

EXPLORE A debated ban

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DIFFÉRENCIATION

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Teen activists could be the key to social media ban challenge

A constitutional fight is brewing¹ over Australia's world-first social media ban, according to top legal scholars.

YouTube emerged as the most likely source of a challenge to the ban in July, when parent company Google⁵ first raised the prospect.

But experts in constitutional and media law told the ABC that doubts about the ban's constitutional validity extended well beyond the board rooms² of the companies that would stand to gain from a victory.

10 They argue the policy could ultimately be overturned in the High Court because of its impact on the implied right to freedom of political communication, and believe that young climate activists such as 16-year-old Ivy Sheng showcase that risk.

The Year 10 student uses Instagram to promote her podcast about environmental justice, as well as sharing her political views with a wide network, including both adults¹⁵ and younger students.

She credits much of her "political education" to social media.

"There wasn't really one specific moment where I suddenly switched on [politically], but I was about 12," she said.

Ivy will scrape past³ the new social media age limit of 16 when it takes effect on²⁰ December 10, but many of her peers are preparing to lose access to their accounts once platforms start checking ages, as required by Australian law.

"That's the first group that I'm reaching and so with this ban in place, that's going to be a group that we're losing," she said.

Ivy said social media had become the main place where young people developed²⁵ their political views, and represented their best opportunity to be heard by people who were old enough to vote.

"Having young people step up and say, like, hey, this is going to impact my future—I think that's probably the most important thing that's going to bring more older people into the [climate] movement," she said.

30 "If people aren't able to access [...] social media, they won't be thinking about this when they go into their teens and when they [reach] voting age."

"And that's just not something that is beneficial for us, I think, as a society."

Ange LAVOPIERRE, *abc.net.au*, 2025



▲ Climate activist Ivy Sheng protesting to protect the environment, 2025

1. developing 2. a room where heads of companies meet 3. contournier

WAY 1

1. a. Look at the photo and read the title and tick the correct answers. The document is about:

- ☐ climate change ☐ the impact of the ban on young activists
☐ the impact of the internet on the environment

b. Read the text and **highlight** the information about Ivy Sheng, then **complete** the sentence.

Ivy Sheng is years old, at school she is in, she is an activist.

2. Read the text again and **highlight** the impact of the ban according to experts and **tick** the right answer.

- ☐ the ban is unconstitutional because it limits the freedom of speech ☐ the ban is not popular because it is useless
☐ the ban is impossible to implement because activists are protesting

3. **Underline** Ivy's relationship to social media and how she uses the internet for her political engagement. Then **complete** the sentence.

She is active on social media such as in order to share her opinions and promote her environmental She is an online

Thanks to the internet, she developed her awareness when she was years old.

4. Pick out information about the impact of the ban on youth civic participation, and **tick** the right answers.

Young people may: ☐ no longer develop political views ☐ start spreading fake news ☐ no longer be heard ☐ not lose their accounts ☐ never vote ☐ lose a means to be politically educated

5. Sum up the main ideas of the document, showing the conflict between online protection and political expression rights. **Use** the following words and expressions.

Young activists • ban • prevent from • political education • protection • freedom of speech

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WAY 2

1. a. Look at the picture, **read** the title, and **say** what the article could be about.

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b. Read the text and **highlight** the information about Ivy Sheng, then **sum up** in one sentence.

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2. Read the text again and **highlight** the impact of the ban according to experts and rephrase their views.

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3. Underline Ivy's relationship to social media and how she uses the internet for her political engagement. Then **recap** in a few lines.

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4. Pick out information about the impact of the ban on youth civic participation, then **rephrase**.

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5. Sum up the main ideas of the document. **Use** the following words and expressions.

young activists • ban • prevent from • political education • protection • freedom of speech

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