



Facebook's Actions Highlight Flaws of Digital Platforms Code

Australia, 18 February 2021:

Facebook's actions today illustrate the level of unchecked power that successive Australian governments have permitted the company to accumulate. Australia needs regulation aimed at curbing this power, yet the News Media and Digital Platforms Mandatory Bargaining Code will entrench Facebook as a vital source of funding for news media organisations in Australia.

It also highlights the government's heavy-handed approach to matters of policy, and its inability to navigate the complex and nuanced policy issues that face Australia in the 21st century. Facebook publicly stated it would take this action, and the government noted the risk in its own Explanatory Memorandum to the Code. It cannot now claim to be surprised that Facebook did what it said that it would do.

Technology and the Internet are a vital part of modern society and we must be able to handle these issues with a deftness and aplomb that has been sorely lacking today. Australians deserve better.

Rather than attempting to bully technology companies into providing a direct subsidy for a small subset of Australia's media organisations, Australia should be using public funds to fund public goods such as journalism.

EFA calls on the government to commit to funding public interest journalism in a non-partisan and open fashion.

We also call on the government to tackle abuses of market power by massive multi-national corporations, such as the wide-scale privacy abuses perpetrated daily by the digital platforms. These issues of surveillance are magnified by the Code rather than improved, and Australians will be worse off no matter how a few paltry dollars flow from one massive corporation to another.

The Code does nothing to improve the lives of most Australians. Instead, the childish bullying tactics of both the government and Facebook have today caused us harm.

It is time for our government to look after all Australians, not just those who write the news.

Media Contact

media@efa.org.au