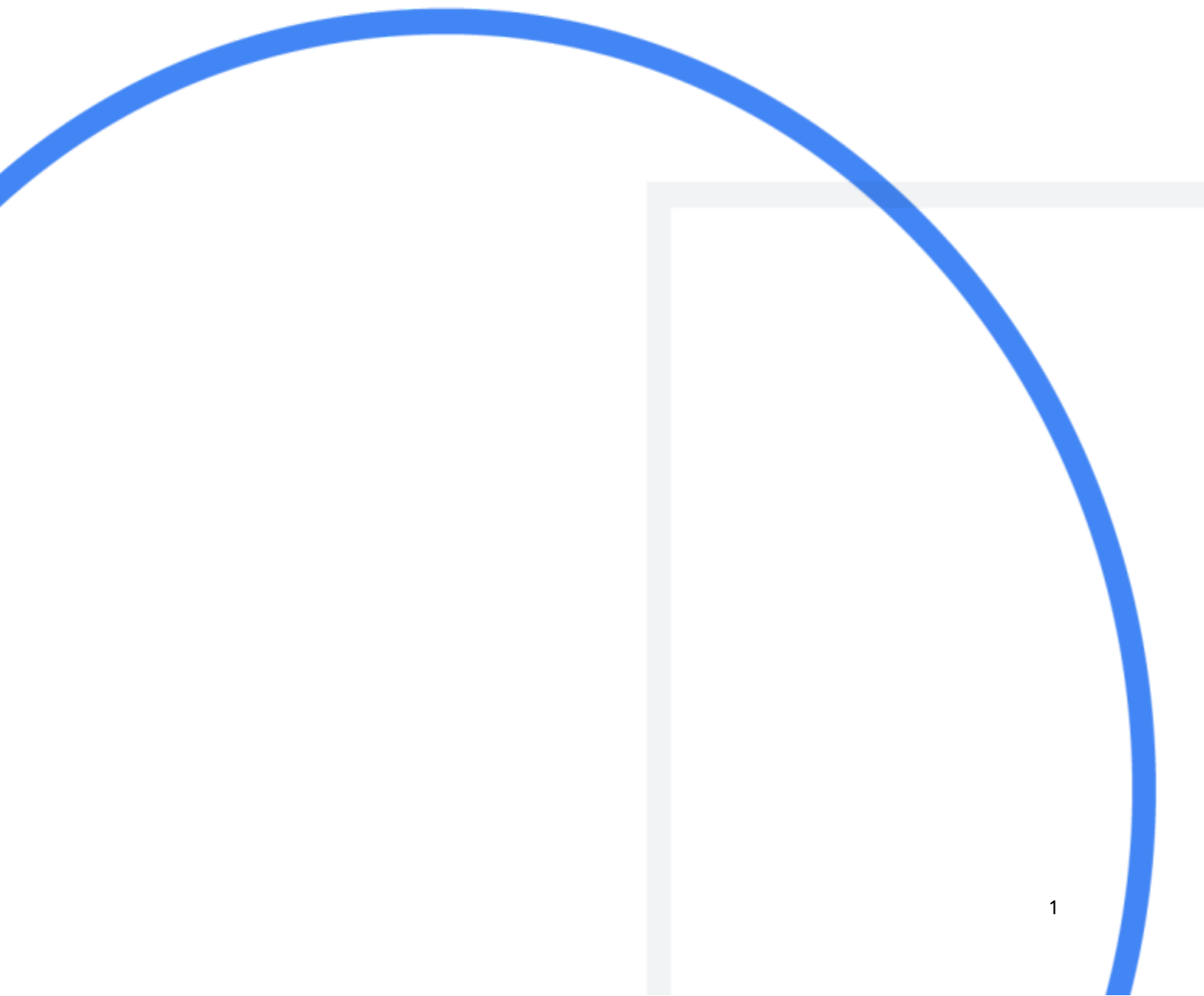


Australian Code of Practice on Disinformation and  
Misinformation

# Google Annual Transparency Report, May 2023

1st January 2022 - 31st December 2022



# Introduction

As Google's mission is to organise the world's information to make it universally accessible and useful, combating misinformation and disinformation is of utmost importance.

Since Google's founding, our product, policy, and content enforcement decisions have been guided by the following three principles:

1. **Value openness and accessibility**
2. **Respect user choice**
3. **Build for everyone**

With these principles in mind, we implement a multi-faceted approach to address the complex challenges and risks raised by misinformation and disinformation across many of our products and services.

This report discusses these approaches across many of Google's diverse products and services, particularly in the context of addressing misinformation and disinformation. The contents of the report are organised through the framework of Objectives 1 through 7 of the Code, and cover the period from 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2022. We highlight relevant policies, product features and tools, and enforcement efforts across Google's key consumer-facing information services, such as Google Search, Google News, Google Ads, Google AdSense and YouTube. We also include case studies on a range of initiatives including supporting the Australian Federal election campaign, the disruption of the 'Spamouflage Dragon' coordinated influence campaign and activities undertaken as a result of the Russia / Ukraine conflict. Unless stated otherwise, all policies apply to users and content creators in Australia.

We will continue to publish updates to this report annually. We are also committed to improving and augmenting future iterations with further insights relevant to our continued efforts to combat misinformation and disinformation.

With respect to terminology, we acknowledge the differences between 'misinformation' and 'disinformation', as outlined by this Code. The main difference pertains to whether the individual creating or sharing content has an *intent to deceive*. We use the term 'misinformation' to refer to both disinformation and misinformation and apply our policies and enforcement actions equally across each category.

# Commitments under the Code

Google, including YouTube, has committed to all 7 Objectives and related Outcomes provided in the Code and detailed below. As we respond and adapt to new and evolving challenges relating to misinformation, we continually review our products, policies, enforcement and transparency work to ensure that they are as effective as possible.

Objective and Outcomes	
<b>Objective 1 - Provide safeguards against harms that may arise from disinformation and misinformation</b>	
1a	Signatories contribute to reducing the risk of harms that may arise from the propagation of disinformation and misinformation on digital platforms by adopting a range of scalable measures.
1b	Users will be informed about the types of behaviours and types of content that will be prohibited and/or managed by Signatories under this Code.
1c	Users can report content or behaviours to Signatories that violate their policies under section 5.10 through publicly available and accessible reporting tools.
1d	Users will be able to access general information about Signatories' actions in response to reports made under 5.11.
<b>Objective 2 - Disrupt advertising and monetisation incentives for disinformation</b>	
2	Advertising and/or monetisation incentives for disinformation and misinformation are reduced.
<b>Objective 3 - Work to ensure the integrity and security of services and products delivered by digital platforms.</b>	
3	The risk that Inauthentic User Behaviours undermine the integrity and security of services and products is reduced.
<b>Objective 4 - Empower consumers to make better informed choices of digital content.</b>	
4	Users are enabled to make more informed choices about the source of news and factual content accessed via digital platforms and are better equipped to identify misinformation.
<b>Objective 5 - Improve public awareness of the source of political advertising carried on digital platforms.</b>	
5	Users are better informed about the source of political advertising.
<b>Objective 6 - Strengthen public understanding of disinformation and misinformation through support of strategic research.</b>	
6	Signatories support the efforts of independent researchers to improve public understanding of disinformation and misinformation.
<b>Objective 7 - Signatories will publicise the measures they take to combat disinformation and misinformation.</b>	
7	The public can access information about the measures Signatories have taken to combat disinformation and misinformation.

# Objective 1: Provide safeguards against harms that may arise from disinformation and misinformation.

Outcome 1a: Signatories contribute to reducing the risk of harms that may arise from the propagation of disinformation and misinformation on digital platforms by adopting a range of scalable measures.

The misinformation landscape, and the narratives that propagate through it, are constantly evolving. As such, our efforts and interventions to combat misinformation must adapt accordingly. Across many of our products and services, we deploy a range of measures to address the risk of potential harm caused by the propagation of misinformation. We also monitor certain narratives that pose a risk of harm, and may adjust our policies, and/or the enforcement of those policies, to counter them. We present a number of outcome-focused metrics to this effect below.

## **Actions taken to address coordinated influence operations**

Our Threat Analysis Group (TAG) and Trust & Safety teams work to monitor malicious actors around the globe, disable their accounts, and remove the content that they post, including but not limited to coordinated influence operations and other operations that may affect Australia. TAG publishes a quarterly TAG [Bulletin](#), which provides updates about coordinated influence operation campaigns terminated on Google's platforms, as well as periodic [blog](#) posts detailing specific campaigns, threats, or trends.

### **Case Study: DRAGONBRIDGE activity disrupted in 2022**

DRAGONBRIDGE, also known as “Spamouflage Dragon,” is a spammy influence network linked to China that has a presence across multiple platforms. Most DRAGONBRIDGE activity is low quality content without a political message, populated across many channels and blogs. However, a small fraction of DRAGONBRIDGE accounts also post about current events with messaging that pushes pro-China views. DRAGONBRIDGE narratives in 2022 spanned a wide range of news topics — ranging from China’s COVID-19 response to the war in Ukraine — and included a higher volume of content critical of the US. The actor has primarily targeted Chinese speakers, but some narratives were in English and other languages.

In 2022, Google disrupted over 50,000 instances of DRAGONBRIDGE activity across YouTube,

Blogger, and AdSense, reflecting our continued focus on this actor and success in scaling our detection efforts across Google products. We have terminated over 100,000 DRAGONBRIDGE accounts in the information operation (IO) network's lifetime. Despite their scale and profuse content production, DRAGONBRIDGE achieved practically no organic engagement from real viewers — in 2022, the majority of DRAGONBRIDGE channels had 0 subscribers when Google disrupted them, and over 80% of DRAGONBRIDGE videos had fewer than 100 views. Engagement for DRAGONBRIDGE's blogs on Blogger was also low, with nearly 95% receiving 10 or fewer views for blogs terminated in December.

See [TAG's blog post](#) for more information.

## Enforcement of YouTube's Community Guidelines

As detailed in our [Community Guidelines](#), YouTube does not allow misleading or deceptive content that poses a serious risk of egregious harm. We enforce our policies across the globe, including in Australia, using a combination of content reviewers and machine learning to remove content that violates our policies as quickly as possible. More information on how YouTube addresses misinformation can be found [here](#).

In 2022, the following actions were taken:

19,000,000+

YouTube **videos removed globally** for violating the Community Guidelines

80,000+

YouTube **videos** that violated Community Guidelines and were uploaded from IP addresses in **Australia** were **removed**.

300,000+

YouTube **videos removed globally** for violating Misinformation Policies \*

2,000+

YouTube **videos** uploaded from IP addresses in **Australia** were **removed** for violating Misinformation Policies. \*

300,000+

YouTube **videos removed globally** as content related to dangerous or misleading COVID-19 information

3,000+

YouTube **videos** uploaded from IP addresses in **Australia** and where content related to dangerous or misleading COVID-19 information were **removed**.

\* Reporting period is Q2-Q4 2022 for misinformation removal metrics (reporting period is Q1-Q4 2022 for other metrics in this section).

As mentioned above, we rely on a combination of people and technology to flag inappropriate content and enforce these guidelines. These flags can come from our automated flagging systems, from members of the [Trusted Flagger program](#) or from users in the broader YouTube community.

## 2022 Violative View Rate Estimate

To measure our progress on removing violative videos, YouTube has developed a metric called Violative View Rate (VVR). This metric is an estimate of the proportion of video views that violate our Community Guidelines in a given quarter (excluding [spam](#)). Additional data on VVR can be found [here](#). A more detailed explanation of the VVR calculation (including which policies are included) is found within the [Community Guidelines Report FAQs](#), and further information on the VVR methodology can be found [here](#).

- In **Q1** (Jan - Mar 2022), VVR was **0.09-0.11%** (i.e., out of every 10,000 views on YouTube, 9-11 were of violative content).
- In **Q2** (Apr - Jun 2022), VVR was **0.09-0.11%** (i.e., out of every 10,000 views on YouTube, 9-11 were of violative content).
- In **Q3** (Jul - Sep 2022), VVR was **0.10-0.11%** (i.e., out of every 10,000 views on YouTube, 10-11 were of violative content).
- In **Q4** (Oct - Dec 2022), VVR was **0.09-0.11%** (i.e., out of every 10,000 views on YouTube, 9-11 were of violative content).

More information on metrics pertaining to content that violates our Community Guidelines can be found in the [YouTube Community Guidelines Enforcement Report](#).

### **Case Study: YouTube's response to combating misinformation as it relates to Russia's invasion of Ukraine**

YouTube's [Community Guidelines](#) are a key part of YouTube's [broader suite of policies](#) and are [regularly updated](#) in consultation with outside experts and YouTube creators to keep pace with emerging challenges or crises. YouTube's teams work quickly to remove content that violates its policies.

Since 24 February 2022, YouTube has removed more than 9,000 channels and more than 80,000 videos related to the ongoing crisis in Ukraine for violating its content policies, including those pertaining to misinformation, hate speech, and graphic violence. Likewise, YouTube has blocked more than 800 channels and more than 4 million videos related to the Russia/Ukraine conflict since 24 February 2022.

**Outcome 1b: Users will be informed about the types of behaviours and types of content that will be prohibited and/or managed by Signatories under this Code.**

We aim to ensure that our policies across products and services are available to the public, users and creators in a form that is clear, predictable and repeatable. Each of our product policies address the

types of behaviours and content prohibited on the product, with examples as needed. A list of product-specific policies are available on [this page](#). Those most relevant for this report are included in [Appendix A](#), along with explanations of each policy.

## Outcome 1c: Users can report content or behaviours to Signatories that violates their policies under section 5.10 through publicly available and accessible reporting tools.

Our products and services provide publicly available and accessible channels or mechanisms that allow users to report content that they believe has violated our policies. Highlighted below are examples of reporting mechanisms that users can utilise to provide feedback across Google Search, Google Ads, Google AdSense and YouTube.

- In **Google Search**, users can provide feedback on an overall Search results page or on specific features such as [Knowledge Panels](#) or [Featured Snippets](#).
- On Google-served **Ads**, users can tap the three dots on the top right corner of an ad and select 'Report this Ad' to let us know about ads that they believe are illegal or violate our policies. Clicking on 'Report this Ad' will redirect users to the 'Report an ad/listing' [form](#). Using this feature, individuals can choose the reason that best describes their complaint.
- On **Google AdSense**, users can [report a site](#) that they believe is showing ads in violation of our product policies.
- On **YouTube**, users can [report](#) content using YouTube's flagging feature and indicate information about which of our policies they believe the video is violating. Users can also report inappropriate channels, playlists, comments and other content.

## Outcome 1d: Users will be able to access general information about Signatories' actions in response to reports made under 5.11.

We provide regular, publicly available reports on enforcement of our content policies - these include information regarding actions in response to reports of misinformation. A list of these reports (including public links to the materials) is included below. Information from these sources have also been incorporated throughout the relevant sections of this report.

- Our [Google Transparency Report website](#) is a centralised hub for transparency reporting on key content topics across various Google products and services;
- The annual [Ads Safety Report](#) provides updates on policy enforcement in Google Ads;

- Our Threat Analysis Group Quarterly Bulletin (published on our [Threat Analysis Group blog](#)) discloses actions we have taken against coordinated influence operation campaigns on our platforms;
- Our [YouTube Community Guidelines Enforcement report](#) provides a quarterly update on the work we do to enforce our policies on YouTube.



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

Outcome 2: Advertising and/or monetisation incentives for disinformation and misinformation are reduced.

## Relevant policies across our products and services

Our advertising and monetisation policies prohibit a range of behaviours and types of content that are clearly connected to misinformation, or that commonly overlap with misinformation. These policies include, but are not limited to:

- [Google Ads Policies](#)
- [Google Publisher Policies](#)
- [YouTube Advertiser-friendly Content Guidelines](#)
- [YouTube Channel Monetisation Policies](#)

Further details on these policies can be found in [Appendix A](#).

## Updating our monetisation policies related to misinformation

As the misinformation landscape and the narratives that propagate through it constantly evolve, our efforts and interventions to combat misinformation must adapt accordingly. This includes updating our policies and monitoring risks associated with misinformation in the context of broad societal issues that impact our users' lives. Examples of updates made to our Ads and YouTube policies are explained below.

### Updating our monetisation policies in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine

Since the first days of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Google has been helping the Ukrainian people, the Ukrainian government, and others affected by the invasion.

In February 2022,

- Google Ads launched a Sensitive Event around the war in Ukraine to block ads that sought to exploit or condone the conflict.
- Google Ads [updated the Sensitive Events Policy](#) and paused ads from and on Russian Federation state-funded media.
- Google Ads paused ad serving to users in Russia and ads on Google properties and networks globally for advertisers based in Russia.
- YouTube expanded its [Channel Monetisation Policies](#), resulting in the pause of monetisation privileges for Russian state-funded media channels. YouTube restricted

access to monetisation privileges for more than **300 channels**, including those with ties to Russian state media.

In March 2022,

- Google further clarified and in some instances expanded its monetisation policies to remove ads from publisher pages and YouTube content that is exploitative, dismissive, or condones the invasion.
- YouTube paused access to all monetisation features for users in Russia, including users' ability to complete new sign-ups for the YouTube Partner Program. This policy was enforced under YouTube's [Channel Monetisation Policies](#).

Throughout 2022,

- We remained vigilant enforcing these policies and blocked more than **17 million ads** related to the war in Ukraine under our sensitive event policy. Separately, we removed ads from more than **275 state-funded media sites** across our platforms.

A detailed list of YouTube policy updates including those related to Russia's invasion of Ukraine can be found on [this page](#). Likewise, a list of Google Ads policy updates can be found [here](#).

Google Ads also provides its advertising partners with features that enable them to maintain control over where their ads appear, the format in which their ads run, and their intended audience. In addition to performing regular review of our monetisation policies, Google Ads leverages its Dynamic Exclusion Lists feature to help our advertisers to seamlessly and continuously prevent ads from serving alongside certain content. Further information can be found [here](#).

## Enforcing our policies to reduce monetisation incentives for misinformation

To verify that advertisers and publishers on our networks are complying with our policies, we continuously monitor our advertising networks and use a combination of algorithmic and human reviews. The metrics below highlight Australia-specific enforcement actions taken for violation of misrepresentation-related ads policies.<sup>1</sup>

**65,836**

**AdSense pages** actioned for violating Unreliable and Harmful Claims, Replicated Content, Manipulated Media, or Dangerous or Derogatory Content Policies in Australia

**60**

**AdSense domains** actioned for violating Unreliable and Harmful Claims, Replicated Content, Manipulated Media, or Dangerous or Derogatory Content Policies in Australia

**441,164**

**creatives** actioned for violating [Destination Requirements Policies](#) (i.e. Insufficient Original Content) in Australia

**212,125**

**creatives** actioned for violating [Inappropriate Content Policies](#) (i.e. Dangerous or Derogatory Content, Shocking Content, Sensitive Events, Animal Cruelty) in Australia

<sup>1</sup> The data points in the Ad Safety report are expected to be modified in 2023; the metrics included in this section provide an updated benchmark to be relevant and comparable in the future.

260,045

**creatives** actioned for violating [Misrepresentation Policies](#) (i.e., Unacceptable Business Practices, Coordinated Deceptive Practices, Misleading Representation, Manipulated Media, Unreliable Claims, Misleading Ad Design, Clickbait Ads, Unclear Relevance, Unavailable Offers) in Australia

Our [2022 Ads Safety Report](#) and [Ads Safety blog post for 2022](#) are publicly available and contain additional data that exemplify enforcement actions taken on ads and publisher content.

# Objective 3: Work to ensure the integrity and security of services and products delivered by digital platforms.

Outcome 3: The risk that Inauthentic User Behaviours undermine the integrity and security of services and products is reduced.

