

Australia plans age limit to ban children from social media

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Australia's prime minister said he wants children off phones and "onto the footy fields"

Australia will ban children from using social media with a minimum age limit as high as 16, the prime minister said Tuesday, vowing to get kids

off their devices and "onto the footy fields".

Federal legislation to keep children off [social media](#) will be introduced this year, Anthony Albanese said, describing the impact of the sites on young people as a "scourge".

The minimum age for children to log into sites such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok has not been decided but is expected to be between 14 and 16 years, Albanese said.

The [prime minister](#) said his own preference would be a block on users aged below 16.

Age verification trials are being held over the coming months, the center-left leader said, though analysts said they doubted it was technically possible to enforce an online age limit.

"I want to see kids off their devices and onto the footy fields and the [swimming pools](#) and the tennis courts," Albanese said.

"We want them to have real experiences with real people because we know that social media is causing social harm," he told national broadcaster ABC.

"This is a scourge. We know that there is mental health consequences for what many of the young people have had to deal with," he said.

Australia's conservative opposition leader Peter Dutton said he would support an age limit.

"Every day of delay leaves young kids vulnerable to the harms of social media and the time for relying on [tech companies](#) to enforce age limits," he said.

'Easy to circumvent'

But it is not clear that the technology exists to reliably enforce such bans, said the University of Melbourne's associate professor in computing and [information technology](#), Toby Murray.

"We already know that present age verification methods are unreliable, too easy to circumvent, or risk user privacy," he said.

Analysts warned that an age limit may not in any case help troubled children.

It "threatens to create serious harm by excluding young people from meaningful, healthy participation in the [digital world](#)," said Daniel Angus, who leads the digital media research center at Queensland University of Technology.

"There is logic in establishing boundaries that limit young people's access," said Samantha Schulz, senior sociologist of education at the University of Adelaide.

"However, young people are not the problem and regulating youth misses the more urgent task of regulating irresponsible social media platforms. Social media is an unavoidable part of young people's lives."

The prime minister said parents expected a response to online bullying and harmful material present on social media.

"These social media companies think they're above everyone," he told a radio interviewer.

"Well, they have a social responsibility and at the moment, they're not exercising it. And we're determined to make sure that they do," he said.

Australia has been at the forefront of global efforts to regulate [social media platforms](#), with its online safety watchdog bumping heads notably with Elon Musk's X over the content it carries.

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