



Beyond the Platforms: Youth Communication Strategies for School Sport Associations

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Overview

Throughout this webinar, we will cover:

- **Legislation and what's actually occurred**
- **Our responsibilities in response to the legislation**
- **Understanding the current youth landscape**
- **Strategies for connection in the wake of the legislation**



Who are we?

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We exist to support youth facing professionals in effective engagement and connection with young people across the landscape, we do this through providing evidence-based training and support.



The Legislation

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Snapshot of the Change

This is no longer a debate; the conversation shifts from “Should we restrict social media?” to “How do we continue to communicate with and support young people through this change?”

- From 10 December 2025, many major social media platforms were required to prevent Australians under 16 from holding or creating accounts.
- Platforms have now blocked over 4.7 million accounts since December
- Rather than calling it a “ban,” the official framing is a “minimum-age obligation.”
- The obligation rests on platforms, not on supporting adults, youth-facing organisations, parents, carers or children.
- There are no penalties for a minor who previously had an account or for a parent; enforcement applies to the companies.
- The law doesn’t mandate a specific method of age-check.



Why the change?

The minimum-age obligation is designed to reduce the pressure load young people experience when they are logged in to social media platforms.

The concern isn't simply the content young people might see - it's the way platforms are designed to demand attention and shape behaviour. Many platforms rely on features that:

- Create constant pull and urgency through notifications, alerts and disappearing content
- Encourage prolonged screen time rather than intentional use
- Use algorithms that increasingly serve content designed to provoke emotion, comparison or reaction, which raises the likelihood of young people being exposed to distressing, polarising or manipulative material



What IS now age-restricted?

Services that eSafety considers age-restricted social media platforms:

- Facebook
- Instagram
- Kick
- Reddit
- Snapchat
- Threads
- TikTok
- Twitch
- X
- YouTube



What is NOT age-restricted?

Services that eSafety has NOT considered as age-restricted social media platforms:

- Discord
- GitHub
- Google Classroom
- LEGO Play
- Messenger
- Pinterest
- Roblox
- Steam and Steam Chat
- WhatsApp
- YouTube Kids



What the legislation does not prohibit:

- Does not stop organisations from:
 - Posting about young people on official, adult-run accounts (with consent)
 - Communicating with young people through appropriate, adult-mediated channels
 - Using digital tools to share information, schedules or resources
- Does not require organisations to police or enforce age compliance

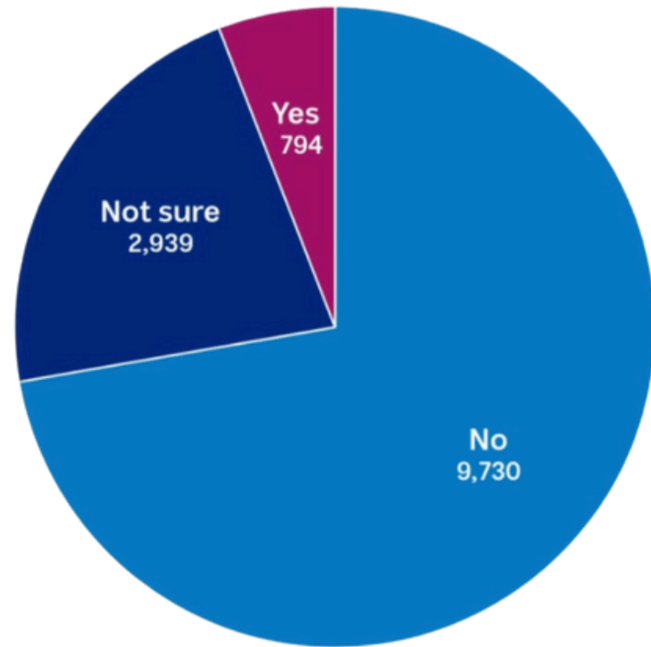
There is a distinction between access and exposure:

- Young people may not hold accounts on certain platforms
- But they can still:
 - View information shared by adults
 - Receive content via parents, schools and coaches
 - Be represented in official communication
- Communication is now relational and mediated, not blocked.



What do Young People think about the ban?

Do you think it will work?

