

SBS SUBMISSION TO THE JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL MEDIA AND AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY
INFLUENCE AND IMPACTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY

JUNE 2024

KEY POINTS

- SBS welcomes the Committee's inquiry, which comes at a time of intense challenge to the availability and accessibility of trusted news and information, which are both critical inputs to civic participation and social cohesion.
- Recent research, including the highly regarded *Digital News Report: Australia 2024* (the **Digital News Report**) published this month, shows that at the same time that Australians' reliance on social media for news is increasing, Australians' trust in news is falling. Research also shows that social cohesion in Australia is under pressure and declining on some fronts.
- This comes at a time when the volume of mis- and dis-information online is growing exponentially, fuelled by algorithms which favour polarisation, and by the ease with which artificial intelligence can generate and publish misleading information and/or content from extreme viewpoints.
- The importance and value of trusted and free sources of news and information is intensifying in these conditions, which makes SBS's impartial and accurate news content more important than ever. *SBS News* is the most trusted news source in Australia.¹
- It is therefore imperative that SBS's trusted content must be present where Australian audiences are, including on major online and social media platforms, noting in particular the upcoming Federal election and other democratic processes taking place around the world.
- The current challenge is amplified by the fact that multilingual, multicultural and First Nations audiences (which SBS has specific Charter remits to serve) are more active users of social media when compared to non-Indigenous Australians or English-only speakers.
- The opaque nature of the algorithms that deliver content to users on social media is an issue of concern that SBS has raised in the past as part of the ACCC's Digital Platforms work. Over the last couple of years, SBS has observed incremental de-prioritisation of its news content on Meta's platforms.
- In February 2021, at a critical time in the COVID pandemic, Meta demonstrated its willingness to completely remove Australians' access to news content on its platforms in favour of driving its own political and commercial agenda. This withdrawal of access had significant impacts on the safety and wellbeing of communities in Australia, such as remote First Nations communities who were reliant on the in-language health advice being shared on the platform, and multilingual SBS audiences seeking information about the lockdown and vaccine programs in their own language. In June 2023, Meta took similar action in Canada in response to legislative change. The Canadian news ban is still in place.
- The significant social harms that would result from a removal of trusted and reliable Australian news on these platforms should compel policy-makers to carefully consider what other interventions are needed.

¹ *Digital News Report*, page 121



- Whilst SBS has consistently supported designation of Meta under the News Media Bargaining Code (**the NMBC**) (which would address certain anti-competitive impacts), a broader consideration of the potential social harms arising from Meta's market behaviour should also take place on a priority basis. It is foreseeable that designation may result in Meta removing all news content from its platforms in Australia as a response.
- An overall consideration of the impact of social media on social and political discourse (including the impact of algorithms) must be considered and effectively addressed through a carefully calibrated range of regulatory interventions, including potentially novel interventions such as a "must carry" style regime for trusted media sources that could be applied to social media platforms operating in the Australian market. While this would not solve the issue of fair remuneration for news content on those platforms (which the NMBC sought to address), it would be a better outcome than Australians being unable to access news at all on these platforms.

I. INTRODUCTION

SBS appreciates the opportunity to respond to the Joint Select Committee on Social Media and Australian Society's inquiry into the influence and impacts of social media on Australian society (the **Inquiry**).

For almost 50 years, the SBS network's principal function has been providing trusted, accurate, balanced and impartial news and information in more than 60 languages for all Australians, including multicultural, multilingual communities and First Nations peoples – including through its dedicated National Indigenous Television (NITV) cross-platform service, as part of the SBS network. Multilingual, multicultural and First Nations communities are, on average, more active on social media than other Australians, particularly on Meta's platforms—Facebook and Instagram, as discussed further below.

As part of its digital strategy and noting the evolution of the news consumption preferences of Australian audiences, SBS has been purposefully growing the distribution of its content across these third-party platforms, which has in turn delivered increased engagement with audiences.

