

Danes to slap ban on social media

Following Australia's lead

COPENHAGEN: Denmark is set to ban social media for children younger than 15, declaring the hope that it will lead the way in Europe for more nations to adopt similar laws.

Digitalisation Minister Caroline Stage Olsen said on Saturday that the government was "drawing a line in the sand".

"The so-called social media thrive on stealing our children's time, childhood and wellbeing and we are putting a stop to that now," she said.

"Denmark is now leading the way in Europe with a national age limit for social media and a concerted effort to strengthen the digital wellbeing of children and young people.

"We are taking a necessary stand against a development where large tech platforms have had free rein in children's rooms for far too long."

The Danish government said they have faith the legislation will be passed as it has the support of politicians across the board.

Denmark's Australian-born Queen Mary is passionate about protecting young children from bullying and it is one of the main aims of her charity The Mary Foundation.

The announcement of the new law comes after Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen described how society "unleashed a monster" by allowing vulnerable young people to use the platforms. "Never before have so many children and young people suffered from anxiety and depression," she said.

Parents will have the option to allow their children access to the platforms from age 13 – but only with parental consent and under tighter rules.

According to an analysis from the Danish competition and consumer authority published in February, youngsters in the Nordic country spend on average two hours and 40 minutes every day on social media.

In September, Australian mother Emma Mason spoke before the United Nations General Assembly in New York about how her 15-year-old daughter Matilda "Tilly" Rosewarne died after relentless online bullying.

"Social media played a direct role in her death – Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, they all played their dirty part," Ms Mason said of her daughter.

"The only way to stop this harm is to hit these corporations in their hip pocket because they've known about it and they've done nothing, much like the tobacco companies of old."

"I implore leaders and nations of our great world to act but act now. Making it illegal for children to access social media under 16 will improve lives. It will save lives."

The move was brought about by advocacy from News Corp Australia's Let Them Be Kids Campaign, which highlighted the harm being caused to kids through social media.

From December 10, the age of access to social media will be increased from 13 to 16 for Australian kids.



Mette Frederiksen