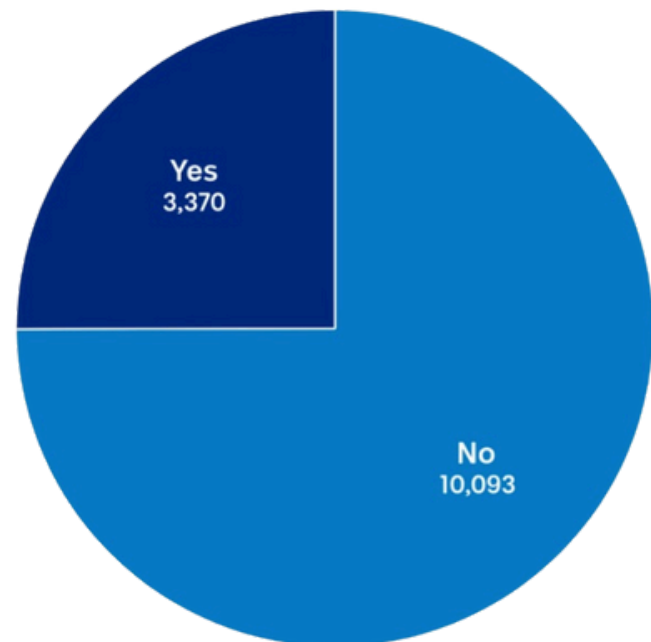


“Social media is how I talk to my friends. Taking it away doesn’t make sense.”

“I wish I got social media later. Social media exposed me to things I wasn’t ready for yet.”

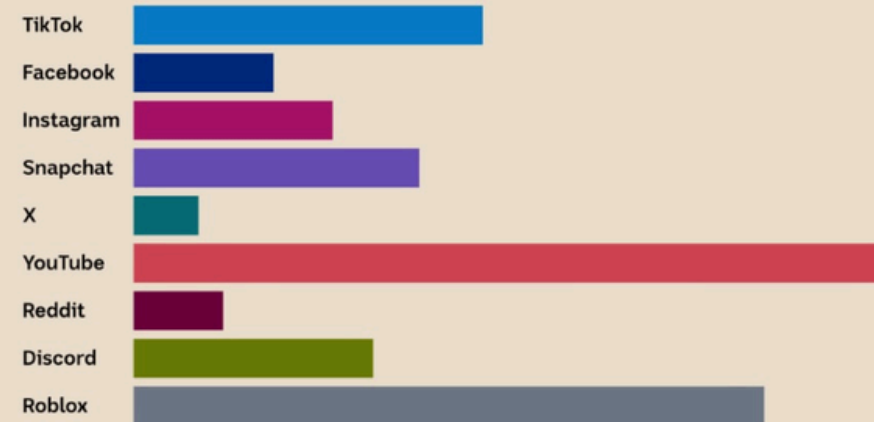
“Kids will still get it. It just makes it more secret and dangerous.”

Do you plan to stop using social media once the ban comes in?



What platforms do you use?

YouTube was the most popular, closely followed by Roblox.



While apps such as Instagram and Snapchat will outright ban under-16s from creating accounts, both YouTube and Roblox will allow under-16s to access a "kid-friendly" version of their platforms.



Our Responsibilities

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So, where does the responsibility sit?

- For youth-facing organisations, such as School Sport Associations, responsibility is about:
 - Choosing appropriate communication channels
- Ensuring communication is:
 - One-to-many by default
 - Transparent
 - Child-safe
- Aligning practice with existing:
 - Child safety standards
 - Privacy policies
 - School/Community expectations
- Where it's risky:
 - Direct messaging
 - Informal channels
 - Blurred boundaries



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If this interaction was audited, would it still feel appropriate?



Why does this matter beyond compliance?

- **Poor communication during this shift risks:**
 - **Confusion**
 - **Reduced participation**
 - **Increased parent and school workload**
 - **Disengagement from sport**
- **Strong communication systems protect:**
 - **Young people**
 - **Volunteers**
 - **Associations**
 - **Relationships with schools**



This change does not mean organisations need to withdraw, reduce engagement, or avoid digital communication.

It does mean communication needs to be more intentional, adult-mediated and aligned with child-safe practice.



It is completely normal to have fears surrounding this change, such as:

- **Loss of visibility with students**
- **Fear of non-compliance**
- **Anxiety about “getting it wrong”**
- **Risk of disengagement, not just legal breach**
- **Disruption to program-related communication if it previously occurred on now-restricted platforms.**



What are your current challenges when it comes to youth communication?



Who is this demographic?



Generations at a Glance



Diving Into Gen Z

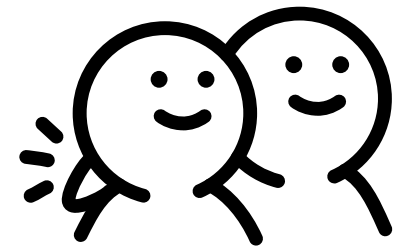
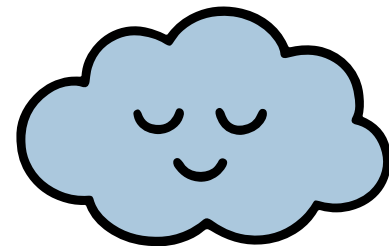
Key distinctions of this generation:

