

Australian Code of Practice on Disinformation and Misinformation

Apple Pty Limited: Apple News

2023 Annual Transparency Report 17 May 2024

Summary

The Apple News product is designed to promote quality journalism, with a focus on the quality of the content and its visibility. to prevent the propagation of Disinformation and Misinformation.

It is through this lens 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
- 1e: Recommender systems
- 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. Apple News includes a diverse range of publications, with differing perspectives on issues, recognising that comprehensive coverage of issues further reduces the risks of misinformation and disinformation.

An Apple editorial team evaluates outlets before they are onboarded on the platform. Outlets are evaluated 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>. Likely reasons for a publication not to be onboarded include where a publication publishes factual inaccuracies or fails to adhere to widely accepted journalistic standards. The onboarding process was further strengthened in mid 2022, with publishers no longer able to make an unsolicited application to join Apple News, so that the addition of new channels was on an invitation-only basis throughout 2023.

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. This has given us access to local journalism experts 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, the Voice to Parliament referendum and global conflicts.

The careful and deliberate human curation of stories by Apple News Editors on a range of topical issues is a key feature of the service. This includes a number of high visibility touchpoints that are entirely managed by our 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:

Voice to Parliament referendum

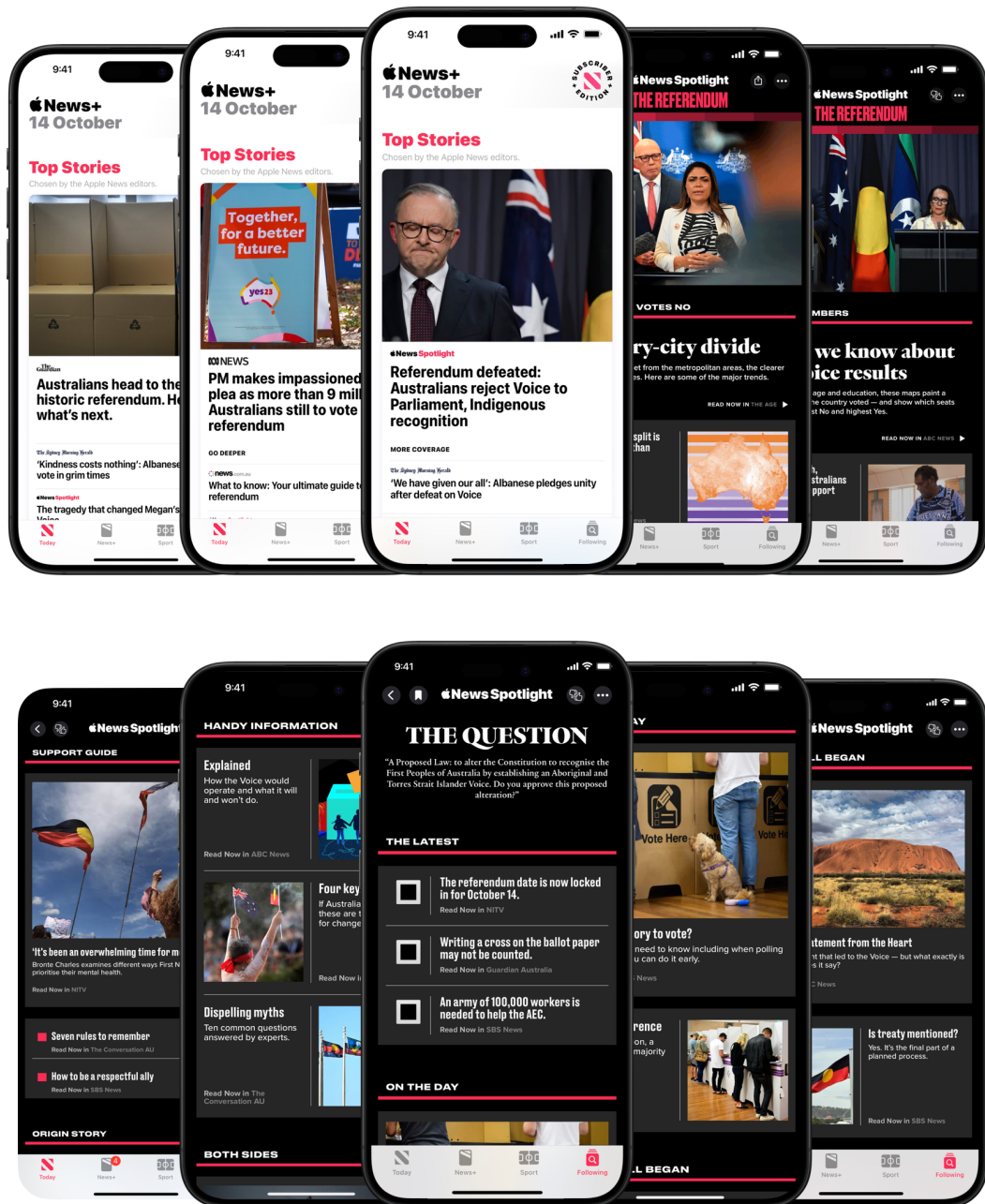
Apple News began its extensive coverage of the Voice in March 2023 in conjunction with the finalisation of the referendum question. Our coverage sought to navigate the nuance and complexity of the debate in an informed, thoughtful way for Apple News readers. We ensured all featured content was clear, fact-based and reflected the view of experts in the field, in conjunction with first-person perspectives to add depth and quality to a debate that often drove high levels of social fragmentation.