Google is continually working to address and mitigate risks associated with behaviours that seek to undermine the integrity and security of our products and services ('Inauthentic User Behaviours'). Targeted policies are in place across our products and services, tailored to the specific risks faced by each product or service in relation to Inauthentic User Behaviour. Further details on these policies can be found in [Appendix A](#).

## Google Search & Google News

- Google Search [Webmaster Guidelines](#) prohibit techniques which may be misused to deceive our ranking systems or users.
- The [Google Search Content Policies](#) include policies related to Search Features. Content on Google News must follow all Google Search Content Policies, as well as [Google News-specific Policies](#).

## Google Ads

- To minimise Inauthentic User Behaviour, the [Ads Misrepresentation Policy](#) highlights unacceptable practices and behaviours that advertisers must avoid, such as excluding relevant product information or providing misleading information about products, services, or businesses.

## Google AdSense

- Users who wish to monetise their content with Google ad code are required to adhere to the [AdSense Program Policies](#).

## YouTube

- Our [YouTube Community Guidelines](#) include policies to prohibit content intended to impersonate a person or channel, as well as fake engagement, which aims to artificially increase the number of views, likes, comments, or other metrics either by using automatic systems or serving up videos to unsuspecting viewers.

- More information related to 'Inauthentic User Behaviours' can be found in the Threat Analysis Group case study (see [Outcome 1a](#)) and advertisement policy enforcement metrics (see [Outcome 2](#)).

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

Outcome 4: Users are enabled to make more informed choices about the source of news and factual content accessed via digital platforms and are better equipped to identify misinformation.

## **Tools and features enabling users to make more informed choices**

Across many of our products, we provide users with a variety of opportunities to make informed choices about content encountered, thereby allowing users to identify misinformation. With more tools to identify misinformation, users are then empowered to report instances of misinformation using the mechanisms outlined in [Outcome 1c](#), thus helping reduce the overall risk of harm from misinformation.

The below sub-sections highlight some of the tools and features created to elevate authoritative sources and to help users make informed choices; an overview of additional tools and features for these purposes can be found in [Appendix B](#). Note that these tools and features are automatically available to all users in Australia, and their availability does not require an individual user to select and/or activate them.

## **Google Search content advisories**

Google Search's content advisory notices help alert users to when they have encountered a query and results set that may not yet include high quality information from reliable sources or when the results retrieved are likely to be off-topic and therefore unhelpful. These are specifically designed to address data voids which include queries for which either content is limited or nonexistent or when a topic is rapidly evolving and reliable information is not yet available for that topic.

Google Search released a new content advisory in 2022, after adjusting design and messaging based on expert feedback, to indicate where Google Search systems do not have high confidence in the overall quality of search results in English. See blog for [details](#).

## **YouTube information panels**

YouTube highlights information from authoritative third-party sources using information panels. As users navigate YouTube, they might see a variety of different information panels, including panels that tell users a channel is affiliated with state-sponsored media. If a channel is owned by a news

publisher that is funded by a government, or publicly funded, an information panel providing publisher context may be displayed on the watch page of the videos on its channel.

Information panels provide additional context, with each designed to help users make their own decisions about the content they find. These information panels appear in relevant search results and video watch pages, regardless of what opinions or perspectives are expressed. If users want to learn more, most panels also link to the third-party partner's website. For example, developing news in search results may link to articles from authoritative sources on ongoing breaking stories. In 2022, YouTube displayed information panels on topics prone to misinformation and COVID-19 below relevant videos or above search results over **150,000,000 times** in Australia.

## Google Search structured authoritative information

In 2022, Google Search provided a number of features to provide structured, authoritative information to users, particularly in times of crises.

- **'SOS Alerts'**: Google brings together relevant and authoritative content from the web, media, and Google products, and then highlights that structured content across Google products such as Google Search and Google Maps. The content includes authoritative help links and relevant local information aiming to make emergency information more accessible during a crisis. See [Help Centre](#) for more information. In 2022, there were **over 6,700,000 views/impressions** on Crisis Response alerts (e.g., 'SOS Alerts', 'Public Alerts') in Australia.
- **Special features created to provide information about COVID-19**: These features provide structured, authoritative information about the COVID-19 pandemic including information on COVID-19 vaccines. The features organise the search result pages to help users easily navigate to trusted COVID-19 resources. In 2022, there were **over 53,100,000 views/impressions** on COVID-19 structured features in Australia.

## Ranking Google Search results

We continue to improve the design of our ranking systems, which are key to helping users make informed decisions and reducing the proliferation of misinformation. For example, Google Search's algorithms consider a host of 'signals' (or characteristics of a web page) that are indicative of high-quality and reliable information and undergo a [rigorous testing process](#) that involves both live tests and thousands of trained external Search Quality Raters from around the world. More information on ranking Search results is available in [Google's 2022 Australian Code of Practice on Disinformation and Misinformation Annual Transparency Report](#).

## YouTube recommendation systems

YouTube has expanded the ways in which it ensures that its ranking and recommendations systems surface high quality content to curb the spread of harmful misinformation and 'borderline' content — content that comes close to, but does not quite violate YouTube's Community Guidelines.

An explanation of how our recommendation system works, including how we raise up authoritative information in ranking and recommendations, can be found [here](#).

## Media literacy

In the face of near limitless access to information, Google remains committed to supporting efforts that deepen users' collective understanding of misinformation. Google aims to improve users' media literacy and empower users to think critically through investing in media literacy campaigns and designing tools and features in a way that allows users to feel confident and in control of the information they consume and the choices they make.

### **Google Search**

Google Search aims to connect users with high quality information, and help users understand and evaluate that information. Google Search has deeply invested in both information quality and information literacy, as described below.

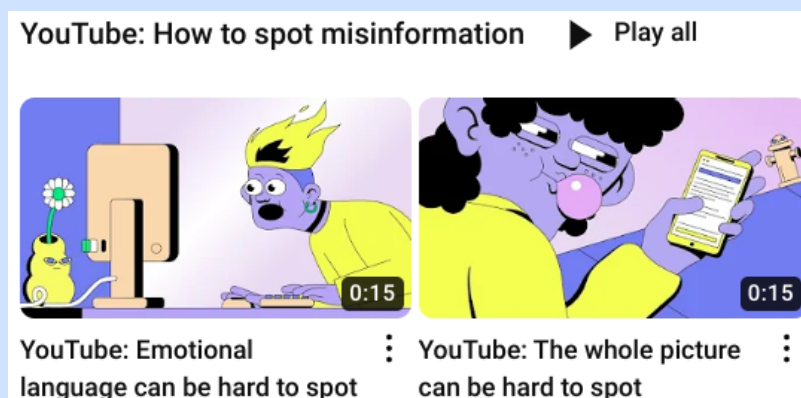
Google Search's 'About This Result' feature enables users to quickly learn more about a result and make a more informed decision about the sites they may want to visit and what results will be most useful for them (more information found [here](#)). Further information on this feature is available in [Google's 2022 Australian Code of Practice on Disinformation and Misinformation Annual Transparency Report](#). In 2022, the 'About this Result' panel was **viewed 61,902,776 times** in Australia.

