

# Australian Code of Practice on Disinformation and Misinformation Apple Pty Limited: Apple News

## 2022 Annual Transparency Report 17 May 2023

### Summary

Apple Pty Limited is committed to “creating a trusted, informative news environment by advancing quality journalism and thwarting misinformation.” The Apple News product is designed to promote quality journalism, with a focus on the quality of the content and its visibility, so as to prevent the propagation of Disinformation and Misinformation. It is with this in mind that Apple views its commitments under the Code.

### Commitments under the Code

Apple has opted-in to the following commitments under the Code for its Apple News product:

- 1a: Reducing the risk of harms that may arise from propagation of disinformation and misinformation
- 1c: Allowing users to report content
- 2: Reducing advertising and/or monetisation incentives
- 4: Enabling users to make informed choices about source of content
- 6: Strengthening public understanding
- 7: Publishing its annual transparency report

Apple has not opted-in to the following commitments under the Code for its Apple News product as set out below:

1b: Informing users about managed or prohibited user behaviour

Apple News is a service for professional news-gathering organisations and publishers, not for the dissemination of user-generated content.

1d: Responses to reports about user behaviour	Apple News is a service for professional news-gathering organisations and publishers, not for the dissemination of user-generated content.
3: Reducing advertising and/or monetisation incentives	As Apple News does not provide users the ability to surface content to other users within News, this objective and its focus around inauthentic and other user behaviour leading to propagation of disinformation and misinformation does not apply to the Apple News product
5: Improving awareness of the source of political advertising	Apple does not sell political advertising either directly or through its resellers.
7: Publicising measures in addition to its annual report	Although Apple has not opted into this commitment, Apple may voluntarily report on additional initiatives not otherwise referenced in this report on a case by case basis, as relevant.

## **Reporting against commitments**

### **Outcome 1a: Reducing harm by adopting scalable measures**

Apple News, with its human curation and vetting of publishers, has been designed to reduce the risk of harm that may arise from the propagation of disinformation and misinformation.

Before outlets onboard to News, an Apple editorial team evaluates those outlets carefully and fastidiously, working with organizations like NewsGuard to ensure they are credible, standards-based, professional organizations. Details on the process is accessible at <https://support.apple.com/guide/news-publisher/publishing-on-apple-news-apde42330c66/icloud> with likely reasons for a publication not to be onboarded listed, including where a publication publishes factual inaccuracies or fails to adhere to widely accepted journalistic standards.

Apple News has worked with NewsGuard since 2020, meeting regularly to discuss potential new publishers on the platform as well as trends in misinformation and news narratives that may affect News. NewsGuard's ratings on credibility and transparency have been one of the many metrics we use to maintain a trusted, informative environment. In March 2023, NewsGuard expanded its service to Australia and New Zealand, which has given us access to local journalism experts in those countries and a more nuanced perspective on Apple News's presence within the greater

Australia news environment and the misinformation narratives spreading there, including on climate change and COVID-19.

