



# SOCIAL MEDIA AGE RESTRICTIONS

Prepared by the ASC / November 2025

**From 10 December 2025, the Australian Government will implement a new legislative framework<sup>1</sup> that requires certain social media platforms to take reasonable steps to prevent Australians under 16 years of age [U/16s] from holding accounts with them.**

- The list of social media platforms 'caught under' the framework is a **dynamic** one, and can be revised by the Federal Minister of Communications at short notice.
- As of 5 November 2025, nine platforms are listed as being required to comply with the 'Social Media Minimum Age (SMMA) obligation': **Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, Snapchat, Threads, Reddit, Kick, and X (Twitter)**.
- Social media platforms that are not accessible in Australia are not dealt with under the incoming legislation.

**The purpose of this guideline is to set out some basic considerations for athletes, their parents/guardians, and National Sports Organisations (NSOs), in respect of the SMMA obligation.**

It is important to note that this is 'world-first' legislation and **constitutes a kind of uncharted territory**: precisely how various of its aspects will function in practice remains to be seen. As with any area of public policy that is novel and/or in flux, advice and analysis offered around it is necessarily conditional and subject to change.

## Commercial considerations

Many NSOs have elite and/or talented athletes under the age of 16 involved in pathways and programs. A high proportion of this U/16 cohort is **deeply engaged with the social media landscape**, and attracts/maintains a significant social media following.

**Some U/16 athletes have commercial arrangements in place with their sport and/or with sponsors.**

- Often, **a key aspect of such arrangements is a requirement to post on social media** with (for example) sponsor-name acknowledgements, product or equipment mentions, and the wearing of branded clothes or accessories.
- In a limited number of cases, an U/16's social media accounts may be 'held' by the athlete, but professionally managed or curated in day-to-day terms by a commercial third party (a management agency or branding specialist, for example).

**The ASC is in contact with the eSafety Commission to explore how the interests and obligations of U/16 athletes in commercial-arrangement situations can be advised and accommodated going forward.**

## Potential impact on young people, young athletes

For the generation currently growing up with social media, barriers between the virtual world and IRL ['in real life'] are often fluid to the point of negligibility. To be online is second nature, and imminent changes to social media access may constitute an experience of **genuine loss or adjustment**.

- The office of the **eSafety Commissioner** offers a **range of resources** designed to assist U/16s, parents/guardians, and organisations with the SMMA obligation transition.

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<sup>1</sup> The Online Safety Act 2025 and Online Safety (Age-Restricted Social Media Platforms) Rules 2025



**A number of potential impacts to young athletes may arise out of the restrictions, over and above those experienced and/or reported by young people in society generally.**

- For some, the restrictions may result in a **reduced sense of social connection** with friends and family. This is especially relevant in the case of young athletes who relocate to pursue sport, or who are travelling for training camps and/or events.
- Similarly, many young athletes report **using social media to regulate pressures** felt during identified periods of heightened stress (selection periods and Benchmark Events, for example). In this context, the subtraction of social media engagement as a 'pressure valve release' may be problematic (especially if abrupt and/or not compensated for).

**NSOs are advised to review the communication processes and channels that are used by athletes within and across their programs in the specific context of the SMMA obligation, and with particular regard to the nine social media platforms in question.**

It is important to **ensure that no U/16 athletes are disadvantaged** in terms of being removed from discussion groups, messaging platforms, and/or information sources (etc.) upon which they rely for both official and informal program communications.

- The **AIS Mental Health Referral Network [MHRN]** supports high performance (HP) athletes + eligible individuals within the Australian HP sports system who are experiencing mental health or wellbeing concerns.

## FAQs

### Is every social media platform caught under the new framework?

The new legislation applies to platforms that satisfy certain statutory conditions, including that their sole or significant purpose is to **enable online social interaction between two or more end-users, or that the platform allows users to post material** on the service.

Conversely, statutory rules exclude/exempt other types of platforms, including those with the sole or primary purpose of **enabling messaging, emailing, voice calling, or video calling**. Popular apps such as WhatsApp and Messenger are therefore not caught.

### What will social media platforms have to do?

Social media platforms caught under the framework will have to take reasonable steps to identify accounts held by age-restricted individuals and deactivate them. They will also have to take reasonable steps to prevent U/16s from opening new accounts. Methods for meeting the SMMA obligation will likely include **age-verification software** that assesses accounts and flags indicators of U/16 use.

### Are there exemptions for the use of social media for professional purposes?

No, **the legislative requirement applies as a blanket prohibition for U/16s**, irrespective of the purpose for which they hold a social media account. Thus, U/16 athletes who hold accounts with a caught platform wholly or predominantly in order to conduct a business (or build/manage a personal brand related to sport) are restricted from doing so in the same manner as any other U/16.

### Can a parent, guardian, or AW&E Manager (for example) manage an U/16's account on their behalf?

No, there is **no carve out in the legislation** that allows a parent, guardian, or NSO staff member to run, manage, or administer an U/16's social media accounts on a caught platform.

It remains to be seen what view the regulator (or the platforms themselves) will take of situations in which an **adult third party** owns and administers a social media account that essentially depicts (or is otherwise closely related to) an individual under the age of 16. Such scenarios may well fall within the parameters of '**account holding**' (by the U/16 so depicted), which – as a legal concept – is likely to be more broad than simply 'in whose name is this account technically held?'.



- The terms of service (TOS) for most mainstream social media platforms include conditions that user access must comply with the law. It is therefore reasonable to suggest that an adult third party who holds an account of behalf of an U/16 is **breaching the TOS**, leaving platforms free deactivate the account under that regulatory option (rather than relying on the legislative framework).

**Until such matters are tested by the regulator, the platforms, and/or the Courts, there is a significant lack of clarity around applicable regulatory positions.**

### Will U/16s be penalised for having a social media account after 10 December 2025?

No. Co-regulators, such as the eSafety Commissioner, have **consistently emphasised that U/16 individuals will not face penalties** for maintaining or creating a social media account with a caught platform.

Rather, the **obligation to enforce compliance lies wholly with the social media platforms** caught under the framework, and the same is true of penalty provisions within the Act: they only apply to platforms.

### If an U/16 has a sponsorship agreement that requires them to make social media posts, will failure to post as a result of this framework be a breach of contract?

Such considerations will likely depend on the specific wording of any given sponsorship agreement (case-by-case basis). However, as a general position, and in the context of a sponsorship agreement, where an U/16's 'failure to post' is regarded as a breach of contract by some interested party, **multiple defences may apply**.

These include **statutory illegality** (material terms of the contract are prohibited by statute) or **frustration** (performance of a contractual obligation is rendered impossible through no fault of either party).

- In this scenario, an affected U/16 athlete might seek to **renegotiate** the terms of their agreement to require posting on a platform that is not caught under the new framework. (How plausible a likelihood this is remains to be seen.)
- Athletes who are a party to a contract of this nature are advised to seek **specialist advice** tailored to their individual circumstances.

### Can an U/16 deactivate their account and reactivate it when they turn 16?

Social media platforms subject to the SMMA obligation may provide users with the option to deactivate an account and **reactivate** it when they turn 16. In some cases this option may be restricted to those already in a certain age bracket (i.e. available only to those who are currently at least 15 years of age, for example).

### Can social media platforms delete an U/16's account without telling them?

The regulatory guidance provides that social media platforms should deactivate and remove accounts with "kindness, care, and clear communication." Moreover, **users should receive warnings and be allowed to download their data** prior to account deletion.

### Will an U/16 be able to watch sports tutorials [etc.] on Facebook or YouTube [for example]?

The new rules prevent U/16s from holding accounts. This means they will be unable to access any content that a caught platform **restricts to its account holders** only.

Conversely, **U/16s will be able to access online content that a platform does not restrict to account holders** only.

## More information

- **For ongoing guidance + support, athletes should contact their sport's AW&E manager or integrity manager.**
- To further discuss the considerations raised in this guideline, contact ASC Leadership and Professionalism: [leadershipandprofessionalism@ausport.gov.au](mailto:leadershipandprofessionalism@ausport.gov.au)