



Literature review on cell phone ban in schools

Background on the proposed ban

1. On 9 August 2023, the leader of the National Party (National), Christopher Luxon, announced National “will ban cell phone use at schools to help lift achievement and support every child to make the most out of the education”. This is part of National’s 100-day action plan. [OBJ]
2. The press release indicated schools would be able to decide how to enforce the ban with examples given of requiring students to hand in their phones or leave them in their lockers or bags. Parents would be able to contact their children via the school office and there would be exceptions for some students as mentioned above. The ban would be implemented via regulations with school deciding on practical arrangements.

Method

3. The press release from National referred to UNESCO report and other studies in the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America (USA). Other evidence used in this review includes a range of materials from studies, articles, and government publications on the banning of mobile phones in schools.

Background to mandatory bans of mobile phones in schools

When did mobile phones in schools become a problem?

4. The first smartphone, the iPhone, was introduced in 2007. The use and ownership of smartphones by school aged children and young people has expanded rapidly since then. According to a literature review by the New South Wales (NSW) government, as at 2016 9 out of 10 Australian teens aged 14 to 17 own a smartphone and 67% of primary school-aged children own their own mobile screen-based device.¹ The use of digital technology (including individually owned devices such as smartphones, smartwatches and personal tablets) in schools has become increasingly prevalent both in Australia and internationally.²

¹ [Impact of mobile digital devices in schools - Literature Review \(nsw.gov.au\)](https://www.nsw.gov.au/impact-of-mobile-digital-devices-in-schools-literature-review) and Roy Morgan ‘9 in 10 Aussie teens now have a mobile (and most are already on to their second or subsequent handset)’, Roy Morgan, Australia, viewed 28 September 2018, <http://www.roymorgan.com/findings/6929-australian-teenagers-and-their-mobile-phones-june-2016-201608220922>, and Royal Children’s Hospital Melbourne 2017, Australian Child Health Poll 2017, report prepared by Dr. A Rhodes.

² [Impact of mobile digital devices in schools - Literature Review \(nsw.gov.au\)](https://www.nsw.gov.au/impact-of-mobile-digital-devices-in-schools-literature-review)

Methods and outcomes of bans mixed

5. A table of jurisdictions that ban or restrict the use of mobile phones in schools is in Annex 1. According to a 2023 UNESCO study on technology in schools (the UNESCO study), one in seven OECD countries ban the use of mobile phones by law with more using policy, plans, strategy or guidelines to restrict the use of mobile phones in schools. [OEB] There is a mix of regulatory tools used to ban mobile phones. There is also a mix of outcomes from these bans or restrictions.
6. A legislative mandatory ban may not be warranted. According to the UNESCO study:³

“Banning technology from schools can be legitimate if technology integration does not improve learning or if it worsens student well-being. Yet, working with technology in schools, and the accompanying risks, may require something more than banning. First, policies should be clear on what is and is not permitted in schools. Second, there should be clarity on the role these new technologies play in learning and on their responsible use by and within schools. Third, students need to learn the risks and opportunities that come with technology, develop critical skills, and understand to live with and without technology.”

Findings from literature on purpose of mandatory bans

7. Governments pursue two main goals with this type of policy intervention: improving academic performance and reducing bullying. Any restriction on the use of mobile phones needs to consider the growing importance of technology for students.

Reduce distraction, improve student achievement

8. The UNESCO study found the use of smartphones and computers disrupts classroom and home learning activity. According to this study, evidence shows a negative link between excessive ICT use and student performance. The study says: “[m]ere proximity to a mobile device was found to distract students and to have a negative impact on learning in 14 countries, yet less than one in four have banned smartphone use in schools”.⁴
9. A longitudinal study by the London School of Economics (the UK longitudinal study) analysed the gains in test scores before and after mobile phone bans were introduced in schools and found the bans resulted in positive effects on student achievement. This study involving students in 91 UK high schools in 2015 found that there was an improvement in student performance of 6.41% of a standard deviation in schools that banned mobile phones. The researchers estimated this corresponded to an extra working week to the school year. They found there were no significant gains in student performance if a ban is not widely complied with. [OEB]
10. A study on the effect of banning smartphones in the classroom on students’ educational outcomes in Norwegian middle schools, showed that the banning policies significantly increased students’ grade point average and increased their likelihood of attending an academic high school track. [OEB]

³ Ibid p 157.

⁴ World Economic Forum UNESCO “Technology in education: a tool on whose terms” (2023) p 4, available at unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000385723/PDF/385723eng.pdf.multi

11. In 2018 the New South Wales Department of Education did a review of the impact of mobile phones in schools (NSW review).⁵ The NSW review team surveyed students, parents and carers, and teachers and received almost 14,000 responses.⁶ The reviewers also did a literature review, held focus groups, did interviews, and received written submissions. The consensus was that mobile devices are often a distraction in the classroom, especially in primary schools. Some teachers thought a significant amount of time was wasted managing mobile devices in the classroom, which diminished the time spent delivering the syllabus.
12. On the other hand, Dr Joanne Orlando, a digital expert at the University of Western Sydney, says research indicated phone bans does not improve academic outcomes, largely because students were rarely using phones during class.⁷ Dr Orlando cites the 2020 Swedish study that examined high school students grade marks before and after a yearlong mobile phone ban and found no impact on academic performance.⁸
13. The Alberta Teachers' Association did a survey in 2005 of 2,200 teachers and principals.⁹ Two-thirds of teachers said they felt that digital technology was a growing distraction in class for students, and more than half said that they themselves felt distracted. More than three-quarters of teachers surveyed also said that they felt students were having more difficulty focusing in school, and about two-thirds of educators said more students were coming to school sleepy.
14. A Spanish study in 2022 (the Spanish study) used empirical data of two regions, Galicia, and Castilla La Mancha, to look at the impact of a non-spending-based policy intervention directly aimed at enhancing academic outcomes and, simultaneously, students' social behaviour.¹⁰ This study compared the two regions where the policy was implemented with the rest of regions in Spain before and after the intervention took place. It found a ban of mobile phones had significant effects on the PISA scores of the Galicia region that are equivalent to 0.6–0.8 years of learning in maths and around 0.72 to near one year of learning in sciences.¹¹ The detrimental effects of mobile phones in schools are explained because multi-tasking or task-

⁵ [Review into the non-educational use of mobile devices in NSW schools – report](#)

⁶ [Review into the non-educational use of mobile devices in NSW schools – report](#)

⁷ Dr Joanne Orlando "Another school has banned mobile phones but research shows bans don't stop bullying or improve student grades" (11 August 2022) [Another school has banned mobile phones but research shows bans don't stop bullying or improve student grades — Dr Joanne Orlando | Digital Wellbeing Specialist](#)

⁸ Kessel, D., Hardardottir, H.L. and Tyrefors, B. (2020), "The impact of banning mobile phones in Swedish secondary schools", *Economics of Education Review*, Vol. 77, p. 102009.

⁹ [Impact of mobile digital devices in schools - Literature Review \(nsw.gov.au\)](#) and Alberta Teachers' Association 2015, *Growing up Digital*, Alberta, report prepared by The Alberta Teachers' Association, University of Alberta, Boston Children's Hospital, Center on Media and Child Health, & Harvard Medical School.

¹⁰ Pilar Beneito & Óscar Vicente-Chirivella, 2022. "Banning mobile phones in schools: evidence from regional-level policies in Spain," *Applied Economic Analysis*, Emerald Group Publishing Limited, vol. 30(90), pages 153-175, January.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

switching decrease learning.¹² For example, notifications on the smartphone are a constant distraction limiting students' attention during class and/or study time.

15. The Spanish study found that even if mobile phones are used to structured activities, allowing them in schools opens the door to be used for recreational purposes as well, thus generating distraction.

Reduce bullying, improve mental wellbeing

16. According to the NSW, there are concerns about the impact of digital devices, such as mobile phones, on the interactions between students including bullying, exposure to harmful material, mental and physical health, and disruption to schoolwork. [OBJ]

Bullying

17. There is little research on the relationship between the use of mobile phones and bullying in schools. It is estimated that cyberbullying represents around 20 percent of bullying cases according to a 2020 article.¹³ Smartphones are one of the main conduits for bullying among children.¹⁴ Although there is not a lot of evidence, a 2020 paper found that banning mobile phones have the potential to reduce bullying amount middle-school students.¹⁵ The NSW review team, however, found that there is no credible, peer-reviewed literature about the extent to which the presence of mobile phones in recess and lunchtime increases the incidents of cyberbullying.¹⁶
18. Due to the nature of cyberbullying, it is It is difficult to determine the extent to which mobile phones in schools influence cyberbullying. With increased access to, and use of, information and communication technologies, such as mobile digital devices, there is an increased risk of students being cyberbullied and cyberbullying others.¹⁷ The NSW Commission for Children and Young People found cyberbullying is seen as a new form of an old problem, rather than because of internet use itself. [OBJ]
19. The NSW review team referred to a report from the eSafety Commissioner which found one in four students under the age of 12 are being stalked, harassed, and abused online. [OBJ] Although mobile phones themselves do not cause bullying, they are connected to the issues of attitude, relationships, respect, and culture.¹⁸ From their survey they found that mobile devices – and, in particular, social media and messaging applications – were seen by some young people

¹² Pilar Beneito & Óscar Vicente-Chirivella, 2022. "Banning mobile phones in schools: evidence from regional-level policies in Spain," Applied Economic Analysis, Emerald Group Publishing Limited, vol. 30(90), pages 153-175, January.

¹³ Cook, S. (2020), "Cyberbullying facts and statistics for 2020", Website Comparitech.com. Updated: November (11), 2020, available at: www.comparitech.com/internet-providers/cyberbullying-statistics/

¹⁴ Adams, M. (2019), "Threading the Cyber-Needle: protecting children by banning smartphones in school while still embracing technology", McGeorge L. Rev, Vol. 51, p. 245.

¹⁵ Abrahamsson, S. (2020), "Distraction or teaching tool: do smartphone bans in schools help students?", available at: <https://sites.google.com/view/saraabrahamsson/research>

¹⁶ [Review into the non-educational use of mobile devices in NSW schools – report](#)

¹⁷ Vaillancourt, T, Faris, R, Mishna, F 2017, 'Cyberbullying in children and youth: Implications for health and clinical practice', Canadian Journal of Psychiatry, vol. 62, no. 6, pp.368-373.

¹⁸ [Review into the non-educational use of mobile devices in NSW schools – report](#)

and teachers as amplifying existing bullying problems within a school community.¹⁹ Overall, the review team noted that the evidence from young people and peer reviewed literature is that the presence of smartphones in schools at recess and lunchtime may increase the incidence of bullying and image-based abuse with significant short-, medium- and long-term impacts on the mental health of young people.²⁰

20. A report by the University of Queensland in April 2023 drawing on national and international evidence noted: [REDACTED]

- a lack of agreement within research as to the efficacy of banning mobile devices at school as a universal strategy to reduce cyberbullying;
- restricting access (for example requiring students to lock phones in lockers, and blocking access to social media platforms on school-owned technology) has been introduced in some jurisdictions to reduce the impact of distractions from technology during learning times; and
- that the suggestion of 'bans' may be overly simplistic and do not sufficiently address addiction to technology, digital distraction, or rates of cyberbullying.

21. The Spanish study found the ban of mobile phones in two regions in Spain showed noticeable reductions of bullying incidence among teenagers in the two regions. [REDACTED] This is, according to the authors, the first empirical study analysing the impact of mobile phone bans in schools on bullying cases, exploiting variation across regions (or other units), years and age intervals. [REDACTED]

22. On the other hand, Dr Joanne Orlando from the University of Western Sydney says research tell us traditional (in person) bullying continues to be more prevalent than cyberbullying so removing a device for six hours a day will not stop the bullying. [REDACTED]

Wellbeing

23. Evidence shows a link between the increased of digital technologies by young people and their wellbeing. Research conducted by the Gonski Institute for Education in 2020 found that nine out of 10 teachers and principals in Australia have seen an increase in the number of students with emotional, social, and behavioural challenges compared to just five years ago. The report stated that “although the report noted the apparent deterioration in students’ health, wellbeing and enthusiasm for learning cannot be directly linked with their increased use of digital technologies –it is “most likely the case”²¹.

24. A 2017 US study found an association between growing rates of ‘new media’ (electronic device use and social media) screen time and a rise in mental health issues. [REDACTED] The study examined the results of two nationally representative surveys of over 506,000 US teenagers in Years 8 to 12. It found that young people who spent more time on new media were more likely to report mental health issues including depression, suicide, and suicide-related outcomes than young people who spent more time on non-screen activities such as in-person social interaction, sports, and homework. [REDACTED]

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ [Review into the non-educational use of mobile devices in NSW schools – report](#)

²¹ Gonski Institute for Education “Growing Up Digital Australia: Phase 1 Technical report (2020) [Growing Up Digital Australia | Gonski Institute for Education - UNSW Sydney](#)

25. According to the UNESCO study the use of technology is associated with negative impacts on physical and mental well-being and increased susceptibility to online risks and harms, which affect academic performance in the long term.” [REDACTED]
26. The Queensland Government commissioned an independent review into the student mobile phone use in Queensland state schools in 2023. According to the paper by Cheryl Vardon three guiding principles for the review were: [REDACTED]
- protecting learning environments from unnecessary distractions
 - safeguarding the wellbeing of all students
 - supporting principal autonomy to recognise student and school community needs in policy implementation.

