

Commonwealth Games abandons data mining after Facebook scandal

March 22 2018



Visitors at the Commonwealth Games in Australia could have their Facebook data mined in exchange for free and fast wifi, although authorities insist no private or personal information will be stored

A plan to mine data from Commonwealth Games visitors who use free

and fast wifi in Australia was abandoned Thursday as a privacy scandal swirls around social media giant Facebook.

The local Gold Coast council is offering a service up to 10 times normal speed after laying new fibre cables to coincide with the multi-sport event next month, which is contested between nations that are members of the Commonwealth.

But there was a catch.

To use it, they wanted people to log on through a Facebook account, allowing the council to capture data, which it said would be used to help shape future tourism marketing campaigns.

But authorities had a re-think after Facebook became embroiled in a snowballing scandal over the hijacking of personal data from millions of its users.

Gold Coast councillor Hermann Vorster said the wifi feature would be amended to allow users to access it without having to log in through the [social media](#) platform.

"Only today, the Facebook CEO has confirmed that he is investigating privacy issues to do with Facebook and how it manages people's privacy," he said in a statement.

"So if Facebook cannot guarantee the security of its users, it is best council takes a cautionary approach and removes this feature from our free wifi. That is what we are doing right now."

The Facebook saga erupted when a whistleblower revealed that British data consultant Cambridge Analytica had created psychological profiles on 50 million users via a personality prediction app.

The app was downloaded by 270,000 people, but also scooped up their friends' data without consent—as was possible under Facebook's rules at the time.

Facebook chief Mark Zuckerberg apologised Wednesday for a "major breach of trust" and admitted the group must do better.

The Gold Coast backdown also followed outrage from the Queensland Council for Civil Liberties, which said privacy laws prohibited any data collection unless it was necessary for council purposes.

Its president Michael Cope said while the council may have claimed it was simply for tourism purposes, depending on the Facebook privacy settings of those using the wifi, the council could collect a lot of other information.

"The data that might be collected by council, depending on a person's Facebook [privacy](#) settings, would include how many friends they have, who their friends are, what they've liked on Facebook and their photos," he said.

In a statement to AFP, the council earlier said the purpose was simply to "gather publicly available information about age, gender and nationality for the purpose of monitoring the use patterns".

It said it never planned to mine or store any private data.

The Games run from April 4 to 15, with thousands of athletes, support staff and fans due to attend.

© 2018 AFP

Citation: Commonwealth Games abandons data mining after Facebook scandal (2018, March 22)

retrieved 27 April 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2018-03-commonwealth-games-abandons-facebook-scandal.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.