Australian Code of Practice on Disinformation and Misinformation
Apple Pty Limited: Apple News
2021 Annual Transparency Report
24 May 2022

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 against this design 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	Apple News
1c: Allowing users to report content	Apple News
2: Reducing advertising and/or monetisation incentives	Apple News
4: Enabling users to make informed choices about source of content	Apple News
6: Strengthening public understanding	Apple News
7: Publishing its annual transparency report	Apple News

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. . When outlets apply to join News, they submit applications, answering questions about their mission, standards and corrections' policies, and general editorial processes. An Apple editorial team then evaluates those applications carefully and fastidiously, working with organizations like NewsGuard to ensure the applicants are credible, standards-based, professional outlets. Details on the process is accessible at https://support.apple.com/en-au/guide/news-publisher/apde42330c66/icloud, with likely reasons for an objection to listed, including where a publication publishes factual inaccuracies or fails to adhere to widely accepted journalistic standards.

Apple News also takes steps to ensure that our users are provided with editor-curated areas of interest, featuring a broad range of perspectives from trusted sources. An example of this is Apple's implementation and curation of a number of 'hubs' on topics of particular public interest with the potential for misinformation/disinformation to negatively impact users (examples included below).

There are also instances where Apple News has specifically provided information on misinformation/disinformation to users by way of news articles (examples included below).

Examples referenced above include:

COVID hub

The collection of articles and resources featured as an ever-present directly underneath Top Stories during the peak of Australia's Delta and Omicron COVID outbreaks.

The hub received 3.2 million total views in September 2021, 3.5 million in October 2021, 2.7 million in November 2021 and 482,000 in January 2022.

A banner pointed readers to the hub housing explainers and analysis of hot-button topics including the effectiveness of vaccines, masks and the accuracy of PCR v Rapid Antigen Tests.

The hub later developed into a destination for critical official information including a state-by-state breakdown of COVID restrictions, case numbers and instructions and a pointer to the ABC's myth-busting Coronacast podcast.

The hub was visited by more than 50,000 readers per day and 1.41 million total.
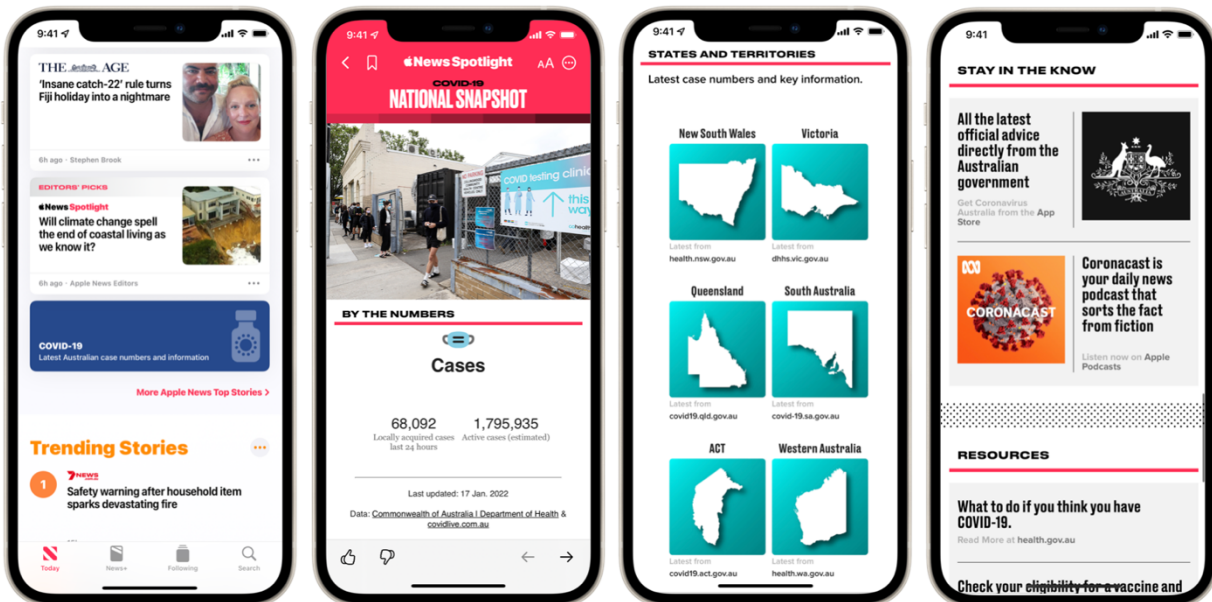
Russia/Ukraine hubs

