

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

Mr Craig Rowley

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### SURVEY

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

**Response:** Very good idea

Companies providing social media platforms to Victorians must gain a 'social license' to operate here. Harassment, including trolling, and defamatory activities, as well as propagation of disinformation is unacceptable to Victorians, and may also be unlawful activities. Bots are tools that can be used to facilitate harassment and propagation of disinformation. Companies providing social media platforms should ensure that they are not facilitating unlawful activities.

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

**Response:** Good idea

An increase in media literacy rates would be a public good and the Victorian Government should invest in the creation of public goods as there is a significant return on such investments.

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

Political advertising should be disclosed as such and authorisation information provided to aid accountability tracing for each item of political advertising.

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

**Response:** Good idea

Disclosure of who paid for online electoral advertising would somewhat assist with accountability tracing, however it should be noted that transactions of funds often occur behind the transactions that are the purchases of the online electoral advertisements. For example, Party A may purchase an electoral advertisement and declare that fact, but Party A may have received the funds used to make its purchase from donors. Disclosure of the linkage from Party A to donors would become challenging when there are multitudes of donors.

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

**Response:** Good idea

Government support for fact-checking organisations may be useful; however, there would also need to be

measures to assure the independence of the fact-checking organisations from the political party or parties that form the government and opposition.

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

**Response:** Very good idea  
The VEC is trusted.

Q7. New laws requiring truth in political advertising.

**Response:** Very good idea  
The requirement for truth in political advertising should be no different to the requirements of law prohibiting businesses from misleading conduct.

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

**Response:** The requirement for a driver's licence serves to both assure that a driver is sufficiently skilled and that a driver is identifiable. This makes drivers traceable in the event of a need to find them responsible for a consequence of their driving. In a similar way, a requirement that users of social media platforms can only do so after proving their valid legal identity would provide assurance in the system of traceability and this would greatly enhance responsibility, which in turn would underpin higher levels of respectful civility in social media interactions.