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News Corp calls for sweeping social licence regulation over global tech firms

The head of News Corporation in Australia has called for a sweeping social licence regulatory regime to be imposed on global tech platforms such as Meta, TikTok and X.

News Corporation Australian executive chair Michael Miller delivered a speech at the National Press Club in Canberra yesterday advocating for a stringent social licence regulatory framework for tech platforms. Miller emphasised that companies like Meta, X and TikTok should be subject to a comprehensive set of laws and requirements if they wish to operate in Australia.

Miller (right) outlined the concept of a social licence as a formalised package of obligations that these tech platforms must adhere to. "The tech monopolies should also be made to pay a licence," Miller stated. "This social licence would be a package of laws and requirements the tech monopolies would need to meet if they want access to Australian consumers."

One of Miller's key proposals was the establishment of an effective consumer complaints handling system, including accessible call centres staffed by Australian experts. He added, "The licence should require that each platform has an effective consumer complaints handling system including call centres contactable by telephone with expert staff in Australia."

Additionally, Miller called for the implementation of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's ex-ante competition framework to address the monopolised digital advertising markets and a financial contribution from these tech platforms towards mental health initiatives.

He stressed the importance of tech platforms honouring the media bargaining code, saying, "A requirement for the tech platforms proven to be media's unavoidable trading partners would be to honour the Media Bargaining Code and compensate all publishers and media companies."

Miller said that the wonder years of the internet were now over.

"Australians are no longer in awe of social media. 75% are very or extremely concerned about frauds and scams. 83% believe that the tech monopolies should be subject to Australian regulations and laws. Australians overwhelmingly say that social



media should play by the same rules as the rest of us,” he told the Press Club.

“The social media giants profit from evil videos, they profit from bullying, they profit from online con artists, they profit from glamorising eating disorders. They monetise misery ... According to a recent report in the UK’s Sunday Times magazine, that profit is a staggering US\$136 million every single day.”

Communications minister Michelle Rowland issued a comment following the Miller speech yesterday, outlining its actions. “The government acknowledges serious concerns about the role, conduct and impact of digital platforms on our way of life,” she said. “Whether it is the spread of seriously harmful misinformation and disinformation, the proliferation of scams or deep fakes, and other dangerous content, digital platforms need to do more to keep their users safe. The Albanese Government is working across a number of measures to hold digital platforms to account, including through amendments to the Basic Online Safety Expectations, reviewing the Online Safety Act, and developing new mandatory scams codes for social media”.

Social media platforms are large generators of both traffic and end user demand for both fixed and mobile telco networks, and are also increasingly significant buyers of capacity directly from telcos. TikTok owner Bytedance, for example, is understood to be currently in the market for multiple 400Gb wavelengths and substantial DC capacity across Sydney and Melbourne.

Grahame Lynch

eSafety drops court action against X over stabbing footage

The Office of the eSafety Commissioner has dropped its high profile attempt to seek a court injunction against X Corp, imposing a de facto global takedown of video footage of the stabbing of a Sydney bishop.

The case garnered international attention, with high-profile US-based free speech organisations successfully seeking the right to participate in the case. The decision to end the court action came after eSafety failed in its attempt to extend a temporary injunction, which was flouted by X even while in force, as well as amid death threats against the office’s staff.

However, commissioner Julie Inman Grant is still pursuing the social media service over the issue, announcing that eSafety would “consolidate” action over the removal notice it served to X in the Administrative Appeals Tribunal.

“We now welcome the opportunity for a thorough and independent merits review of my decision to issue a removal notice to X Corp by the Administrative Appeals Tribunal,” a statement released yesterday by the commissioner said.

“Our sole goal and focus in issuing our removal notice was to prevent this extremely violent footage from going viral, potentially inciting further violence and inflicting more harm on the Australian community. I stand by my investigators and the decisions eSafety made.”

She said that X Corp had admitted it “routinely” removed material similar to the video. “X globally removed a compilation video featuring footage of the Bondi stabbing, the Wakeley stabbing, and an older video of the killing of two Victorian police

officers, when notified by eSafety following the attack,” Inman Grant said.

X recently reported to the European Commission it had taken action against 226,000 items of content, as well as globally deleted 40,000 items of content, the commissioner said.

Citing X’s previous statements on violent content as well as the actions of other social media services, the commissioner said that it was “a reasonable expectation when we made our request to remove extremely graphic video of an attack, that X Corp would take action in line with these publicly stated policies and practices.”

The case had been scheduled to be heard next month. In its most recent court filing late last month, eSafety argued that X had not taken reasonable steps to prevent Australians from seeing the footage when accessing the site via a VPN. It said there were steps that the service could have taken to identify the use of VPNs. It also said that X hadn’t taken steps to ensure that minors couldn’t see the footage.

The move still appears to leave at least two older cases involving the parties before the Federal Court, focused on X’s treatment of transparency reporting notices from the commissioner, as part of the Basic Online Safety Expectations regime.

Responding to the commissioner’s announcement, communications minister Michelle Rowland said: “The Albanese Government supports efforts by Australia’s world-leading regulator to improve safety online.”

“This is an independent decision by eSafety. We understand that other proceedings remain on foot.”

“Our expectation remains that any company operating in this country comply with Australian law. We will continue working with the eSafety Commissioner to fully implement our laws and improve safety for Australian users online,” the minister said. “The fact remains that Australians should not share or engage with ‘class 1’ content, including terror content.”

Rohan Pearce

Advisory group urges committed comms funding for First Nations communities

The First Nations Digital Inclusion Advisory Group has called for a portion of funding for universal telecommunications services to be allocated specifically for Indigenous communities.

First Nations communities “have often missed out on funding opportunities due to the competitive and bureaucratic nature of grants and other initiatives that may assist in meeting their connectivity needs,” the group has told the Department of Communications.

However the group cautioned against the use of “too restrictive characteristics which could result in arbitrary exclusion for communities.”

It suggested that “basic parameters in determination of funds could include: regional, rural and remote communities where the majority of the population identify as First Nations and are currently underserved in regards to basic phone call and internet connectivity.”

The department is currently looking at future funding arrangements for non-

commercial telco services, with the review's scope including the Regional Broadband Scheme, which supports NBN Co's Sky Muster and fixed wireless services, and the Telecommunications Industry Levy, which helps fund delivery of the Universal Service Obligation scheme.

The First Nations group has backed a flexible approach to universal services to help address the "unique cultural and geographical considerations" facing Indigenous communities. It reiterated its advocacy for "place-based solutions" with funding allocated on a "needs and outcomes basis" rather than being tied to a particular provider or technology.

Flexibility could support the use of newer technologies to deliver services to communities where in the past it may have been considered unviable either because of funding or technological constraints.

Funding should extend beyond infrastructure to include some form of subsidised device sales to act as a connectivity safety net. Combined with the emergence of direct to device LEOsat services, that could end up saving infrastructure costs, it said.

"While we recognise that the specific funding mechanisms related to the Universal Service Framework are generally a concern for government and providers, it is still critical to consider the impact that these mechanisms can have on First Nations communities," it argued.

"This means ensuring those mechanisms are centred on the needs and interests of First Nations people (who remain one of the most digitally excluded cohorts in Australia) and that they ensure all Australians have access to essential telecommunications services regardless of where they live and their current circumstances."

DIGITAL INCLUSION MEASURES: Separately a document released by the advisory group adds detail to some of the federal government's digital inclusion plans. The 2024-25 budget included \$65 million to support First Nations digital inclusion, with measures developed in response to the advisory group's initial report released in October 2023.

A \$20 million, three-year funding package to support free community Wi-Fi in remote communities will "be a contestable program, open to telecommunications providers, to roll-out community Wi-Fi to additional communities," the document said.

"This program will allow for consideration of emerging technologies, including LEOsat services. The selected communities will be in areas where terrestrial communications infrastructure is unable to meet community needs.

"Community Wi-Fi will help alleviate community members accessing and affording internet connections within the community, while also improving access to media and broadcasting," the document said. "This will help ensure people in those communities have access to the information they need to make informed decisions about their lives and communities."

Another key measure is improving the data on Indigenous digital inclusion, with \$6 million to support an expansion of the Australian Digital Inclusion Index produced by RMIT's ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision-Making and Society.

A further measure is funding a digital support hub that will offer online and telephone support as well as support developing culturally appropriate and translated resources and increasing the opportunities to apply for grants and similar programs.

The other initiative is an \$18 million investment in a network of digital mentors to help community members access online services effectively, increase awareness of risks, assist with internet connection and devices problems and support the use of the government's Digital ID system.

Rohan Pearce

More to use AI to help inform marketing campaigns

More Telecom has partnered with telco-focused AI intelligence company SourseAI to pilot marketing mix modelling informed by data science.

Under the agreement, More will use SourseAI's Atlas platform to help it accurately evaluate the effectiveness of its marketing activities and channels, and adjust its marketing budget allocation accordingly.

More CEO Andrew Branson said the project demonstrates More's dedication to continually improving the customer experience. "In today's challenging economic landscape, overcoming customer-facing hurdles requires investing in technology that guides our commercial decisions, ensuring we connect with consumers at the right time," he said.



"Gone are the days of relying solely on gut instinct; as a company, we're dedicated to delivering campaigns and offers informed by consumer data. Collaborating with SourseAI, a team deeply versed in telco dynamics, enables us to amplify both our commercial strategies and customer-centric focus concurrently."

SourseAI CEO Tanya Hyams-Young said the Atlas platform is designed to allow telcos to identify the influence, impact and interplay between all marketing touch-points and tactics, to help them better allocate finite marketing budgets for the best returns on investment.

"Machine learning and AI is the only way to connect all the dots and data sources to deliver impactful insights and deliver better performance. This is especially true as More operates with a complex marketing mix including traditional channels, sponsorships and affiliates, which are typically harder to understand and attribute in marketing mix modelling," she said.

More Telecom has a partnership with the Commonwealth Bank allowing the companies to offer integrated telco and banking customer experiences and special offers. More is also the sister brand of Tangerine Telecom.

Dylan Bushell-Embling

Speedcast embraces LEO, transforms into connectivity provider

Speedcast said it has seized the opportunities provided by new LEOsat networks, transforming itself into a connectivity solutions provider.

Speaking at the Australasia Satellite Forum, Speedcast VP for APAC Enterprise and Emerging Markets, Hamish Lee, said "Initially, we kicked off being a geostationary

satellite solutions provider, but we've now morphed into a connectivity solutions provider in terms of the LEOs and the non-GEOs. Over the last 18 months, we've led the way in bringing new LEO services to market. We've been a leader in both Starlink and OneWeb in both the technical assessments, performance testing, trials and customer deployments."

Lee acknowledged Speedcast's ups and downs but emphasised a renewed focus on delivering solutions and managed services regardless of the technology.

"We're the largest global Starlink integrator with 6,500 sales as of the end of 1Q. We're also the first service provider to get OneWeb service live across the globe. So the leadership in LEO innovation is critical to delivering a comprehensive hybrid solution for customers today."

Lee noted that satellite technology is at a critical turning point, similar to the evolution of international connectivity two decades ago from bilateral circuits and voice minutes to wavelengths now. "And there's a group... who want to put their head in the sand, buy a couple of VideoEzy stores, get some taxi plates and still believe that that business will continue on as it did 25 years ago," he said.

"Even the way that the industry refers to new technology! Oh, they're disruptors. Disruption to me is the 10-year-old kid that sits in the back of the class and makes a noise, with his hand up all the time. That's disruption. But the innovation is the guy in the corner tinkering with the wire, soldering something together and doing something that's going to benefit thousands and millions and the whole globe, right?"

For legacy operators lamenting the revenue impact of LEOs, Lee was blunt: "So the ranger sitting in the Northern Territory, having time to make a cup of tea on his geostationary network whilst his imaging comes up, is delighted in the fact that he's got a low latency network to complement the geostationary network with an SD-WAN device. So for us, it's around what are your requirements?"

Gilat Regional VP for Asia Pacific and North Asia Mark Hannon echoed Lee's sentiments. "I think what we see in the satellite industry is there's a whole plethora of use cases which were enabled by the innovation of today that we don't know about today, we can't even contemplate really. And that's what makes it exciting. Let's not be those taxi plate guys waiting on governments to save us from our business. Let's instead think about what actually caused the taxi industry to go into a decline. It was the ease of use of solutions like Uber. It's a new way of doing business and that's how we need to think about being successful in the future."

