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## Australia Sets 16+ Age Rule for YouTube Access

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MELBOURNE, Australia The Australian government has reversed its earlier exemption for YouTube and will now require users to be at least 16 years old to hold an account, effective December 10. The change follows the passing of new child protection laws in November last year.

Communications Minister Anika Wells released updated rules on Wednesday, confirming that YouTube will be classified as an “age-restricted social media platform.” Other platforms already covered include Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, and X (formerly Twitter).

Under the new law, platforms must take “responsible steps” to prevent users under the age of 16 from holding accounts, or face fines of up to AU\$50 million (US\$33 million). The government did not specify what measures qualify as “responsible steps,” but clarified that users will not be required to submit personal ID documents such as passports or driver’s licenses.

“These platforms already possess the technology and data to determine users’ ages,” said Wells. “They know when you opened an account and what your usage history is. This is about protecting children, not adding more surveillance.”

Government research cited by Wells indicates that 40% of Australian children who reported online harm identified YouTube as the source. “We will not be intimidated by legal threats when this is a genuine fight for the wellbeing of Australian kids,” she added.

YouTube, owned by Alphabet Inc., expressed concern over the inclusion. In a statement, the platform argued it should not fall under the social media category. “YouTube is primarily a video-sharing platform, not social media. We share the government’s goal of reducing online harm and will consider our next steps,” the statement read.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese also weighed in, saying Australia would advocate for global alignment on child safety at a United Nations forum in New York this September.

“This is not just an Australian issue,” said Albanese. “Other world leaders I’ve spoken to are also examining the social media impact on young people in their own countries.”

The government commissioned a report last year to assess “age assurance technologies” that can verify users’ age without requiring personal identification uploads. While the final findings have not been released, the new regulations indicate platforms will need to implement alternative verification methods.

Children under 16 will still be able to view YouTube content but cannot create or manage personal accounts.