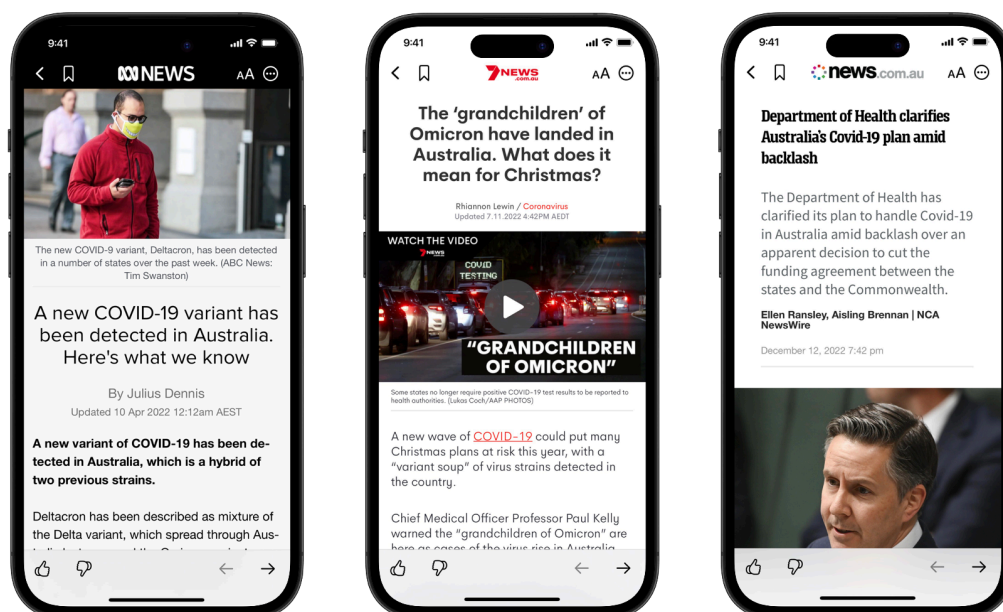
The careful and deliberate curation of stories by Apple News Editors on a range of significant topics is a key feature of the service. This includes these high visibility touchpoints that are entirely managed by Apple News Editors:

- Top Stories section within Apple News and Apple Stocks featuring a selection of stories from across our portfolio of publishing partners
- Individually crafted Spotlight Collections where Editors select content, images and themes
- Weekly Newsletter to opted-in Apple News readers

Examples referenced above include:

## COVID Regulation Changes

Apple News played an important role in communicating lockdown rules and disseminating fact-based information about the efficacy and safety of COVID vaccines to Australians in 2021, drawing on the breadth of premium reporting from our publisher partners. In 2022, the emergence of Omicron subvariants and other variants of concern coincided with the easing of restrictions and regulations, driven by high levels of vaccination recorded in the population. Apple News informed and educated readers by sending push notifications to these important developments and featuring key stories in Top Stories. The below represents a selection of articles which led Top Stories within Apple News and were supported with push notifications to readers, each being viewed by 300,000-400,000 Australians.

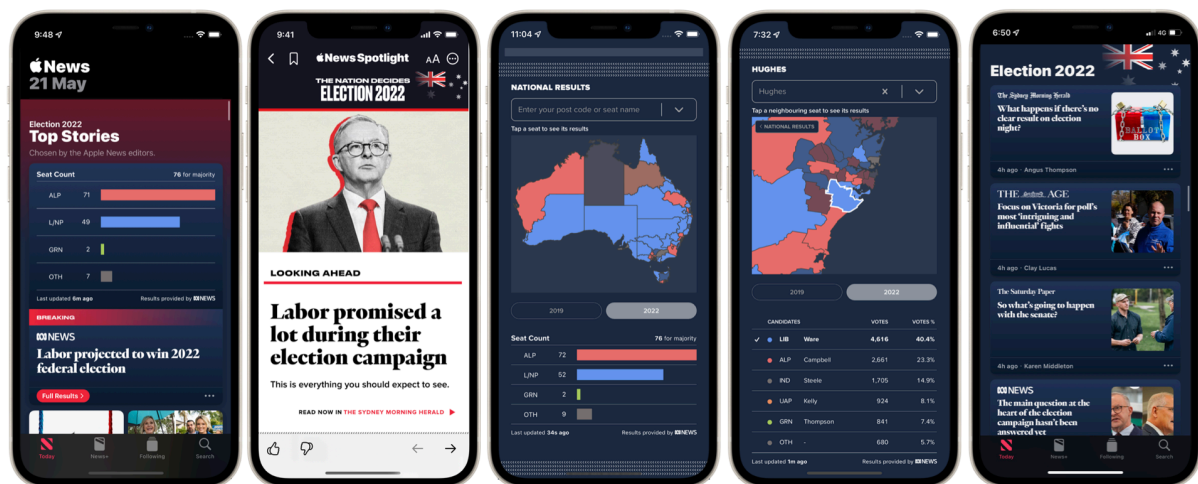


## 2022 Australian Federal Election

Apple News delivered comprehensive coverage of the Federal Election held on May 21, 2022 and partnered with the ABC to provide live election results data directly to the app, which was updated in real-time and led Top Stories. An interactive map allowed users to explore the live vote count for any federal electorate, anywhere in the country.

A dedicated election hub was created to present all the latest headlines, features, photos and analysis alongside Top Stories. The hub was visited more than 2.5 million times by 950,000 unique viewers.

Following the result, Apple News Editors created a Spotlight collection which revisited the key commitments made during the campaign and included a wealth of “explainer” content to allow readers to deeply understand the issues.



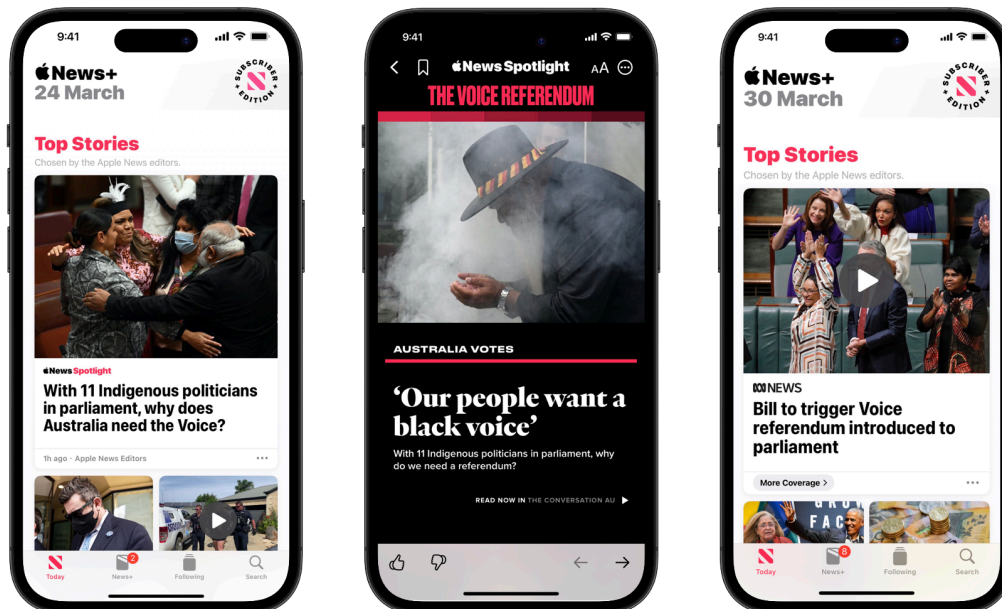
## Voice to Parliament Referendum

Australia will embark on an historic referendum in the second half of 2023, with the population asked to vote Yes or No to amend the Constitution to establish an Indigenous Voice to Parliament to advise on matters relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Following the Prime Minister's historic announcement of the question to be put to the country, Apple News AU published a special Spotlight collection that has been months in the making, charting the journey of reconciliation and outlining the purpose and importance of the Voice. The collection featured content from a broad range of publications and included perspectives from both sides of the debate, as well as a heartfelt first-person account from one of Australia's most recognised journalists and Wiradjuri man, Stan Grant.

The collection was heavily featured in Top Stories throughout the day and a push notification was sent to readers, generating over 250,000 views and featured within our weekend newsletter. The collection will be regularly

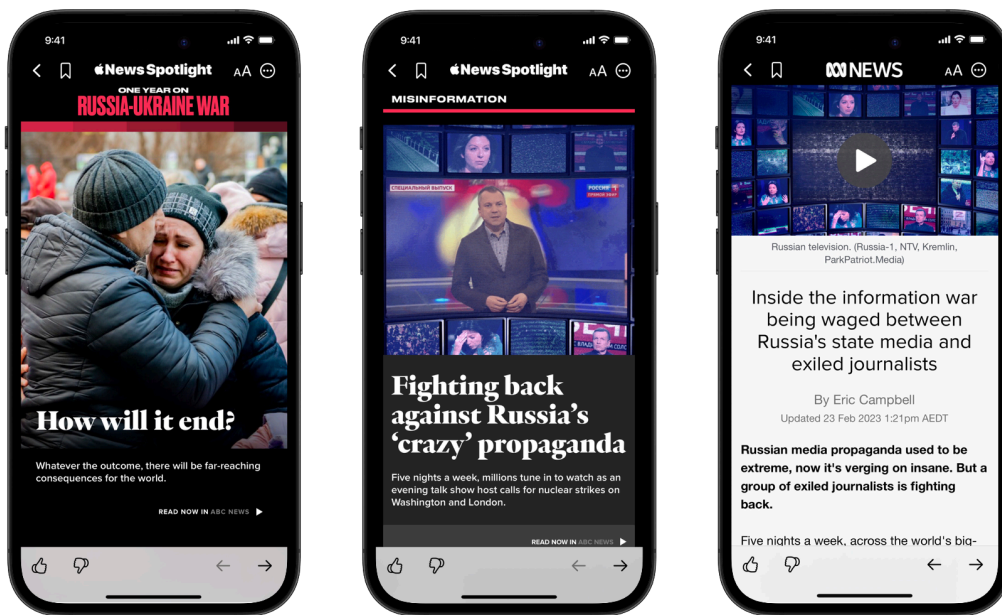
updated and included via the "More Coverage" tab in Top Stories as this story reaches key milestones in the lead-up to the referendum, as shown on 30 March below.

Although outside the 2022 calendar reporting year, Apple has included reference to this in our 2022 report, given the importance of the topic.



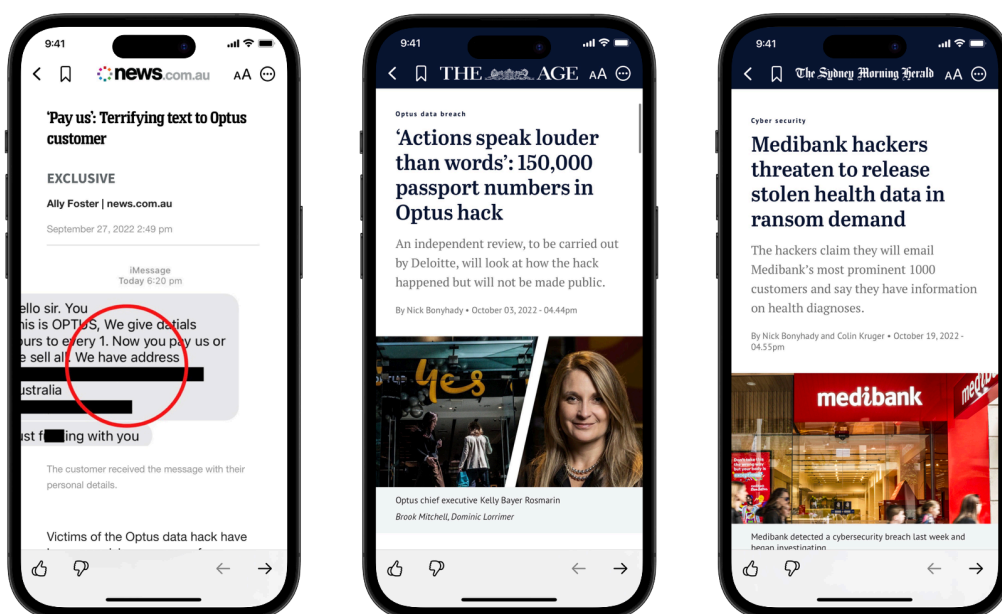
## Russian Invasion of Ukraine

One year following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Apple News crafted a collection to provide readers with updates from the region, expert perspectives on the future trajectory of the war and a compelling piece from ABC News focusing on the sophisticated propaganda mechanisms in place within Russia and the distorted narrative being communicated to the Russian population. This collection was featured in Top Stories and a push notification was sent to users, with 230,000 Australians engaging in the content.



