

NEWSROOM POST – STRICTLY EMBARGOED UNTIL 12.01AM AEDT 15 MARCH 2022

How Meta is Preparing for the 2022 Australian Election

By Josh Machin, Head of Public Policy for Meta Australia

- Meta has been preparing for this year's Australian election for a long time and will be using a comprehensive strategy to combat misinformation, election interference, and other forms of abuse on our platforms.
- We're expanding our third-party fact-checking program in Australia to include RMIT FactLab. They'll join Agence France Presse and Australian Associated Press to review and rate content. We'll also be providing one-off grants to all our fact-checkers to increase their capacity in the lead up to the election.
- We're also working with the [Australian Associated Press](#) to re-run the "Check the Facts" media literacy campaign in three other languages - into Vietnamese, Simplified Chinese and Arabic to extend the benefits of the campaign even further.

With the Australian Election set to take place in the coming months, Meta has been preparing for them for a long time. We've been involved in more than 200 elections around the world since 2017, and we've learned key lessons from each one about where to focus our teams, technologies, and investments so they will have the greatest impact. Here are some of the ways that we're already promoting safety and integrity across our platforms ahead of this year's Australian Election.

Combating Abuse, Misinformation, and Election Interference Using a Comprehensive Approach

We've made significant investments in safety and security, including approximately \$5 billion/ \$AU7 billion in 2021 alone and now have more than 40,000 people around the world working on safety and security. These investments have allowed us to build our ability to reduce the likelihood of abuses - including election interference, misinformation and online harms - from happening in the first place, rather than just addressing them when they occur. For this year's Australian election, this work will include:

- **Announcing a new Australian Fact-Checker.** We know the importance of ensuring Australians have access to reliable information about the election in Australia. Therefore, we are pleased to announce the expansion of our third party fact checking program in Australia today. From March 21, RMIT FactLab will join Meta's global independent fact checking program in reviewing and rating the accuracy of content in the lead up to the 2022 Australian Election, alongside Agence France Presse and the Australian Associated Press. We'll also be providing one-off grants to all our fact-checkers to increase their capacity in the lead up to the election. Our fact checkers work to reduce the spread of misinformation across Meta's services. When they rate something as

false, we significantly reduce its distribution so fewer people see it. We also notify people who try to share something rated as false and add a warning label with a link to a debunking article.

- Russell Skelton, Director of RMIT FactLab said, “We see this as a really important public service. If we can play a role in preventing the dissemination of misinformation on social media that has the potential to mislead or harm, then we see that as providing a really critical service.”
- We are also working with expert organisations such as [First Draft](#) to increase monitoring for misinformation in the lead-up to the election and publish related analyses and reporting on their website. First Draft will also be providing pre-election training for Australian journalists on how to identify and prevent amplifying mis and dis information.
- **Empowering People to Identify False News.** Since we know it’s not enough to just limit or remove harmful or misleading electoral misinformation that people see, we’re giving people more context about a post so they can make an informed decision on what to read, trust and share. We have invested in dedicated Australian initiatives including:
 - Working with the [Australian Associated Press](#) to launch an education and awareness campaign comprising a series of short videos modelling how people can recognise and avoid misinformation by taking simple steps to 'Check the Facts'. The campaign will run again this April and will include, for the first time, content translated in three other languages - Vietnamese, Simplified Chinese and Arabic to extend the benefits of the campaign even further.
 - Partnering with [First Draft](#) to develop the “Don’t be a Misinfluencer” campaign on Facebook and Instagram to help creators and influencers to share tips for spotting false news.

Security and election interference

- **Combatting Influence Operations.** We have specialised global teams to identify and take action against threats to the election, including signs of coordinated inauthentic behaviour across our apps. We are also coordinating with the Government's election integrity assurance taskforce and security agencies in the lead up to the election. We’ve also improved our AI so that we can more effectively detect and block fake accounts, which are often behind this activity.
 - Since 2017, we have removed over 150 networks around the world including ahead of major democratic elections. We’re working to find and remove any networks of Coordinated Inauthentic Behaviour. We’ll also share publicly what we find.
- **Protecting candidates and leaders running in the Australian election.** In December 2021, we extended our [Facebook Protect](#) security program to Australia. The program has been rolled out to those who might be at a higher risk of being targeted online, such as candidates and public officials, encouraging them to adopt stronger account security protections. We will also be running a Facebook security prompt to candidates and leaders to remind them to turn on two factor authentication. We are working with the Australian Electoral Commission and political parties to run training sessions for all candidates on our policies and tools and how to keep safe in the lead up to the election.

Encouraging transparency around political, election and social issues ads

- **Mandatory transparency for political ads.** Since the 2019 Australian Federal Election, we've made a series of changes for advertisers in Australia that want to run electoral, political and social issue ads. Advertisers are now required to go through an authorisation process using government-issued photo ID, and place a "Paid for by" disclaimers on their ads. This includes any person creating, modifying, publishing or pausing ads that reference political figures, political parties or elections. It also includes social issue ads that seek to influence public opinion through discussion, debate or advocacy for or against important topics, such as civil and social rights, crime, environmental politics, education or immigration. We launched these requirements for social issue ads last year, before the first possible election date, to ensure it was in place for the Australian federal election. Any political, electoral or social issue ads on Facebook and Instagram that do not have the correct authorisation or disclaimers will be removed from the platform and archived in a public [Ad Library](#) for seven years.
- **Allowing Australians to control their experience.** While political and social issue ads play an important role in every election, people have told us they want the option to see fewer of them in their Facebook and Instagram feeds. Last year, we [announced](#) a new feature that gives people more control by giving them the choice to see fewer social issues, electoral, and political ads.

Encouraging civic engagement and empowering voters

We want to do more than just prevent abuse on our platforms during elections. We also want to empower people to participate, so for this year's Australian elections, we're supporting civic engagement in a number of ways.

- **Developing products on the platform to encourage people to vote.** Closer to election day we will begin running notifications at the top of Facebook's Feed for people over 18, reminding them to vote, while also connecting them with reliable information about the voting process. We will also be launching Instagram Stories elections stickers to celebrate and encourage voter engagement.



Election Day Reminder (example only)

- **Informing people about the latest election communications from political parties, journalists and the Australian Election Commission.** We will release a public, Live Display on [Crowdtangle](#) dedicated to the Australian Election. The Live Display will provide real-time coverage of the most recent communications about the election on Facebook and Instagram.

As we get closer to the Australian election, we'll stay vigilant to emerging threats and take additional steps if necessary to prevent abuse on our platform while also empowering people in Australia to use their voice by voting.

+++++

About RMIT

RMIT FactLab is a research hub at RMIT University dedicated to debunking misinformation online and developing critical awareness about its origins and spread. It is devoted to social media verification, research and education and combating the viral spread of misinformation on social media platforms. RMIT FactLab brings together the best of quality journalism and academic excellence to teach and build awareness around the damaging impact of bad information. It also conducts original research into the digital news ecosystem.