

Elon Musk's X tells watchdog it has shed 1,000 'safety' staff

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X, formerly known as Twitter, has seen 1,213 "trustworthy and safety" specialists leave the company since Elon Musk purchased it in October 2022.

Elon Musk's X has shed more than 1,000 staff globally from teams responsible for stopping abusive content online, according to new figures

released Thursday by Australia's online watchdog.

Australia's eSafety Commission said these "deep cuts" and the reinstatement of thousands of banned accounts had created a "perfect storm" for the spread of harmful content.

The regulator has in recent months zeroed in on X—formerly known as Twitter—previously saying Musk's takeover coincided with a spike in "toxicity and hate" on the platform.

Using Australia's groundbreaking Online Safety Act, the eSafety Commission has obtained a detailed breakdown of [software engineers](#), content moderators and other safety staff working at X.

Commissioner Julie Inman Grant, a former Twitter employee, said it was the first time these figures had been made public.

They showed 1,213 specialist "trust and safety staff", including contractors, had left X since it was acquired by Musk in October 2022.

This included 80 percent of the software engineers focused on "trust and [safety issues](#)", said Inman Grant.

"To take 80 percent of these specialist engineers away, it would be like Volvo—known for its [safety standards](#)—eradicating all of their designers or engineers," she told AFP.

"You've got a perfect storm. You're drastically decreasing your defenses, and you're introducing repeat offenders back onto the platform."

Australia has spearheaded the global push to regulate [social media](#), forcing tech companies to outline how they are tackling issues such as hate speech and child sexual abuse.

But attempts to exercise these powers have occasionally been met with indifference.

In October last year, the eSafety Commission slapped X with an Aus\$610,500 (US\$388,000) fine, saying it had failed to show how it was cracking down on child pornography.

But X ignored the deadline to pay the fine, before launching ongoing legal action to have it overturned.

X did not reply to AFP's request for comment, instead sending an automated response that read "busy now, please check back later".

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