



Australian Government

Department of Infrastructure, Transport,
Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts

Social Media Minimum Age

Fact sheet

The Australian Government has taken world-leading action to reduce online harms experienced by young Australians by introducing a minimum age of 16 to access social media.

This means Australians under 16 can't have accounts on age-restricted platforms because they enable **algorithms** that recommend harmful or inappropriate content, **infinite scrolling** and other features designed to keep users **continuously engaged**. Delaying access to social media helps protect the health and wellbeing of young people and gives them extra time to develop real world connections and digital literacy skills before they join global platforms.

How does it work?

Social media platforms now need to take reasonable steps to **prevent Australians under 16 from having a social media account**.

The law is intended to capture social media platforms like **TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat, X, Facebook, YouTube** and others – not parents, carers or children. Under 16s can still see publicly available social media content that doesn't require being logged into an account, but are less likely to be exposed to some of the harmful design features of social media – such as predatory algorithms.

Under 16s continue to have access to **messaging services (such as WhatsApp and Messenger), online gaming, professional networking and development services**, and services that are primarily for the purposes of **education and health support**.

Australia's eSafety Commissioner will continue to update the list of platforms it considers age-restricted. Check the [eSafety website](#) for the latest advice.

Age verification

There are 3 types of age assurance technology that age-restricted social media platforms can use to identify if a person is under 16:

- **Age inference:** uses existing data to infer a person's age, such as how long they've held the account, their interests and networks.
- **Age estimation:** analyses a person's characteristics, like their facial features, voice and language, to estimate their age.
- **Age verification:** uses a person's year or date of birth, typically from official documents – for example, a passport.

Age-restricted social media platforms are encouraged to take a layered approach, and no Australian can be forced to use government ID to prove their age online. Age-restricted social media platforms must comply with Australian law to protect the data provided to assure a person's age.

Penalties

The responsibility is on the social media platforms, not parents, carers or children, to follow this law.

Age-restricted social media platforms may face penalties of up to \$49.5 million AUD (150,000 penalty units) if they don't take reasonable steps to prevent under 16s from having accounts on their platforms. The penalty will be determined by the courts.

The eSafety Commissioner will monitor compliance and enforce the law. This will be done through a range of regulatory powers provided in the Online Safety Act 2021. The Australian Information Commissioner also has responsibility for the privacy aspects of the framework.

Why is the minimum age 16?

There is growing evidence to suggest that at 16, young people are generally outside the most vulnerable adolescent stage. The age was endorsed by Australia's National Cabinet on 8 November 2024 following extensive consultation.

Legal framework

About the Online Safety Act and social media minimum age

The Online Safety Act 2021 (the Act) was amended in November 2024 to introduce a social media minimum age framework (SMMA), providing greater protections for young Australians at a critical stage of their development.

The SMMA is designed to complement existing online safety regulatory schemes under the Act, including the cyberbullying and image-based abuse reporting schemes, industry codes and standards, and Basic Online Safety Expectations.

To learn more about the Act, visit the [eSafety website](#).

Regulatory guidelines

On 16 September 2025, the eSafety Commissioner published [regulatory guidance](#) for the online industry, setting out reasonable steps age-restricted social media platforms will need to take to comply with the SMMA. The guidance assists social media platforms to understand eSafety's expectations and how the legislation will be enforced.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach. The guidance is not prescriptive and it doesn't dictate or endorse any specific system or technology that platforms need to have in place.

The guidance sets out the expectations from the eSafety Commissioner, including that platforms:

- detect and deactivate underage accounts
- prevent re-registration or circumvention
- provide accessible review mechanisms for users.

The [Australian Information Commissioner's guidance](#) outlines that, when choosing age assurance methods, platforms are required to:

- choose age-assurance methods that are necessary and proportionate, and proactively assess the privacy impacts associated with each method
- minimise the inclusion of personal and sensitive information in age assurance processes
- destroy personal information use for SMMA purposes once purposes are met
- ensure that any further use of personal information collected for SMMA purposes is strictly optional, has the user's unambiguous consent and can be easily withdrawn
- be transparent about the handling of personal information for SMMA purposes in privacy notices.

Find out more

Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts

The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts (DITRDCA) is responsible for the policy and development of Australia's online safety legislation and supports the Minister for Communications in their role.

For more information about the Australian Government's online safety policies and the development of Australia's online safety laws, visit the [DITRDCA website](#).

eSafety Commissioner

The eSafety Commissioner (eSafety) is the Australian Government's independent online safety regulator. eSafety's purpose is to help safeguard Australians at risk of online harms and to promote safer, more positive online experiences. For more information about Australia's social media minimum age, visit [eSafety's website](#). You can also subscribe to its [newsletter](#).