These article collections, rolled out at least once per week and prominently placed in Top Stories, have included information on how to avoid misinformation and highlighted fake news stories to avoid.

Featured articles have also included insights on [Russia's digital iron curtain](#) and first-person stories from [young Ukrainians blindsided by the invasion](#) due to a lack of available information.

These collections have attracted anywhere between 100,000 and 300,000 unique views.
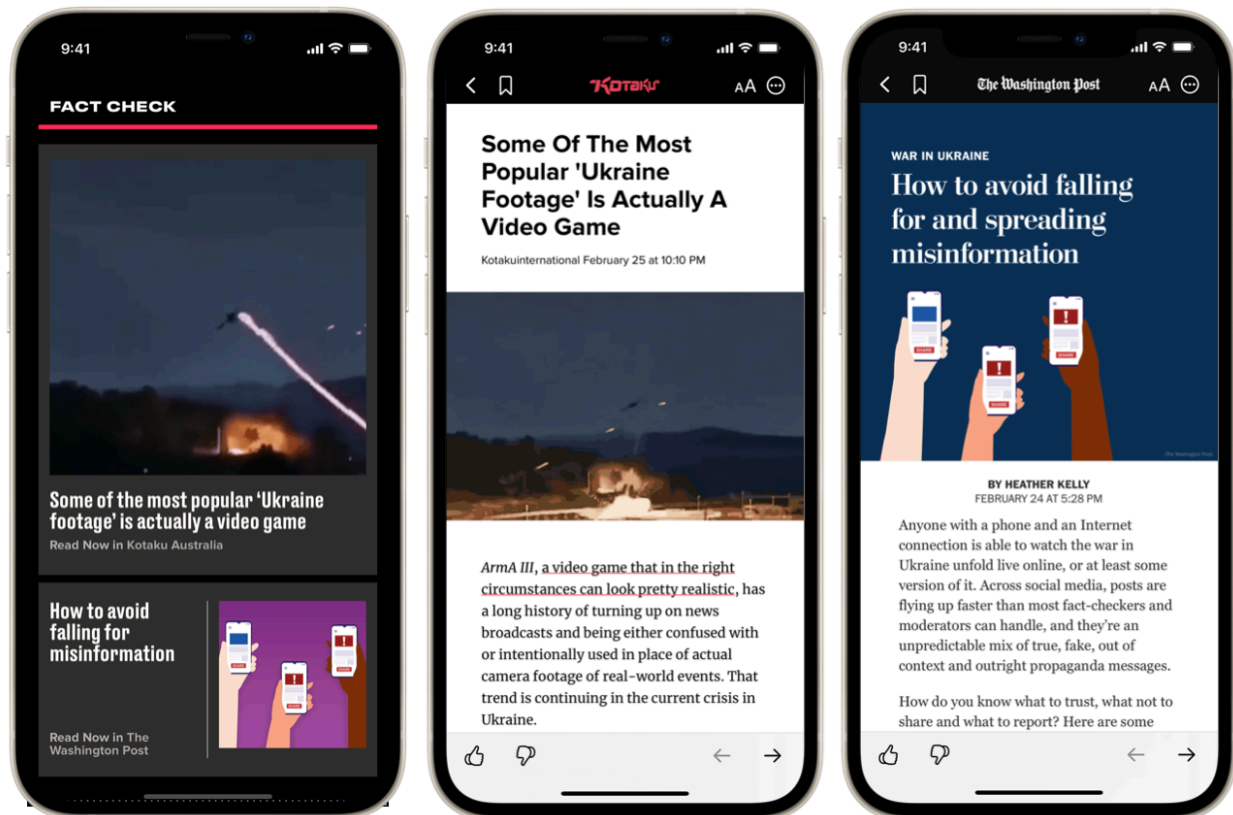
A "War in Ukraine" banner underneath Top Stories points readers to a selection of stories from trusted outlets.