Benefits of mobile device use

27. The reviews and studies also found positive aspects to the student use of mobile phones. The NSW review team noted that according to international research, under the right circumstances, digital media can powerfully support children’s and young people’s mental health and wellbeing. [REDACTED] Research shows that while greater access to technology potentially exposes children to a greater risk of harm, it also exposes them to greater opportunities, including that of increasing their digital literacy. [REDACTED]
28. The NSW review team found that mobile devices can be powerful education tools when used responsibly and increasingly children are learning and documenting their learning in formats other than traditional reading and writing.²² Mobile devices can assist with monitoring health and/or mental health conditions; promote connection to communities of support; and encourage help-seeking practices among groups who do not usually reach out for support.²³ They concluded that young people from an early age need to be equipped with the skills, knowledge and strategies to use these new technologies in a safe, responsible and informed way.²⁴
29. The NSW review team acknowledged, however, that the majority of parents, teachers and many students did not perceive a genuine educational use for mobile devices.²⁵ Both students and educators noted that, when there was reliable, good quality, regular access to iPad, tablet, laptop, or desktop technology, mobile device access was seen as having minimal additional educational value.²⁶ In schools where the quality of connectivity, or the availability of desktops and laptops, was not always optimal, mobile devices may, however, represent the most viable option for connected learning.²⁷
30. The Spanish study also found the use of mobile devices is not necessarily detrimental for education when correctly designed. For example, the use of certain Apps could make children more involved in their learning process and increase the enjoyment from studying. [REDACTED]

²² [Review into the non-educational use of mobile devices in NSW schools – report](#)

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ [Review into the non-educational use of mobile devices in NSW schools – report](#)

²⁵ [Review into the non-educational use of mobile devices in NSW schools – report](#)

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

Components to consider for a regulatory ban

Whether the restrictions should be mandatory or optional

31. National's proposed ban is for nation-wide mandatory ban. Currently schools can restrict student use of cell phones through making bylaws (rules). This allows schools to decide whether to have restrictions to meet the circumstances of their school.
32. A review for the Queensland Government in 2023 did a survey of students, educators, parents and carers, experts, and other interested members of the community. From the 1261 responses (97.7% of all schools) 86.5% implemented a full restriction where mobile phones are stored away for the day. 7.7% applied a partial restriction which allowed mobile phones to be accessed and used during approved times (e.g. lunch breaks). Despite most schools already banning mobile phones, the review report said "there was an overwhelming response from the stakeholders we heard from that, whatever the outcome of this review, a clear and consistent policy across all Queensland state schools is urgently needed" [REDACTED].

Cell phones, smartphones, or mobile devices?

33. National's proposed ban is for cell phones. As seen in Annex 2 other jurisdictions refer to mobile phones, mobile digital devices, smart phones, smart watches, tablets, and other personal devices.
34. According to a review of smartphones in classes by the New South Wales (NSW) government the term 'mobile digital device' means: [REDACTED]

Mobile digital device: a hand-held electronic device that can generate, receive, store, process and send digital information, including photos and videos. For the purposes of this review, mobile digital devices include smartphones, smartwatches, and mobile tablets but not laptops. The review team make a distinction between personal use devices that often have independent internet connectivity which bypasses the school internet filter and devices that are provided by the school and or authorised by the school as part of teacher-directed educational activities.

35. One issue is whether the ban should just be for mobile phones or for other mobile devices. Appendix 2 shows a mix of banning just mobile phones and banning mobile phones as well as other devices such as smart watches and personal iPads.
36. The NSW review team was not in favour of banning the use of technology in the form of desktops, laptops, and tablets if they have school-provided filters that offer students some level of protection, as well as opportunities for positive classroom learning. [REDACTED]

Practical issues on how to implement and how to enforce

37. Annex 2 shows there are a variety of ways to enforce a mandatory ban of mobile phones. Western Australia and Northern Territory in Australia restrict younger children from having mobile phones in their possession while older children can have their phones, but they must be turned off. Queensland decided to work closely with schools on how to best implement the ban in a way that reflects the realities of their school. For example, a small school in the outback may require students to hand phones in to a nominated staff member, while a school with thousands of students may choose to use lockable pouches.

38. The NSW review team found that policies which restrict use of mobile devices are both manageable and enforceable.²⁸ They recommended NSW Government resource facilities to ensure the safe storage of children's mobile devices in government primary schools during school hours.²⁹ The NSW Government did not support this and instead provides advice to primary schools on the way different schools are managing devices, including storage.

Exceptions to a ban

39. National's policy is to have the following three exceptions for the mandatory ban:³⁰

- The use of cell phones in class for an educational purpose that is part of a student's schoolwork.
- Students who need to use their cell phone for a health purpose will be granted an exemption.
- Students with learning challenges, who are aided by cell phones, will be granted an exemption.

40. Annex 2 shows a mix of exceptions from jurisdictions with mandatory bans. Ontario and France have similar exceptions as proposed by National. South Australia new ban in high schools allows school principals to approve exemptions in exceptional circumstances on a case-by-case basis, including for:

- to monitor or help manage a health condition
- as a negotiated adjustment to a learning program for a student with disability or learning difficulties
- to help translate information in the classroom by a student with English as an additional language
- where there are extenuating personal circumstances which require them to have ready access to their personal device, such as being a parent themselves or a primary carer to a younger sibling or an unwell family member.

