



THE SENATE

SELECT COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN INTERFERENCE THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

21 April 2022

Senator the Hon Slade Brockman
President of the Senate
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Progress Report

Dear Mr President

On 5 December 2019, the Senate established the committee to inquire and report on or before the second sitting day of May 2022. The committee tabled an interim report on 17 December 2021.

The committee received a total of 46 submissions and held four public hearings on 22 June 2020, 25 September 2020, 11 December 2020, and 30 July 2021. A list of submissions appears in Appendix 1 and witnesses who appeared at the public hearing are listed in Appendix 2.

Due to circumstances including the prorogation of Parliament and the election, the committee has not been able to complete its inquiry and final report as intended.

The committee has produced an interim report that addresses the key concerns relating to the conduct of elections, and the policy settings needed to support them. It now falls to government to implement the recommendations made in that report, and to respond to the other policy concerns canvassed in the committee's interim report and the Deputy Chair's additional and further additional comments.

The past three years have seen a global pandemic, numerous contested elections overseas, and armed conflict in the Ukraine. Each of these events has changed our understanding of what foreign interference through social media may look like, and the types of tools and responses we have available.

Cyber enabled foreign interference is not a static policy target. It requires constant action to ensure that government policy responds to an ever-evolving set of threats and prerogatives.

The committee urges the government to consider the recommendations set out in its interim report, and the important issues canvassed in the additional and further additional comments by the Deputy Chair.

The committee recommends the Senate consider whether to re-establish the committee in the 47th Parliament, with provision to access the documents and evidence of this committee, to enable the inquiry to be completed.

Yours sincerely

Senator Jenny McAllister
Chair

Appendix 1

Submissions and additional information

- 1 RAND Australia
- 2 Dr Jake Wallis and Mr Thomas Uren (Australian Strategic Policy Institute)
- 3 Mr Robert Size
- 4 China Policy Centre
- 5 Ms Melissa Harrison
- 6 Special Broadcasting Service Corporation (SBS)
- 7 Dr Bruce Arnold and Dr Benedict Sheehy
- 8 News and Media Research Centre (University of Canberra)
- 9 Australian Citizens Party
- 10 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- 11 Law Society of New South Wales: Young Lawyers
 - 11.1 Supplementary to submission 11
- 12 Osmond Chiu and Kun Huang
- 13 Attorney-General's Department
- 14 Australian Electoral Commission
- 15 Australian Communications and Media Authority
- 16 Department of Home Affairs
- 17 Responsible Technology Australia
- 18 Law Council of Australia
- 19 Allens Hub for Technology, Law and Innovation; the Datafication and Automation of Human Life; and the Society on Social Implications of Technology
- 20 Twitter
 - 20.1 Supplementary to submission 20
- 21 Dr Carlo Kopp
- 22 Ms Joy Bell
- 23 Google Australia
- 24 Australian Muslim Advocacy Network
 - 24.1 Confidential
 - 24.2 Confidential
- 25 Principle Co
- 26 TikTok Australia
- 27 Facebook
 - 27.1 Supplementary to submission 27
- 28 Paul Dabrowa

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- 29 Mr Tom Sear
 - 29.1 Supplementary to submission 29
 - Attachment 1
 - Attachment 2
 - 30 WeChat International Pte Ltd
 - 31 Australia Institute
 - 31.1 Supplementary to submission 31
 - 31.2 Supplementary to submission 31
 - 31.3 Supplementary to submission 31
 - 32 *Confidential*
 - 33 *Confidential*
 - 34 Mr John Xu
 - 35 The Council on Middle East Relations
 - 36 Engineers Australia
 - 37 UNSW Law Society
 - 38 Australian National University Law Reform and Social Justice Research Hub
 - 39 Mr Benjamin Cronshaw
 - 40 John Abdelmalek, Kyron Johnson, Michael Barberio, and Mathew Bubica, with Dr James Scheibner
 - 41 Australasian Cyber Law Institute
 - 42 Dr Shumi Akhtar
 - 43 Migration Council Australia and Centre for Digital Wellbeing
 - 44 Dr Melissa-Ellen Dowling
 - 45 University of Adelaide, University of Melbourne and University of New South Wales
 - 46 DT Global

Additional Information

- 1 'The Weaponization of Information: The Need for Cognitive Security': Dr Rand Waltzman's written testimony to a US Senate Armed Services Committee hearing on 27 April 2017 ('Cyber Enabled Influence Operations').
- 2 Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, 'Interim report on all aspects of the conduct of the 2019 Federal Election and matters related thereto: Delegation to the International Grand Committee, Dublin, Ireland', 15 May 2020

Answer to Question on Notice

- 1 Answers to questions on notice - TikTok Australia - Canberra (25 September 2020 public hearing) - received 25 October 2020
- 2 Answers to written questions on notice - Department of Home Affairs (issued on 23 October 2020) - received 6 November 2020
- 3 Answer to questions on notice - Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade - Canberra (11 December 2020 public hearing) - received 10 March 2021 (M&C Saatchi)

