



13 August 2012

Dear Richard,

On behalf of the Online Hate Prevention Institute (OHPI), an Australian NGO dedicated to combating all forms of online hate, I am writing to you to thank Facebook for removing a number of pages and groups promoting 'Aboriginal Memes' of a derogatory and racist nature. While there were some delays in the process, and some mixed messages at times, in this instance OHPI believe Facebook responded within a reasonable time and took the right decision in removing the content.

We believe it would be to Facebook's benefit, and in the public interest, for Facebook to make it clear that **hate speech in the form of Memes is a breach of the Facebook Community Standards and unacceptable**. We would welcome a statement to this effect in your reply to this letter. In this particular instance, some or all of the Aboriginal Memes fall into this category. Examples include:

|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
|   |   |    |
| <p>This meme promotes the idea that indigenous Australians are drunks. It also denegrates their connection to country and their culture.</p> | <p>This meme dehumanises indigenous Australians, it implies they are dirty and takes a cavalier approach to violence against them.</p> | <p>This meme dehumanises indigenous Australians, it implies they are of low intelligence and of little worth. It is classic racism.</p> |

Facebook initially considered the content "controversial" but within the community standards. As the groups and pages have been shut down (with one exception discussed below), OHPI assumes Facebook reconsidered the



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material and revised its opinion. A statement saying Facebook has revised its position, and earlier responses have been superseded, and that this information has been **circulated to all Facebook staff likely to be involved in processing complaints** would be welcome. This would reassure users that reports of similar content, if it reappears in the future, would be welcomed by Facebook and will be acted upon.

An alternative possibility is that Facebook has not changes its position on the Memes, but has responded to other hate within the groups and promoted by the group /pages owners. While we could consider this far less ideal, if this is the position some clarity on the matter would be helpful. We note for example the following from someone claiming to be an owner of one of the removed pages (despite the reversal in names and change to the profile this is the same user account in both examples below):



**Militia Charlie**

Guys, why cant you just accept the page for what it is... Funny.

We made it for fun.

about an hour ago near Sydney, New South Wales



**Charlie Militia** I'm not even racist, I don't care who kills the coons.  
about an hour ago · Like



**Andre Oboler** Militia Charlie, I suggest you remove that last post. Even in the US that would breach the 1st ammendment.  
about an hour ago · Like · 1

**M** Dan talks a load of crap - this is not about hate; this is about racism and it's disgusting and loathsome...and Alana woteva ur name is - we would have a s.... world with people like you in it!  
about an hour ago · Like



**Charlie Militia** Andre, I suggest you eat a dick.  
about an hour ago · Like

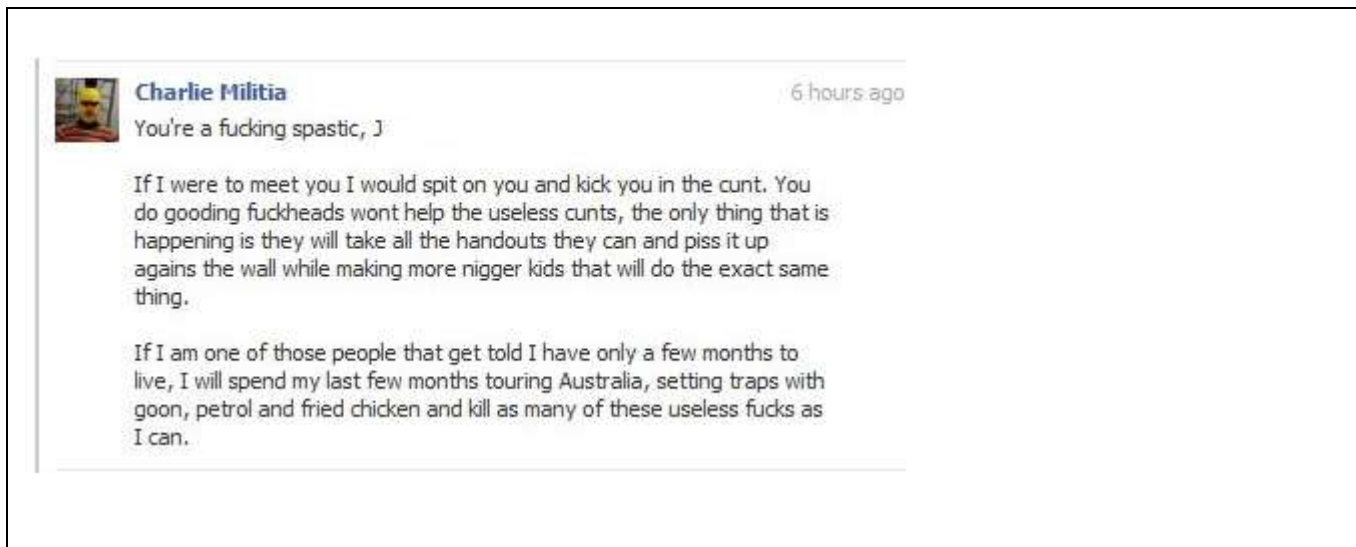


**Charlie Militia** On second thoughts, stop eating dicks, you've clearly had enough.

Tubby fuck.  
about an hour ago · Like



In a message to another user that was shared with OHPI that same user wrote:



The examples demonstrate other breach of the Facebook Community Standard in the form of **Violence and Threats** and **Bullying and Harassment**. In the context of someone setting up and promoting groups designed to spread hate we believe this a serious abuse not only of Facebook but also of Australian law. In addition to inquiring whether this account will be terminated (it is in any case, we believe, a fake account), OHPI inquires whether Facebook agrees the contents above are violations, and **whether Facebook has provided details on this user to Australian law enforcement or to the Australian Human Rights Commission**. If not, we would like to notify you that this information would likely be required as a result of current investigations.

For the public record we would appreciate a statement from Facebook **explaining which Australian agencies can receive user information** and IP address details from Facebook and **through what process?**

Finally, we note that there is one remaining page promoting the Aboriginal Memes,<sup>1</sup> and it has been blocked in Australia rather than removed. We assume this was a result of a compliance order from the Australian regulators rather than an assessment by Facebook itself. OHPI calls on Facebook to remove this page in line with recognition of these Memes as a form of hate speech. This page may have only a small number of fans,

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Aboriginal-Memes-2-Electric-Boogaloo/270526909724446>



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but it should nevertheless be removed as a demonstration of enforcement of community standards and to bring closure to this issue. **A response in relation to this page and what action Facebook will now take** in relation to it would be welcomed.

Finally, while commending Facebook on the response to this issue, we note that it highlights a wider problem related to the identification of racism in local contexts. In the case of racism against indigenous people in Australia, we note that the Government created the Australian Human Rights Commission to serve as expert advisers on this and other forms of racism. Having liaised closely with the Racial Discrimination Commissioner on this particular issue, OHPI know the Commission is keen to help and would encourage Facebook to use the commissioner as a source of expertise. If Facebook approached the Commissioner for an explanation regarding content it was uncertain about, Facebook staff would be able to receive expert advice and be in a much better position to take a decision. OHPI urges Facebook to develop policies that can better engage with NGOs and draw on their expertise.

The Online Hate Prevention Institute looks forward to your response and to working with you resolve this and other issues of online hate in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Andre Oboler

CEO, Online Hate Prevention Institute