

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications

Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice

Additional Estimates Spill-Over Hearing March 2017

Communications Portfolio

Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner

Question No: 292

Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner

Hansard Ref: Page 42-43, 24/03/2017

Topic: Programmatic advertising – Issue awareness

Senator Urquhart, Anne asked:

Senator URQUHART: Are you aware of recent reports that some of the world's biggest brands, through the use of so-called programmatic advertising, are unwittingly funding Islamic extremists, among other hate sites and pornographic sites, by advertising on their websites and YouTube videos and delivering funds based on the number of views?

Ms Inman-Grant: I am not aware of that issue.

Senator URQUHART: What, if anything—

CHAIR: I have heard about that as well. Commissioner, would you mind taking that on notice and perhaps coming back to us if you can find any information about that.

Ms Inman-Grant: I am happy to take that on notice, but I would like to ask some clarifying questions to make sure that we come back with the right information.

Senator URQUHART: Why don't I put a question on notice that outlines that, and that will give you the basis for that?

Ms Inman-Grant: That is fantastic because, obviously, that is a concern to us. To give you an example of what has happened on my watch, an individual took and posted a video of the more grotesque aspects of the Bourke Street massacre. When we were made aware of it, we called YouTube and we were able to effect a take-down. Obviously, when we see anything that incites violence, terrorism and should not be seen by the broader public, we work with our colleagues at the Attorney-General's Office or the law enforcement community. It is our job to do that, but that is something that we would keep a watch on and act on as appropriate.

Senator URQUHART: We will put that on notice so you have the details. Minister, are you aware of that?

Senator Fifield: I heard a media report—I think it might have been yesterday—on that, but I think the commissioner rightly points to the fact that some of those things would be appropriate for law enforcement and security agencies to deal with. I know that the commissioner's office does work closely with those agencies.

Senator URQUHART: Commissioner, you have some staff here in the room; I am not sure how many. Are any of them available to answer that in terms of their awareness of it?

Ms Inman-Grant: Maria or Stuart—do you have any knowledge of that from your end?

Ms Vassiliadis: My only awareness is the fact that it has been in the media.

Senator URQUHART: So that is the only understanding you have of it. What, if anything, is the office doing to prevent the Australian advertising and marketing industry from inadvertently funding terrorism through the use of so-called programmatic advertising, which delivers advertisements to online content and earns money for content owners based on the number of views of the advertisements?

CHAIR: I would ask the commissioner's or the minister's advice but, on that whole topic, given the commissioner's relative newness, would you prefer to take questions on that whole issue on notice?

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Senator URQUHART: I am happy to put it on notice to get something further, but I would like a brief response.

Senator Fifield: I think there are two things here. One is social media organisations' obligations and just being good corporate citizens to make sure that there are not any inadvertent outworkings of their platforms that could be taken advantage of by those who are seeking to undertake illegal activities. That is the first point.

The second point is in terms of what action may be taken, and how it might be taken, in relation to those things. They are not necessarily things that would be helpful to canvass publicly. It may, to some extent, be appropriate to do so, but I think it is an area where advice would need to be taken from relevant security and intelligence agencies. I would make those two observations.

Senator URQUHART: I guess the reason is that it is a significant issue that has attracted attention around the world—Google, AdMedia et cetera. It is serious, and I would expect that the eSafety Commissioner would be aware of it. Following on from that, Commissioner, would you or the minister confirm that none of the agencies listed in your pack have been in touch to advise you about that?

Ms Inman-Grant: About this particular issue in the media yesterday?

Senator URQUHART: Yes.

Ms Inman-Grant: That is correct. When we take that question on notice, it will be a great opportunity for us to look at jurisdictional questions and working across government to ensure that we are all operating within our own patch and cooperatively.

Answer:

This matter falls outside the jurisdiction of the Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner.