

Elon Musk accuses Australia's ABC of embracing censorship after it shut down Twitter/X accounts

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Author: Amanda Meade

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Elon Musk has accused the ABC of embracing censorship after Australia's public broadcaster drastically reduced its presence on X, the social media platform formerly known as Twitter. "Well of course they prefer censorship-friendly social media," Musk posted on X in reply to an ABC news report about the move. "The Australian public does not." The ABC's managing director, David Anderson, on Wednesday said the broadcaster was shutting down almost all of its official accounts on X. He cited "toxic interactions" on the social media site as a reason for the decision, along with the cost and better interactions with ABC content on other platforms. Anderson said the vast majority of the ABC's social media audience was located on official sites on YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and TikTok. "We want to focus our effort and resources on where our audiences are," he said. Sign up for Guardian Australia's free morning and afternoon email newsletters for your daily news roundup Musk in his response appeared to be reacting to the ABC's decision to use the rival social media platforms. Originally a popular platform for journalists, X has been in steep decline since Musk took over and withdrew the free authenticating blue tick. The ABC is the third big public service broadcaster to remove itself from Twitter, following US broadcasters NPR and PBS in April. NPR and PBS left Twitter after Musk branded them "state-affiliated media", later changed to "government-funded media", which the ABC was also labelled. Dozens of the ABC's X accounts, including ABC Emergency, Four Corners and Q+A, have been archived. The disappearance of the Q+A account is particularly surprising as the show pioneered using Twitter on television and is based on audience interaction. The ABC will only keep four official accounts on X: @abcnews, @abcspport, @abcchinese and the master @abcaustralia account. ABC Chinese reaches Chinese-speaking audiences on X. "Starting from today, other ABC accounts will be discontinued," Anderson told staff. ABC executives told staff whose official accounts have been archived under the new policy that they should use alternative means of audience engagement and awareness include TikTok, Instagram, Facebook and YouTube. ABC staff who have personal Twitter accounts are under no obligation to delete them. "Some teams have recently enquired about establishing accounts on Meta's new platform, Threads," staff were told. "The ABC is currently testing Threads with a small number of accounts and will consider further accounts in due course." Several high-profile ABC journalists left Twitter after being subjected to abuse, including News Breakfast host Lisa Millar and Australian Story host Leigh Sales. Musk's introduction of the X name and logo in July is the latest in a series of moves that have led to falling advertising for the platform and investors writing down their stakes. After taking over Twitter in October last year, Musk folded the company into an entity called X Corp, whose parent is X Holdings Corp. This month, the Tesla CEO announced that he was forming a new artificial intelligence company called xAI.