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No socials, no worries

Daily Telegraph, Sydney

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Parents and kids welcome upcoming ban on platforms

Taylor Penny

For many teens, the incoming social media ban will mark a huge change to their day-to-day lives.

But not for 14-year-old Dinah Hersh – she has never used social media and believes other teens will be better off with the ban too.

Busy with school most days, she says her time outside of the classroom is spent away from screens too.

“I love to read, go on walks, and I like to bake cakes and cupcakes,” Dinah said.

She said having no social media had not caused any issues in her social life.

Using a “dumbphone” which does not connect to the internet, she is able to text her friends but prefers to communicate in person.

“We see each other every day at school, and we’re still able to catch up on weekends and holidays,” Dinah said.

Her mum, Tarryn, chose not

to allow her four kids – aged three to 14 – access to social media, over concerns for their mental and physical wellbeing.

“Being a teenager and going through relationships and school is a huge process in itself,” she said. “I think social media has made childhood more challenging these days, and we just felt we needed to push through that.”

Dinah said the upcoming ban for anyone aged under 16 in Australia, following News Corp’s Let Them Be Kids campaign, would be a great way for teens to focus on life beyond their screens.

“Maybe it’d be a good time for people to find a new hobby,” she said.

Amy Friedlander, co-founder of Wait Mate – a movement connecting parents who don’t want their kids accessing social media – said 13,324 parents across 1774 Aussie schools

had pledged to stop their children accessing smartphones.

“Smartphones are designed to be addictive and are the gateway to social media,” she said.

One of the parents joining the Wait Mate movement is Andrea Aschner.

With her 13-year-old daughter Frankie, Ms Aschner made the choice to ban social media after a safety conference showed her the dangers.

“They talked about exposure to pornography and different content, and it really opened my eyes,” she said.

Frankie said she thinks the upcoming ban might make it easier to communicate with other teenagers.

“Sometimes it’s hard to speak to people my age when they’re always on their phones,” she said.

Frankie also said being off social media had not stopped her from maintaining friend-

ships. “I do a lot of swimming ... and I play netball too, so I’m always seeing my friends from sport,” she said.

Mrs Aschner said her daughter’s busy schedule was easier because of their technology restrictions. “I think she gets better sleep, and it gives her more energy to do the things she loves,” she said.

Australian Association of Psychologists president Sahra O’Doherty said social media could have detrimental effects on teen wellbeing and was linked to depression, anxiety, increased stress, and decreased concentration levels.

“It can change how they think about themselves, not just in their adolescence but into adulthood,” she said.

LET THEM BE KIDS



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Yoni and Tarryn Hersh have decided to keep their kids – Gavi, 10, Eitan, 7, Ami, 3, and Dinah, 14 – off social media and say the results have been positive. Picture: Josie Hayden