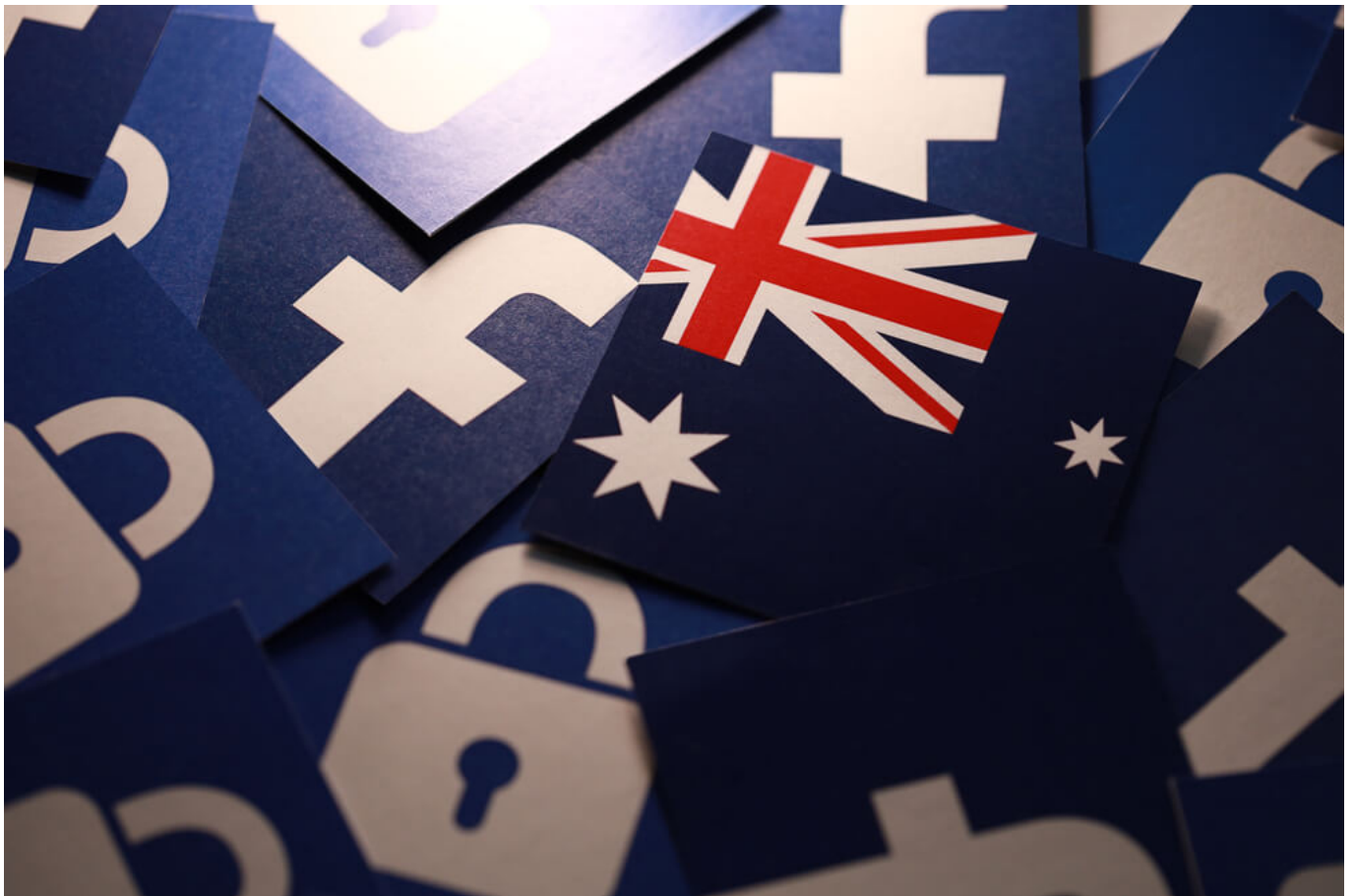




By: TA | AP Brief

# Australia demands social media giants report progress on account bans for children under 16



Australian authorities demanded some of the world's biggest social media platforms report how many accounts they have deactivated since a **ban on accounts** for children younger than 16 became law.

Facebook, Instagram, Kick, Reddit, Snapchat, Threads, TikTok, X, YouTube and Twitch all said they would abide by Australia's **world-first law** that took effect on Wednesday, Communications Minister Anika Wells said.

But the tech companies' responses to eSafety Commissioner Julie Inman Grant's first demand for data will likely indicate their commitment to ridding their platforms of young children.

"Today the eSafety Commissioner will write to all 10 platforms who are considered age-restricted social media platforms and she will ask them ... what were your numbers of under 16 accounts on Dec. 9; what are your numbers today on Dec. 11?" Wells said.

The commissioner would reveal the platforms' responses within two weeks.

The platforms would be required to provide monthly updates for six months.

The companies face fines of up to 49.5 million Australian dollars (\$32.9 million) from Wednesday if they fail to take reasonable steps to remove the accounts of Australian children younger than 16.

## Global interest

Wells said the European Commission, France, Denmark, Greece, Romania, Indonesia, Malaysia and New Zealand were considering following **Australia's lead** in restricting children's access to social media.

"There's been a huge amount of global interest and we welcome it, and we welcome all of the allies who are joining Australia to take action in this space to draw a line to say enough's enough," Wells said.

Sydney-based rights group Digital Freedom Project plans to challenge the law on constitutional grounds in the Australian High Court early next year.

## 84% of children in Australia aged 8-12 had accessed a social media account

Inman Grant said some platforms had consulted lawyers and might be waiting to receive their first so-called compulsory information notice Thursday or their first fine for noncompliance before mounting a legal challenge.

Inman Grant said her staff were ready for the possibility that platforms would deliberately fail to exclude young children through **age verification** and age estimation technologies.

"That could be a strategy that they have in and of themselves: we'll say we're complying but then we'll do a crappy job using these technologies and we'll let people get through and have people claim it's a failure," Inman Grant told Australian Broadcasting Corp.

Inman Grant said her research had found that 84% of children in Australia aged 8-12 had accessed a social media account. Of those with social media access, 90% did so with the help of parents.

Inman Grant said the main reason parents helped was because "they didn't want their children to be excluded."

"What this legislation does ... is it takes away that fear of exclusion," Inman Grant said.