

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

Mr Garry Page

**Phone number:** [REDACTED]

**Email:** [REDACTED]

**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:** Very good idea

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

**Response:** Very good idea

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

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

**Response:** Very good idea

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

**Response:** Very good idea

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

**Response:** Very bad idea

COVID-19 restrictions forced the VEC to change handling of Candidate Statements. A number of candidates could not or did not submit scanned signatures in the allowed time. The VEC then discarded Candidate Statements that were completed and submitted online. It appears a number of candidates believed when the VEC online system stated a Candidate Statement was complete and submitted that they had been advised by the VEC that they had completed all requirements. Needless to say people

who have had their Candidate Statement rejected have no chance of being elected. Their only option is to appeal to VCAT after the election is declared. The current response is a bureaucratic stonewall. The signature requirement should have been totally electronic and included in VEC's online system. You can handle submission of your tax online but the VEC can not process documents. This problem does not impact members of the major political parties as they are aware of all the pitfalls in the election process. A rejection of submitted Candidate Statements effectively eliminates the small independent candidates and increases the chance a candidate from a major political party will be elected.

Due to the problem with donkey votes in Victoria the VEC and parliament is effectively running a lottery not an election. Even though submissions have been made it is impossible to have a discussion with the VEC or the Minister for Local Government about this issues. Due to the poor state of the Victorian electoral system the VEC does not provide unbiased, independent advice. I'll attempt to resubmit the donkey vote issue to show how little engagement a candidate has with the VEC. Using an independent organisation is an excellent idea, unfortunately the VEC does not provide reliable information on elections. The fix is called a Robson Rotation and has been implemented in the ACT and Tasmania. In regard to the rejected Candidate Statements, this could have been addressed by the 24 hour extension provisions by advising a Candidate that declaration is missing a signature and that part of the Candidate Statement need to be corrected i.e. signed. Alternatively a separate piece of paper with any rejected Candidate Statements could be included in a ballot distribution under Local Government (Electoral) Regulations, Part 5 - Voting in elections, Division 2 - Issue of postal ballot materials, Clause 49 Issue of postal ballot materials, (2) The postal ballot envelope must contain the following - (h) any other material that the election manager thinks is appropriate. Given the impact of COVID-19 the VEC should have

VEC is not the appropriate independent organisation. I would suggest a University is more appropriate e.g. Melbourne, Monash, RMIT, etc

Q7. New laws requiring truth in political advertising.

**Response:** Good idea

Good idea but which independent organisation has perfect knowledge of the truth and how do you control overseas publication i.e. those outside Australia that do not care about 'truth'.

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

**Response:** There are a significant number of improvements that should be made, catch is I don't have any more time in the few hours remaining to make submissions.