Hannon continued, "We are a believer in the multi-orbit construct with unified management systems, unified solutions across multiple orbits, in order to enable and serve new use cases."

"I reflect that in the last three years that I've joined this industry, I've seen a lot of change, but a lot of that change actually has parallels in the rest of the telco industry. We talk about the focus on ease of use technologies like virtualisation, et cetera, standardisation," Hannon, who previously worked at Ericsson and Nokia for many years, explained.

"When I joined this industry, I was amazed to find out how non-standard everything was. I think in five or 10 years time we'll see a different world."

Grahame Lynch

FirstWave details changes to relationship with Telstra

FirstWave Cloud Technology said key customer and partner Telstra has modified the strategic focus of its relationship with the company, but said the changes are expected to be complementary to its own core growth strategies.

In April, FirstWave signed an extension of its Product and Services Agreement with Telstra for a further 15 months to July 2025. The agreement provides a range of fixed and variable remuneration for FirstWave based on its cybersecurity-as-a-service platform CyberCision.

In a market update, FirstWave announced the shifts in Telstra's strategic focus are in part designed to capitalise on the potential to grow revenues from key customer contracts under the PSA. The company is now engaged directly with Telstra and the more significant customers under the agreement to help achieve this goal.

Telstra also aims to finalise the launch of the sovereign, government compliant ISM multi-tenanted email platform delivered by FirstWave, Cisco and Telstra, FirstWave said.

Finally, the refocusing is based on removing or closing less profitable lines of business. This will include decommissioning Telstra's firewall security offering Gateway Protection Advanced, powered by FirstWave. FirstWave revealed that GPA is a non-core business for the company, and that the decommissioning will only affect 27 customers and result in the loss of around \$440,000 in gross profit per year.

Telstra also plans to decommission an uneconomical infrastructure platform. Affected customers may be moved directly to FirstWave's Sydney platform operating on AWS infrastructure, or the contracts may be terminated. In either case, the decision is not likely to have a material impact on the company, the market update states.

Finally, a recharge for hosting services involved with the platform of around \$100,000 in revenue at zero margin to FirstWave will cease, FirstWave revealed.

The shifts are overall complementary to FirstWave's core strategies of expanding its international footprint in the Americas while domestically securing extensions to current contracts under the Telstra PSA, the update states.

Dylan Bushell-Embling

SA researchers develop method to detect fires from space using AI

A research team led by the University of South Australia has developed an AI-powered early smoke detection system for South Australia's Kanyini satellite that promises to be able to detect fires from space 500 times faster than on-ground processing.

The SmartSat CRC funded project uses techniques to overcome the limitations of on-board processing and compression of large amounts of hyperspectral imagery on cubesats to allow the early detection of bushfires from space.

The AI model was trained on simulated satellite imagery of Australian bushfires to detect smoke using on-board processing, according to research lead Dr Stefan Peters,

a senior lecturer in geospatial science at UniSA.

Peters said with a constellation of satellites using the team's technology, it would be possible to detect fires less than an hour after they occur. Using a past fire event as a case study, the simulated AI onboard approach took less than 14 minutes to detect smoke and send the data to the South Pole ground station. By comparison, it usually takes 6-8 hours to detect fires using traditional ground-based processing of satellite imagery.

"For most sensor systems, only a fraction of the data collected contains critical information related to the purpose of a mission. Because the data can't be processed on board large satellites, all of it is downlinked to the ground where it is analysed, taking up a lot of space and energy. We have overcome this by training the model to differentiate smoke from cloud, which makes it much faster and more efficient," he said.

"This research shows there are significant benefits of onboard AI compared to traditional on ground processing. This will not only prove invaluable in the event of bushfires but also serve as an early warning system for other natural disasters."

The team hopes to demonstrate the technology in 2025 when the Kanyini mission launches. Kanyini will be a 6U CubeSat satellite that will be launched into low earth orbit. The mission is a collaboration between the South Australian government, SmartSat CRC and industry partners.

"Once we have ironed out any issues, we hope to commercialise the technology and employ it on a CubeSat constellation," Peters said.

Kanyini will use a hyperspectral satellite sensor to capture reflected light from Earth in different wavelengths to generate detailed surface maps for applications including bushfire monitoring, water quality assessment and land management.

