

SOCIAL MEDIA AGE RESTRICTIONS



**From December 10, 2025,
Australians aged under 16 will not
be allowed to create or hold accounts
on social media platforms.**

The law aims to create a developmental pause, delaying social media use until children are better equipped to manage its demands and risks.

AFFECTED PLATFORMS

📷 Instagram | 🎵 TikTok | 👤 Snapchat
📘 Facebook | ✂️ | 📺 YouTube

The ban does not currently include messaging apps like WhatsApp, iMessage or tools like Zoom or gaming platforms. The law applies to platforms that exist primarily to facilitate online social interaction, allows users to link or interact and lets them post their own content. To stay up to date with all platforms included in the ban visit esafety.gov.au



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HOW THE LAW AFFECTS SCHOOL LIFE



Digital Citizenship

Some students may try to get around the rules by using VPNs, proxies, or someone else's account. These tools can hide a child's age and location and may expose them to scams or inappropriate content. The school won't be checking students' personal devices, so we recommend parents talk with their child about the rules and set up family safety controls on devices and home routers. See [eSafety.gov.au](https://www.esafety.gov.au) for help.

We will continue to teach students about responsible technology use, online respect, and the impact of digital footprints. Lessons will focus on wellbeing, empathy, and safe communication.

Online Behaviour and Cyberbullying

While the new law may reduce some social media related issues, online conflict could still occur through messaging apps and games. The School will continue to apply its Pastoral Care and Wellbeing Framework to guide and support students involved in any online incidents at school.

Pastoral Conversations

If a student under 16 is found to have or use a social media account during the school day, parents and guardians will be contacted. The focus will be on providing support and guidance to families and the matter will be documented as a pastoral concern on the students SEQTA records.

Partnership with Parents

We recognise that this transition may be difficult for families navigating peer pressure and changing digital norms. Our primary care teams, deputies, deans, psychologists and staff are here to provide guidance to support the conversations you have at home.

Use of Online Tools at School

St Stephen's School will continue to use YouTube for educational purposes, under the guidance and direction of staff and aligned to learning outcomes.

Scan here for additional information on the
School's BYOD & Cyber Safety Policies.



HOW THE LAW PROTECTS YOUR CHILD



This legislation reflects growing evidence linking early social media use to mental health challenges among children and young teens.

The law is designed to protect children from:

- **Addictive design features** such as endless scrolling, streaks, and constant notifications.
- **Exposure to harmful content** including violence, hate speech, and unhealthy body image messages.
- **Cyberbullying and online grooming**, which most commonly occur on social media platforms.
- **Sleep disruption and stress**, which can affect attention, learning, and wellbeing.

This is a **protective pause, not a punishment**, a chance to allow young people time to mature in a world where technology can often move faster than their capacity to manage it. For children who already have social media accounts this is a unique chance to clean up their digital footprint before it follows them into adulthood. The embarrassing photos, old posts and DM's will be deleted giving your child a fresh start.

Under the law, the responsibility lies with the age-restricted platforms to find and deactivate existing accounts held by under-16s and to prevent under-16s from creating new accounts. **There are no penalties for under-16s who access an age-restricted social media platform, or for their parents or carers.**



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TALKING TO YOUR CHILD



Before you speak to your child about the social media age delay, ask yourself, what role has social media played in my child's life? What have I seen it bring? This is an opportunity to have honest, supportive conversations about technology and wellbeing.

Here are some ways to guide those discussions:

- **Ask open questions:**
 - "What do you like about being online?"*
 - "How do you feel when you use social media?"*
 - "What do you think will be the hardest part when things change?"*
- **Acknowledge their feelings:** Many children use social media for connection and belonging. For some kids this is a big loss, the carefully constructed version of themselves will now be deleted. Make space for the sadness, honour what mattered to them.
- **Explain the 'why':** Let them know this change is about protecting them, not restricting them.
- **Model good habits & revisit your homes tech rules:** Create a simple, consistent plan for device use, sleep routines, and online time.
- **Help them access and download their content before December 10.**

EXTRA RESOURCES TO START THE CONVERSATION

SCAN HERE to access the
CTRL SHFT parent essentials library



SCAN HERE for conversation guides
and family tech agreement templates

SAFE ALTERNATIVES

Don't just take things away – Offer safe alternatives

What to look for in safer alternatives:

- No algorithmic feed (chronological or curated by the user only).
- No ads or data tracking.
- Strong, transparent moderation.
- Clear boundaries around messaging and visibility.

 **Pixelfed** is a photo-sharing app like Instagram but without the hidden levers that shape what they see and how they feel.

 **Vimeo instead of YouTube**
If your child has used YouTube to post their creative work, consider helping them migrate that content to Vimeo instead. Vimeo doesn't push ads mid-video or harvest viewing habits to feed an algorithm. It also doesn't manipulate attention with autoplay traps or engagement bait. Vimeo is built for creators, not for clicks.

HOLD THE PHONE

Many parents feel pressured to give their child a smartphone as a gift but waiting may be one of the most protective and loving choices for their future wellbeing.

A 2025 global study of more than 100,000 young people found owning a smartphone before 13 is associated with increased risk of suicidal thoughts, detachment from reality, poorer emotional regulation and diminished self-worth particularly among young females.

Consider alternatives such as simple phones that allow calls and texts. Be open and honest with your child about why they can't have a smartphone and build a community of like-minded parents who support waiting to receive a smartphone device.



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TOGETHER FOR A SAFER DIGITAL FUTURE



A recent survey of children aged 10 - 15 by the ESafety Commission revealed:

- **96%** of children reported having at least 1 social media account
- **7 out of 10** children had encountered harmful content including violence, misogyny & content promoting disordered eating
- **4 out of 10** children reported seeing harmful content on YouTube
- **1 out of 7** children experienced online grooming-like behaviour including inappropriate questions or requests to share nude images
- **36%** of children experienced online bullying from their peers on social media
- **36%** of children experienced online bullying through messaging apps
- **26%** of children experienced online bullying through gaming platforms

The social-media age restriction is an opportunity to reset, reconnect, and rethink how technology shapes our lives. St Stephen's School fully supports this law and will continue to provide updates to our School community on the evolution of the social media delay and how it will affect family and school life.

This pamphlet was created utilising resources from the ESafety Commission website, Safe on Social, the CTRL SHFT Coalition with Kirra Pendergast and Protecting the Developing Mind in a Digital Age: A Global Policy Imperative by Tara C Thiagarajan, Jennifer Jane Newson & Shailender Swaminathan (2025)



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