

*The Australian Code of Practice on Disinformation and Misinformation*  
**CODE REVIEW SUBMISSION**

Jonelle Norman  
jonellenorman@outlook.com

16.07.2022

‘The right to freedom of opinion is the right to hold opinions without interference, and **cannot be subject to any exception or restriction.**

The right to freedom of expression extends to any medium, including written and oral communications, the media, public protest, broadcasting, artistic works and commercial advertising. The right is not absolute. It carries with it special responsibilities, and **may be restricted on several grounds. For example, restrictions could relate to filtering access to certain internet sites, the urging of violence or the classification of artistic material.**’ Source: ag.gov.au

The contradiction above is a clear representation of both the state of communication in this country, and the vague guidelines that allow a complete over-reach of power and control regarding freedom of speech.

The Australian Code of Practice on Disinformation and Misinformation further exemplifies this.

After reading the Annual Report and the Discussion paper, my concerns are as follows:

1. The survey was conducted on a mere 2,303 people over just a one week period. In a country of approx. 27 million people, these results seem woefully misrepresentational.
2. Some if not all of the founding members of Digi - *Apple, eBay, Google, LinkTree, Meta, TikTok, Twitter, Snap, Yahoo and associate members Change.org, GoFundMe, ProductReview.com.au and RedBubble*, as well as Code signatories *Adobe, Microsoft and Twitter* are major funders of many fact-checker sites, which shows an absolute conflict of interest, and gives reason to distrust (how can a fact-checking site be completely unbiased when it’s very existence is dependent on those who fund it, and those who fund it having a vested interest in the outcome of the fact-checking?).

*Sources:*

**factcheck.org/our-funding**

We do not accept funds from corporations with the exception of Facebook, which provides funding as part of Facebook’s initiative to debunk viral deceptions, and Google, which provided a one-time grant to support our COVID-19 coverage in 2020.

### **[aap.com.au/aap-factcheck-organisational-structure/](https://aap.com.au/aap-factcheck-organisational-structure/)**

AAP FactCheck is funded by a targeted allocation from AAP's general newsroom budget and income earned through fact-checking work for Meta and TikTok. Seed funding for AAP FactCheck was originally contributed by the Google News Initiative, and Google has since provided funding towards the costs associated with multiple election-specific fact-checking projects.

### **[reuters.com/fact-check/about](https://reuters.com/fact-check/about)**

The fact-checking unit at Reuters has joined Facebook's third-party fact-checking program. Through this program, Facebook will provide funding to the Reuters fact-checking unit, in exchange for assessments of the authenticity of content on its platform.

### **[politifact.com/who-pays-for-politifact/](https://politifact.com/who-pays-for-politifact/)**

Organizations that contributed more than 5 percent of total PolitiFact revenues in the previous calendar year will be listed here:

- Facebook
- TikTok

#### 2021 Annual Report:

Microsoft: \$20,000 (For sponsorship of United Facts of America)

Facebook: \$25,000 (For sponsorship of United Facts of America)

TikTok: \$25,000 (For sponsorship of United Facts of America)

Google News Initiative: \$25,000 (For sponsorship of United Facts of America)

Facebook: \$85,000 (NABJ fact-checking fellowship)

Facebook: \$10,000 (Facebook business accelerator)

#### 2020 Annual Report:

Google: \$50,000 (Fact-checking of Corona Virus misinformation)

### **fullfact.org**

2021

Facebook £305,119.64 Third party fact checking programme

Facebook £116,352.14 Collaboration during misinformation crises

Facebook £59,634.83 Health fellowship

Google AI £235,222.77 Automated fact checking

2020

Facebook £325,224.43 Collaboration during misinformation crises

Facebook £258,759 Third party fact checking programme

Google AI £117,140.54 Automated fact checking

Google News £115,669.68 Covid-19 fact checking

Google Digital £13,112 Third generation fact checking

Since January 2019, Full Fact has checked images, videos and articles on Facebook as part of the social network's third-party fact checking initiative. This work is funded by Facebook. The

amount of money that Full Fact is entitled to depends on the amount of fact checking done under the programme.

In 2019, we were joint winners of **Google's AI for Social Good Challenge** for our work developing world-leading automated fact checking tools. Our prize was three years of funding and support from the Google.org Fellowship, which saw seven Google developers volunteer with our team for six months.

We also benefit from a general **Google Grants** scheme for charities which provides \$10,000 worth of Google advertising per month.

3. If the Covid-19 situation over the past 3 years has taught us anything, it is that the mainstream narrative will be that which is favoured by those who fund the media. It will be guided by "experts" who are either directly or indirectly funded by parties with a vested interest in said narrative. And anybody who challenges that narrative will be censored, if not cancelled. This is not a conspiracy theory, I have not only seen this play out through hundreds of others but also experienced it first-hand across several online platforms.

- Since April I have been banned from commenting on **MSN** articles, simply for using the word UNVACCINATED in a comment. (I appealed this and have been advised the ban will be reversed however no timeframe has been given.)
- **Facebook** stories would not allow me to post anything related to Covid-19 (fact sharing) that did not support the mainstream narrative. This was not an issue of misinformation nor disinformation – I was sharing factual information.
- **Instagram** censored at least half of my posts that were related to Covid-19 (fact sharing) because they did not support the mainstream narrative. Again, this was not an issue of misinformation nor disinformation – I was sharing factual information.
- **TikTok** captions would auto-change set words ie: if you said "unvaccinated" it would automatically change it to "vaccinated". This was picked up by hundreds of thousands of Tik Tok-ers.

I no longer use any of these platforms. I also no longer watch/read mainstream media because I am fully aware that all Australian mainstream media falls under monopolies (News Corp alone owns two-thirds of metropolitan Australia's print media) meaning there is a control of narrative, whatever the topic.

So, who decides what actually IS misinformation or disinformation?

So-called facts that were originally put forth by "experts" via mainstream media regarding Covid-19, that have since been disproven by other equally or higher qualified experts, is one example of how dangerous regulating such is.

In conclusion, I see this Code as yet another dangerous step towards the loss of freedom of speech in Australia. (*But perhaps that is the objective?*)