

## **Australian ISPs in League with Morrison Government Block "Undesirable" Web Sites**

by Paul Smith via fred - AFR Saturday, Aug 24 2019, 9:02pm

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### **Telcos caught in social media crackdown**

*Australian ISPs under the auspices of the new Pentecostal 'speaking in tongues' ideologically conservative Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, have already arbitrarily blocked dissenting web site 'Zero Hedge,' though that web site has never broadcast or propagated violent material (Christchurch shooting) as Facebook and Twitter have, which two Corporate sites have not been blocked in Australia under Morrison's (selective) "e-smart" policy. It would seem that any website which the government disagrees with could and no doubt would be blocked in future, as clearly this now implemented censorship has met with no resistance from the public though clearly the strategy is the thin end of the wedge.*



***This anti-Australian, dribbling in tongues clown must go!***

*If the government and private sector Telcos/ISPs continue to arbitrarily censor "undesirable", "ensure quality content" and other ambiguous, vague excuses, anything in future that disagrees with the plutocrat owned scripted mass media dominant narrative/discourse (propaganda) would be blocked and Aussies would find themselves living in an insulated from reality, paternalistic, nanny State, something that few, if any, Australians would accept.*

*It therefore becomes an imperative for Australian people to reject ALL such attempts at IMPOSING censorship on internet information. Australians are, and always have been, able to discriminate between what is real and what is fake, though digitally shaped (by algorithms) millennials may have problems in this regard, as they have already been shaped and enslaved by digital social media; however, the vast majority of Australians remain free, INDEPENDENT thinkers and it is they that should protect their children, unique culture and society, NOT some Washington ruled, lackey, nanny government that CLEARLY is opposed to traditional Australian culture and values.*

Telstra, Optus and Vodafone have been called to a meeting by Prime Minister Scott Morrison on Tuesday to thrash out solutions to prevent violent videos, like that of last week's Christchurch terror attack, being live streamed and widely distributed online.

The Brisbane meeting was first reported to be focusing on just the big global social

media platforms like Facebook and Twitter, which first hosted and then propagated the footage, however ISPs received invitations on Wednesday requesting they also attend.

The country's three largest ISPs, Telstra, Optus and Vodafone, have already taken the decision to block access to a number of websites which they said were hosting the footage, however neither Facebook or Twitter were blocked.

"While the initial focus has been on responding to immediate events and assisting New Zealand colleagues, the government has also started looking at measures to address the ways digital platforms were used and abused. As part of these efforts the government will be calling together representatives of digital platforms, ISPs and government agencies next Tuesday," Communications Minister Mitch Fifield said in a statement.

"Digital platforms have evolved in what they can offer to the community and regrettably the worst elements of our society have also adapted their use. The time has come for those who own and manage platforms to accept a greater responsibility for how they are used. A best endeavours approach is no longer good enough."

### **Voluntary blocks**

The ISPs' decision to block access to websites was controversial as they acted to censor content without instruction from either the Australian Communications and Media Authority or the eSafety Commissioner, and most smaller service providers have decided to keep access open.

Media reports have named message boards 8chan and 4chan, as well as video sharing site LiveLeak, social media aggregator Voat and financial markets-focused blog Zero Hedge among the websites currently blocked. The Australian Financial Review has seen a list totalling 25 websites which had been banned as of late Tuesday night, with content teams at the ISPs monitoring the sites to gauge when access can be restored.

The larger ISPs coordinated their approach, and industry sources said Telstra, Optus and Vodafone were sharing information about which sites to block.

"Due to the extraordinary circumstances, several large ISPs in Australia have taken the decision to voluntarily implement temporary blocks of websites that continue to host footage of the Christchurch terrorist attack video," John Stanton, the CEO of telco industry group the Communications Alliance, said.

"These ISPs have sought to balance community expectations to remove access to the video with the need to minimise any inconvenience that may arise from legitimate content being blocked as an unavoidable, temporary consequence."

### **Zero Hedge banned**

Writing on Zero Hedge, the site's in-house contributor, who goes under the pseudonym "Tyler Durden", [from 'Fight Club' movie] noted that the footage of the massacre was still available for download online for those who made the effort to seek it out, and questioned why the site was being treated differently to the high-profile social media giants.

He said the site had featured uncensored conversations about the massacre, but not been involved in the spread of the footage.

"We learned that Zero Hedge has now been banned in New Zealand and Australia, despite the fact that we never hosted video footage of the Christchurch attack. We were not contacted prior to the censorship. Instead, we have received a steady flood of people noting that the site is unavailable in the two countries unless a VPN (virtual private network) is used," he wrote.

"And while Australia and New Zealand account for a negligible amount of traffic to Zero Hedge, the stunning arrogance of NZ and OZ telcos to arbitrarily impose nanny-state restrictions on content is more than a little disturbing."

On Wednesday afternoon a Telstra spokesman said it had started to unblock sites that reached out to it and were proactively removing related content from their websites. He conceded some websites had been blocked despite the fact they had already been removing the footage, and said those sites had been unblocked.

"Major social networks are proactively managing the appearance of footage and so were not included in the blocks we undertook," the spokesman said.

Vodafone also said Facebook and Twitter were spared as they were actively trying to remove the offending content.

The topic of website blocking has long been a contentious one in Australia, with former a Labor Communications Minister eventually abandoning a years-long push to introduce a mandatory internet filter to block undesirable sites in 2012.

Aside from issues related to the potential for unaccountable censorship of content and erroneously blocking business websites, industry experts have frequently pointed out how easily blocking can be bypassed by methods like VPNs, which mask an internet user's location.

### **'We are actively monitoring'**

While Telstra first announced its blocking plans on Monday night, Optus initially said it would only block websites when instructed to do so by law enforcement.

However it said it changed its mind based on feedback and observing community expectations.

"Given the horrific nature of this attack and the strong community concerns about the proliferation of the inappropriate online material, Optus felt it was appropriate to place a temporary block on a limited number of sites which are known to contain footage which victims and their families have found distressing," Andrew Sheridan, Optus vice-president regulatory and public affairs said.

"We recognise that some of these domains are taking their own steps to remove offensive content. We are actively monitoring the situation and altering the list of sites which are blocked."

Managing director of smaller ISP Aussie Broadband Phillip Britt said it had not blocked websites due to the difficulty associated with doing so, and doubts about whether they were best placed to rule on content.

"As a smaller ISP, our view to date has been that the decision on blocking belongs to a court of law, which we feel is more qualified to determine what should be blocked and what should not," Mr Britt said.

"We are currently considering whether this view should change, but to be candid this is a difficult discussion and there is no easy answer. A secondary issue we face is that we don't currently have the infrastructure and resources to effectively block a website. We believe larger ISPs will have this in place due to recent copyright lawsuits."

Optus is yet to respond to questions about how the blocked sites were chosen, and why Facebook and Twitter escaped the same fate.

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