41. The NSW review team noted that many parents regard their child having a smartphone as an essential communication tool, especially going to and from school. The review team recommended that, where a parent wishes their child to take a smartphone to and from a primary school, they should opt either to purchase a 'dumb' phone or other device without internet access or a camera, or alternatively use parental controls to deactivate the camera and internet functionality on an existing 'smart' device. [OBJ]

All levels, or just younger children?

42. Annex 2 shows some jurisdictions apply the ban from preschool to the end of school (e.g. Northern Territory), while others just applied a ban to primary schools (e.g. NSW although high schools will be included in late 2023).

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ [Review into the non-educational use of mobile devices in NSW schools – report](#)

³⁰ Christopher Luxton, National "National will ban cell phone use at school" (9 August 2023, National press release) [National will ban cell phone use at school - New Zealand National Party](#)

43. The NSW review team stopped short of recommending a restriction on smartphones for secondary schools but offered several approaches that schools could adopt based on their circumstances.³¹ Their reasoning was that students in Year 11 and 12 demonstrate greater capacity for self-regulation than their younger peers and that schools should therefore provide these students with opportunities to develop self-control in the context of limiting smartphone use to specific times and specific places.³²

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

References

Reviews & articles

UNESCO report: "Technology in education: a tool on whose terms" (2023) is available at unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000385723/PDF/385723eng.pdf.multi

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[Review into the non-educational use of mobile devices in NSW schools – report](#)

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Beland, L & Murphy, R 2015, Ill communication: Technology, distraction and student performance, CEP discussion paper no. 1350, Centre for Economic Performance, London, [Microsoft Word - Mobile Phones May2015v6 \(lse.ac.uk\)](#)

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[France: Government Adopts Law Banning Cell Phone Use at School | Library of Congress \(loc.gov\)](#)

Media

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[South Korea's teachers to be allowed to remove disruptive students, ban phones | The Straits Times](#)

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RNZ “Principals say National’s plan to ban phones in school is unworkable” (9 August 2023) [Principals say National's plan to ban phones in school is unworkable | RNZ News](#)

Newshub “Election 2023: Chris Hipkins says schools don’t need ‘Christopher Luxon’s permission’ to ban mobile phones” [Election 2023: Chris Hipkins says schools don't need 'Christopher Luxon's permission' to ban mobile phones | Newshub](#)

Lee Kenny, Stuff, “New year mobile phone ban for students as Christchurch school resolves to improve learning and mental health” (20 December 2020) [New year mobile phone ban for students as Christchurch school resolves to improve learning and mental health | Stuff.co.nz](#)

Government

[Mobile phones in Queensland state schools will be ‘away for the day’ - Ministerial Media Statements](#)

[NSW Government begins mobile phone ban in public high schools | NSW Government](#)

Department of Education, UK “Mobile phones in schools” (9 February 2022) [Mobile phones in schools - The Education Hub \(blog.gov.uk\)](#)

Ministry of Education, Ontario, Canada, [Cell phones and other personal mobile devices in schools | ontario.ca](#)

Legislation and guidelines

The Education (Surrender, Retention, and Search) Rules 2013 provides for the retention and storage of items or devices taken under the Act (rule 7).

Ministry of Education “Surrender and retention of property and searches – guidelines” (January 2014) [Surrender and retention of property and searches - guidelines – Education in New Zealand](#)

Ministry of Education “Digital technology – a safe-use guide for schools’ Digital technology – [A safe-use guide for schools – Education in New Zealand](#)

Ministry of Education “Consulting on bylaws (school rules)” [Consulting on bylaws \(school rules\) – Education in New Zealand.](#)



Annex 1: Overseas jurisdictions

Jurisdiction	Mandatory & legislation	Duration & coverage	Exemptions	Enforce & how
United Kingdom	<p>Not mandatory. It is currently up to headteachers to decide whether to ban devices.</p> <p>The UK Department of Education will provide guidance in October 2023 for schools on the management of mobile phones but will leave it up to schools to develop plans or ban mobile phones during the school day.³³</p> <p>However, Education Secretary Gillian Keegan on 2 October 2023 threatened to pass legislation to ban mobile phones if schools fail to act on the proposed new guidance in lessons and during break times if new guidance is not heeded.^[REDACTED]</p> <p>As of September 2023, Scotland is considering having stricter rules on the use of mobile phones in schools through having a partial ban.^[REDACTED]</p>			Currently not enforced as voluntary.
Northern Territory	<p>Mandatory ban by guidelines from term 1 2023.^[REDACTED]</p> <p>Students in preschool to year 6 will not be permitted to have mobile phones in their possession during the school day and smart watches must be switched to flight mode.</p>	All Northern Territory government schools	Does not apply to outside hours school care services run by external providers.	Student mobile phones in government school policy ³⁴