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- 4 Answer to questions on notice - Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade - Canberra (11 December 2020 public hearing) - received 10 March 2021 (disinformation related activities)
 - 5 Answers to written questions on notice - Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (issued on 23 October 2020) -received 29 July 2021
 - 6 Answers to questions on notice - Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet - Canberra (11 December 2020 public hearing) - received 29 July 2021
 - 7 Answers to questions on notice - Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications - Canberra (30 July 2021 public hearing) - received 10 August 2021
 - 8 Answers to questions on notice - Attorney-General's Department - Canberra (30 July 2021 public hearing) - received 13 August 2021
 - 9 Answers to questions on notice - Department of Home Affairs - Canberra (30 July 2021 public hearing) - received 13 August 2021
 - 10 Answer to question on notice - Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications - Canberra (30 July 2021 public hearing) - received 19 August 2021
 - 11 Answers to questions on notice - Twitter - Canberra (30 July 2021 public hearing) - received 20 August 2021
 - 12 Answers to questions on notice - Facebook - Canberra (30 July 2021 public hearing) - received 12 November 2021

Media Releases

- 1 Media Release - Opening of Submissions
- 2 Media Release - Upcoming Public Hearings in 2020
- 3 Media Release - Public Hearing of 25 September 2020
- 4 Media Release - Reopening of Submissions

Appendix 2

Public hearings and witnesses

Monday, 22 June 2020

Committee Room 2S1, Parliament House Canberra ACT and via videoconference

Berkman Klein Centre for Internet & Society

Ms Evelyn Douek
Stanford Internet Observatory

Mr Alex Stamos
Australian Strategic Policy Institute

Dr Jake Wallis, Senior Analyst

Mr Thomas Uren

National Security College, ANU

Ms Katherine Mansted

University of Canberra

Dr Mathieu O'Neil

Professor Robert Ackland

Dr Michael Jansen

Monash University

Dr Carlo Kopp

Friday, 25 September 2020

Committee Room 2S3, Parliament House Canberra ACT and via videoconference

University of Canberra's News and Media Research Centre

Dr Michael Jensen

Professor Kerry McCallum

Associate Professor Mathieu O'Neil

TikTok Australia

Mr Brent Thomas, Director of Public Policy
Mr Lee Hunter, General Manager
Mr Roland Cloutier, Chief Security Officer

Friday, 11 December 2020

Committee Room 2S3, Parliament House Canberra ACT and via videoconference

Attorney-General's Department

Ms Sarah Chidgey, Deputy Secretary, Integrity and International Group

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Mr Robert McKinnon, Acting First Assistant Secretary, International Security Division
Dr Tobias Feakin, Ambassador for Cyber Affairs and Critical Technology

Department of Home Affairs

Mr Neil Hawkins, Acting Deputy National Counter Foreign Interference Coordinator
Mr Hamish Hansford, First Assistant Secretary Cyber, Digital and Technology Policy
Dr Richard Johnson, First Assistant Secretary, Social Cohesion Division

Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet

Mr Lachlan Colquhoun, First Assistant Secretary, National Security Ms Celeste Moran,
First Assistant Secretary, Government
Mr Peter Rush, Parliamentary and Government

Friday, 30 July 2021

Committee Room 2S3, Parliament House Canberra ACT and via videoconference

Facebook

Mr Nathaniel Gleicher, Global Head of Security Policy
Mr Josh Machin, Head of Public Policy, Australia

Google Australia

Mr Richard Salgado, Director, Law Enforcement and Information Security
Ms Lucinda Longcroft, Director, Government Affairs and Public Policy, Australia and
New Zealand

Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet

Mr John Reid, First Assistant Secretary, Government Division
Mr Lachlan Colquhoun, First Assistant Secretary, National Security Division
Mr Peter Rush, Assistant Secretary, Parliamentary and Government

Australian Electoral Commission

Mr Tom Rogers, Electoral Commissioner
Mr Jeff Pope APM, Deputy Electoral Commissioner

Department of Finance

Mr Scott Dilley, First Assistant Secretary, Governance, Governance and Resource
Management
Mr Nathan Williamson, Deputy Secretary, Governance and Resource Management

Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications

Mr Mike Makin, Assistant Secretary

Ms Pauline Sullivan, First Assistant Secretary

Ms Bridget Gannon, First Assistant Secretary, Digital Platforms and Online Safety Branch

Attorney-General's Department

Ms Autumn Field, Assistant Secretary, Transparency and Criminal Law Branch

Ms Julia Galluccio, Assistant Secretary, Information Law Branch

Department of Home Affairs

Dr Richard Johnson, First Assistant Secretary Social Cohesion

Mr Hamish Hansford, First Assistant Secretary, Cyber, Digital and Technology Policy

Mr Patrick Hallinan, Acting First Assistant Secretary, Counter Foreign Interference Coordination Centre

Twitter

Ms Kathleen Reen, Director of Public Policy, Australia and New Zealand

Ms Kara Hinesley, Director of Public Policy, Australia and New Zealand