



# REGULATORY WATCH

A round up of the latest news from the world of communications and media policy

DECEMBER 2025

## Australia's under-16 social media ban comes into force

As of midnight on the 9 December, social media companies operating in Australia must take 'reasonable steps' to ensure that their services are not used by anyone under the age of 16. By some estimates, 1 million accounts will be deleted. The new legislation is described as 'world-leading' by Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, while the companies affected say it will simply drive teenagers to other, less-well protected sites. Research conducted by ABC in Australia suggests that the majority of under-16 social media users in the country don't think the ban is a good idea and intend to find ways around it. Only a small majority thought it would work. [Read the report on ABC's survey.](#)

## UK Government pushing for nudity-blocking software

The UK Home Office wants technology companies to block access to explicit images by default as part of a new strategy to tackle violence against women and girls. The UK government is resisting following Australia's example of banning under-16s from social media, and is focused instead on preventing children from seeing harmful content. It's thought that the use of nudity-blocking software will be encouraged rather than mandated, but ministers have praised HMD Global, a company which has deployed a system to automatically detect and block explicit imagery.

## Datacentres in space

In the latest move in the space race, SpaceX and Blue Origin are racing to launch orbital datacentres. Deploying satellites with significant AI computing technology is recognised as technically challenging and critics say they won't be competitive on cost. But supporters argue that the ability to tap unlimited solar energy can solve the huge energy demands of datacentres. Google is planning to launch two test satellites carrying AI chips as soon as 2027, but sees orbital datacentres as a 'moonshot'. One estimate is that recreating the capacity of a gigawatt datacentre would require 10,000 satellites. However, SpaceX's massive new Starship design, expected to debut next year, could deliver 300 gigawatts of solar-powered AI satellites into orbit, according to owner Elon Musk.

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## **Executive order expected to end 'patchwork of AI laws' in the US**

The US administration is thought to be working on a new executive order aimed at curtailing the proliferating number of state-by-state AI rules. Big tech companies have long argued that the patchwork of laws threatens America's technological leadership. President Trump has previously said on Truth Social that 'you can't expect a company to get 50 Approvals every time they want to do something'. However, the move is seen as likely to displease many Republicans, who insist that states should have the power regulate the potential harms of AI.

## **EU launches investigation into Google's training of its AI models**

In its latest challenge to big tech companies, EU regulators will examine whether Google is breaking competition law over the company's use of third party content to train its artificial intelligence models. The investigation will also look at the terms Google is imposing on online publishers and content creators who upload videos to its YouTube platform, and consider whether rival AI developers are being put at a disadvantage. The EU is also investigating Meta over its latest policy on AI providers' access to WhatsApp and follows a \$120 million dollar fine on X for breaking rules on digital transparency, described by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio as 'an attack on all American tech platforms'.

***Sources: The Financial Times, The Wall Street Journal, Bird and Bird, APNews, Euronews, CNN, The Guardian, The Daily Telegraph, Bloomberg, Economic Times, Ars Technica, Reuters, BBC, Politico, Telecompaper***