The 'More About This Page' link within the 'About This Result' feature provides additional insights about sources and topics users find on Google Search. When a user taps the three dots on any search result, they will be able to learn more about the page. Additional information can be found in the Google Search blog post [here](#). In 2022, the 'More About This Page' feature was **viewed 641,324 times** in Australia.

### **YouTube**

YouTube takes its responsibility efforts seriously, outlining clear policies used to moderate content on the platform and providing tools that users can leverage to improve their media literacy education and better evaluate what content and sources to trust. To empower users to think critically and use YouTube's products safely and responsibly, YouTube invests in media literacy campaigns to improve users' experiences on YouTube; the most recent global media literacy campaign is highlighted below.

#### **Case Study: YouTube's 'Hit Pause' Program**



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/@HitPause>

YouTube's global media literacy campaign, 'Hit Pause', launched in November 2022 and will



target over 70 countries around the globe. As of December 2022, the campaign was live in more than 50 countries, including Australia where we partnered with the Alannah and Madeline Foundation to promote their Media Literacy Lab (developed with seed funding from Google in 2020).

The program seeks to teach viewers critical media literacy skills via engaging and educational public service announcements (PSAs) via YouTube home feed and pre-roll ads, and on a dedicated [YouTube channel](#). The YouTube channel hosts videos from the YouTube Trust & Safety team that explain how YouTube protects the YouTube community from misinformation and other harmful content, as well as additional campaign content that provides members of the YouTube community with the opportunity to increase critical thinking skills around identifying different manipulation tactics used to spread misinformation – from using emotional language to cherry picking information.

## Fact checks on Google Search and News

Fact checking is an important part of tackling misinformation. Google Search has developed policies and processes to label fact-checked articles that are displayed in Search results (if they meet the eligibility and technical criteria). Google also provides tools like [Fact Check Explorer](#) and the [Google FactCheck Claim Search API](#). Fact Check Explorer allows anyone to explore the Fact Check articles that use the '[ClaimReview](#)' HTML mark-up, an open standard that lets any fact-checker mark up their content so it can be identified and used by any online service (including but not limited to Search Engines or Social Media). To make it easier for fact-checkers to leverage the ClaimReview mark-up, Google developed a [free tool](#) that simplifies the process of marking up webpages using this standard. Additional information about the Fact Check Markup Tool can be found [here](#). Using the [Google FactCheck Claim Search API](#), users can query the same set of Fact Check results available via the [Fact Check Explorer](#) or a developer could continuously get the latest updates on a particular query. The metrics below relate to the availability of fact-checked articles and use of the Fact Check Explorer tool.

**53,996**

**articles available** in English in Google Search **Fact Check Explorer** at the beginning of 2022, globally

**72,171**

**articles available** in English in Google Search **Fact Check Explorer** at the end of 2022, globally

**4,161**

**Fact Check Explorer tool users** in Australia in 2022

Fact check features on Google are another way to easily find information that has been verified by independent fact-checking organisations. The 'Fact Check' label in Google Search applies to published stories with fact-checked content that is indicated by the [schema.org ClaimReview markup](#), like round-up stories that contain multiple fact check analyses within a single article. Google News may apply this label to publisher content, where applicable. This helps users find fact-checked content for major stories appearing on Google News; when browsing Google News on desktop, they can see recently fact-checked claims from independent publishers in their region, when related to the top stories of the day. Likewise, when users search for a topic that may be disputed, they might

see fact-check articles in their results. These results display snippets to help users get context about a claim that was made.

More information about fact check features can be found on '[Check the facts with these Google features](#)'. The below case study also highlights Google's commitment to continue to partner with independent fact-checking organisations.

### Case Study: Google's investment in IFCN

The International Fact Checking Network (IFCN) website states that their organisation, 'enable[s] fact-checkers through networking, capacity building and collaboration. IFCN promotes the excellence of fact-checking to more than 100 organisations worldwide through advocacy, training and global events.'

On 29 November 2022, Google and YouTube announced they will provide a \$13.2 million USD grant to the [IFCN](#), to support [135+ organisations](#) from 65 countries, covering over 80 languages. Within the funding provided, \$1.2 million USD will be used by IFCN to operate the fund, manage the application process and outreach. The goal is to reach fact-checking organisations of differing maturity:

- **Build:** fact-checkers with little or no online presence;
- **Grow:** fact-checkers with a basic digital presence looking to expand reach;
- **Engage:** digitally mature fact-checkers, looking to invest in new technologies.

# Objective 5: Improve public awareness of the source of political advertising carried on digital platforms.

Outcome 5: Users are better informed about the source of political advertising.

Google's broader ads policies, as described in [Appendix A](#), apply to all ads, including election ads. Australia Election Ads are ads that feature: an Australian federal political party, a candidate for the Australian House of Representatives or Senate, or a current elected federal office holder in the Australian House of Representatives or Senate.<sup>2</sup>

## Updates to Political Advertising Policies

Prior to February 2022, Google Ads/DV360<sup>3</sup>'s global election ads policies included exemptions for advertisers promoting products, services, and news. On 15 February 2022, Google Ads/DV360 [removed](#) these exemptions from election ads policies worldwide to promote increased transparency and fairness. Advertisers wishing to promote products, services, and news with ad content in scope of the policy (e.g. featuring a current candidate or officeholder) are now subject to the respective election ads policy, including the requirement that they apply for election ads verification in order to run these ads.

Concurrent with the elimination of election ads exemptions on 15 February 2022, Google Ads/DV360 expanded ad serving options for election ads. Before, election ads could serve only in the country or region to which the ad content pertained (e.g. Australia Election Ads could only serve in Australia; EU Election Ads could serve only in the EU). With this update, to run election ads in the region to which the ad content pertains, an advertiser must be verified under that region's [Election Ads verification](#) process. For example, an advertiser must complete the Australia Election Ads verification process to run Australia Election Ads in Australia. To run election ads outside the region to which the ad content pertains, an advertiser must be verified under either the [Election Ads verification](#) or [Advertiser Identity verification](#) process for the region in which the advertiser is located. For example, a UK-based advertiser must complete a UK verification process to run Australia Election Ads in any region outside Australia.

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<sup>2</sup> Google's Australia Election Ads policy will be updated in May 2023 to additionally include state, territory, referendum, and plebiscite election advertising.

