

# Supporting young people to navigate the social media age change

The Australian Government's new law restricting social media use for under-16s comes into effect on December 10, 2025. Here are some ways you can show up for young people with empathy and practical support during this moment of change.

## Remember, this law isn't about young people getting in trouble

The responsibility to ensure under-16s aren't on social media lies with social media companies, not kids, families, teachers, or workers. No one should feel afraid of being punished for using social media. What matters most is that young people still feel safe to speak up about harm – these laws don't change that.

If a young person experiences harm online, they can still report it – to **eSafety**, their school, or directly to the platform (if possible without an account). Reaching out for help will not get them in trouble.

**Your role:** Keep supporting young people who disclose harm, and remind them that reporting is still encouraged.

## Expect real grief and support young people through it

For many teens, this change will feel like genuine loss. Not because they're 'addicted' to screens, but because they're losing spaces that help them in meaningful ways.

Social media may be where they talk to cousins overseas, stay in touch with old friends, or find identity-affirming communities. Losing that can bring sadness, anger, or withdrawal, which are all valid responses. This isn't the moment to say "go outside more," but to listen and acknowledge that this is real for them.

**Your role:** Validate grief, listen with empathy, and support them even if you don't fully understand their attachment to online spaces.

## Open up curious conversations

Young people will find new ways to connect online – that’s what they do. The best thing adults can do is to stay curiously engaged, not step back.

Ask where they’re spending time, why it matters, and what they enjoy there. You don’t need to monitor or interrogate them, instead just show interest. Meanwhile, keep building your own digital literacy to understand the spaces they’re exploring.

**Your role:** Stay curious and keep communication open. Ask about their online world and build trust through genuine interest.

## Actively support young people with the transition

Adults often say, “Well, we’re not banning the internet.” But for many teens, social media is the internet. So this change will bring real gaps in how young people learn about the world, access info, feel seen, and connect. You can help them to make this transition:

*For news*, help them discover youth-friendly, trusted sources. *For connection*, support involvement in youth groups or school communities. *For identity*, guide them to spaces where they can still feel seen and affirmed.

**Your role:** Be proactive in helping young people to find new avenues and places to connect, learn, and feel seen.

## Keep digital skills alive

Being online isn’t just about scrolling – it’s where young people develop digital and critical literacy. They learn to communicate, evaluate information, and understand how digital systems work. These are life skills they’ll need long after this law takes effect.

Let’s remember, this ‘delay’ is a chance to prepare, not to disconnect. By keeping learning alive and encouraging digital thinking, we can support young people to step back into online spaces at 16 with confidence and capability.

**Your role:** Keep nurturing digital literacy – every conversation about online content is a chance to build future-ready skills.

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