

Australia declares child social media ban victory as 4.7m accounts closed

The figures are the first to show the scale of the landmark ban since it was enacted on December 10, 2025.



A teenager holds a mobile phone displaying a message from TikTok as a law banning social media for users under 16 in Australia took effect [File: Hollie Adams/Reuters]

Social media companies have revoked access to about 4.7 million accounts identified as belonging to children in Australia since the country banned use of the platforms by those under 16 on December 10, 2025, officials said.

“We stared down everybody who said it couldn’t be done, some of the most powerful and rich companies in the world and their supporters,” communications minister Anika Wells told reporters on Friday.

“Now Australian parents can be confident that their kids can have their childhoods back.”

The figures, reported to Australia’s government by 10 social media platforms, were the first to show the scale of the landmark ban since it was enacted in December over fears about the effects of harmful online environments on young people. The law has provoked fraught debates in Australia about technology use, privacy, child safety and mental health, and has prompted other countries to consider similar measures.

Under Australian law, Facebook, Instagram, Kick, Reddit, Snapchat, Threads, TikTok, X, YouTube, and Twitch face fines of up to 49.5 million Australian dollars (\$33.2m) if they fail to take reasonable steps to remove the accounts of Australian children younger than 16. Messaging services such as WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger are exempt.

To verify age, platforms can either request copies of identification documents, use a third party to apply age estimation technology to an account holder’s face, or make inferences from data already available, such as how long an account has been held.

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About 2.5 million Australians are aged between 8 and 15, said the country’s eSafety Commissioner Julie Inman Grant, and past estimates suggested 84 percent of eight to 12-year-olds held social media accounts. It was not known how many accounts were held across

the 10 platforms but Inman Grant said the figure of 4.7 million “deactivated or restricted” was encouraging.

“We’re preventing predatory social media companies from accessing our children,” Inman Grant said.

The 10 biggest companies covered by the ban were compliant with it and had reported removal figures to Australia’s regulator on time, the commissioner said. She added that social media companies were expected to shift their efforts from enforcing the ban to preventing children from creating new accounts or otherwise circumventing the prohibition.

Australian officials didn’t break the figures down by platform. But Meta, which owns Facebook, Instagram and Threads, said this week that by the day after the ban came into effect, it had removed nearly 550,000 accounts belonging to users understood to be under 16.

Meta criticised the ban

In the blog post divulging the figures, Meta criticised the ban and said smaller platforms where the ban does not apply might not prioritise safety. The company also noted browsing platforms would still present content to children based on algorithms – a concern that led to the ban’s enactment.

The law was widely popular among parents and child safety campaigners. Online privacy advocates and some groups representing teenagers opposed it, with the latter citing the support found in online spaces by vulnerable young people or those geographically isolated in Australia’s sprawling rural areas.

Some said they had managed to fool age-assessing technologies or were helped by parents or older siblings to circumvent the ban.

Australia's social media ban for kids "a quick-fix approach"

Other countries considered following suit

Since Australia began debating the measures in 2024, other countries have considered following suit. Denmark’s government is among them, saying in November that it had planned to implement a social media ban for children under 15.

“The fact that in spite of some scepticism out there, it’s working and being replicated now around the world, is something that is a source of Australian pride,” Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said on Friday (January 16, 2026).

Opposition politicians have suggested that young people have circumvented the ban easily or are migrating to other apps that are less scrutinised than the largest platforms. Inman Grant said on Friday that data seen by her office showed a spike in downloads of alternative apps when the ban was enacted but not a spike in usage.

“There are no real long-term trends yet that we can say but we’re engaging,” she said.

Meanwhile, she said, the regulator she heads planned to introduce “world-leading AI companion and chatbot restrictions in March,” although she did not disclose further details.

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