<sup>3</sup> [DV360](#) is Google's end-to-end campaign management tool for enterprise.

### Case Study: 2022 Australia Election Ads

As described above, only [verified advertisers](#) are permitted to run election ads in Australia. All election ads run by verified election advertisers must contain a [disclosure](#) that identifies who paid for the ad. The below metrics highlight election ad activity in Australia throughout 2022:

- **127 verified advertisers** ran Australia Election Ads in Australia
- **11,921 ads were rejected due to unverified advertisers** attempting to run Australia Election Ads

We did not detect any coordinated influence operation campaigns targeting the Australian election.

### Updates to Political Advertising Transparency Report - User interface & tools

Google has also made significant investments in [enhancing transparency around election advertising](#). In addition to election ads verification policies, the [AU Political Advertising Transparency Report](#) makes it easy for voters, researchers, and journalists to see - among other things - who is purchasing election ads on Google, YouTube, and Partner properties in Australia and how much money is being spent on those ads. In May 2022, Google updated the [Political Ads Transparency Report](#), creating a new user interface and adding new tools for accessing and filtering information about targeting, location and formats for specific election ads and advertisers.

Anyone can access and use this information, and Google has aimed to ensure that it is easy for third parties to analyse it more effectively: the report is searchable and downloadable, and can be filtered by spend, number of impressions, type of ad format, time and region/country. It is updated after an ad is first served, and displays election ads from verified advertisers that have one or more impressions. The data from the AU Political Advertising Transparency Report and Ad Library is also available on [Google Cloud's BigQuery](#). Using BigQuery's API, any interested third party can write code and run their own unique queries on this data set to develop charts, graphs, tables, or other visualisations of election ads on Google platforms.

Within the Google Advertising Political Advertising Transparency team, a User Experience team has been devoted to understanding target users' (including researchers') needs and working with Product Managers, Engineers, and others to develop new and improve existing features and functionalities of the Political Advertising Transparency Report. For example, Google Advertising has an always on survey that surfaces for anyone who views the Political Advertising Transparency Report. Via this survey, Google Advertising consistently gets feedback from researchers, as well as other user groups, and uses this feedback to inform improvements to the website.

### Case Study: Political Advertising Transparency Report insights

The [Political Advertising Transparency Report](#) can be filtered by country/region, date and ad format (text, image, video) to get insights into the top advertisers during specific election periods and their respective ad spend.

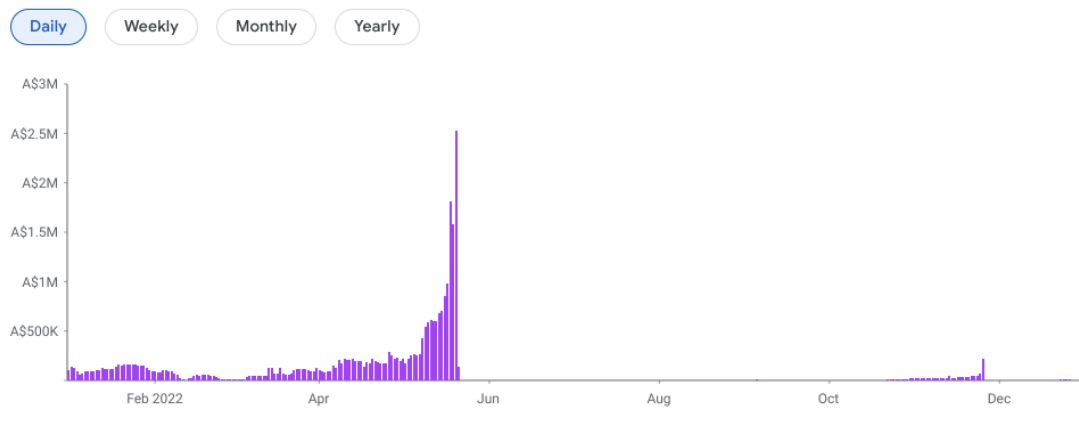
The below metrics summarise selected insights about Australia Election Ads shown in Australia

in 2022. The Australian federal election took place on 21 May 2022.

- Total election ad spend amounted to **A\$28,308,600** (AUD), spent across **8,462 ads**
- The top three advertisers by ad spend were the United Australia Party (**A\$19.1M**), The Australian Labor Party National Secretariat (**A\$2.3M**), and the Liberal Party of Australia (**A\$1.46M**)
- The top three states or territories by ad spend were New South Wales (**A\$8.14M**), Victoria (**A\$7.66M**), and Queensland (**A\$6.02M**)
- Video ad formats accounted for the highest ad spend at **A\$24.9M**, followed by text ad formats (**A\$2.72M**) and image ad formats (**A\$680K**).

### Spending over time

Shown in Australia, custom Jan 1 – Dec 31, 2022



**Source:** [Political Advertising Transparency Report](#) as of May 8, 2023

Note: Google is continuously reviewing its data and improving its classification of election ads. As Google constantly increases the accuracy of our data, historical data may slightly fluctuate over time.

# Objective 6: Strengthen public understanding of disinformation and misinformation through support of strategic research.

Outcome 6: Signatories support the efforts of independent researchers to improve public understanding of disinformation and misinformation.

We continue to support global and Australia-specific efforts to enhance awareness and detection of misinformation and promote authoritative sources of information. Examples of these collaborations are provided in the table below.

Name of university, institute, or company	Overview of research
Australian Associated Press (AAP)	AAP is providing translated fact checks to approximately 40 culturally and linguistically diverse news publishers around Australia. Collaborating with the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS), they are translated into Mandarin, Arabic and Vietnamese. The titles include: Koori Mail, Indian Link, Viet News, Epoch Times, Ngaarda Radio, Korean Herald, Australian Muslim Times, Phil Times, Almestaqbal and SBS's channels and platforms. AAP is a verified <a href="#">fact checker through Google</a> , so their pieces also appear in <a href="#">Google search results</a> .
First Draft	First Draft worked with 10 news publishers (a mix of small and large) and additional community organisations to help them identify false, misleading and confusing claims during the Federal election campaign. They supported journalists through simulations and masterclasses and created an online community for the partner publishers. First Draft also provided daily alerts and weekly briefings on false and misleading claims that were circulating online. The partners they worked with included: Asian Alliance Australia, AAP, Canberra Times, SBS, NITV, Launceston Examiner, Northern Daily Leader Tamworth Wimmera Mail-Times, Codebreakers, Codebreakers, Democracy in Colour, Crikey, Joy, Guardian Australia, 3CR Community Radio, RMIT ABC Fact Check, The Drum, ABC and, The Humanism Project.
Squiz Kids	Google funded the development of Squiz Kids' media literacy program Newshounds which is delivered in Australian classrooms to help primary school children understand which media stories they should trust. Over