Dylan Bushell-Embling

Cisco plans US\$1 billion investment in AI startups

Cisco Systems has launched a US\$1 billion fund targeting startups working in the artificial intelligence space, naming Cohere, Mistral AI and Scale AI as its initial portfolio of investments.

According to Cisco, the firm has spent the "past several years" shoring up its AI capabilities, including acquisitions and investments in generative AI and machine learning capabilities, in turn integrated AI capabilities across its portfolio.

Of the new US\$1 billion fund, Cisco said it has already committed some US\$200 million. The three named investments are aimed at advancing "customers' AI readiness and complement Cisco's AI innovation strategy," Cisco said.

Specifically, Toronto and San Francisco-headquartered Cohere is a provider of "security-focused frontier large language models and Retrieval-Augmented Generation capabilities," while Mistral AI is a Paris-based developer of new models of GenAI for businesses. The third firm, Scale AI, is a US firm providing "data centric, end-to-end platform" that trains and validates AI applications.

"The establishment of our US\$1 billion AI investment fund is a testament to our commitment to the transformative power of artificial intelligence and its potential to redefine industries globally," said Cisco corporate development and investments SVP

Derek Idemoto. “This fund represents our unwavering commitment to AI and innovation, and to the entrepreneurs and visionaries who are defining the next wave of technology.”

Tony Chan

Hope and fear in the AI age: Ericsson ConsumerLab report

Even the most ardent fans of artificial intelligence technologies are weary of their potential impact on their lives, according to the results of a new survey by Ericsson’s ConsumerLab unit.

The survey of some 6,500 early adopters of AI across 13 cities around the world found that 60% of the so-called “AI hopefuls” who feel “joy, hope and excitement” about AI, believe they will not have full control of how AI will impact their lives in the 2030s. Interestingly, the same figure is only marginally higher at 70% for those that feel fear and anxiety towards AI today, otherwise dubbed “AI fearfuls”.

Despite the apparent apprehensions, respondents to the survey show no hesitation in the use of AI applications with over half of the “hopefuls” and just over a quarter (26%) of the “fearfuls” saying they will try to use AI as much as possible.

Out of the 120 digital service ideas from 15 areas that were presented in the survey, respondents believe about 80% of the populace could be using AI simulation in the 2030s for “life-altering decisions such as buying houses or stocks, and for making lifestyle changes based on health simulations.” Respondents also see AI playing a major role in assisted childcare to boost children’s skills and believe AI will play a significant role in securing good employment.

That said, there are plenty of warning signs among the top AI application scenarios selected by the respondents. For example, 6 out of 10 respondents believe humans will turn to plastic surgery to get the right “AI-generated beauty standard look” while 74% of the respondents cited AI childcare will improve technical skills of children but “diminish creative/emotional intelligence.” Further, while AI is expected to improve productivity at work, respondents express concerns that it may strip the work of meaning. More succinctly, 59% warn against AIs “running wild” as interconnected AIs could start developing their own agendas, making future coexistence with AI difficult. In fact, AI is expected to be so prevalent in every life that doing without it could become the outstanding outlier or innovator.

“The report also flags the possibility of AI becoming so influential in decision making that ignoring certain AI insights could be a key to success,” the report said. “About 58% of respondents believe that the innovators of the 2030s will be those who dare to ignore AI’s advice.”

Tony Chan

HK GETS ASIA’S FIRST 25GPON SERVICE

Hong Kong Broadband Network has launched what it claims is Asia’s first 25G passive optical network broadband offering. The service will provide HKBN’s residential and enterprise customers with access to 20Gbps symmetrical speeds across its fibre footprint in Hong Kong. The service is based on Nokia’s 25G PON fibre solution powered

by the Quillion chipset, which allows HKBN to reuse its existing fibre broadband equipment to deliver the higher speed tier.

LAUREN WILLIAMS JOINS MEGAPORT BOARD

Lauren Williams has joined Megaport's board as a non-executive director and chair of the Remuneration & Nomination Committee. Megaport said Williams was an "experienced ASX non-executive director and former CEO with a proven track record in building high-growth businesses and deep experience in digital strategy, marketing, and technology transformation." She currently also serves on the board of US-based software company Altium, Constructiv Technologies Group and non-profit Good360. Chair Bevan Slattery said: "We are delighted to announce Lauren's appointment to the board. Lauren brings with her a wealth of operational and governance experience in high-growth transformative businesses across industries that are complementary to Megaport."