This submission demonstrates why the presence and ease of discoverability of SBS's content, including news and current affairs on social media platforms, is critically important, and consequently, why consideration must be given to regulatory interventions which would ensure these services continue to be easily accessible and widely available.

This submission also addresses the Inquiry's terms of reference in the **APPENDIX**.

II. SBS'S TRUSTED NEWS AND INFORMATION IS CRITICALLY IMPORTANT IN SUPPORTING SOCIAL COHESION

Contemporary trends in consumption of, and attitudes to, news and information

This section of the submission highlights recent findings from the highly regarded and long-running *Digital News Report*, published on 17 June 2024,² which sets out the results of a survey of almost 100,000 respondents in Australia and around the world. The following key findings provide critical context for the Inquiry's consideration of the impact of social media on Australian society, and in particular public attitudes to news and information sources.

The report shows that Australians have an increased interest in news and information, despite an environment of growing distrust in news. It revealed the following:

² By the News and Media Research Centre at the University of Canberra in partnership with the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, Oxford University, available at: <https://www.canberra.edu.au/research/faculty-research-centres/nmrc/digital-news-report-australia>



- Over half of Australians (51%) access news more than once a day (a 3 percentage point (pp) increase from last year)³
- There has been a notable rise in news consumption among Gen Z and women (up 5pp) accessing news more than once a day, reflecting a growing interest in international affairs (such as the Israel-Hamas conflict)⁴
- Social media is on track to catch up with TV as a source of news. Television's popularity as a source declined to 56% (-2pp), while almost half of Australians (49%) use social media to access news (+4pp)⁵
- Trust in news generally fell slightly (-3pp) to 40% but remains within the long-term trend⁶
- Distrust in news is rising consistently, and at a faster rate than trust in news is falling. Distrust is at its highest point since 2016 at 33% (+8pp)⁷
- There was a sharp increase in Australians' concern about misinformation, since 2022 (+11pp)⁸
- There are widening gaps between men and women, young and old, low and highly-educated, and city and regional audiences in relation to news consumption, news interest, trust, and news avoidance⁹
- Forty four percent of news users in Australia say they are unaware of AI, which is much higher than the global average (35%).¹⁰

The wider context is exacerbating these trends in distrust, and mis- and dis-information

It is a critical time for public interest journalism both globally and in Australia. Trusted, impartial and accurate news and information is becoming increasingly important in the face of rapidly increasing levels of mis- and dis-information (particularly online), which pose threats to civic participation and social cohesion.

At the same time, trusted, impartial and accurate news and information is becoming harder to find – a trend which will accelerate as a result of generative AI (including the creation of AI generated answers in response to searches like the features being trialled by Google¹¹) and the moves by some platforms (such as Meta) to amend algorithms and content offerings in a way that deprioritises news.

Digital platforms' algorithms continue to sharpen social divisions, serving news and information that targets extremes of political discourse, restricting consumers' exposure to divergent views.¹² Other drivers shaping news and journalism environment in Australia include the fragmentation of audiences across third-party platforms (such as YouTube, TikTok, X, for example) and away from traditional media platforms.

SBS seeks to meet audiences where they are and is purposefully seeking to increase its engagement with audiences on these third-party platforms. This requires significant time and investment to adapt and repurpose news content so that it is optimised for consumption on each of those platforms, which is a challenge for newsroom budgets. Similarly, the proliferation of mis- and disinformation means that fact-checking and verification of information takes longer and requires more resources.

³ *Digital News Report*, page 10

⁴ *Digital News Report*, page 10

⁵ *Digital News Report*, page 10

⁶ *Digital News Report*, page 11

⁷ *Digital News Report*, page 11

⁸ *Digital News Report*, page 9

⁹ *Digital News Report*, page 10

¹⁰ *Digital News Report*, page 11

¹¹ See for example, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2024/05/13/google-ai-search-io-sge/>

¹² See for example, <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2024/feb/06/social-media-algorithms-amplifying-misogynistic-content>



These are platforms which are very susceptible to the spread of mis-information and dis-information, and SBS sees it as part of its role and commitment to public interest journalism to ensure it has a strong presence on those platforms – both to ensure access to reliable news and to displace the consumption of potentially nefarious content.

