

Inquiry into the Impact of Social Media on Elections and Electoral Administration Survey

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Organisation name:

Your position or role:

SURVEY

Q1. Encouraging social media platforms to take more action against inappropriate activities (such as bots, harassment, trolling, spreading fake news).

Response: Good idea

The platform is equivalent to a publisher in old media, and should be responsible for what they disseminate. It is a business and there is always the danger that profits are taken more seriously than ethics, without regulatory forces.

Q2. The government funding media literacy campaigns to help people know what they can trust online.

Response: Not sure

Good idea if only about media literacy but not if it slides into “what they can trust”. The wording of this question is ambiguous. Hopefully that is accidental.

Q3. Requiring public disclosure of all online political advertising (for example, webpages created by social media platforms showing all of the political advertising on their platform and who paid for it, or webpages created by parties/candidates showing all of the online ads they have run).

Response: Very good idea

All political advertising should be treated this way. Still doesn't help misinformation via third parties, so probably of limited value.

Q4. Requiring online electoral advertising to state who paid for it.

Response: Very good idea

All electoral advertising sources should be transparent.

Q5. Government support for independent and trust-worthy organisations that can fact-check claims or identify misinformation.

Response: Not sure

Government support and independence can be difficult unless the factors are clearly separated.

Q6. Using independent organisations (e.g. the Victorian Electoral Commission) as a source of reliable information about electoral candidates.

Response: Good idea

But not sure what information they should hold about candidates.

Q7. New laws requiring truth in political advertising.

Response: Not sure

Some things can be fact checked, some are interpretation, some are surmise. All levels of statement are legitimate. Only those that can be fact-checked can really be the subject of meaningful legislation. How do you frame legislation that doesn't just end up in lengthy court battles of interpretation? - a waste of time and money and would be settled too late to have any effect.

Q8. Are there other things you'd like to see the government do relating to social media or online advertising and elections?

Response: Specifically focus on civics at school, at several levels to promote civic responsibility, critical thinking and a more sophisticated understanding of persuasive techniques.