

23 October 2020

Committee Secretary
Select Committee on Foreign Interference through Social Media
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Canberra ACT 2600

By email: foreigninterference.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Secretariat,

Thank you for providing us with a copy of the Hansard, following our appearance before the Committee on 25 September 2020.

During that appearance, we committed to providing additional information on questions put on notice by Members of the Committee. This information is provided below.

Question from Senator Hanson-Young

Senator Hanson-Young (*referring to suicide content which was briefly on the platform*): I would like to put on notice and find out how many Australian accounts saw this content, and what equivalent remuneration was generated for TikTok over that period when it was viral here in Australia.

Response

First, to reiterate our comments at the hearing, our sincere condolences go to the family and friends of the deceased.

We can confirm a very, very small percentage of Australian users saw this content that was initially livestreamed on Facebook. Further, the vast majority of Australian users that did see the video specifically sought it out. As we also made mention at the hearing, the spreading of this content was deliberately undertaken by bad actors and we, like other platforms, worked relentlessly to detect, suppress and remove the content. The vast majority of attempts to upload the content were caught and suppressed by our systems.

Question from Senator Kitching

Senator Kitching: Do you think it's inevitable, given that China bans most Western social media, and given that TikTok and ByteDance obviously comply with Chinese law, that TikTok in all Western countries will inevitably need to be sold or closed—perhaps sold to the US consortium that appears likely to buy TikTok's US business? Would the Australian arm also be sold? Do you agree that this is probably inevitable?

Response

The negotiations with respect to a 'deal' in the United States remain ongoing. TikTok Australia is not party to these sensitive commercial negotiations, and we are unable to provide an update to the Committee at this time. However, we are happy to do so when we are able.

Other matters

Transparency and Accountability Centre Virtual Tour

As mentioned at our appearance, our team in the United States is able to accommodate a virtual tour for Committee Members. If Senators are interested, we would be pleased to engage with the Committee's secretariat to find a suitable time.

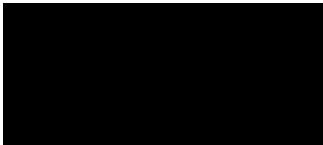


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Data storage

During the hearing witnesses from TikTok stated that Australian user data was stored in the United States and Singapore. However, an incorrect reference was made to a *backup* in Singapore.

Sincerely



Brent Thomas

Director of Public Policy, TikTok Australia and New Zealand