

# Media Release



**Peter Malinauskas MP**  
Premier

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Minister for Education, Training and Skills

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## **SA Government leads the way to make childhood smartphone free**

In yet another Australian first, the Malinauskas Labor Government is supporting South Australian parents to unite and delay the introduction of smartphones for their kids.

Having already led the nation with a comprehensive phone ban in schools, and the world by drafting model legislation to impose an age limit for social media accounts, the Malinauskas Government will provide \$6.5 million to make the Wait Mate program available to every public and private school in the state.

Wait Mate is an initiative designed to reduce smartphone use among children and reshape social norms around early phone adoption.

Inspired by [Wait Until 8th](#) in the United States, the program empowers parents to unite, delay smartphone introduction, and support each other through shared commitment.

Supported by resources, presentations, and an online pledge system, parents commit to encouraging their children to wait.

Once ten families from the same year level at a school have committed, a local email community is unlocked to help them stay connected and reduce peer pressure for phones at school.

The State Government funding will provide the opportunity for Wait Mate to present to parents at all South Australian primary schools in 2026-27, and all high schools in 2027-28, while providing take-home packs for parents.

The State Government will also deploy a high-impact communications campaign to help parents hold firm against smartphone pressure as their children start high school.

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Research suggests that delaying smartphone ownership may be one of the most powerful ways to support your child's cognitive development and learning, with a landmark 2017 study finding the mere presence of a smartphone - without even touching it – reduces working memory, attention span, and problem-solving ability.

Research has also found that the younger someone is when they receive their first smartphone, the worse their mental health outcomes tend to be in adulthood – with clear associations between early smartphone use and higher rates of depression, anxiety, sleep problems, self-harm, and difficulty with social relationships later in life.

Smartphones can be a gateway to social media, constant connectivity, and often, exposure to harmful content, cyberbullying, and addictive algorithms.

A nationwide minimum age limit for access to social media will take effect this Wednesday December 10.

Based upon model legislation drafted at the request of the South Australian Government, the legislation puts the onus on social media platforms, rather than parents or young people, to take reasonable steps to ensure fundamental protections are in place.

The Malinauskas Government's introduction of a mobile phone 'off and away' policy in schools continues to show huge improvements in student behaviour and wellbeing.

Department for Education incident reporting shows there has been a 72 per cent decline in matters related to mobile phone use in terms 1 and 2 of 2025 – compared to the same period in 2023, before the ban was in place.

### **Quotes attributable to Peter Malinauskas**

*It is a big week for our state and our nation.*

*As a result of the actions taken by this government, kids around our nation will be protected from the dangers of doomscrolling and harmful algorithms on social media until the age of 16.*

*But legislation is not enough. We need to help give parents the tools they need to talk to their children and support them to free their kids from smartphones.*

*Like seatbelts and smoking in the past, every generation has its challenge requiring widespread cultural change and regulation – smartphones and social media are the modern challenge of our time.*

*Parents can change this, by standing strong together and delaying smartphones, for the benefit of their kids.*

*This investment in the Wait Mate program will allow them to do just that.*

## **Quotes attributable to Blair Boyer**

*South Australia has been leading the nation in protecting our young people.*

*Research has shown the long-term damage that social media can cause young people, and we have tackled it head-on.*

*Often the greatest challenge is how we get the attention of young people to tune in to important safety issues.*

*By creating a community of support, through schools and families, we are showing young people the benefits of not having access to these platforms.*

*Wait Mate provides families with the impetus to help their children through this transition away from social media.*

## **Quotes attributable to Emily Harrison, SA Lead, Wait Mate**

*Every generation has its big challenges. I think smartphones in kids young kids hands is ours. Now that we know the harms of phones we have to face the huge job of turning the tides. We can't do that alone.*

*Parents don't need more rules - they need community. Wait Mate brings that community back.*

*Our goal is simple: to give parents strength in numbers, and to give children back a childhood that isn't dominated by a device.*

*Kids just want to fit in with their peers and smartphones have unfortunately become the currency to belong. And parents don't want their kids to miss out.*

*Wait Mate removes the social pressure from both sides: parents don't feel alone, and kids don't feel different.*

*When whole school communities commit together, the pressure on individual families decreases. That's the power of Wait Mate.*

*I'm incredibly proud that South Australia is leading the way. When government, schools and families work together, we can create healthier digital habits for an entire generation.*

*It's time to change the social norms around kids and smartphones and let our kids be kids for longer.*