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Analysis

Australia's social media ban reminds us of the power of a loving boundary



By Virginia Trioli

Internet Culture

Sat 13 Dec 2025 at 8:00am



This can only be a relief to any parent, writes Virginia Trioli, even to the ones whose younger teens are anguished at being locked out of their preferred messaging platforms. *(ABC News: Maren Preuss)*

On day one of Australia's social media ban, my 13-year-old son said the most unexpected thing.

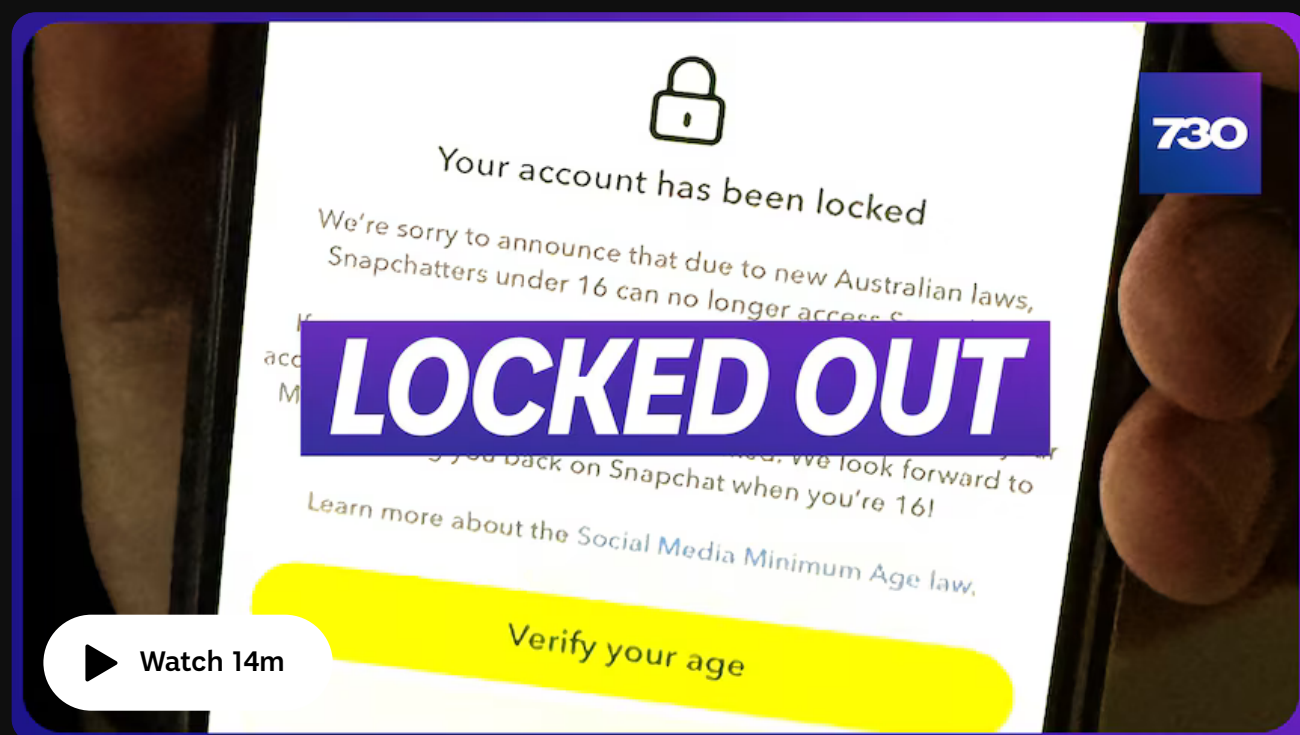
"It's a good start — but it doesn't go far enough."

This from the kid who, like so many of his peers, had been rolling his eyes at the "lame" attempts by the federal government to restrict what has become open access by predators to kids on almost every social media and messaging site.

