



PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA
Electoral Matters Committee

MEDIA RELEASE

Social media impact on Victorian elections to be investigated

The impact of social media and online advertising on Victorian elections is the focus of a new public inquiry launched today by Parliament's Electoral Matters Committee.

The inquiry will investigate the impact of social media on the electoral process and explore how social media platforms are being used for political communication. It will examine whether regulations that authorise political content on social media are appropriate and if further government action is needed.

"Social media has changed the way we campaign at elections. It gives people instant access to different viewpoints and makes it easy for people to connect with political candidates. But it can also be used to spread fake news or to harass people," said Lee Tarlamis, Chair of the Electoral Matters Committee.

"This inquiry will look at different approaches the government can take to reduce the negative impacts of social media and online advertising on our elections, and how we can take advantage of the positive opportunities that social media brings," he said.

The Committee will investigate specific actions taken by governments in Australia and overseas to protect and enhance electoral processes when it comes to social media and digital communication. These include the funding of fact-checking organisations, making online ads available for all to see, conducting media literacy campaigns and passing truth in political advertising laws.

"There are genuine concerns in the community about the way new technologies appear to be impacting elections in this state," said Mr Tarlamis.

"We're asking people to tell us how political parties and others are using social media around elections. We want to hear about the problems people have seen and their ideas for addressing those problems," he said. "We also want to hear about people's positive experiences with social media and elections and how social media can be used for good."

A further matter to be explored is the use of social media and new communications technologies by the Victorian Electoral Commission and the Victorian Parliament to engage people in the electoral process.

The Committee will host an online community forum on 12 August bringing together experts and community representatives to identify and discuss issues associated with the inquiry. The panel discussion will be live streamed on the Parliament's [Facebook page](#) from 6 pm. Members of the public are encouraged to participate and direct questions to the panel.

Public submissions to the inquiry are welcome until 30 September 2020. Public hearings are expected to be held toward the end of the year, with the Committee reporting back to Parliament by 30 June 2021.

The inquiry's terms of reference and details on how to make a submission are available from the Committee's website at www.parliament.vic.gov.au/esm.

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