

Australians Against Covid spokesperson Craig Wallace speaks to WSWS about Facebook censorship

Our reporter
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Australians Against COVID spokesperson Craig Wallace spoke to the *World Socialist Web Site* last week about Facebook’s suspension of his account following his posting of a John Snow Project video (see: “Facebook censors Australians Against Covid spokesperson Craig Wallace and a Sydney health worker”).

“Nothing in this video is highly contested information,” Wallace told the WSWS. Issued in the lead up to Halloween, a potential super-spreader event globally, the video explained the importance of N95 masks to reduce the incidence of COVID infections.

Craig Wallace: My post was highly on topic, and clear and scientifically based health advice. If governments were in the right mind, they should be producing and disseminating material like the John Snow Project in order to tell the public how to protect themselves.

The Facebook ban raises questions in mind as to who has the time, motivation and resources to run around trying to silence advocates and activists on social media. I’ve been targeted by extreme-right elements before, but I’m not alone, others are being singled out.

Is it anti-vaxxers or are state actors involved? These are questions that need to be investigated. It feels like asymmetrical warfare and it seems to be just one way. If you look at the Department of Health Facebook, for example, it is literally carpet-bombed by people spreading all kinds of ridiculous disinformation and yet Facebook allows it.

WSWS: How has this impacted on your work?

CW: I use Facebook as a space where disability activists, who have been isolated physically during the pandemic, can congregate to organise, share

information and plan. It is generally accessible and open—or at least it used to be—where people, including people with disability who don’t have IT resources, can share.

There seems to be a concerted attempt to shut down this kind of organising.

WSWS: What was the reaction to the Facebook ban by your social media followers?

CW: Hundreds of people denounced it as an outrageous denial of freedom of speech and suppression of accurate information. The John Snow Project also reached out to say that they had had issues with their Facebook presence. I’ve got no intention of stepping back from my COVID safety messaging and the rights of the disabled. It might mean that my social media messaging has to be delivered in different ways.

WSWS: You raised concerns in a recent tweet about the Australian Capital Territory government’s response to COVID safety and for a monitoring group of disabled people to ensure proper support. Could you expand on that?

CW: Our local territory government has been persistently trying to say that the COVID pandemic is over, that there’s no longer a need for a dedicated group monitoring the support for disabled people here.

We’ve been consistently resisting these claims, pointing out that the other high-level committees that report to government on health issues need to have disabled people on them or being involved. There’s still a lot of work to do to support people through the pandemic.

The bureaucrats clearly want to disengage with us. I’ve been meeting with ministers and senior officials

and others through “advocacy for inclusion” that I work for. We’re urging for every avenue of communication for the disabled to be kept open.

Disabled people are still trapped in their homes and still getting ill. There’s also a lack of clarity around core issues such as the availability of antivirals for people who become sick. The process is really opaque. You can’t just say you have disabilities in order to get the antivirals. You have to have various comorbidities, there’s got to be a GPs judgement involved.

Believe it or not I’m not eligible. I’m a 53-year-old obese man with a congenital neuro-muscular condition and have been in a wheelchair since 1984. If I’m not eligible for anti-virals, then who is?

The whole business is problematic and is combined with the government abandoning all protections or providing safe spaces for people with disabilities. We’re still not guaranteeing the rights of people to work from home and get employment from home as the crisis continues. We need to have more conversations about poverty and cost of living impacts for people with disabilities in this situation.

It is, quite frankly, disgusting that the government is trying to shut down its communications with a highly vulnerable community during this crisis. Governments are pretending the pandemic is all over and doesn’t exist, but it’s a human rights issue, a poverty issue, it’s about ‘ableism’ and eugenics.



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