

**HOME AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO
DEPARTMENT OF HOME AFFAIRS**

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY SPOKEN QUESTION ON NOTICE

Senate Select Committee on Foreign Interference through Social Media.

QoN Number: 1

Subject: Tencent meeting notes

Asked by: James Paterson

Question:

PATERSON asked who the Australian participants were at the meeting and requested a summary of what was discussed and a summary/ characterisation relating the meeting with Tencent

Ms Pfeiffer: Provided an overview and provided a characterisation based on the meeting notes

PATERSON requested a copy of the meeting notes be provided on notice

Answer:

Please find attached an aide memoire which was prepared for the meeting. A classified record of the meeting prepared by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade advises that the discussions at the meeting reflected this document.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade may be able to provide additional advice on this matter.

Meeting of Australian Government representatives and Tencent Group, May 2019

The Australian Department of Communications and the Arts, the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) and the Department of Home Affairs wishes to convey the following points:

1. The Australian Government seeks to establish a constructive working relationship with all major digital platforms and Internet Service Providers, to ensure that the services they provide to Australians are consistent with Australian laws and regulations.

This is especially significant in the lead up to, and during, Australian Federal and State elections.
2. Noting WeChat's growing profile in Australia, we seek to establish a direct working relationship with both Tencent Group and WeChat. Consistent with our dealings with other major social media providers, we appreciate provision by Tencent Group of working-level contacts. This will enable relevant Australian Government agencies to communicate directly with Tencent and WeChat on matters of mutual interest. Such channels of communications will help minimise the potential for any inadvertent breach of Australian law.
3. The Australian Government has implemented a range of measures to assist and protect Australians online. These include new laws and regulations to ensure political advertising and communication aimed at influencing the vote of Australian electors is properly authorised in all forms of media including social media.
4. The Delegation seeks Tencent and WeChat's assistance to investigate possible unauthorised electoral advertising which may be contrary to the Electoral Act.
5. The AEC's website currently includes links to the major media platforms enabling members of the Australian public to report unauthorised content. The delegation seeks Tencent's support to include a link to WeChat on the AEC website for this purpose.
6. Separately, in some cases, advertising and other discussion via online platforms may also need to be registered under Australia's Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme and include a disclosure about the identity of any foreign principal on whose behalf the communication is made. A letter from the Attorney-General's Department outlines the main issues.
7. A direct relationship between Tencent Group and Australian Government agencies will support our joint efforts to prevent the potential misuse of major social media platforms and ensure Australians are protected in their use of online platforms.
8. We look forward to deepening our relationship with Tencent and WeChat.