

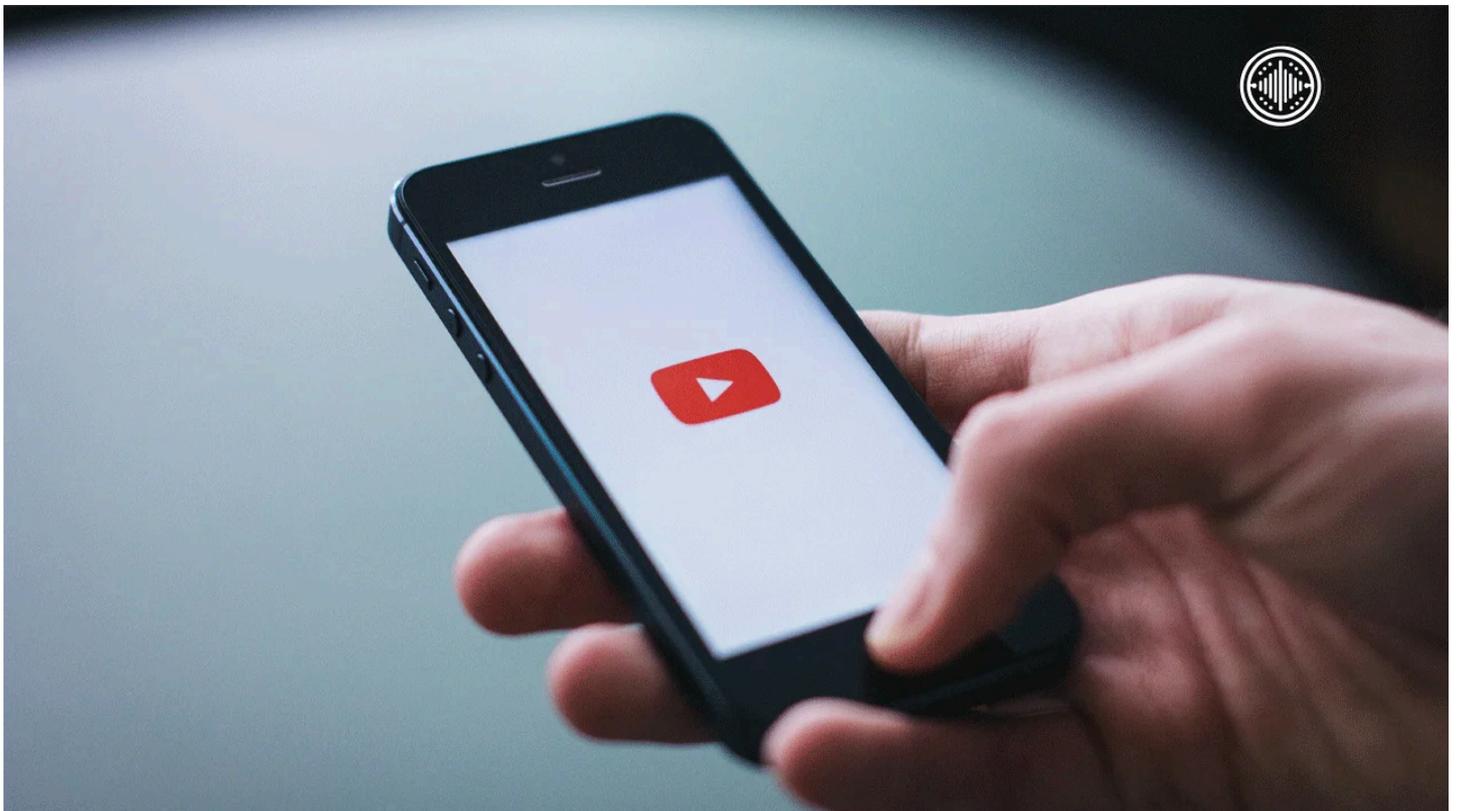
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YouTube Ban Threatens Gen Z Creativity and Opportunity

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Australia's new policy banning children under 16 from creating YouTube accounts, set to take effect in December 2025, has sparked widespread debate, particularly among Generation Z, who see the platform as vital for self-expression and learning. While the measure aims to reduce exposure to harmful content, critics argue it may restrict creative development and equitable access to digital platforms.

Leo Puglisi, the 17-year-old founder of 6 News Australia, expressed concern that the policy would prevent others from following similar paths. He started his YouTube-based news channel at age 11 and, by 14, interviewed then-Prime Minister Scott Morrison. "YouTube was the only platform that enabled my success," Puglisi told the ABC. His

channel now has over 35,000 subscribers and serves as an example of youth-led journalism in Australia.

The federal government says the move is grounded in child protection. A survey conducted by the Office of the eSafety Commissioner found that 37% of minors encountered harmful material on YouTube, prompting stronger regulatory oversight. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese described the policy as supporting parental concerns and promoting online safety. Platforms found non-compliant with the rule may face penalties of up to \$49.5 million, although enforcement mechanisms remain under review.

However, critics, including Puglisi and youth advocates, argue the blanket restriction does little to address underlying risks. “Teens will still view content without accounts,” he said, questioning the ban’s practical effectiveness. He also noted that YouTube enables access to educational resources and industry opportunities, especially for students and aspiring creatives. While some educators have informally reported relying on the platform for learning materials, official data on usage in schools is limited.

Other youth content creators, such as 15-year-old Maggie Perry, have said YouTube fosters communities where teenagers connect and build skills. Tech companies and digital rights advocates have echoed these concerns, suggesting the legislation may disproportionately affect responsible users while overlooking the role of parental guidance.

As Australia becomes the first country to introduce this type of restriction, the policy raises complex questions about children’s digital rights. The ongoing debate highlights a growing tension between safety and opportunity, with Gen Z voices at the center of a conversation about who gets to shape the future of digital engagement.