NEWS LESSON

Australia's Under-16 Social Media Ban



BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. Would you have wanted an age limit on social media when you were younger?
2. What makes an online space feel suitable for young people?
3. Would an age limit change a habit if friends kept using the app?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**regulator**	☐	A	websites or apps where people share things
2	**platforms**	☐	B	damage or injury
3	**experiment**	☐	C	fair and sensible
4	**reasonable**	☐	D	a group that checks that companies follow the rules
5	**harm**	☐	E	relationships between people who like each other
6	**false**	☐	F	not true or not real
7	**document**	☐	G	a test to find out if something works
8	**friendships**	☐	H	an official paper with important information

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

Instagram, TikTok and Snapchat must keep younger teenagers out. The early results do not give a simple answer.

1 In December 2025, Australia brought in a major change to social media. Companies such as Instagram, TikTok and Snapchat were required to take reasonable steps to stop children under 16, that is, anyone younger than 16, from having accounts. The government said it wanted to protect young people from online harm. Very few other countries had tried anything this strict.

2 People often call this a social media ban, but that description is not completely correct. Children under 16 can still use many parts of the internet and look at some public content without an account. They can also use certain messaging, gaming and educational services. The new rules mainly deal with accounts on particular platforms.

3 Supporters say social media can create problems for teenagers. Young people may spend too many hours staring at their phones, compare their lives with other people's photos or come across upsetting content. Waiting until they are 16 might give them more time to grow up and build healthy habits.

4 But making a rule is not the same as making it work. Teenagers may give a false age or find other ways to get to their favourite services. Companies also face a difficult question: how do you check somebody's age without collecting too much personal information? Few parents want their children to hand over an official document just to sign up for an app.

5 During 2026, Australia's online safety regulator published information about the first months of the restrictions. The early results did not provide a simple answer. There were signs that accounts were being taken down, but researchers were still studying how young people used social media and how they felt about the change. It may be years before anybody can say whether teenagers are happier.

6 Some parents welcomed the rules because they no longer had to argue alone with their children. Other people worried that teenagers could lose valuable friendships or support, especially if their friends live far away. Australia's experiment shows that protecting young people online involves much more than pressing a button marked "ban".

Sources: Australian eSafety Commissioner. Picture: AI illustration.

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. Some parents felt the rules helped them at home. T F NG
2. The rules will be reviewed after three years. T F NG
3. Under-16s can no longer use any part of the internet. T F NG
4. The rules came into force in December 2025. T F NG
5. Researchers have already proved that teenagers are happier. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

compare	dangerous	delete	protect	strict	valuable	welcomed

1. The school has very _____ rules, so students cannot use their phones at all.
2. Parents want to _____ their children from dangerous websites.
3. It is not fair to _____ yourself with famous people you see on a screen.
4. Many teachers _____ the new rule because phones were causing arguments in class.
5. Online friends can give _____ support to someone who feels alone.

6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. Companies _____ to stop children under 16 from having accounts. (REQUIRE)
2. The government said it _____ to protect young people. (WANT)
3. Last year, a teenager _____ his account when he gave a false age. (LOSE)
4. Researchers were still _____ how young people used social media. (STUDY)
5. Australia's experiment _____ that protecting young people online involves much more than pressing a button. (SHOW)

7 Language focus: linking words

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. Use *but* to show a contrast, *because* to give a reason, *so* to show a result and *or* to give a choice.

because	but	despite	however	or	so	unless

1. Some parents liked the rules _____ they no longer had to argue alone.
2. The rule is strict, _____ some teenagers still find a way around it.
3. Teenagers may give a false age _____ use a different app.
4. Many teenagers wanted to keep in touch with friends, _____ they looked for other apps.
5. The ban may protect some teenagers. _____ , it may cut others off from their friends.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. What should a platform fix besides checking someone's age?
2. Would a ban help someone whose friends organised everything online?
3. What would make a social-media rule feel fair to the teenagers affected?

9 Role-play: can I keep my account?

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the parent

Your 15-year-old wants to keep using a messaging app. You like the new rules because they stop the arguments at home. Ask at least two questions before you decide. You can say yes, no, or yes with a condition.

Student B · the teenager

Your best friends live far away and you only talk to them on one app. Explain why it matters to you and suggest a way to use it safely.

Useful phrases

I'd really like to stay in touch with my friends.
It's not just for fun, it's how we talk.
How much time would you spend on it?
I'm worried about what you might see.
We could try it for a month and then talk again.
That's fair, I'll agree to that.

Afterwards, tell the class: did the parent say yes, and was it a fair decision?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 D · 2 A · 3 G · 4 C · 5 B · 6 F · 7 H · 8 E

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 NG · 3 F · 4 T · 5 F

5 Vocabulary

1 strict · 2 protect · 3 compare · 4 welcomed · 5 valuable

6 Verb forms

1 were required · 2 wanted · 3 lost · 4 studying · 5 shows

7 Language focus

1 because · 2 but · 3 or · 4 so · 5 However

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