

HACKED OFF

THE CAMPAIGN FOR A FREE + ACCOUNTABLE PRESS

Office of the Prime Minister
Executive Wing, Parliament Buildings
Wellington
New Zealand

Dear Prime Minister,

I am writing from the Hacked Off Campaign, which is a leading UK-based and non-partisan NGO working in the field of media accountability. We recently published a research paper about the impact of traditional media companies on spreading and amplifying the footage by and manifesto of the Christchurch terrorist. I attach it with this letter for your information.

We welcome the proposed “**Christchurch Call**” as a pledge for social companies to do more to tackle the spread of race-hate and other extremist content on their platforms but **we believe strongly - after conducting our research - that the “Christchurch Call” must go further and include any entity that spreads extremist content. Harm is harm.**

As you may be aware, three UK newspaper titles’ websites (The Sun, The Daily Mail, and The Daily Mirror) published edited footage of the video recorded by the Christchurch terrorist on March 15th 2019. They did so after the New Zealand police authorities had requested footage **not** to be shared.

The Daily Mail (which styles its website as the Mail Online) uploaded the terrorist’s manifesto, which enabled readers to download it directly from that Mail’s website.¹

While we are petitioning the UK Government to participate in the Christchurch Call, **we are writing to ask you to ensure that any pledge is applicable to traditional media companies that spread extremist content in addition to social media websites**². It would be unreasonable to exempt traditional media companies from any pledge in view of the role the three named titles played in propagating footage from March 15th, and of the role of the Mail Online in publishing the manifesto in full.

Successive UK Governments, of differing politics, have been heavily criticised for cultivating unhealthy relationships with the print media industry in the United Kingdom³. For this reason, we retain some scepticism that the UK Government will consider our submissions on these issues fairly and reasonably.

We urge you to work with other international stakeholders to ensure that traditional media publishers that spread extremist content - regardless of location - are subject to the same pledge that social media companies are. No matter what the UK government’s position may be, UK publishers have global reach and their coverage affects citizens of other states.

¹ <https://hackinginquiry.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/inflection-point.pdf>

² <https://hackinginquiry.eaction.org.uk/christchurchcall>

³

<https://www.mediareform.org.uk/blog/meeting-murdoch-news-corp-bosses-still-have-keys-to-the-back-door-of-government>

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I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to talk with you and/or your team about our research and the need to broaden the “Christchurch Call” to curb the spread of extremist content.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kyle Taylor". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kyle" and the last name "Taylor" clearly distinguishable.

Kyle Taylor
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