Trusted and free sources of news and information, such as SBS's, are more important than ever in this environment

The importance and value of trusted and free sources of news and information is intensifying in these conditions. SBS has a legislated obligation to remain impartial, and this is buttressed by a comprehensive suite of editorial controls, checks and balances, and a very high level of transparency.

The SBS Code of Practice (Code)¹³ sets out the principles and policies SBS uses to guide its content to ensure that SBS maintains the highest standards of editorial independence and integrity. It details SBS's obligations regarding matters such as accuracy for factual content, impartiality and balance in news and current affairs, scheduling of content, advertising and complaints handling. SBS is accountable to the Code through a transparent and accessible complaints and investigations framework.

Whilst accountability frameworks exist for other broadcasters and for news publishers, SBS is unique in that its Code applies equally to all SBS content, regardless of platform. This means the Code applies to posts made by SBS on social media platforms.

This transparent and comprehensive framework of standards and accountability underpins the trust that Australians have in SBS, and consequently it's strength in promoting social cohesion.

This comes at a time when social cohesion in Australia is under pressure and declining on some fronts. The results of the Scanlon Institute's 2023 *Mapping Social Cohesion* study showed that social cohesion declined by four points to 79, the lowest score on record.¹⁴ Consequently, access to balanced news and information that explores our shared values, views, experiences, and sentiments, as well as issues of divided opinion, is more important than ever.

It is imperative that SBS's trusted content must be present where Australian audiences are – including on major social media platforms

As we have seen above, Australians are seeking their news and information on social media platforms in increasing numbers. As noted above, SBS continuously reviews and evolves its strategies for reaching audiences to ensure SBS is 'meeting' the consumer where they are.

SBS has been present on (then) Twitter since 2007, and Facebook since 2009. The SBS Charter contained in the *Special Broadcasting Service Act 1991* (Cth) was amended in financial year 2013 to add 'digital media services' to SBS's remit¹⁵, reflecting the change in media consumption by Australians and the importance of SBS content being distributed on these platforms.

As outlined above, the *Digital News Report's* corroborates this need, as it found social media to be the source of news for 49% of Australians, an increase of 4 percentage point since last year:

- among those born between 1997 and 2012 (Generation Z), this figure is higher at 74%; and
- among those born between 1981 and 1996 (Generation Y, or Millennials), this figure is also higher at 57%.

¹³ <https://www.sbs.com.au/aboutus/SBS-code-of-practice>

¹⁴ *Mapping Social Cohesion 2023*, p 6

¹⁵ Prior to the amendment, the SBS Charter stated 'The principal function of the SBS is to provide multilingual and multicultural radio and television services that inform, educate and entertain all Australians and, in doing so, reflect Australia's multicultural society';

subsequent to the amendment, it currently states (emphasis added) 'The principal function of SBS is to provide multilingual and multicultural radio, television **and digital media** services that inform, educate and entertain all Australians and, in doing so, reflect Australia's multicultural society', see SBS Charter, available here: <https://www.sbs.com.au/aboutus/how-we-operate/overview-of-sbs-charter/>



The report found Facebook to be the most popular social media platform overall, with 66% of all Australian respondents using it, as well as the most-used social media platform for news among all Australian respondents.¹⁶ This research directly contradicts a statement by Meta in March 2024 which said '[w]e [Meta] know that people don't come to Facebook for news and political content [...]'.¹⁷

Multilingual, multicultural and First Nations audiences are more active users of social media—particularly Meta's platforms

The importance of SBS's presence on social media is amplified by recent data that shows multilingual Australians and audiences are more likely to use Facebook and Instagram than the total population, or English only speakers.¹⁸

In-language research conducted by McNair for SBS across 11 language groups in recent years corroborates this. Among multilingual respondents surveyed, 81% used Facebook on a monthly basis, with 58% using it on a daily basis. Some language groups had even higher rates of daily usage, including Filipino (79%), Nepali (77%), Hindi (68%) and Vietnamese (66%) language speakers.