- Growing up as digital natives
- Working parents/guardians
- COVID-19 during identity-forming years
- Cost of living and economic anxiety
- Blurring of news and entertainment through TikTok, YouTube, memes, etc.
- Deeply value authenticity and truth
- Levels of loneliness are rising
- Despite challenges, the data suggests they are still hopeful about the future



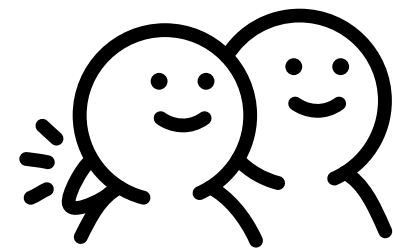
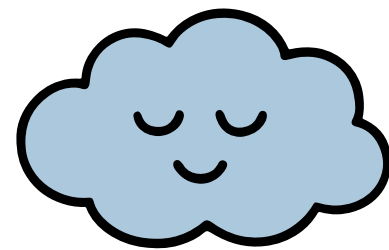
Communication Influences

- **Mental health**
- **Less capacity to handle stress**
- **Human skill development**
- **Dependence on technology for connection**
 - **Asynchronous communication**



Drivers for Engagement

- **Authenticity and transparency**
- **Social responsibility**
- **Inclusivity**
- **The search for balance**
- **Freedom and flexibility**



Motivation

Extrinsic

- Pass a test
- Gain a reward
- Avoid a consequence

Intrinsic

- Enjoyment from doing the thing itself



Self-Determination Theory

The Self Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci) identifies three fundamental psychological needs essential for optimal functioning

Autonomy

Feeling in control of one's own actions

- Self expression
- Personalised interests
- Agency in communication

Competence

Experiencing effectiveness and mastery in activities

- Opportunities to deepen knowledge and skills
- Positive feedback loops
- Optimal Challenge

Relatedness

Feeling connected and belonging with others

- Communication with community
- Finding 'your people'
- Being seen and validated

Strategies for Communication & Connection

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Communication Principles

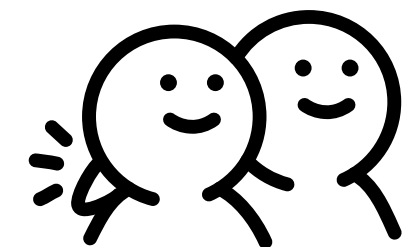
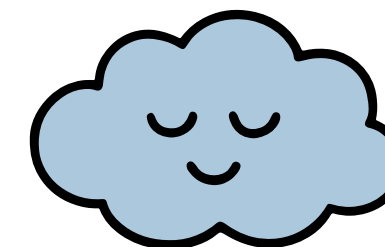
What do young people need when it comes to communication?

- Clarity
- Consistency
- Relevance

There has been a shift in the REAL audience we are now communicating with:

- Young people are still the beneficiaries
- Parents/carergivers and schools are now often the gatekeepers
- Staff, coordinators and volunteers are the messengers

CLEAR IS KIND



Instead of asking:

“How do we reach students?”

We need to ask:

“How does information flow to students through the adults and systems around them?”

And even better:

“How can we use communication systems that serve both?”



Communication Strategies

	Best for:	Why it works:	Notes
Email and/ or school-based communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timetables • Event details • Selection processes • Policy updates • Cancellations or changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive (students, parents, schools) • Creates a clear record • Aligns with education systems • Low safeguarding risk 	Consistent, clear and reliable.
Sport Management Platforms (website, portal)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fixtures • Team lists • Results • Schedules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose-built • Controlled access • Clear boundaries • Familiar in sport settings 	These reinforce rather than replace primary comms.
WhatsApp (Group Messaging)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reminders • Logistics • Short-notice updates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult oversight • Reduces one-to-one risk • Fast without being informal 	Key boundary: <i>Group-only, admin-led, no DMs with young people.</i>

Summary

- **Design communication systems, not workarounds**
 - **Move away from ad-hoc messaging and build clear, repeatable, adult-mediated communication pathways.**
- **Default to one-to-many, transparent communication**
 - **Use channels that can be seen, audited, and trusted by schools, families, and volunteers.**
- **Let adults be the bridge - not the bottleneck**
 - **Parents, schools, coordinators and coaches are now key messengers in how information reaches young people.**
- **Prioritise clarity, consistency, and child-safe practice**
 - **Clear systems reduce confusion, protect volunteers, and maintain participation in sport.**
- **See this shift as an opportunity, not a restriction**
 - **Strong communication builds trust, strengthens relationships with schools, and keeps young people engaged in sport.**



A group of young people, including a man with curly hair, a woman with blonde hair, and a woman with dark hair, are looking at their smartphones. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent white box containing the word "Questions?".

Questions?

THANK YOU FOR JOINING US

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 @youthengagementproject

 hello@youthengagementproject.com

 www.youthengagementproject.com