Between March and October, Apple News Editors crafted, featured and promoted 15 free Spotlight collections on the Voice, with over 200 individual pieces of content from a wide variety of quality publications. These collections received over 3 million views from readers. For many of these Spotlights, Apple News sent a push notification to all opted-in Apple News readers.

Our collections included timely insights, which addressed key moments and milestones during the debate, with the specific intent of mitigating misinformation in the community, including:

- Quality, well-sourced and authoritative journalism during debates around the constitutional implications of the referendum
- Fact-check pieces when the official "Yes" and "No" pamphlets were released

- Features on the origins and detail of the Uluru Statement from the Heart when this became a contentious issue.
- On the vote occurring, extensive coverage of the latest results and outcome, with follow-up Spotlights published on October 14 and 15.

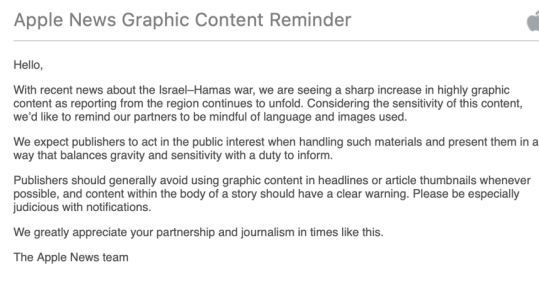


Israel-Hamas war

Apple News editors have sought to provide extensive coverage for Australian readers, drawing on the deep editorial expertise from our partner publications, with special emphasis on our international partners. Reuters, CNN, The Guardian and The Wall Street Journal were among many featured publications with journalists in the conflict zone, filing high-quality first person, well-researched reports. Our coverage has sought to inform Australians of the latest developments in the region and provide insights on the geopolitical situation in the Middle East, seeking to focus

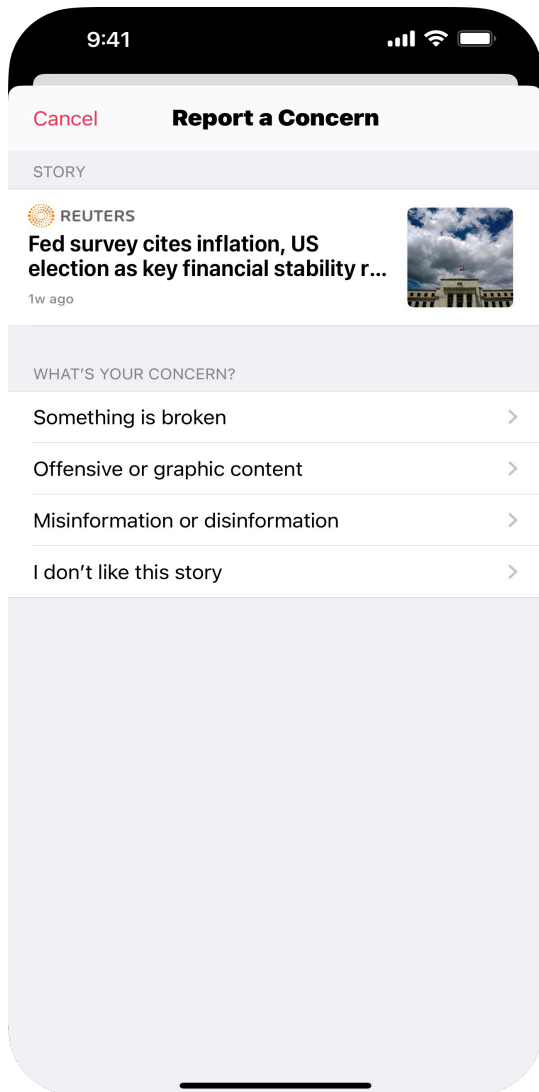
on verified and factual news reports at a time of heightened anxiety in the community.