[This managed topic showcases content from dozens of publishers](#), allowing for diverse perspectives while eliminating content from less trusted sources.
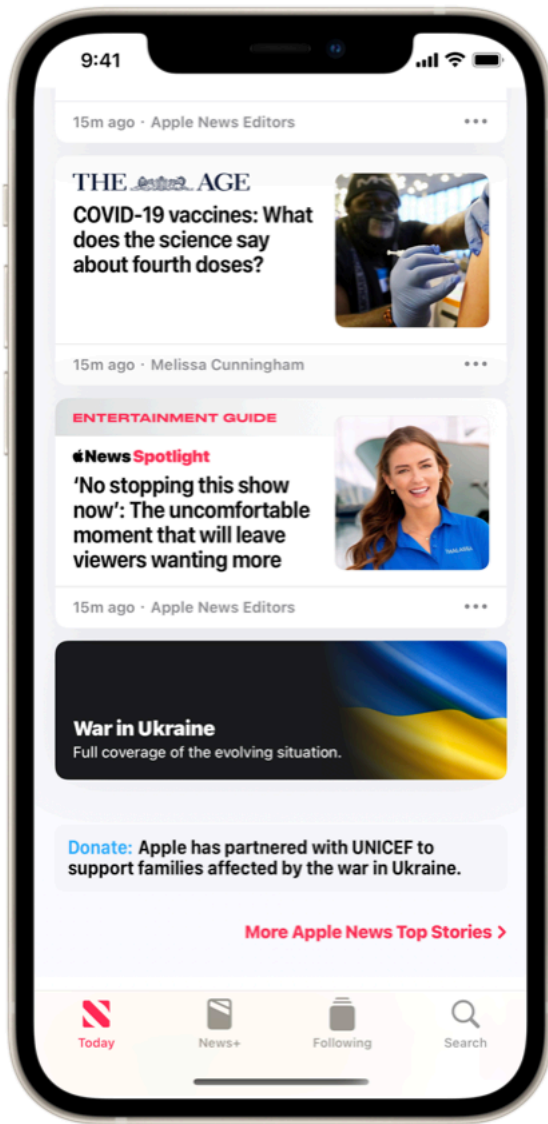
Outcome 1c: Users can easily report offending content

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 "It's broken" or "It's offensive") and then asked to leave details of their concern. 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. We will be including a specific category for misinformation/disinformation in the future.

Cancel   **Report a Concern**

STORY

CNN
India and Pakistan heat wave is "testing the limits of...

55m ago

WHY DON'T YOU WANT TO SEE THIS?

It's broken >

It's in the wrong category >

It's in a language that I don't read >

It's dated incorrectly >

It's something I don't agree with >

It's offensive >

It's hate speech >

It's threatening or it encourages criminal a... >

Something else >

When these numbers are further 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 2021, Apple News readers worldwide reported approximately 655,000 concerns on article content or with technical issues. The vast majority of these concerns were not deemed to be violations of platform guidelines. Approximately 17,000 concerns on 5,600 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. Articles produced by Australian publishers that were actioned for misinformation/disinformation in 2021 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.
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 prioritised;
- 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 is considering opportunities in this space and has not received any research requests to date.

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

Apple is cognisant of the issue of misinformation/disinformation, and the importance of ensuring that Apple News remains a trusted place for readers.