First Nations communities also have higher rates of social media use when compared to non-Indigenous Australians. They are critical platforms on which First Nations communities engage, communicate and obtain critical emergency information - particularly in regional and remote communities, and in First Nations languages.

Consequently, social media remains one of the significant ways for NITV to reach its core audience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.¹⁹ As at March 2024, 40% of NITV's online traffic is from social networks, with 70% of NITV online viewers visiting the homepage, articles and webpages via a mobile device.²⁰

During the Referendum on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice (the **Referendum**), NITV saw a significant increase in the referral/click through rate (to its website) of its news content on social media platforms, particularly Facebook, as audiences were looking for authentic, accurate content that centred the lived experiences of those impacted by the proposed changes. Facebook has the largest followers among all the active NITV social media accounts – at 462,000 followers (28 March 2024) and remains the simplest way to put direct hyperlinks to NITV websites. Other referrals to NITV website come from, among others, NITV's fortnightly newsletter, Apple News, and search services such as Google.

Meta has taken steps to de-prioritise news content

Despite the factors outlined above, SBS has observed continued de-prioritisation of its news content (including multilingual and NITV content) on Facebook.

Whilst there is currently no transparency provided by Facebook in relation to its algorithms, since March 2021 (when the NMBC was introduced), SBS has observed the de-prioritisation of news content, and especially news content produced by organisations that do not have a commercial agreement with Meta, including SBS and NITV.

As a key example, In July 2023, 36% of *SBS News* third-party video views came from Facebook, this fell to 19% in May 2024, or nearly halved during the past 12 months.²¹

These moves by Meta have the potential to significantly impact SBS's audiences, especially those from smaller language communities – who are sometimes served by a singular social media platform, Facebook, due to the communities' small sizes and concentration on that platform.

¹⁶ YouTube and Instagram were the next most popular in both instances - *Digital News Report*, page 95

¹⁷ *Meta is ending its deals to pay for Australian news content. This is how it could change your Facebook and Instagram feeds.* <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-03-02/facebook-google-news-media-deal-media-pay-meta/103534342>

¹⁸ Source: Nielsen Consumer Media View, Survey 10, 2023

¹⁹ Refer to *First Nations Digital Advisory Group initial report*, *International Journal Equity in Health*, *Mapping the Digital Gap 2023*

²⁰ Internal SBS/NITV data

²¹ Internal SBS data



There will be a significant impact to SBS's operations and budget from continued de-prioritisation of, or removal of access to, news content by Meta

If de-prioritisation of news content by Meta continues, or in the event Meta removes access to news content on its platforms (explored further in III. below), SBS will be required to invest in additional marketing and other activities to rebuild its online audiences outside Meta's platforms.

It is also likely that there will be audiences who will be difficult to connect with through other avenues (such as smaller language communities), and in turn will be disproportionately impacted by the removal of trusted professional news and information in their preferred languages on the platform.

III. APPROPRIATE REGULATORY INTERVENTIONS ARE REQUIRED TO ENSURE PRESENCE AND EASE OF DISCOVERY OF PROFESSIONAL NEWS CONTENT, INCLUDING SBS'S, ON SOCIAL MEDIA

As outlined above, it is critical to social cohesion and civic participation that Australians are able to access trusted and reliable news and information on their preferred platforms.

As such there is a role for carefully calibrated regulatory settings, to ensure that these intermediary digital platforms do not deny Australians this access, or otherwise distort the news media ecosystem.

Meta has already demonstrated its willingness to disrupt access to trusted news and information

When Australian news was removed for a number of days from Facebook in February 2021, no news content was visible, including from international news outlets. Key government information was also blocked as "news", such as the Bureau of Meteorology and other government agencies. Meta's act had a material impact on Australian communities generally, but was especially egregious given the status of the COVID pandemic and commencement of the vaccination program.

