



*6 March 2017*

Committee Secretary  
Senate Constitutional and Legal Affairs References Committee  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

***By email: [LegCon.Sen@aph.gov.au](mailto:LegCon.Sen@aph.gov.au)***

Dear Secretary,

Thank you for the opportunity for Facebook and Instagram to appear before the Constitutional and Legal Affairs References Committee on Friday 9th February, 2018.

During our appearance, we undertook to come back to the Committee on several Questions on Notice. Attached in Appendix A are our responses to these.

Kind regards,

Mia Garlick  
*Director of Policy, Australia & New Zealand  
Facebook*

## Appendix A

- **The number of user reports received from Australians in relation to content that potentially violates our policies**

Content and accounts can be removed from Facebook for violating our policies in a number of ways.

Firstly, for specific types of content where we have a high degree of confidence that these can be automatically identified, we use artificial intelligence and automated tools to prevent the sharing of content or the creation of accounts that violate our policies. For example, under our policies, people must be authentic and it is against our policies to have a fake account. To enforce this policy, we use a number of automated tools to prevent the creation of fake accounts and to remove accounts that are behaving in an inauthentic manner.

By way of further example, we use automation, image matching and other tools to proactively identify and remove 99% of the terror-related content before anyone in our community has flagged it to us, and in some cases, before it goes live on the site. We do this primarily through the use of automated systems like photo and video matching and text-based machine learning. Once we are aware of a piece of terror content, we remove 83% of subsequently uploaded copies within one hour of upload.<sup>1</sup>

And we use pattern recognition to detect posts or live videos where someone might be expressing thoughts of suicide, and to help respond to reports faster — before they are reported to us.<sup>2</sup>

A second way in which content may be removed from our services is by people reporting it to us using the report links provided throughout the site.<sup>3</sup> People send us millions of reports each week each month. Our community operations team promptly reviews these reports and removes those that violate.

In any given month, the number of reports may vary depending on a variety of factors including the type of content being shared on the site, the awareness of the community about the existence of the reporting tool, and the use by the community of the reporting tool for reasons other than to have violating content removed from the site, for example, sometimes people may report content because they do not agree with it. In addition, the number of reports received does not capture the accounts and content that are prevented from being created or shared due to automatic tools. Moreover, we

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<sup>1</sup> More details are available here: <https://newsroom.fb.com/news/2017/11/hard-questions-are-we-winning-the-war-on-terrorism-online/>

<sup>2</sup> More details are available here: <https://newsroom.fb.com/news/2017/11/getting-our-community-help-in-real-time/>

<sup>3</sup> Please see [www.facebook.com/help/reportlinks](http://www.facebook.com/help/reportlinks)

also receive reports from local safety stakeholders, educators and regulators.

We understand the rationale behind your requests for us to provide more detail around the data showing reporting trends, however, unfortunately at this stage, we are not able to do so. We do hope, however, to be able to share more with the Committee in the coming months.

- **Number of fake accounts removed**

We have provided estimations of how many fake accounts we think exist on the platform as part of our public disclosures associated with our earnings, most recently as part of our 2017 fourth quarter earnings. Specifically, our 10k form<sup>4</sup> stated:

*We are continually seeking to improve our estimates of our user base, and such estimates may change due to improvements or changes in our methodology.*

*We regularly evaluate these metrics to estimate the number of "duplicate" and "false" accounts among our MAUs. A duplicate account is one that a user maintains in addition to his or her principal account. We divide "false" accounts into two categories: (1) user-misclassified accounts, where users have created personal profiles for a business, organization, or non-human entity such as a pet (such entities are permitted on Facebook using a Page rather than a personal profile under our terms of service); and (2) undesirable accounts, which represent user profiles that we determine are intended to be used for purposes that violate our terms of service, such as spamming. The estimates of duplicate and false accounts are based on an internal review of a limited sample of accounts, and we apply significant judgment in making this determination. For example, to identify duplicate accounts we use data signals such as similar IP addresses or user names, and to identify false accounts we look for names that appear to be fake or other behavior that appears inauthentic to the reviewers. Our estimates may change as our methodologies evolve, including through the application of new data signals or technologies, which may allow us to identify previously undetected duplicate or false accounts and may improve our ability to evaluate a broader population of our users. As such, our estimation of duplicate or false accounts may not accurately represent the actual number of such accounts. In particular, duplicate accounts are very difficult to measure at our scale, and it is possible that the actual number of duplicate accounts may vary significantly from our estimates.*

