

We don't remove comments just because we disagree with them

Written by Cory Zaroni, Community Manager, The Conversation

Every so often, after removing a few comments for violating our community standards, a discussion will start about moderation and what kinds of comments are removed. Inevitably, one line of argument will pop up:

Comments shouldn't be removed just because they disagree with the author.

It's been a recurring theme since I started working at The Conversation. It's perplexing since we here at TC agree.

Fostering debate

We neither expect nor want discussions where everyone agrees. As our [community standards](#) say:

We want the discussion of an article to be, if anything, more illuminating than the original article.

You don't get illuminating discussions if everyone thinks or says the same thing. Debates need dissent to function: it's how we reach new, more interesting ideas. And we wrote our community standards to help foster robust, interesting debate.

That's why they encourage the things we think are necessary for high quality debate: respect for others, transparency, supporting evidence and a constructive approach to discussion.

I do the overwhelming bulk of the moderation on The Conversation Australia's articles and I can, quite comfortably, say I've removed comments I agree with. I've also removed comments I didn't agree with.

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But my belief or lack thereof hasn't factored into a comment's removal since that doesn't factor into our standards.

Why comments are removed

That said, I understand why the argument keeps popping up. In the absence of a clear explanation of why a comment was removed people can easily assume it was because of some nefarious reason.

That's on us to fix. We're working at making our moderation more transparent and will continue to do so. It also means acknowledging when we get a moderation decision wrong — it happens, after all.

But our doing that requires a certain level of self reflection on the part of moderated commenters too. It calls on people to acknowledge that a comment mightn't have been on topic or might have been a touch too personal.

Sharing opinions

That won't always happen. People mightn't be used to our standards or they just plain won't like having comments removed for any reason. There's going to be miscommunication and a misalignment of goals whenever a diverse range of people come together en masse to talk about things.

That's why we think our [community standards](#) are important. We want that diverse range people to share their diverse range of opinions in an illuminating a way as possible.

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Read more <http://theconversation.com/we-dont-remove-comments-just-because-we-disagree-with-them-63586>