³³ Department of Education, UK "Mobile phones in schools" (9 February 2022) [Mobile phones in schools - The Education Hub \(blog.gov.uk\)](#) and [Blanket ban of mobile phones in schools across England 'unenforceable' | The Independent](#)

³⁴ [Student mobile phones in government schools – policy](#)

	<p>Students from years 7 to 12 can have their mobile phone during the school day but they must be off and away all day - switched off, not accessed, seen, or heard during the school and securely stored. Smart watches must be switched to flight mode.</p>		<p>The new policy will allow for teachers to permit mobiles only when required for learning purposes, medical reasons or in emergencies to contact emergency services. Exceptions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to monitor a health condition as part of a school-approved documented health care plan; • for a particular educational purpose under the direct instruction of a teacher; • with permission of a teacher for a specific purpose; • in the event of an emergency. 	
<p>New South Wales</p>	<p>A digital technology policy released for NSW public schools in 2020. ⁽⁶⁹⁾ This allows schools to customise their own school procedure using an online form. It includes communication resources.</p> <p>This started in 2018 for public primary schools, will start in late 2023 for public high schools. Extending the ban to</p>	<p>The ban applies during class, recess, and lunch times</p> <p>The policy covers student use of smartphones,</p>	<p>Exemptions may be granted by a principal or teacher, including allowing students to use a device for an educational purpose, or as part of a reasonable adjustment for student learning and wellbeing.</p>	<p>The student use of digital devices and online services policy³⁵</p>

³⁵ [Student Mobile Phones in Public Schools Policy - Policies - Department of Education](#)

	<p>cover high schools was an election commitment. [redacted] Some high schools already have a ban. [redacted]</p> <p>This followed a 2020 review into the non-educational use of mobile devices in NSW schools which assessed the extent to which smartphones in schools contributes to online (or cyber) bullying and the wellbeing and educational experiences of young people. [redacted] It considered whether a restriction or other limits should be placed on smartphone use for children.</p> <p>Principals are to consult students, parents, carers, and school staff when developing their school procedure</p>	<p>smartwatches, tablets, laptops, and any other device that allows connectivity to the internet and applications.</p> <p>From Term 4 2023, students in all government schools will be banned from using mobile phones at school. The ban on mobile phones will apply during class, recess, and lunch times, as is the case in government primary schools. Students will be allowed to carry their phones while travelling to and from school.</p>	<p>Parents, carers, and, if appropriate, students themselves, can request the principal to provide an exemption from parts of this policy or the school procedure.</p>	
<p>Queensland</p>	<p>A mandatory ban starts will start Term 1, 2024. [redacted] This will be done by guidance.</p>	<p>The ban is for all school hours including breaks.</p>	<p>School principals have flexibility to determine:</p>	<p>The Department will work closely with schools on how to best implement the ban in a way that</p>

	<p>Almost all (95%) of state school already have bans in place, but not all bans cover break times. The purpose is to strengthen state-wide policy.</p> <p>A paper was prepared for the Queensland Government in July 2023 on the proposed ban. [66]</p>	<p>The ban applies to mobile phones and wearable technology like smartwatches.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how mobile phones and certain wearable devices will be stored during the day • reasonable adjustments for students with disability or learning difficulties, medical needs, those experiencing trauma, and where use of a personal device is approved to support student learning • appropriate student disciplinary action where the policy is not followed, in accordance with departmental policies 	<p>reflects the realities of their school. For example, a small school in the outback may require students to hand phones in to a nominated staff member, while a school with thousands of students may choose to use lockable pouches.</p>
<p>ACT</p>	<p>No mandatory ban. The use of mobile phones and other personal electronic devices by students in ACT public schools is currently governed by the Acceptable Use of ICT - Parents and Students policy³⁶ and the Use of Personal Electronic Devices (PED) policy³⁷. These policies currently allow the use of mobile phones and other personal electronic devices in ACT public schools.</p>	<p>Students in government schools may take personal electronic devices to school to support their learning, including</p>		<p>The Use of Personal Electronic Devices policy³⁸</p> <p>The principal is responsible for ensuring student use is consistent with the policy.</p>

³⁶ [Communities Online: Acceptable use of ICT – Parents and Students Policy - Education \(act.gov.au\)](#)

³⁷ [Use of Personal Electronic Devices Policy - Education \(act.gov.au\)](#)

³⁸ [Use of Personal Electronic Devices Policy - Education \(act.gov.au\)](#)

