NEWS LESSON

What Happens After a Social Media Age 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	**restrictions**	☐	A	rules that limit what people can do
2	**enforcement**	☐	B	the right to keep your personal life and information secret
3	**privacy**	☐	C	how happy, healthy and comfortable a person feels
4	**workarounds**	☐	D	making sure people obey a rule or law
5	**wellbeing**	☐	E	websites or apps where people share and see content
6	**tendency**	☐	F	clever ways to avoid a problem or a rule
7	**platforms**	☐	G	a duty to look after something or deal with it
8	**responsibility**	☐	H	something that often happens or that someone often does

3 Read

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

Removing an account is easy to count. Whether teenagers are sleeping better, or simply moving somewhere nobody is watching, is much harder to measure.

1 On 10 December 2025, Australia began enforcing one of the world's most ambitious age restrictions on social media. Major platforms were required to take reasonable steps to prevent Australians under 16 from creating or keeping accounts. The policy was presented as a way of giving teenagers more time before they enter an online environment designed to hold on to their attention.

2 The term "social media ban" is convenient but imprecise. Young people can still get at public material that does not require a login, and several messaging, educational and gaming services fall outside the rules. The law focuses on accounts held by younger users on platforms judged to belong in the age-restricted category, which means a teenager's online life does not simply switch off overnight. A ban in name is not always a ban in practice, and that difference shapes how fairly the policy can be judged.

3 Supporters point to concerns about harmful content, online pressure, sleep and the tendency of social-media feeds to encourage constant checking. They argue that the responsibility should rest with technology companies rather than individual parents, who may feel unable to say no when all their children's friends are online. For those parents, a national rule turns an exhausting family argument into something closer to a fact of life.

4 The difficult part is enforcement. Platforms need to estimate or confirm a user's age, and there is more than one way to do that. Stronger age checks tend to raise privacy concerns, because the more a platform checks, the more it may learn about its users. Teenagers may try out inaccurate birth dates or other workarounds. It is also unclear whether restricting accounts cuts down the time young people spend online or simply pushes them towards services that nobody is watching.

5 In July 2026, Australia's eSafety Commissioner published early findings about young people's experiences. These were valuable observations, but they were not a final verdict on the policy's effects. Long-term changes in wellbeing, behaviour and friendships take far longer to measure than the removal of an account, and a platform can point to deleted profiles without showing that anybody is better off.

6 Critics also warn that some teenagers depend on online communities for friendship, information and support they cannot easily find nearby. Shutting those accounts down may protect some young people while cutting others off. For these critics, the question is not whether social media can harm teenagers, but whether a single age limit is the right tool for the job.

7 The Australian experiment raises a question that goes well beyond one age limit. If a service is potentially harmful because of the way it is designed, should society concentrate on keeping children away from it, or on making companies redesign it for everyone?

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. The writer suggests that deleting accounts does not prove that teenagers are better off. T F NG
2. According to the text, a national rule can ease arguments inside families. T F NG
3. The policy blocks under-16s from every messaging service. T F NG
4. Most teenagers in Australia have said they feel happier since the rules began. T F NG
5. Changes in friendships can be measured as quickly as the removal of an account. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

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

ambitious	convenient	enforce	estimate	exhausting	restrictive	valuable	verdict

1. The council's plan to plant a million trees in five years is very _____ , and some people doubt it can be done.
2. Many shoppers like the new app because it is quick and _____ .
3. After an _____ week of night shifts, the nurse slept for twelve hours.
4. Doctors can only _____ a patient's age from an X-ray, not state it exactly.
5. Her teacher gave her _____ advice that helped her pass the exam.
6. The jury took two days to reach a _____ .

6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. Platforms _____ to take reasonable steps to prevent under-16s from creating accounts. (REQUIRE)
2. By the time the law began, millions of teenagers _____ accounts. (OPEN)
3. The early findings _____ by the eSafety Commissioner in July 2026. (PUBLISH)
4. If a platform _____ every user's exact age, it would learn far more about them. (KNOW)
5. Critics say a single age limit _____ the right tool for the job. (NOT BE)

7 Language focus: linking words

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. Check what follows the gap: a clause, a noun phrase or a new sentence. Despite takes a noun phrase, although takes a clause.

although	consequently	despite	nevertheless	otherwise	since	unless

1. _____ the law is called a ban, teenagers can still read public pages.
2. _____ strong support from many parents, the rule has its critics.
3. A policy cannot be judged fairly _____ researchers follow teenagers over several years.
4. Stronger age checks collect more data. _____ , privacy concerns grow.
5. The regulator published only early results, _____ the first months gave little reliable evidence.

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

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 T · 3 F · 4 NG · 5 F

5 Vocabulary

1 ambitious · 2 convenient · 3 exhausting · 4 estimate · 5 valuable · 6 verdict

6 Verb forms

1 were required · 2 had opened · 3 were published · 4 knew · 5 is not

7 Language focus

1 Although · 2 Despite · 3 unless · 4 Consequently · 5 since

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