

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON ECONOMICS QUESTION
(Supplementary Budget Estimates 20 October – 21 October)

Question: SBT 89**Topic: Social Media**

Senator Bushby:

Has the department instituted any policies or protocols that restrict or deny staff the use of Youtube; online social media, such as Facebook, MySpace and Twitter; and access to online discussions forums and blogs? If yes, please explain what restrictions have been put in place. Why were these restrictions put in place?

If not, why not?

Are staff utilising these sites during work hours? If yes, how many hours are spent on these sites? What time are these sites most accessed? Will measures be introduced to restrict access to these sites?

Answer:

The ATO has the following policies to restrict staff use of social media:

- Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) Circular 2009/6: Protocols for online media participation
- APS Values and Codes of Conduct
- ATO Proper use of IT facilities Corporate Management Practice Statement (internal guidelines for ATO staff)
- ATO Social media guidelines
- ATO Digital media corporate management practice statement and corporate management procedure and instructions - under development and will replace existing Social media guidelines
- ATO Online forum and blog guidelines covering official and unofficial use- under development

Access restrictions to social media sites from ATO IT facilities are as follows:

- Facebook - blocked (except for approved staff for official purposes)
- Twitter - coached (except for approved staff for official purposes)
- Youtube/MySpace- blocked

Standard ATO users receive a blocked message for "facebook", "youtube" and "myspace" and cannot get to these sites. Standard users will get a coached page for "twitter". The coached page asks you to confirm you do require this webpage for work related purposes before you proceed.

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99.9% of ATO staff fit into the standard group who cannot access these sites. Other higher level access is available for specific reasons, although even this higher level access comes with some restrictions, e.g. access to Youtube is available but video content cannot be viewed.

Discussion groups and blogs have restrictions placed on them depending on their intended audience:

- IT blogs and discussion groups are generally open to all users
- Adult/Mature Content; Personals/Dating blogs and discussion groups are blocked

The ATO has ongoing monitoring of all internet access and reports are provided to investigation areas within the ATO on a weekly basis. Access is monitored and breaches dealt with as required. Access contrary to ATO policy will result in loss of access and/or further sanctions such as dismissal.

The number of hours spent on these sites cannot currently be measured and reported on specifically, but given the above information, this would be very minimal.

The ATO considers current restrictions to these sites are appropriate.