

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

Mr Mark Roper

Phone number:

Email:

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: Not sure

Social media platforms tend to operate according to a certain political agenda and resist most attempts to hold them accountable for their actions. If you acted against social media platforms on this subject, you'd also have to act against parties who use robo-calling/texting technology during a campaign as it is also considered (by some) to be inappropriate.

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

Response: Good idea

Good idea but there would have to be some very clear criteria establish in relation to what the government considers "trustworthy". Otherwise, the political persuasion of the government of the day would strongly influence any campaign of this nature.

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: Good idea

This should be a two-way obligation. The websites and candidates should be required to disclose this information.

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

Response: Good idea

In most cases, the funding source of political advertising is clear. There are some circumstances where interest groups and candidates do not make such a declaration. This should certainly be addressed. Furthermore, the portion of the advertisement devoted to declaring the funding source thereof should be large enough for a reasonable person to see and understand the information as easily as they would the editorial content.

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

Response: Not sure

In the current climate, "fact-checking" does not appear to apply evenly across the political spectrum. It is a term largely used by certain media organisations to disguise editorial criticism as substantiation of facts. If

the government were to become involved in this exercise, the most difficult task would be finding an organisation in which all electors place their trust.

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

Response: Good idea

It's a good idea but, again, questions are often raised about the independence of the VEC. The other difficulty with this proposal is the volume of information made available during a campaign. Organisations such as the VEC may not have the resources available to process, vet and publish all the information offered by candidates or others. This proposal would need further examination before being implemented.

Q7. New laws requiring truth in political advertising.

Response: Not sure

There would need to be a distinction between advertising that offers opinion and advertising that offers fact. Only the latter could be subject to a law of this kind.

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

Response: