Questions on Notice for TikTok Australia - hearing 11 July 2023
Answers received 21 July 2023

Questions unanswered as at 21 July 2023: nil

QON4
Senator Paterson: Does the Chinese government have a representative on the board of Douyin?
Ms Woods-Joyce: I'm not sure of the board representation, but I am happy to follow it up for you.
Senator Paterson: If you could take that on notice, that would be good, but the answer is yes.

The answer to the honourable Senator's question is as follows:

No. The Chinese government does not have a representative on the board of Douyin Group (HK) Ltd., a subsidiary of ByteDance Ltd.

As has been widely reported, the Chinese government has a representative on the board of one Douyin subsidiary in China, called Beijing Douyin Information Services Co. Ltd., in order to meet domestic licensing requirements. Beijing Douyin Information Service Co. Ltd is solely focussed on the Chinese domestic market.

QON5
Senator Paterson: How many engineers does TikTok employ who work on the app in China?
Ms Woods-Joyce: I don't have the precise figures, I'm afraid. I'd be happy to see if I can get that on notice for you.

The answer to the honourable Senator's question is as follows:
There are approximately 5,000 engineers around the globe that work on the TikTok app. Most of these engineers are based in China and the United States with growing numbers in Australia, UK, and other global markets. As with most global technology companies, the number of engineers working on the TikTok app at any one location will fluctuate significantly over time. We have engineering teams across a range of technical disciplines including data and security, R&D and infrastructure, and monetisation.

QON6
Senator Paterson: How often has Australian user data been accessed by mainland China employees?
Mr Farrell: I don't have specific numbers in front of me. I'd be happy to take that on notice.

The answer to the honourable Senator's question is as follows:
The rules and safeguards governing employee access to TikTok user data, including Australian user data, is based on the sensitivity of that data, in adherence to the principles of least privilege. Our engineers based around the world, including in China, will only be granted access to sensitive user data when under controls and approval protocols overseen by our US-led security team, where a valid business reason is presented. For example, this could include work to improve the relevance and accuracy of searches, recommendations, and providing troubleshooting support on technical

issues. In addition, user access is periodically reviewed for appropriateness, and other controls, such as inactive permission revocation, are implemented to further restrict access when needed. Because of the size and scale of the platform, as well as the need to provide 24 by 7 support, frequency of access can vary. Consistent with the practices of other global businesses, this can be as frequent as daily, and is used to support the platform's safety, security and operation.