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Media coverage

Electoral communication

A 6 April Guardian story, about more than 30 Facebook pages and profiles being operated by Andrew Laming MP, mentioned the AEC and the authorisation requirements for such material under the Electoral Act.

The initial Guardian story – plus that website's follow-up story saying the AEC would investigate Mr Laming's Facebook activity – generated blanket media coverage on 7-8 April. All major national and capital-city daily newspapers had some version of the "AEC investigates" angle, and AAP's story on the topic was published far and wide in country papers. Many 6pm TV bulletins ran with the story, as did both ABC and commercial-radio bulletins and talkback programs. Sky News reported that Minister Anne Ruston said Mr Laming should "reconsider returning to parliament altogether".

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Media enquiries

Following up ^{s 47F} Guardian story (mentioned above) about Andrew Laming MP, ^{s 47F} asked whether authorisations were required for Mr Laming's posts and advertisements and whether the AEC would look into the matter. In response, the AEC said it would be investigating the requirement for electoral authorisation in this case and provided background information about the purpose of the authorisation measures and the definition of "electoral matter". Exactly the same response was provided to 11 other journalists on 7 April who called after the Guardian published a new story saying the AEC would investigate Mr Laming.



Social media

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Third-party posts: Andrew Laming

Widespread mainstream media coverage on 6-8 April led to a large amount of comment on Twitter about Mr Laming's activities and the AEC's perceived lack of power/willingness to act.

This included the typical range of commentary – seeding the expectation that the AEC will ultimately not take action, with many citing a lack of authority, a lack of will or even suggestions of bias. There was also frequent referral to the 2019 “purple signs” matter as an example of the AEC's “corruption”.

The volume of traffic was significant and mostly negative, as is standard for the channel. Commentary moved on quickly.



Dave Donovan

@davrosz



BREAKING: AEC begins routine process of clearing corrupt Liberal MP.



Electoral watchdog to investigate Liberal MP Andrew Laming over dozens of Fac...
The Australian Electoral Commission is investigating coalition MP Andrew Laming over dozens of Facebook pages operating without political authorisation...

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9:43 PM · Apr 7, 2021 · Twitter for Android

166 Retweets 5 Quote Tweets 448 Likes

AEC MEDIA TEAM

02 6271 4419 | media@aec.gov.au



