

Senate Select Committee on Foreign Interference through Social Media
FOREIGN INTERFERENCE THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

RESPONSE TO QUESTION ON NOTICE
Australian Electoral Commission

Subject: Referrals to social media platforms
Question date: 12 July 2023
Question type: Hearing Proof Hansard, page 35

Question

CHAIR: Thank you. In your submission, you note there were 11 items of social media communication that resulted in requests by the AEC to the relevant social media company to remove the illegal communication. I believe that's in relation to the last federal election. On notice, a bit of detail about those communications and those social media platforms would be helpful.

Response

The 11 social media communications referenced in Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) Submission No. 14 to the inquiry into foreign interference through social media conducted during the 46th Parliament relate to the 2019 federal election. The submission notes the AEC investigated many examples of electoral communication on social media during the 2019 federal election. Matters required further action where the infringement was not addressed following a warning notice. This action included requesting social media companies remove content found to be in breach of the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* (Electoral Act).

Facebook: The AEC made eight referrals requesting removal of content. Three of these related to a breach of s329 of the Electoral Act and five in relation to a breach of s321D of the Electoral Act. Facebook removed content in relation to seven AEC requests, with the remainder being taken down by the User before Facebook could take action. Of these communications referred, five were paid advertising, two were images and one was a video.

Twitter: The AEC made one referral requesting removal of paid advertising that breached s321D of the Electoral Act. Twitter found no advertising to remove.

Google: The AEC made one referral requesting information regarding paid advertising that breached s321D of the Electoral Act. Google found no advertising to remove.

WeChat/Tencent: The AEC made one referral that included requests relating to three pieces of content appearing on the platform. The content was referred for breaches of s321D of the Electoral Act. WeChat responded that they were unable to locate one item and removed the remaining two items.