*In the fourth quarter of 2017, we estimate that duplicate accounts may have represented approximately 10% of our worldwide MAUs. We believe the percentage of duplicate accounts is meaningfully higher in developing markets such as India, Indonesia, and the Philippines, as compared to more developed markets. In the fourth quarter of 2017, we estimate that false accounts may have represented approximately 3-4% of our worldwide MAUs. Our estimation of false accounts can vary as a result of episodic spikes in the creation of such accounts, which we have seen originate more frequently in specific countries such as Indonesia, Turkey, and Vietnam. From time to time, we may make product changes or take other actions to reduce the number of duplicate or false accounts among our users, which may also reduce our DAU and MAU estimates in a particular period.*

- **Increased operational teams**

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<sup>4</sup> Available here: <https://investor.fb.com/>

We now have around 14,000 people working across community operations, online operations, and our security efforts. We are committed to increasing this number across all of these teams to a total of 20,000 by 2018.<sup>5</sup>

- **Removal of hateful content in Europe**

There is no place on Facebook for hate speech. We take this seriously and are committed to making Facebook a safe environment. Over a year ago we entered in to a Code of Conduct with other companies and the European Commission to tackle the problem of hate speech online in Europe. This is the context of the response rate improvements cited by the Chair during the hearing. This has not come about as a result of the recent German law, and we note that many people in Germany are now questioning the appropriateness of legislation of this nature that requires companies to make decisions about legal matters. Against this background, we believe that industry codes are a more collaborative and effective of achieving the results we all want to see in terms of promoting a safer online experience.

Independent of the European Commission's Code of Conduct, we've been making major investments to add more technology, human expertise and partnerships to combat this issue. The code is a good example of how governments, civil society and industry can work together. These investments apply globally, including in Australia. Consequently, any improvements in our response times and enforcement of our policies is already being felt in Australia.

- **Response the argument that online platforms are publishers**

On Facebook, people choose who to be friend with, and which Pages or Groups to follow. Consequently, people make a decision about the types of content that they can see in their News Feed. News Feed then ranks the stories based on how relevant a particular piece of content is that a person has chosen to see. We do not write the posts that people read on our services.

While we are not in the business of picking which issues the world should read about, we *are* in the business of connecting people and ideas — and matching people with the stories they find most meaningful.

- **Minors on Facebook**

Under our policies, people must be over 13 to create an account and we provide additional privacy protections for those accounts that are created on our services that show an age of between 13 to 18 years of age. For example, location is turned off by default for minors.<sup>6</sup> People are required to enter their age as part of creating their account but they can choose whether this is shown only to themselves or to a broader audience of their choice.

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<sup>5</sup> For more details please see: <https://www.facebook.com/zuck/posts/10104501954164561> and our earnings transcript for the fourth quarter 2017: <https://investor.fb.com/financials/?section=quarterlyearnings>

<sup>6</sup> Please see: <https://www.facebook.com/help/244053012290058>

If anyone becomes aware of someone who is under 13 years of age with an account, they can report it to us via this form: <https://www.facebook.com/help/157793540954833> Once we have confirmed this, we will remove the account.

- **Our investment in safety and security**

The safety and security of the information that the 2 billion people, and 15 million Australians, choose to share on our services is our top priority. In our last earnings in the fourth quarter of 2017, our CEO and CFO confirmed that our investment in safety and security has increased steadily, to be more than our investment in 2015 and 2016 combined. This includes people working across our community operations, online operations, and integrity efforts, as well as engineers and product teams working across safety and security features, and our safety policy and community outreach teams. We also provide grants and research payments to promote safety and security through such initiatives as the US\$1 million towards a research fund to work with academics, experts and partners across the industry to further explore the issue of technology use and young people,<sup>7</sup> UK\$1 million as part of our digital safety ambassadors program (— which we are looking to extend to Australia in the coming months),<sup>8</sup> the US\$5 million paid out as part of our Bug Bounty program,<sup>9</sup> and the US\$1 million as part of the digital defense fund.<sup>10</sup>

Given the access to a Page or advertiser account is typically through a personal account, the safety and security of personal accounts is foundational for people to be able to connect and share via our services, as well as for the 70 million Page owners to access their page and our 5 million advertisers to run their campaigns.

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<sup>7</sup> More details are here: <https://newsroom.fb.com/news/2017/12/hard-questions-kids-online/>

<sup>8</sup> More details are here: <https://diana-award.org.uk/facebook-partnership/>

<sup>9</sup> More details are here: <https://www.facebook.com/BugBounty/>

<sup>10</sup> More details are here: <https://www.facebook.com/notes/facebook-security/preparing-for-the-future-of-security-requires-focusing-on-defense-and-diversity/10154629522900766/>