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## Australia Expands Under-16 Social Media Ban to Include YouTube

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Australia is set to implement a nationwide restriction barring children under 16 from accessing major social media platforms, with YouTube now officially added to the list. The decision is part of a broader legislative effort to address online safety and mental health concerns among young people.

The updated regulations, which were passed with bipartisan support in 2023, will take effect on December 10. The ban already applies to platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, X (formerly Twitter), and Snapchat. Initially, YouTube appeared to be excluded, but lawmakers have since confirmed its inclusion to ensure consistency across platforms that dominate online engagement among minors.

While the main YouTube platform will fall under the restriction, YouTube Kids, a curated version of the service designed for younger audiences, will remain available. This distinction aims to maintain a safe space for educational and age-appropriate content while limiting access to the broader platform where exposure to harmful or addictive content is more likely.

The legislation assigns responsibility to technology companies to enforce the age requirement, prompting expectations that more robust age-verification systems will soon be introduced. Advocates of the policy argue that Big Tech has failed to adequately safeguard minors from risks such as data harvesting, harmful content, and compulsive platform use.

Supporters of the new law say it is a necessary step to empower parents and shield children from the psychological pressures of early social media exposure. Julian Hill, a Member of Parliament (MP), said the move aligns with public sentiment: “We want parents to be able to parent their kids. We’re very confident that we’re on the right side of public opinion with this,” he told local media.

As Australia joins a growing number of countries cracking down on Big Tech’s influence over youth, this latest development highlights a renewed commitment to digital accountability. While the finer details of enforcement are still being finalized, the expanded scope of the law underscores a firmer stance on tech regulation in the interest of public welfare, particularly when it comes to protecting the next generation.