

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

Mr James Bell
[REDACTED]
[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

Social media has become a major means of obtaining news and information. Where that information is warped, skewed or corrupted by persons looking to harm peaceful society and democratic debate strong action needs to be taken. Technology companies profit enormously from an unregulated market and are in a position to take the necessary regulatory action to ensure false or misleading information is not spread on their websites.

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

Response: Good idea

Public funding of information campaigns is a good thing, provided that funding is sourced from the large technology companies that are profiting from a currently under-regulated market. This should be something that is taught heavily in schools.

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

Transparency is important and something sorely lacking in online media. Regulation has failed to keep up with the pervasiveness and effectiveness of digital media advertising. People need to know where the information they consume is coming from so they can adequately assess its veracity.

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

Response: Very good idea

For the same reasons as question 3 this is important. Showing where the funding came from is equally as important as transparently displaying why the information is being shown.

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

Response: Very good idea

An independent, publicly funded institution capable of performing such fact checking would be incredibly

valuable for democratic society. It is a 'very good idea' simply because there is little incentive for any other body or institution to provide the same fact checking service on the scale that is required. The ABC's fact check would be a good model to base this on, but what is more important is that the findings of such an institution are made available to those who really need to see it. Such as on large technology platforms that are displaying the political advertising or factually inaccurate material.

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

Response: Very good idea

It is very difficult for persons to obtain timely and accurate, unbiased information about participants in the electoral system. the VEC would be well placed to provide such information.

Q7. New laws requiring truth in political advertising.

Response: Good idea

It would be difficult to assess and enforce. Depending on how the laws were framed, drafted, reviewed and enforced, it could be a great idea but more information would be required.

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

Response: See the above. Social media companies need to be properly regulated and taxed. They make an enormous amount of money here in Australia due to woefully inadequate regulation.