	<p>850 Australian classrooms are using the 9 part training module to teach children how to “stop, think and check” when they read or hear a story. The program has had early success, 86% of pilot students said Newsounds has changed the way they consume media and every teacher said they can see improvements in students’ ability to critically consume media.</p>
YouGov & Poynter Report	<p>In 2022, Google Search partnered with YouGov and Poynter on a report (‘A Global Study on Information Literacy’) that summarised findings from a survey of 8,585 respondents from 7 countries around the world. The report focused on consumer habits and practices related to misinformation, search literacy, and information journeys - see the <a href="#">infographic</a> and <a href="#">full findings</a>.</p>
YouTube Researcher Program	<p>The YouTube Researcher Program provides scaled, expanded access to global video metadata across the entire public YouTube corpus via a <a href="#">Data API</a> for academic researchers affiliated with an accredited, higher-learning institution. The program allows researchers to independently analyse the data they collect, including generating new/derived metrics for their research. Information available via the Data API includes video and channel title and description, views, likes, keyword searches, and other data.</p> <p>There is an application process with detailed policies, eligibility criteria, and guidance that can be found on the <a href="#">YouTube Research Policies</a> page.</p>
Google Trends	<p>Google Search and YouTube provide publicly available data via Google Trends, which provides access to a largely unfiltered sample of actual search requests made to Google Search and YouTube’s search function. By sampling data, Google can look at a dataset representative of all Google and YouTube searches, while finding insights that can be processed within minutes of an event happening in the real world. It is anonymised (no one is personally identified), categorised (determined by the topic for a search query) and aggregated (grouped together). See Trends <a href="#">Help Centre</a> for details.</p>

# Objective 7: Signatories will publicise the measures they take to combat disinformation and misinformation.

Outcome 7: The public can access information about the measures Signatories have taken to combat disinformation and misinformation.

In [Objective 1](#) / [Outcome 1d](#) of this report, we provide details (and links to corresponding materials) regarding publicly available and accessible information outlining measures we take to combat misinformation.

Additionally, YouTube published "[Inside Responsibility: What's next on our misinfo efforts](#)," in February 2022 with more details on how YouTube is tackling some of the largest challenges affecting the platform, including misinformation.

Google has also made investments in developing and publishing videos to help advertisers and publishers understand our policies, including misinformation policies. These videos can be viewed on the [Google Product Policy Hub](#).



# Concluding remarks

Through the framework of the Objectives and Outcomes set forth in the Australian Code of Practice on disinformation and misinformation, we have discussed how our products and services aim to mitigate the risk of harms arising from misinformation. We have outlined the various policies, safeguards and measures implemented across our products and services during 2022 to reduce the propagation and impact of misinformation. The case studies, examples and quantitative data points provided highlight the impact of these approaches. Additionally, we have detailed how we engage with the public and users, how we support other organisations tackling this issue, and how we provide further transparency regarding our own ongoing efforts.

We recognise that misinformation, and the risks associated with this issue, will likely continue to evolve. As such, we will continue to evaluate and adapt the measures and policies that we put in place across our products and services and invest in developing effective ways to protect our users and the integrity of our services. As we continue to report on the progress of this work, we look forward to engaging further with DIGI, the industry, civil society, users, academia and other key stakeholders on this issue.

# Appendices

## Appendix A: Google Misinformation/Disinformation Policies

### Google Search & Google News Policies

- **[Google Search Webmaster Guidelines](#)**: Our webmaster guidelines prohibit techniques which could be used to deceive our ranking systems or abuse our users.
  - [Automatically generated content](#)
  - [Participation in link schemes](#)
  - [Cloaking](#)
  - [Sneaky redirects](#)
  - [Hidden text or links](#)
  - [Doorway pages](#)
  - [Scraped content](#)
  - [Loading pages with irrelevant keywords](#)
  - [Creating pages with malicious behaviour](#)
  - [Abusing structured data markup](#)
  - [Sending automated queries to Google](#)
- **[Google Search Content Policies](#)**: These policies apply to content surfaced anywhere within Google Search, which includes web results. These policies include additional Search Features policies that apply to Google News and other specialised features, which include but are not limited to:
  - **Deceptive Practices Policy**: This policy prohibits sites or accounts that impersonate any person or organisation, or that misrepresent or conceal their ownership or primary purpose. We do not allow sites or accounts that engage in inauthentic or coordinated behaviour that misleads users.
  - **Manipulated Media Policy**: This policy prohibits audio, video, or image content that's been manipulated to deceive, defraud, or mislead by means of creating a representation of actions or events that verifiably didn't take place.
  - **Medical Content Policy**: This policy does not allow content that contradicts or runs contrary to scientific or medical consensus and evidence-based best practices.
- **[Google News Policies](#)**: These content and behaviour policies help ensure a positive experience for users and publishing partners. Along with Google Search's overall Content Policies, Google News has additional feature-specific policies as noted below:
  - **Ads & Sponsored Content Policy**: Ads and other paid promotional material should not exceed content on pages. This policy states that we do not allow content that conceals or misrepresents sponsored content as independent, editorial content.
  - **Misleading Content Policy**: This policy states that News does not allow preview content that misleads users to engage with it by promising details which are not reflected in the underlying content.

- **Transparency Policy:** This Google News Policy notes that news sources on Google should provide clear dates and bylines, as well as information about authors, the publication, the publisher, company or network behind it, and contact information.

## Google Ads Policies

- **Google Ads Policies:** These policies are designed not only to abide by laws but also to ensure a safe and positive experience for our users. This means that our policies prohibit some content that we believe to be harmful to users and the overall advertising ecosystem. Our policies cover four broad areas:
  - Prohibited content
  - Prohibited practices
  - Restricted content and features
  - Editorial and technical.
- **Google Ads Misrepresentation Policy:** This policy prohibits content and behaviours that deceive users by excluding relevant product information or providing misleading information about products, services, or businesses. Violations of this policy, although not a comprehensive list, include unacceptable business practices, coordinated deceptive practices, unreliable claims (such as making claims that are demonstrably false and could significantly undermine participation or trust in an electoral or democratic process) and misleading representation.
  - **Unacceptable Business Practices Policy** does not allow:
    - Scamming users by concealing or misstating information about the advertiser's business, product, or service;
    - Ad destinations that use 'phishing' techniques to gather user information.
  - **Coordinated Deceptive Practices Policy** prohibits two practices:
    - Coordinating with other sites or accounts and concealing or misrepresenting your identity or other material details about yourself, where your content relates to politics, social issues, or matters of public concern;
    - Directing content about politics, social issues, or matters of public concern to users in a country other than your own, if you misrepresent or conceal your country of origin, or other material details about yourself.
  - **Misleading Representation Policy** prohibits advertisers from:
    - Making misleading statements, obscuring, or omitting material information about your identity, affiliations or qualifications;
    - Providing an inaccurate business name or business name that does not clearly represent the advertised business or disambiguates from similar businesses in the ad or user interactions.
  - **Manipulated Media Policy** does not allow advertisers to manipulate media to deceive, defraud, or mislead others.
  - **Unreliable Claims Policy** does not allow advertisers to make inaccurate claims or claims that entice the user with an improbable result as the likely outcome a user can expect. This includes claims related to health and weight loss, financial products or money making schemes, and politics, social issues, or matters of public concern.

