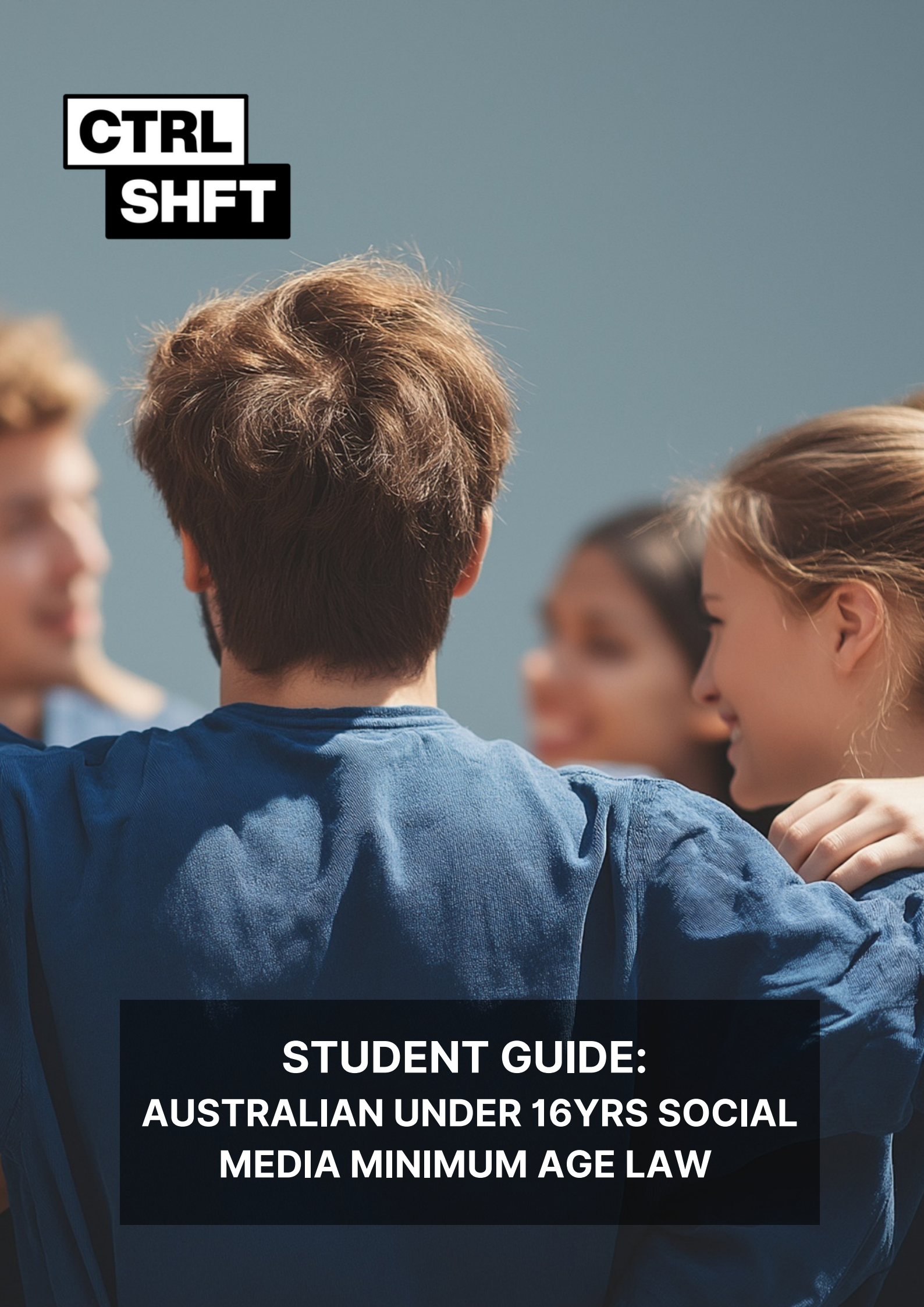


A background image showing the back of a young man with brown hair wearing a blue t-shirt, with other students blurred in the background under a clear blue sky.

**CTRL
SHIFT**

**STUDENT GUIDE:
AUSTRALIAN UNDER 16YRS SOCIAL
MEDIA MINIMUM AGE LAW**

What is happening?

From 10 December 2025, you must be 16 or older to have an account on certain social media platforms in Australia.

