

2022 Federal Election

Our Policy Vision on Electoral Disinformation



When public debate is informed by facts and trustworthy sources, our democracy thrives. But right now, reasoned factual debate is being displaced by disinformation, and this shift is fundamentally eroding our democracy.

Disinformation is travelling seamlessly between newspapers, talkback radio, politicians' tweets and messaging apps. Digital platforms and media companies profit from it, and some politicians build a platform on it.

Widening inequality and isolation, exacerbated by COVID-19, is pushing people towards more sensational, extreme and conspiratorial content. Ultimately, dangerous disinformation campaigns and hate speech are polarising and dividing our communities.

The lead up to this federal election is a critical time for our country. Australians don't want a repeat of the 2019 federal election, when our news feeds

were flooded with lies. Australians have seen the chaos that results when people no longer trust news and facts, from Brexit to the US Capitol riot. We need those in power to step up and prevent Australia from going further down this path.

Only strong and systemic regulation can challenge the business models that underpin disinformation whilst ensuring that the national conversation is focused on a passionate exchange of ideas and information on the best way to govern Australia.

We urge candidates to commit to ambitious reforms that will regulate the key actors responsible for spreading disinformation: digital platforms, politicians and mainstream media outlets.

Ahead of this election, we ask candidates and political parties to:

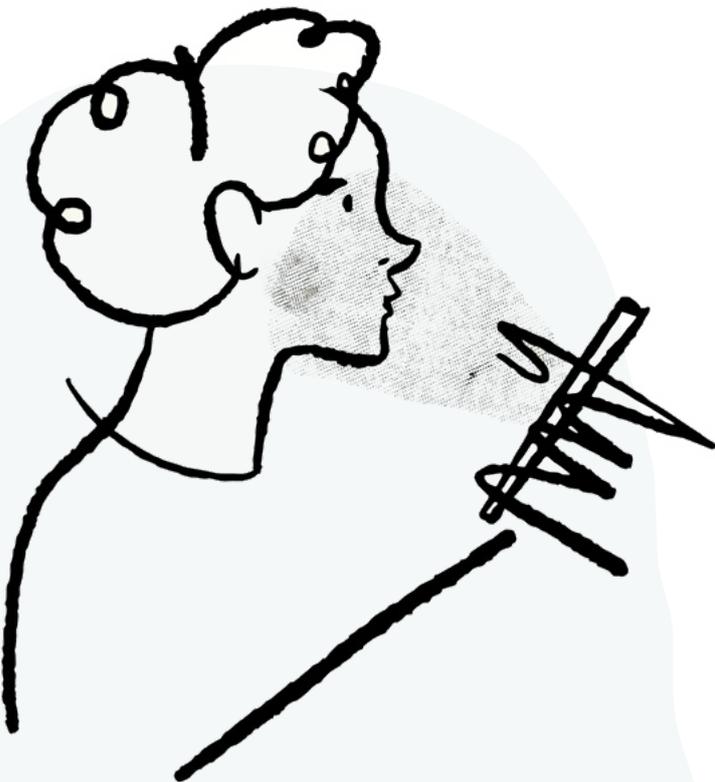
Campaign honestly.

When candidates and political parties lie about their opponents or vitally important issues like health policy or tax reform, voters become cynical and disengage. When trust in democracy decreases, everyone suffers.

Commit to meaningful reform to stop disinformation.

Disinformation is complex, and to successfully tackle it we need laws that will address all the key actors who have an interest in seeing it proliferate. Australia needs political leaders who will consider ambitious reforms, including:

- Penalties for candidates, political parties and other campaigners who intentionally and repeatedly mislead voters.
- Laws that require digital platforms to be transparent about how disinformation is spreading, including audits of their algorithms which push extreme and sensational content to users.
- Laws that prohibit predatory micro-targeting advertising techniques based on sensitive data (such as religious beliefs, sexual orientation and race or ethnicity).
- Laws that hold traditional media companies to account for irresponsibly platforming disinformation.



Commit to developing laws to limit the spread of disinformation consistent with the following principles:

- i. Laws should be carefully drafted so that they do not unduly restrict free speech and a free press, but are targeted to ensure serious harm from the spread of disinformation is avoided;
- ii. Laws should focus on community and societal harms, not just individual level harms;
- iii. Wherever possible truth should be determined by qualified bodies independent of both the executive government and industry;
- iv. Laws should be proportionate, imposing regulation on those with the greatest influence and with the most to gain from disinformation;
- v. Laws should be focused on addressing the risks from systems and processes, expanding upon the current focus on content take-down;
- vi. Laws should be guided by the best global practice and research; and
- vii. Laws should be strong and enforced by well-resourced, independent and integrated regulators.



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