

Access to **social media** is changing

The Australian Government has made some new rules about who can create or have an account on social media in Australia.

This is called 'social media minimum age' (SMMA) but sometimes it is also referred to as the social media 'ban', 'delay', 'age requirement, or 'age obligation'.



SMMA means your personal information will be handled

To follow the new rules, social media companies will need information about:

- 1) if you ordinarily live in Australia, and
- 2) if you are over the age of 16.

This information could be **personal information**, which is information that could identify you. It could also be **sensitive information**, which is a special set of personal information that has stricter rules because, if exposed, could cause harm or discrimination. Both personal and sensitive information are protected by the *Privacy Act 1988*.

Social media companies will handle your personal information or use a 'third party' company known as an 'age assurance provider,' to conduct the age check.

How will social media companies check my location?

There are many ways that social media companies might check if you ordinarily live in Australia.

They might use location information like:

- if you have an Australian mobile number
- your Wi-Fi network information
- GPS information or other location services
- your app store, operating systems and account settings
- photos, tags, connections and online activity you or others have shared on social media.

From **10 December 2025**, social media companies will have a responsibility to make sure everyone using their service in Australia is at least 16 years old. To do this, social media companies will need to handle the personal information of users to be confident that every person creating an account or who has an account on social media is 16 years or older.



eSafety have loads of helpful information

that explain what SMMA is, why it was introduced, which social media platforms it affects and what to do if you are over 16 and your account has been mistakenly removed.

Check out www.eSafety.gov.au



The Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC) is here to protect the privacy of all Australians. We will make sure that social media companies, and any company they team up with to do age checks, called 'third parties' or 'age assurance providers', obey the law and protect your personal information when following these new rules.

How will social media companies check my age?

There are many ways that social media companies might check your age. And they might want to use a few different ways to check, to be sure they got it right.

This age check is called **age assurance**. Assurance means to be confident. So 'age assurance' means that social media companies want to use some kind of method to be confident they know your age.

The three main types of age assurance methods

Age inference

These methods use information that you may have already shared with the social media company such as who you follow, how you speak, when you post and when your account was created to suggest what your age is, to infer your age. Age inference uses multiple bits of information to analyse your online behaviour and infer your age or age range.

These methods are called **age inference** because they *infer*, which means to suggest based on evidence, what your age is.

Age estimation

These methods might ask you to do a task like take a selfie or video to look at physical features like your face or how you move your body or listen to your voice. These methods use facial analysis, artificial intelligence (AI) and statistics to guess what your age or age range is.

These methods are called **age estimation** because they *estimate*, which means to guess, your age or age range based on information such as physical features or behaviour.

Age verification

These methods might ask you to share an image of your government-issued ID like a driver's licence or passport to check your date of birth or sign into another online service that knows your age. These methods check your age by looking at systems that already know your age.

These methods are called **age verification** because they *verify*, which means to confirm, your age with official information.

SMMA prohibits social media companies from persuading Australians to use government-issued ID (including Digital ID) to prove their age online. Social media companies must offer other methods of age assurance to users.

Age assurance methods

may look like



Behavioural analysis

Seeing if you behave like a child



Biometric estimation

Taking a selfie or using your voice



Physical gesture

Looking at how you move your body



Hard identifiers

Sharing your official documents



Age tokens

Signing into another online service

What method of age assurance will I experience?

SMMA does not mandate one single method to age assurance. This means that you may experience different and multiple age assurance methods with each social media company you hold an account with.

Some age assurance methods are quick and may appear as though no age assurance method has

taken place (age inference). Other methods might be more time-consuming and require you to supply additional personal information (age verification and age estimation).

The personal information handled for age assurance will be different, depending on the method.

Privacy + Tips

What can I do to protect my personal information?

You may have the option to choose what age assurance method is used. Being aware of what personal information may be handled by social media companies and third parties for the purpose of age assurance, provides you the opportunity to make informed decisions.

Your privacy is important and here are some general tips to protect your personal information:

Value your information

Personal information is valuable and not just to the person it belongs to. Personal information can be used for targeted advertising and to make money for online companies. Treat your personal information like the asset it is. Don't share it without good reason and only share what's necessary.

Check before sharing

Make sure you trust who you share your information with. Check that the organisation or person is who they say they are and has a good reputation.

Look out for scams

Scammers often pretend to be trusted organisations such as the government, banks, or social media companies. Only share personal information with trusted websites. Look for secure websites that start with <https://>

Read privacy policies and notices

If you're sharing your information, it's important to be clear on how it will be used. Check that the privacy practices of the organisations that you deal with are up to scratch.

Update your privacy settings

Always check what you are saying 'yes' to. Many websites, apps and devices share your personal information by default. Check if you are sharing any information that you'd rather keep private.

Protect your accounts

Use multi-factor authentication, also known as 2-step verification, and strong passphrases or passwords to protect your online accounts. It provides an important extra layer of security for your online accounts.

Respond to breaches

Sometimes things go wrong. If your privacy is breached, act quickly to reduce your risk of harm. Steps you can take include changing your passphrases (password) and watching out for phone or email scams.

Talk about privacy

Make a point of talking about privacy with your friends and family, and especially the young people in your lives. It is essential that young people understand how important their privacy is as soon as they start using digital devices and going online.

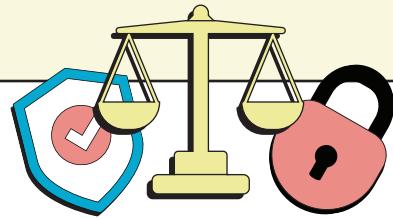


Privacy is about having control of your personal information

Social media companies and third parties will need to tell a person that their information is being looked at. But they do not always need to ask for permission to use and collect this information to do the age check.

If social media companies collect this information and offer to use it for another purpose, such as advertising, then they **must** ask for your permission.

It is important that you know about what personal information may be handled by social media companies and third parties as they comply with the SMMA rules.



There are laws in place to protect your personal information

SMMA has strict 'privacy safeguards'. Privacy safeguards are the set of rules designed to protect your personal information including how it can be collected, used, stored, disclosed and destroyed.

SMMA has multiple privacy safeguards that work together. These include Section 63F in Part 4A of the *Online Safety Act 2021*, the *Privacy Act 1988* and the Australian Privacy Principles.

If social media companies fail to abide by the privacy safeguards of SMMA, it will be seen as 'an interference with the privacy of an individual' and trigger the complaint function in the *Privacy Act 1988*. Serious penalties apply to social media companies if they breach their privacy obligations within the SMMA rules.

I think my personal information has been mishandled, how do I make a complaint?

If you think a social media company or third party has used or shared your personal information in a way they should not have **make a complaint to the social media company or third party**. If they don't respond to your complaint, you can make a complaint to the OAIC.

A step-by-step guide on how to make a complaint is available on our website: www.oaic.gov.au/privacy/privacy-complaints

If you have any questions about SMMA such as what do to if your account has been mistakenly deactivated, eSafety has resources to support you.

Check out www.eSafety.gov.au