We are three days in now from Facebook, Instagram, Threads, X, YouTube, Snapchat, Reddit, Kick, Twitch and TikTok being required to remove

accounts held by users under 16 years of age in Australia and prevent those teens from registering new accounts.

Platforms that do not comply risk fines of up to \$49.5m.



Australia's under 16s social media ban begins (Jacob Greber, Sarah Ferguson)

A relief to any parent

The kids are not restricted from viewing content on sites like YouTube, but they can't sign up for their own accounts until they are 16.

[Highly criticised online gaming platforms like Roblox](#) are also required to implement facial age assurance tests, and my son noted that this was in place and was smartly executed. Chat restrictions were immediately obvious.

This can only be a relief to any parent, even to the ones whose younger teens are anguished at being locked out of their preferred messaging platforms.

But parental responses have been as varied as their kids are furious. Some parents have gone on the record saying they will help out their kids with VPNs and fake accounts, so their kids aren't "left out". Lesser-known messaging services are being downloaded by kids, and possibly parents, to link them in with a hyper-connected world they can no longer imagine

doing without.

I understand the impulse. Teens are impressive advocates for their causes.

But, despite my own scepticism over the effectiveness of this law, it's been heartening to see young teens respond warmly to what is a positive statement of protection and care — and I think we underestimate the force of that.

The power of the loving boundary

From infancy, parents are told about the importance of attachment and presence: of ensuring that a child knows its needs are seen and will be met, and that being around their parents is safe.

Because our teens are mouthy, critical and opinionated young souls yearning to be free of our boundaries, I think we can underestimate the central nervous system calming that comes with knowing that boundaries, even resented ones, are being placed with care and safety around the kids we love.

Grace Tame gets it. The steely former Australian of the Year, author and child sex abuse victim advocate posted to Instagram when the law came into place, noting that the internet gave direct access to children and that "child sex offenders are usually the earliest adopters of new technologies, which they repurpose for harm".

Anything we can do to restrict access is important, she says.

This is where we parents should remind ourselves of the power of the loving boundary: not to bind and constrain, but to properly demonstrate that we hold our kids and their safety in our mind, and that they do not slip out of our mind.

And that's what this might just turn out to be. Not a watertight seal of safety against predators. Nor an onerous restriction of business of the tech giants. But a good first step.

Keep an eye on the shortcuts

Jonathan Haidt, the author of the book *The Anxious Generation*, and a powerful critic of young people having access to phones, is a huge fan of the change. He calls it "the most vital law on the planet" and says it doesn't matter if the rollout is messy and imperfect — "the alternative is far worse. Without action, we leave yet another generation to grow up under the rule of a handful of tech companies whose business models depend on capturing as much of children's time and attention as possible."

In this household, we will try to keep an eye on the shortcuts, contain the resentments and, probably most important of all, try to lead by example by putting our phones away, turning off the messages and reconnecting in the most essential and powerful way: in person.

This weekend, we're joining post-natal mums to the ban, too — [have a look at the research](#) on what screens postpartum can do to an under-slept mum.

What to read this weekend:

[The 50 best albums of 2025: Your ultimate year-end music guide](#)

[How pregnancy is being criminalised in post-Roe America](#)

[We examined MPs' family travel spending — here's what we learned](#)

[Dancing gorilla wins funniest wildlife photo of the year](#)

[Should you go screen-free after giving birth? These mums share their stories](#)

[How to support your child through the social media ban](#)

Have a safe and happy weekend, and given this is my last column before Christmas, I should share really [the only Christmas song that truly gets me](#) — and of course it's sung by one of the great rock and roll voices. Have a wonderful celebration if you celebrate, and a great break if that's on your list, too. I'll catch up with you for some best reads of 2026 before we hit the new year. Go well.

Virginia Trioli is presenter of *Creative Types* and a former co-host

of ABC News Breakfast and Mornings on ABC Radio Melbourne.

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