Mindful of the impact of graphic content, and the potential for misuse of such content, we also took the opportunity to remind our publishers as to the appropriate use of graphic content.



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 team of moderators then evaluates each report to determine whether the article violates the Apple News guidelines.



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 2023, Apple News readers worldwide reported approximately 331,000 concerns on article content or with technical issues. The vast majority — approximately 326,000 — of these concerns were not deemed to be violations of platform guidelines. Approximately 4,800 concerns on 2,500 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 and 2022 numbers.*

	2021	2022	2023
Number of concerns reported	655,000	370,500	331,000
Number of concerns reported deemed valid	17,000 (on 5,600 individual articles)	6,500 (on 2,800 individual articles)	4,800 (on 2,500 individual articles)

As was the case for 2022, articles produced by Australian publishers that were actioned for misinformation/disinformation in 2023 accounted for less than one one-hundredth of one percent of total article views in the Australian Apple News app (with less than five articles in the Australian Apple News app requiring action for misinformation.).

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.

Outcome 1e: Recommender systems

Apple makes information about recommendations in News available to users, together with options and tools associated with those recommendations. See

<https://www.apple.com/legal/privacy/data/en/apple-news/>

Objective 2: Disrupt advertising and monetisation incentives for disinformation.

As set out in our previous reports, 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 within the Advertising on Apple News Content Guidelines (<https://support.apple.com/guide/adguide/unacceptable-or-prohibited-content-guidelines-apd527d891a8/icloud>).

In addition, we provide warnings when we discover advertisements that violate the Content Guidelines and have the ability to block certain advertisers that repeatedly violate the Content Guidelines.

* There may be a number of reasons for the reduction in concerns raised with us. For example, many users report news articles that cover a topic that they dislike, rather than representing misinformation or other breaches of our guidelines. We also adjusted the location of reporting options in 2021 to improve the quality of user reports and minimise reports from users who had not read or engaged with the news content.

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

As set out in our previous reports:

- 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 15% 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.

The delineation between News and Opinion content is an important journalistic distinction, ensuring readers are aware when they are being presented with an opinion piece as opposed to factual coverage of a story. Although outside the reporting period, a communication was sent to all Apple News Publishers on 8 January 2024 requesting clear opinion labelling be included in publisher headlines to reinforce this distinction. This communication also included a requirement that all content which is produced with the assistance of generative AI is appropriately labelled, with links to technical documentation for this requirement. Publishers were advised that "No AI generated content, including material from third party sources, should be published in Apple News without human editorial oversight."



Hi,

Apple News is committed to maintaining a trusted, informative news environment. To that end, we are implementing two new labeling requirements that will help our users better understand the content they see in Apple News.

Opinion content

We ask that all publishers label their opinion content published to Apple News directly in the headline. This will help readers understand that an article they see in their feeds is an opinion piece before they click in. This is reflective of what users experience on many of your owned and operated sites and aligns with industry standards.

Generative AI content

With the rapid advancement of generative AI tools, transparency about the use of AI for content creation purposes is critical. Content generated by or with the assistance of AI should be labeled as such, [with a byline or co-byline](#). Bylines should be clear, avoiding use of a broad "Staff" byline, for instance. AI generated or augmented images, video, or audio must clearly indicate that the content is not original and authentic. **No AI generated content, including material from third party sources, should be published in Apple News without human editorial oversight.**

AI may be used as a tool in idea generation, headline generation, research, or analysis without noting its use in an article if the article was composed by a human journalist.

To label AI use appropriately, AI generated content must include the "contentGenerationType" [metadata flag](#). Additionally, all AI generated content should include a clear note in the story explaining how AI tools were used.

Apple may update our policies over time. Please let us know if you have any questions.

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 our continued support for The News Literacy Project (NLP). This organisation received support from Apple to advance its 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.

As set out in our response for objective 1a, we consider our work with NewsGuard to also be relevant to this objective. Apple News has worked with NewsGuard, an organization that provides tools for readers to understand misinformation that may be spreading online, since 2020.

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

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

Concluding remarks

Apple News is committed to creating a trusted, informative news environment by advancing quality journalism and, by design, to minimise the risks of misinformation and disinformation.