This includes:

- Instagram
- TikTok
- Snapchat
- Facebook
- YouTube
- X (formerly Twitter)
- And others

If you're under 16, these platforms are legally required to:

- Find and remove your existing account
- Stop you from creating a new one
- Prevent you from rejoining immediately with a new account

You won't be fined. Your parents won't be fined. This law isn't aimed at young people or families. But the platforms themselves like TikTok, Meta (which owns Instagram and Facebook), Snapchat and others can be fined up to \$49.5 million if they break these rules or fail to protect under-16s as required.

That's why you might start to see platforms acting more strictly. Not because they're targeting you, but because they're now legally responsible. So even if you've used an account for years, it may be removed. That's why it's important to download your data, know your options, and understand your rights early.

Why Is This Happening?

This change is meant to protect you from some of the risks that come with having a social media account too early, like:

- Endless algorithm feeds that increase screen time
- Harmful or unsafe content
- Pressure to perform, compare, or be online constantly

It also gives you more time to build digital literacy and learn how to stay safe and balanced online.

Can I Still Use Social Media?

Yes, but you cannot have an account.

You can still:

- View public content (like most YouTube videos)
- Browse without logging in

But you can't post, comment, or send messages until you're 16.

Age Checks Are Changing

Platforms won't just ask for your birthday anymore or for you to tick a box that says you are over 13yrs.

They might:

- Estimate your age using your face (facial age estimation)
- Guess your age based on how you behave or what you post online
- Ask you to prove your age

But you don't have to hand over a government ID. Platforms must give you a privacy-safe option.

Deletion vs. Deactivation — What's the Difference?

If your account gets removed, it can happen in two ways:

- Deletion means everything, your account and your content, is permanently gone. This is what happens on platforms like TikTok and Snapchat (after 30 days of deactivation).
- Deactivation means your account is paused and your content is saved. But be very wary that the chances of apps saving your existing account until you are 16yrs is highly unlikely.

What You Can Do Now — Before 10 December 2025

Download your data

Everything you've shared on your account, including photos, videos, messages, stories belongs to you. Even if your account gets removed, you can keep those memories by downloading your data now.

Here's how to do it on the major platforms:

Instagram: Go to Settings → Your Activity → Download Your Information. You'll be sent a file to your email with all your content.

TikTok: Go to Settings and Privacy → Account → Download your data. This might take a few days to process.

Snapchat: Go to Settings → My Data. You'll need to log in and request the data file from their website not the app.

YouTube: Use Google Takeout at takeout.google.com and choose what to keep from YouTube.

Don't wait until your account is removed because once it's gone, you may not be able to get anything back.

Ask questions

If you're unsure about anything, like what's changing, what you're being asked to do, or how to get your content back, talk to someone you trust.

That could be:

- A teacher
- A parent or carer
- Your school wellbeing team
- A digital support service like [eSafety.gov.au](https://www.esafety.gov.au)
-

There's no shame in asking for help. This change is new for everyone.

Know your rights

Even though the law is changing, you still have important rights:

- The right to keep your digital memories (photos, videos, messages)
- The right to privacy and to avoid giving unnecessary personal info
- The right to ask questions and get clear answers
- The right to be respected, not just protected

This law is meant to make the online world safer for young people but it must be done in a way that treats you with honesty and fairness.

Some of you will feel relieved by this. Others may feel frustrated, especially if you've had an account for years. But you all deserve to be informed, supported, and taken seriously.

And if a decision feels wrong, you have every right to speak up.

If a platform says you're under 16 and that's not true, you can challenge the decision. Here's how:

Look for the appeal or review process

Most platforms must give you a way to request a review. This might show up as a notification in the app, an email, or a help centre link. It could be called:

- "Request a review"
- "Dispute age decision"
- "Verify your age"

Don't feel pressured to hand over ID

- Platforms must offer a safe, private alternative to uploading your passport or any government-issued ID.

That could be:

- A selfie video
- An AI-based age estimation tool
- A combination of signals (not just your birthdate)

If you're unsure, ask for help. You can also go to the eSafety Commissioner. If you believe a platform isn't following the rules, or you feel your rights aren't being respected, you can report it at [eSafety.gov.au](https://esafety.gov.au).

They are there to protect people like you.