



# Noah Jarvis — Year 10

## GOVERNMENTS SHOULD NOT CONTROL SOCIAL MEDIA.

We have all used social media to some capacity. This is evident through platforms reaching over 3 billion users in 2020 (Dean, B. 2020). It has allowed us to communicate with each other while not in person, and to be able to make our voices heard while not even speaking at all. However, due to recent events like the 2020 election, there have been cries to regulate social media. Cries loud enough that it has even got the attention of our governments, who now are more likely than not, ready to regulate it themselves. So, it begs the question, should Governments be the one to control social media? I am here today to tell you that Governments should NOT have the power to control social media. This is because Government control would deny people their freedom of speech and expression; they don't know how to regulate it as proven in the past; and that the regulation itself is best left with the tech companies who run those platforms, not governments. We say NO to their regulation!

One of the main obstacles experienced if the government censors social media is the denial of the freedom of speech and expression to the people. Having both these freedoms is a vital component in any successful community as it allows for the people to speak their minds without punishment to some extent. Without it, recent civil rights movements may not have gained as much attention from governments and people. To be more specific, from May 28 to June 7, the hashtag "Black Lives Matter" had been used roughly 48 million times according to research analysis (Anderson, M. 2020). This is an example of how many, many people used social media to make their cries for ultimate change heard, with some even from this audience. As Australians, we can't let Sco Mo take our bloody rights away from us.

Another big reason why government should not attempt to regulate is that it does not know how to, as it is not as simple as giving out fines for every bit of hate speech. Unlike traditional publishing where regulation can be implemented to predict and eliminate crime beforehand, social media regulation can only be implemented to deal with crime after its publication. Government simply does not have the technology to find and remove objectionable social media content at the required scale or speed to be successful. Even looking back recently, the Australian Government has already failed in attempting to regulate and monetise social media, by forcing platforms to pay for news content (BBC News, 2020). Subsequently this led to Facebook blocking Australian users from sharing or viewing news content on the platform. This caused a huge impact, as many rely on Facebook for news. Just imagine how frustrated you would be if the government were to rip away your precious social media only for it to fail because of their foolishness. This proves how ineffective the Government is at attempting to control a portion of social media, what do you think they will be like when they attempt to regulate every part of it?

Now, people on the side of Government regulation state that with it comes less of an occurrence of hate speech, misinformation, and illegal activity online, also defined as "objectionable content". This argument stems from the other side's need to feel safe and secure while online, which is a reasonable one. However, if these people are for social media, then regulation by the Governments hand would destroy social media as it is basically the same as saying to lessen the occurrence of car crashes, we need to get rid of all cars.

Instead, regulation of social media content should be best left to the tech companies themselves and not the government. For one major reason - finding and removing objectionable content will require sophisticated technologies which is something the Government doesn't have. In fact, unlike the Government, tech companies have been at it already in addressing these problems SUCCESSFULLY. Facebook employs over 30,000 people to find and remove objectionable content. During a three-month period in 2018, they removed over 15 million pieces of violent content with over 99% of which done automatically (Kumar, R. 2019). The tech companies' already large number of resources most certainly proves how capable they are at regulating content while also providing safety and security for people online. The same cannot be said for our incompetent Governments. Hopefully now, people may reconsider their positions and deny Government regulations.

Social media has become integral to our daily lives now, and the ability to regulate it should not be in the hands of the Government. As demonstrated in the film 'Wag the Dog', the Government's control over social media would only prevent us from knowing what is true. It will also infringe our right to free speech and expression. Not only that, but Governments are completely incompetent in doing so as proven by recent history and that regulation itself should be better left to the tech companies. Now I call to YOU. Spread your words, electronically or otherwise. Say NO to their regulations. SAY NO to their control! Tell them that it is our God-given right to perfect our Instagram accounts.

### Bibliography:

- Dean, B. (2015). *Social Network Usage & Growth Statistics: How Many People Use Social Media in 2021?* Available at: <https://backlinko.com/social-media-users> (Accessed: 1/6/21)
- Anderson, M. (2020). *#BlackLivesMatter surges on Twitter after George Floyd's death.* Available at: <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/06/10/blacklivesmatter-surges-on-twitter-after-george-floyds-death/> (Accessed: 1/6/21)
- Kumar, R. (2019). *Government should not regulate social media.* Available at: <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/government-should-not-regulate-social-media-57786/> (Accessed: 31/5/21)
- BBC News (2020). *Facebook blocks Australian users from viewing or sharing news.* Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-australia-56099523> (Accessed 1/6/21)