- [Google Ads Inappropriate Content Policy](#): As noted in our help centre, this policy prohibits ads or destinations that display shocking content or promote hatred, intolerance, discrimination, or violence.

## Google AdSense Policies

- [Google Publisher Policies](#): Users who monetise content with Google must adhere to all Google Publisher Policies. Prohibited content and behaviours include but are not limited to: dangerous or derogatory content, misrepresentative content (such as making claims that are demonstrably false and could significantly undermine participation or trust in an electoral or democratic process) or coordinated deceptive practices.
- [AdSense Program Policies](#): AdSense publishers are required to adhere to the AdSense Program Policies or risk their ad or account being disabled. It is the publisher's responsibility to keep up to date with and adhere to the following policies: invalid clicks and impressions, encouraging clicks or views (non-rewarded inventory), traffic sources, ad behaviour, ad placement, site behaviour, deceptive site navigation.

## YouTube Policies

- [YouTube Community Guidelines](#): These Community Guidelines outline what type of content is and is not allowed on YouTube. These policies apply to all types of content on our platform, including videos, comments, and links. These policies cover: spam & deceptive practices, sensitive content, violent or dangerous content, regulated goods, misinformation and monetisation.
- YouTube Misinformation Policies detailed below can be found on this [landing page](#).
  - [YouTube Misinformation Policies](#): Certain types of misleading or deceptive content with serious risk of egregious harm are not allowed on YouTube. This includes certain types of misinformation that can cause real-world harm, like promoting harmful remedies or treatments, certain types of technically manipulated content, or content interfering with democratic processes.
  - [YouTube Elections Misinformation Policies](#): Certain types of misleading or deceptive content with serious risk of egregious harm are not allowed on YouTube. This includes misinformation that can cause real-world harm, like certain types of technically manipulated content, and content interfering with free and fair democratic election processes.
  - [YouTube COVID-19 Medical Misinformation Policy](#): YouTube does not allow content that spreads medical misinformation that contradicts local health authorities' (LHA) or the World Health Organization's (WHO) medical information about COVID-19. This is limited to content that contradicts guidance on treatment, prevention, diagnosis, transmission, and the existence of COVID-19. Note: YouTube's policies on COVID-19 are subject to change in response to changes to global or local health authorities' guidance on the virus. There may be a delay between new LHA/WHO guidance and policy updates given the frequency with which this guidance changes, and our policies may not cover all LHA/WHO guidance related to COVID-19.

- **[YouTube Vaccine Misinformation Policy](#)**: YouTube does not allow content that poses a serious risk of egregious harm by spreading medical misinformation about currently administered vaccines that are approved and confirmed to be safe and effective by LHAs and the WHO. This is limited to content that contradicts LHAs' or the WHO's guidance on vaccine safety, efficacy, and ingredients.
- **[YouTube Impersonation Policy](#)**: This policy states that content intended to impersonate a person or channel is not allowed on YouTube. YouTube also enforces trademark holder rights. When a channel, or content in the channel, causes confusion about the source of goods and services advertised, it may not be allowed.
- **[YouTube Fake Engagement Policy](#)**: YouTube does not allow anything that artificially increases the number of views, likes, comments, or other metrics either by using automatic systems or serving up videos to unsuspecting viewers. Content and channels that do not follow this policy may be terminated and removed from YouTube.
- **[YouTube Spam, Deceptive Practices, and Scam Policies](#)**: YouTube does not allow spam, scams, or other deceptive practices that take advantage of the YouTube community. We also do not allow content where the main purpose is to trick users into leaving YouTube for another site.
- **[YouTube Advertiser-friendly Content Guidelines](#)**: Users in the YouTube Partner Program can share revenue from ads. This policy exemplifies content that is not suitable for ads that will result in a 'limited or no ads' monetisation state.
- **[YouTube Channel Monetisation Policies](#)**: YouTube Monetisation Policies include YouTube's Community Guidelines, Terms of Service, Copyright, and Google AdSense Program Policies. YouTube enforces these Monetisation Policies by:
  - Turning off Ads from your content;
  - Suspending your participation in the YouTube Partner Program; and
  - Suspending or even terminating your YouTube channel.

## Appendix B: Tools and features used to empower users in making informed choices

Google has developed many features and interventions to provide more context to users and ensure that authoritative sources are elevated in response to searches or browsing intents related to health, civic participation, current events, and other topics where users want content that they can trust. The features and interventions listed below are all available to Australian users of our services.

- **Surfacing Fact-Checks on Google Search, Images, and News**: easily enable users to find articles that fact check public information;
- **Elevating original reporting in Google Search**: provide greater context to subsequent news stories;

- **'Full Coverage' in Google News:** help users access context and diverse perspectives about the news stories they read;
- **'Information Panels', including those giving publisher context and topical context on YouTube:** provide greater context around topics related to searches or videos (additional information can be found [here](#));
- **'Breaking News' and 'Top News Shelves' on YouTube:** prominently surface news content from authoritative sources only;
- **Authoritativeness in YouTube recommendations:** prioritise information from authoritative sources for newsworthy events and topics prone to misinformation in search results and recommendations (additional information can be found [here](#));
- **Labelling state-funded news channels on YouTube:** label publishers that are government or publicly funded on the watch pages of their videos.

## Appendix C: Advertiser Verification Process

Google's advertiser verification program verifies advertiser identity, then discloses the advertiser behind specific ads in the ['Why this Ad' \(in some places, 'About this Ad'\) menu](#). This verification and disclosure feature applies to the ads that Google shows on our own properties and those of our publishing partners. Note that the disclosures view can vary slightly between products. Google users can control what types of ads they see, and whether they would like to see more or less of any specific advertiser, through [My Ad Centre](#).

### Verification process for Australian advertisers

Prospective advertisers who wish to run election ads in Australia are also required to go through a verification process. Once Google verifies the advertiser's eligibility to run election ads, they receive an email and an in-account notification. Verifying their identity may require two steps and each step can take up to 5 business days. Our teams are trained to handle this process at scale across Australia, and are equipped to respond to related questions from the political parties and candidates participating in, and institutions responsible for, Australian elections.