	The ACT Government is currently seeking feedback on a review of ACT public schools' mobile phone use policies. [00]	workstations, laptops, tablet devices and smartphones.		
Western Australia	<p>Mobile phones are banned across Western Australia public schools. Children from kindergarten to year 6 who bring a phone to schools must have it stored with teachers for the entire day.</p> <p>This policy took place form term 1 2023.</p> <p>Under the policy: [00]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary students cannot have a mobile phone in their possession. If your child is in Kindergarten to Year 6 and they bring a mobile phone to school, it will be stored until the end of school. • Students in Years 7 to 12 are allowed to have their phone in their possession but must turn it off and keep it out of sight until the end of school. 	<p>This extends to the use of smart watches which need to be on airplane mode during this period.</p> <p>The policy applies to smartphones, smart watches, other electronic communication devices, and associated listening accessories, such as, but not limited to, headphones and ear buds. Schools may choose, in consultation with the school community, to maintain or introduce a</p>	<p>Students in government schools are not permitted to use mobile phones except for medical or teacher-directed educational purposes.</p> <p>Requires the principal to restrict student phone use unless an exemption has been granted for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to monitor a health condition to monitor as part of a school-approved documented health care plan; • for a particular educational purpose under the direct instruction of a teacher; • with permission of a teacher for a specified purpose. 	<p>Student Mobile Phones in Public Schools policy³⁹</p> <p>Breaches of the policy are managed in accordance with the policy: Student Behaviour in Public Schools Policy and Procedure which has a multi-tiered system of support and approaches.⁴⁰</p>

³⁹ [Student Mobile Phones in Public Schools Policy - Policies - Department of Education](#)

⁴⁰ [Student Behaviour in Public Schools Policy - Policies - Department of Education](#) with Procedures available at: [Asset Publisher - Policies \(education.wa.edu.au\)](#) and the Policy available at: [Asset Publisher - Policies \(education.wa.edu.au\)](#).

		mobile phone policy that imposes further restrictions than those set out in the policy.		
Victoria	<p>Mandatory mobile phone policy for all government schools from 2020.⁴¹</p> <p>Phones bought to school must be switched off and stored securely during the school day.</p>	<p>All public schools.</p> <p>Only mobile phones.</p>	<p>Exceptions for if a mobile phone is essential for a student in: ⁽⁰⁰⁰⁾</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning-related: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ specific learning activities ○ reasonable adjustments associated with a student's disability. • Health and wellbeing-related: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ students with a health condition documented in the Student Health Support Plan ○ students who are documented as young carers. • Risk related to managing students offsite, including where students: 	<p>The “Mobile Phones – Student use policy⁴²” requires schools to develop a local approach.</p>

⁴¹ [Mobile phones in schools | vic.gov.au \(www.vic.gov.au\)](http://www.vic.gov.au)

⁴² [Mobile Phones — Student Use: Policy | education.vic.gov.au](http://education.vic.gov.au)

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ travel to and from excursions ○ are on an excursion or camp ○ are offsite and unsupervised with parental permission ○ have a dual enrolment and/or need to undertake intercampus travel. <p>Teachers can grant a classroom-based learning exception. Other exceptions are managed by the school principal.</p>	
South Australia	<p>Mobile phones are banned in all public high schools from term 3 2023. [68]</p> <p>Legislation to trial mobile phone storage devices in Government Schools in 2021 - Education and Children's Services (Mobile Phones in Schools) Amendment Bill 2021⁴³</p>	Smart phones, smart watches, tablets, and other personal devices are included in the ban.	The policy requires students in all government schools to keep their personal devices, including mobile phones, of and away between the start and end of each school day and while attending authorised school activities of-site.	<p>Student use of mobile phones and personal devices policy⁴⁴</p> <p>In line with this policy, each school will locally decide where students will keep their personal devices during school hours. whether teachers will be able to approve</p>

⁴³ [Education and Children's Services \(Mobile Phones in Schools\) Amendment Bill 2021 | South Australian Legislation](#)

⁴⁴ [Student use of mobile phones and personal devices policy \(education.sa.gov.au\)](#)

		<p>The devices covered by this policy include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mobile phones and smart phones • smart watches and other wearable devices that can send and/or receive calls and messages and/or connect to an internet network • laptops, iPads, tablets that are not owned by the school, and were not brought to school by the student under a separate BYOD agreement • any other digital devices with capability of connecting to a cellular communication network, the internet, or both. 	<p>Each school can approve exemptions in exceptional circumstances. These are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the device is used to monitor or help manage a health condition; • the device is a negotiated adjustment to a learning program for a student with disability or learning difficulties; • the device is used for translation in the classroom by a student with English as an additional language; • the student has extenuating personal circumstances that require them to have ready access to their personal device, such as being a parent themselves or a primary carer to younger siblings or an unwell family member. <p>The school principal is responsible for assessing</p>	<p>temporary exemptions for students to use personal devices for a learning activity or other agreed reason - and if so, how the consequences for non-compliance with the policy, in line with the school's local behaviour support policy.</p> <p>When incidents occur during school hours, or in connection with school, they must be managed and reported in line with departmental policies and procedures, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reporting critical incidents, injuries, hazards and near miss procedure • behaviour support policy • suspension, exclusion, and expulsion of students procedure • search and seizure procedure • responding to online safety incidents in South Australian schools' guidelines
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			<p>and granting any exceptions on a case-by-case basis for reasons such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to monitor or help manage a health condition • as a negotiated adjustment to a learning program for a student with disability or learning difficulties • to help translate information in the classroom by a student with English as an additional language <p>where there are extenuating personal circumstances which require them to have ready access to their personal device, such as being a parent themselves or a primary carer to a younger sibling or an unwell family member.</p>	
Tasmania	Since Term 2 2020, students have been required to ensure their mobile phones are "off and away all day" from bell to bell.		Principals may determine exemptions or exceptions where students:	Use of Mobile Phones by Students at School Policy 'Off and away all day' ⁴⁵

