

All eyes Down Under: Australia's social media ban

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London Deputy Managing Partner Terry Green authored an article in *The Law Society Gazette* about Australia's under-16 social media ban and how it contrasts with the UK Online Safety Act (OSA). Terry noted that the OSA "will only require age verification for platforms that host or disseminate adult content or primary priority content," a more targeted approach that protects children from harmful content as opposed to Australia's "blanket platform ban."

Terry emphasized that there is a risk of inconsistency with the Australia ban, flagging, for example, that numerous online gaming platforms and messaging services that are not in scope of the under-16 ban still carry the risk of harmful content being distributed to children. He also stated that the overall ban may encourage children under 16 to use unregulated platforms without content moderation or protective measures in place, unlike current social media platforms.

"The [United Kingdom's] approach answers the points made by those who brought a challenge, backed by The Digital Freedom Project, at the Australia High Court against the ban in Australia, in that a targeted approach to remove harmful content will avoid under-16s being punished," Terry said, adding that "improving online literacy through education as well as enhanced safety measures will be a more balanced approach."

Terry also warned that "whilst Denmark and Norway will be looking to follow Australia's footsteps to require a 15-year-old age limit for social media," such a ban in the United Kingdom would be "intensively scrutinized" and "will likely bring up a whole host of issues, particularly in relation to the freedom of expression under Article 10 of the European Convention of Human Rights."

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