## Cybersecurity

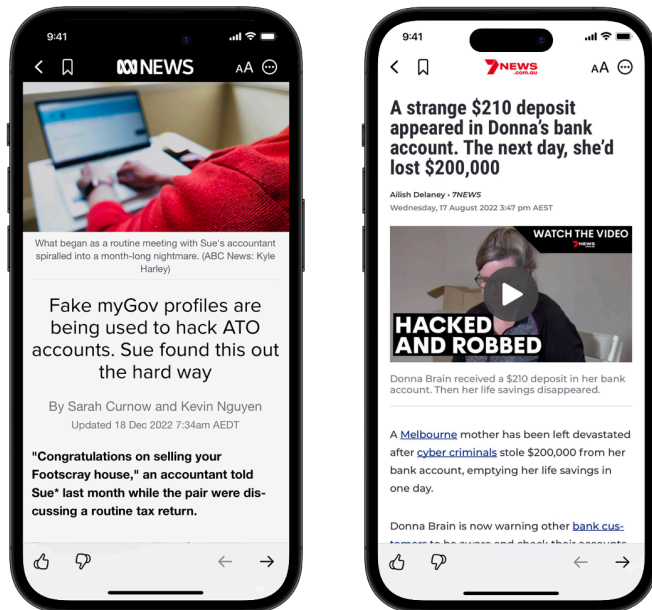
A number of high-profile cyber incidents occurred in Australia throughout 2022 and 2023, compromising the personal details of many Australians and focusing attention on the importance of cyber security. As these incidents emerged, Apple News kept readers educated and informed by featuring clear, fact-based reporting from our publishers, often leading Top Stories and with timely push notifications to readers. The featured stories detailed the nature of each incident, the data accessed (where possible) and the steps affected customers should take to secure their data. In some cases, these stories included instructions for users to make inquiries directly with the affected organisations.





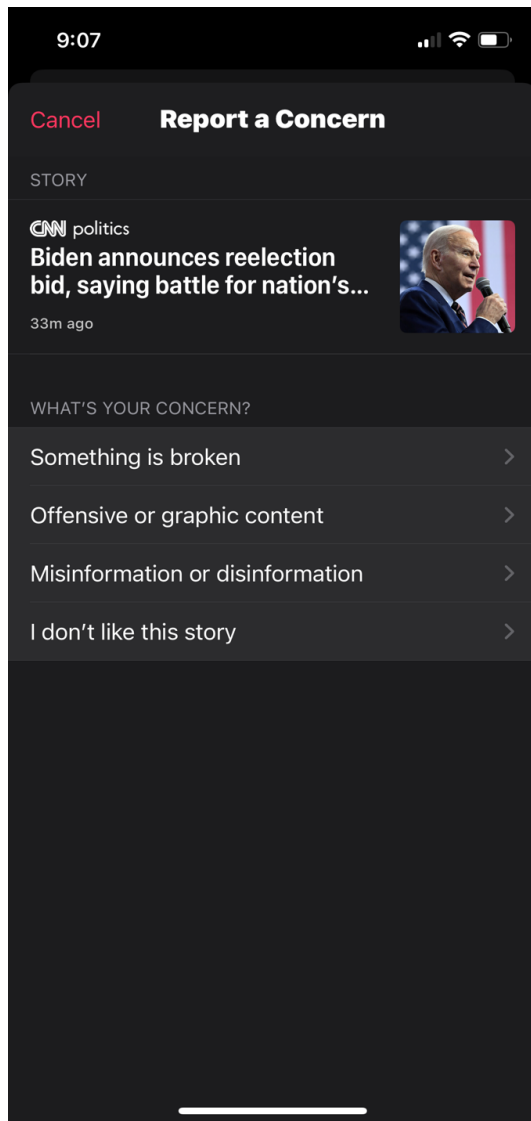
## Consumer Awareness

Misinformation and disinformation sits at the heart of cyber criminal activity and Apple News has drawn attention to a number of stories where individuals have fallen victim to bad actors. These stories serve to remind our readers of the vigilance required when sharing personal or financial information and include actionable steps and warnings to protect consumers. The below represents a selection of stories featured in Top Stories, with each receiving a push notification and viewed by 450,000-500,000 readers.