⁴⁵ [DoE Policy Template \(education.tas.gov.au\)](http://education.tas.gov.au)

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are in Years 11 and 12, in consultation with their school association; • require a reasonable adjustment to a learning program because of a disability and/or learning difficulty; • have a health condition or are young carers; • are undertaking school activities outside school hours that are not on school campuses; • have been given direct instruction by a teacher to use their mobile phone for educational purposes (including under the Bring Your Own Technology Policy and Procedures); • are experiencing extenuating circumstances other than the above, where agreed by the principal. 	
United States of America	<p>The USA National Centre for Education statistics report that about 77% of America public schools have implemented a phone ban in some form. ⁴⁶</p> <p>In New York, mobile phones were banned in public schools in 2005 but this ban was overturned in 2015 in</p>	Most USA school districts have policies or practices to limit phone use during the		

⁴⁶ [Cell phone bans in public schools are trending nationwide | National | thecentersquare.com](https://www.thecentersquare.com/national/cell-phone-bans-in-public-schools-are-trending-nationwide/)

	<p>response to concerns around safety (a belief that students should be able to text their parents if need be) and equity issues (the ban was seen to be more rigidly enforced at schools with metal detectors in poor neighbourhoods).⁴⁷</p> <p>New York now has regulation A-413 that governs the use of cell phones in schools. This requires principals to work with School Leadership Teams in deciding among a range of options for their schools, depending on what they feel best meets the needs of their students, families, and educators. ^[66]</p>	<p>school day, especially in class.</p> <p>The New York ban did cover cell phones and other electronic communication devices like iPads.</p>		
Spain	<p>Two regions in Spain banned mobile phones in schools from 2014/2015. The two regions are Galicia and Castilla La Mancha. The Community of Madrid government banned use of mobile phones during class time from September 2020.</p>	<p>The regional governments of these regions passed laws to ban mobile phones in primary and secondary education centres in 2014 for Castilla La Mancha, and in 2015 for Galicia.</p>	<p>Allowed devices to be used inside the schools as a learning tool for educational purposes</p>	
France	<p>A mandatory ban for cell phones and other electronic communication devices started in 2018⁴⁸</p>	<p>The ban applies to kindergartens, elementary</p>	<p>There are exceptions for certain groups of students (e.g. students with disabilities) or when</p>	<p>Children up to the age of 15 must leave their phones switched off during the school day.</p>

⁴⁷ [Mayor de Blasio and Chancellor Fariña to Lift School Cell Phone Ban | City of New York \(nyc.gov\)](#)

⁴⁸ [France: Government Adopts Law Banning Cell Phone Use at School | Library of Congress \(loc.gov\) and LAW No. 2018-698 of 3 August 2018 on the regulation of the use of mobile phones in school-based educational establishments - ps://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/dyn/15/textes/15b0989_texte-adopte-commission](#)

		schools, and middle schools.	smartphones are used for 'pedagogical' purposes.	
Netherlands	Mandatory ban from 1 January 2024 ⁴⁹	Mobile phones, tablets, and smartwatches		
Sweden	Mandatory ban from August 2020.	Schools mobile phone use		There have been difficulties enforcing the ban with some students finding alternative ways to access their phones during class time, such as using smartwatches or earphones. ⁵⁰
Canada	Ontario has restricted the use of mobile devices in classrooms since 2019.		Students can still use their cell phones for educational purposes with the permission of their teachers, for health and medical purposes, and to support special education needs, according to a 2019 notice sent to school boards. [66]	
Republic of Korea	Mandatory ban. starting from September 2023. Each school can develop their own guidelines. [67]			Teachers can remove disruptive students and confiscate their mobile phones if they continue to

⁴⁹ Reuters "Mobile phones to be banned from Dutch classrooms next year" (5 July 2023) [Mobile phones to be banned from Dutch classrooms next year | Reuters](#)

⁵⁰ University of Gothenburg "Mobile phone ban in school does not work" (13 December 2022) [Mobile phone ban in school does not work | University of Gothenburg \(gu.se\)](#)

				interrupt classroom operations and disturb other students
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