



**THE HON PAUL FLETCHER MP**  
Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Protecting Australians from misinformation on digital platforms**

The Morrison Government welcomes the release today of a position paper from the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) to guide digital platforms in developing a voluntary code to protect consumers from misinformation and promote trusted news sources.

*ACMA's Misinformation and news quality on digital platforms in Australia - A position paper to guide code development* sets out a proposed model and key objectives for the voluntary code.

The Government committed, in its response to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's Digital Platforms Inquiry, that it would ask the ACMA to work with digital platforms to develop such a voluntary code.

Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts, the Hon Paul Fletcher MP said the development of a voluntary code is an important step in combatting misinformation on digital platforms.

"During COVID-19, we've seen firsthand the harm misinformation can cause as it spreads rapidly online. It can create public confusion, raise anxieties and erode trust in institutions, and this is particularly harmful to those most vulnerable in our community," Minister Fletcher said.

"As more Australians rely on online platforms for their news and information, it is critical we put in place a framework to guide how platforms reduce the impact of harmful misinformation, empower users to identify quality news sources, and improve the transparency of their policy implementation," Minister Fletcher said.

"The major digital platforms, such as Google and Facebook, have made considerable efforts to limit users' exposure to false material during COVID-19, however, more must be done. The Government expects the digital platforms will work constructively with the ACMA to set up long-term, transparent and accountable practices to better protect their users.

"Importantly, the code will be developed and implemented to preserve freedom of speech. Digital platforms will not become general arbiters of truth in our everyday conversations - however they do have a role to play in protecting Australians from genuinely harmful misinformation. Some platforms understand this responsibility and are already taking ad hoc action on such content. This code will provide the transparency and accountability needed to maintain Australians' confidence that the right balance is being struck."

The ACMA is overseeing the development of the voluntary code and expects an industry-wide code to be in place by December 2020. The ACMA will report to Government on the adequacy of the platforms' measures and the broader impacts of misinformation with the first such report due no later

than June 2021.

The position paper is available on the ACMA website at [www.acma.gov.au/australian-voluntary-codes-practice-online-misinformation](http://www.acma.gov.au/australian-voluntary-codes-practice-online-misinformation).

**Media contact:**

Brad Hatch | 0448 162 679 | [Brad.Hatch@communications.gov.au](mailto:Brad.Hatch@communications.gov.au)

Rebecca Papillo | 0439 892 771 | [Rebecca.Papillo@communications.gov.au](mailto:Rebecca.Papillo@communications.gov.au)