



# MEDIA RELEASE

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## Facebook move reinforces need for a News Media Bargaining Code

Facebook's move to block sharing of content from Australian news media outlets will encourage the spread of misinformation at a time when factual and credible journalism is more important than ever.

The Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance, the union for Australia's journalists, says the decision made overnight by Facebook is the desperate act of a company with too much power that thinks it is beyond the reach of any government, and reinforces the need for regulation of global digital platforms through a News Media Bargaining Code.

Facebook's removal of news media outlets from its platform denies its audience of essential information. That includes updates about the Covid pandemic and streaming of emergency broadcasts during natural disasters such as bushfires, cyclones and floods.

MEAA Media section Federal President Marcus Strom said: "Credible journalism is a check on the spread of misinformation. This irresponsible move by Facebook will encourage the dissemination of fake news, which is particularly dangerous during the COVID pandemic and is a betrayal of its Australian audiences.

"By restricting independent, professionally produced news in Australia, Facebook is allowing the promotion of conspiracy theories, misinformation, fake news and QAnon crackpots on its platform.

"This move by Facebook, which has refused to negotiate as recommended by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, will only lead to its audience being denied reliable, factual news and will inflict massive reputational damage for its brand.

"Facebook makes hundreds of millions of dollars a year from advertising in Australia, while media companies are struggling to keep journalists employed and newsrooms open.

"Unlike Google, which has sensibly begun negotiating content agreements with publishers and broadcasters, Facebook has abused its dominant position and is holding Australian news agencies, advertisers and consumers to ransom with this cowardly response."

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