## Outcome 1c: Users can easily report offending content

Apple continues to enable customers to provide feedback on a per article basis (as per <https://support.apple.com/en-us/HT211226>), including permitting customers to specify the basis for their complaint (see screenshot below). Readers are prompted to choose from several categories of problems (the problems can be both technical and content-related, for example "Something is broken" or "Misinformation or disinformation," a category that was added in 2022). A team of moderators then evaluates each report to determine whether the article violates the Apple News guidelines. The current process is as per the screenshot below.



When the numbers of concerns raised by users are broken down, they demonstrate very limited misinformation/disinformation concerns being raised by our readers for articles made available by Australian news publishers, supporting our approach taken in the design of the Apple News product. In 2022, Apple News readers worldwide reported approximately 370,500 concerns on article content or with technical issues. The vast majority — approximately 364,000 — of these concerns were not deemed to be violations of platform guidelines. Approximately 6,500 concerns on 2,800 individual articles worldwide were deemed valid and warranted action from the moderation team, although these cover a range of issues and were not limited to misinformation/disinformation. The following table shows a comparison with 2021 numbers.

	2021	2022
Number of concerns reported	655,000	370,500
Number of concerns reported deemed valid	17,000 (on 5,600 individual articles)	6,500 (on 2,800 individual articles)



Articles produced by Australian publishers that were actioned for misinformation/disinformation in 2022 accounted for less than one one-hundredth of one percent of total article views in the Australian Apple News app.

When an article is actioned for containing misinformation or disinformation, a secondary team of trained journalists is involved in the evaluation to ensure the correct action is taken.

## **Objective 2: Disrupt advertising and monetisation incentives for disinformation.**

As set out in our 2021 report, the design and structure of Apple News disrupts advertising opportunities for Misinformation/Disinformation by limiting its appearance on the platform in the first place. See also categories of advertisements not permitted to be made available in Apple News, including ads that are misleading or deceptive (<https://support.apple.com/guide/adguide/unacceptable-or-prohibited-content-guidelines-apd527d891a8/icloud>).

## **Objective 4: Empower consumers to make better informed choices of digital content.**

As set out in our previous report:

- Publishers are clearly identified on a per article basis, allowing users to determine the source of their news.
- We work with the news rating organisation, NewsGuard, and perform our own editorial evaluations to develop an understanding of all the publishers on the platform, and ensure that the most trustworthy sources are prioritise.
- Apple employs editors with newsroom experience in reputable Australian journalistic institutions to evaluate publishers on our platform, which will help ensure that reputable and trusted brands are surfaced to users, so as to help teach users to recognise credible sources of information.
- The most visible part of the News app is Top Stories (with approximately 11-12% of total article views coming from Top Stories), which features only fact-based journalism and is 100% curated by veteran journalists from the Australian news industry who vet each story for adherence to standard journalistic ethics. As such, Apple is establishing the credibility of certain publishers and brands within its ecosystem and helping train users to recognise credible sources of information by establishing trust with the brands regularly featured in Apple News.
- In the case of important topics of public interest, our 'hubs' (see 1a above) provide a broad range of content from a trusted range of publishers, allowing for diverse perspectives to be presented.

## **Objective 6: Strengthen public understanding of Disinformation and Misinformation through support of strategic research.**

Apple has not received any research requests to date.

Apple has taken a global approach to supporting media literacy programs, with support in 2022 for The News Literacy Project (NLP) and Common Sense. These organisations received support from Apple to advance their efforts in empowering young people with the critical thinking skills necessary in today's digital age, training the next generation on how to seek out accurate and reliable information amid an increasingly complicated news landscape.

## **Objective 7: Signatories will publicise the measures they take to combat Disinformation.**

As set out in our previous report, Apple publishes this annual transparency report to outline measures taken.

## **Concluding remarks**

As a curated news platform for professional media organizations, Apple News, by its very design, works to thwart misinformation and disinformation and to ensure a trusted news environment for its users.