

THE SOCIAL MEDIA BAN EXPLAINED

WHAT IS THE UNDER-16 SOCIAL MEDIA BAN AND HOW DOES IT WORK?

From **10 December 2025**, the Australian Government requires major social media platforms to use **approved age-assurance methods** to ensure that users **aged 16 and under** are not using their services.

The **eSafety Commissioner** has confirmed the ban applies to: **Facebook, Instagram, Kick, Reddit, Snapchat, Threads, TikTok, Twitch, X (Twitter), and YouTube**. More platforms may be added, so it's worth checking updates [on the eSafety website](#).

HOW PLATFORMS CAN VERIFY AGE

The government has identified three possible age-assurance methods (none is foolproof, so all three will be used):

1. Biometric age checks (face scans): A photo or short video is analysed by software to estimate age.

2. ID-based verification (via approved third party): Users upload or scan an ID (e.g. driver's licence, passport, Medicare card).

The check is performed by a verification provider, not the social media company.

This method is being presented as the easiest and most convenient option. But it is the gateway to Digital ID.

3. Inference data (information already held)

Platforms can estimate age from:

- birth date on file
- length of time the account has existed
- details from linked Apple / Google / Facebook / browser accounts
- behavioural or usage patterns.

HOW THE ROLLOUT IS WORKING SO FAR

The government backtracked in September stating that not everyone will be required to verify themselves, and that an under-16 using a family account will not automatically be treated as a breach. As a result, the system remains unclear and difficult to apply consistently.

Importantly:

Parents and families will not be fined or held personally responsible if a young person accesses social media.

What this means in practice

The ban places significant compliance pressure on social media companies, which face penalties of millions of dollars if they fail to prevent under-16s from using their platforms. At the same time, the policy design creates a strong **nudge toward Digital ID** as the simplest verification pathway even though it is not mandated.

This makes the Under-16 social media ban an early test case for **normalising identity checks for everyday online activity**, with flow-on implications for adults as well as children.



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