REGIONAL REVIEW REACHES QUEENSLAND

The Regional Telecommunications Independent Review Committee is preparing to take evidence in Queensland, with hearings scheduled for Mount Isa, Mornington Island, Thursday Island and Cairns later this month. The review committee "is seeking a wide range of views and experiences to help inform findings and recommendations" with its members "particularly interested in hearing how emerging technologies could improve connectivity; the needs of First Nations' communities; ways telecommunications can support regional development; and the suitability of telecommunications during emergency situations."

ACTIVEPORT PARTICIPATES IN RADIAN ARC FUNDING ROUND

Cloud orchestration firm Activeport said yesterday that its GPU orchestration partner Radian Arc had raised US\$9 million to help grow its cloud gaming and AI service offerings. ActivePort participated in the round, converting US\$500,000 of outstanding receivables from the company to 2.1 million shares. ActivePort said the Series B funding would "accelerate the global roll-out of Radian Arc's cloud gaming platform incorporating Activeport's orchestration software. "Activeport currently earns AUD \$1M a year of recurring revenue from its GPU orchestration software via Radian Arc and anticipates revenue growth to accelerate as more cloud gaming sites are brought online and new AI applications are deployed on Radian Arc's platform," ActivePort said.

HARVEST LAUNCHES NODESTREAM LIVE

ASX-listed, Perth-based Harvest Technology Group has launched its new Nodestream Live platform, which is designed to facilitate remote video monitoring in bandwidth-constrained environments. "It supports streaming up to 16 channels of video per encoding device from as low as 500kbps, ensuring unparalleled situational awareness even where network availability has previously limited video streaming," the company said

10 YEARS AGO IN COMMSDAY

The latest Ericsson Mobility Report has forecast a gaping global divide based on anticipated volume of 4G/LTE subscriptions in different parts of the world. In 2019, according to the vendor, Europe will only see a 30% LTE subscription penetration, despite 80% LTE population coverage marking a stark contrast with the forecast 85% uptake figure for North America in the same year.

Private label virtual network operator iVNO has launched a mobile service that licences the brand of university retailer Co-op.

Australian managed IT services provider Datacom has landed a A\$1.2 million contract to deliver contact centre services to IP Australia, the federal government agency administering intellectual property rights and patents.

Nearly 50% of Australian smartphone users in the 25-44 age range prefer the Android platform, compared to the 37% opting for iOS devices, according to a new survey by research firm Forrester.

LATEST SHARE PRICES

Company name	Chg %	Last price	Change	Volume	Market cap
5G Networks Limited	+3.13%	0.1650	+0.0050	676,873	55.55M
Aussie Broadband Limited	+2.68%	3.4500	+0.0900	421,423	1.02B
Comms Group Limited	-1.59%	0.0620	-0.0010	5,000	23.837M
Chorus Limited	+1.31%	6.94	+0.09	1.69M	3.011B
Field Solutions Holdings Limited	-9.09%	0.0200	-0.0020	869,712	15.335M
Global Data Centre Group	+0.66%	3.0700	+0.0200	86,111	237.228M
Hutchison Telecommunications (Australia) Limited	0.00%	0.0310	0.0000	1,550	420.748M
Macquarie Technology Group Limited	+1.78%	89.00	+1.56	53,504	2.294B
Megaport Limited	-0.08%	13.08	-0.01	1.073M	2.086B
NEXTDC Limited	+0.97%	17.69	+0.17	964,878	10.638B
Superloop Limited	-0.74%	1.3500	-0.0100	195,056	676.447M
Spark New Zealand Limited	+1.06%	3.8200	+0.0400	982,272	6.93B
Swoop Holdings Limited	0.00%	0.1900	0.0000	29,519	39.56M
Telstra Group Limited	+1.44%	3.5300	+0.0500	37.191M	40.787B
TPG Telecom Limited	+0.65%	4.6700	+0.0300	2.792M	8.683B
Vonex Limited	+27.78%	0.0230	+0.0050	745,283	8.322M

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