For example, remote First Nations communities were disproportionately and significantly impacted as Facebook was, in many cases, the only pathway for a number of communities to connect with First Nations media services (and other members of the communities), including in First Nations languages.²² This is significant not only amidst the already increased social isolation occurring at the time, but also in the context of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (Article 16)²³ and Australia's National Agreement on Closing the Gap (Target 16)²⁴ stating that the access to media or information by Indigenous peoples is to be upheld.

In response to regulatory intervention by the Canadian Government, through the *Online News Act* (similar to Australia's NMBC), Meta removed news altogether from both Facebook and Instagram, stating 'In]ews links and content posted by news publishers and broadcasters in Canada will no longer be viewable by people in Canada'.²⁵ When faced with the possibility of remunerating news businesses for the use of their content, Meta chose to cut off access to that content for users in Canada.

Subsequent research by McGill and the University of Toronto *When journalism is turned off: Preliminary findings on the effects of Meta's news ban in Canada* (pre-print, April 2024) found that

²² See *Indigenous media organisations reeling after Facebook bans sharing Australian news sites* by NITV, 18 February 2023, at <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/feb/23/first-nations-media-has-been-caught-in-the-crossfire-of-facebooks-battle-with-australian-news>

²³ The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP) Article 16 states that (emphasis added) 'Indigenous peoples have the right to establish their own media in their own languages **and to have access to** all forms of non-indigenous media without discrimination'. See https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf

²⁴ Closing the Gap Target 16 'People have **access to information and services** enabling participation in informed decision-making regarding their own lives', see <https://www.closingthegap.gov.au/national-agreement/targets>

²⁵ <https://about.fb.com/news/2023/06/changes-to-news-availability-on-our-platforms-in-canada/>



'the ban has significantly impacted Canadian news outlets'.²⁶ The research also found that Meta has faced minimal impact — 'Meta has deprived users of the affordance of news sharing without suffering any loss in engagement of their user base'.²⁷

Designation of Meta under the News Media Bargaining Code

Pursuant to the NMBC, designation of Meta has been a regulatory option available to the Government since the Code's inception.

SBS has previously flagged the detrimental impacts of Meta's refusal to enter a commercial agreement (and the subsequent failure to designate Meta under NMBC), both in terms of audience engagement, and the ensuing commercial disadvantages faced by SBS relative to other news media providers.

SBS raised these concerns, among other matters, in its [submission](#) in May 2022 to the Treasury, in response to the *Review of the News Media and Digital Platforms Mandatory Bargaining Code* Consultation Paper. The submission noted potential barriers to designation, and also noted the lack of transparency in the framework, which makes it difficult to properly assess its effectiveness. This includes challenges for the Government in making informed decisions regarding designation:

'SBS understands that most, if not all, voluntary commercial arrangements contain strict and exhaustive confidentiality requirements. Whilst this is not unusual for commercial agreements, the effect is to prevent the disclosure of information (such as quantum of remuneration, product enhancements, etc) which would enable an assessment of the impact of the deals on the sustainability of public interest journalism.

There is also no transparency regarding the existence of 'poison pill' provisions (which would void agreements in a platform is designated under the Act), which we have noted above could act as a very significant factor in the dynamics of securing a designation decision'.²⁸

The removal of Australian news from Meta platforms poses substantial threats to Australian audiences and the news media industry

SBS supports the designation of platforms which fail to engage constructively through the NMBC framework. However, there is a material risk that if designated, Meta may subsequently remove access by Australians to professional news content on its platforms, as it has done previously in Australia and more recently in Canada.²⁹ It has been reported that Meta has made this explicit threat.³⁰ Noting the widespread use of Meta's platforms by Australians for news access, the removal of only trusted sources of news from that platform will have a significant and negative impact on social cohesion and civic participation in Australia.

There would also be impacts to the broader news industry. Disrupting a major and established avenue for reaching audiences will impact directly on relevance, readership, advertising revenue and overall sustainability.

These are novel threats not previously experienced in the Australian media landscape. It is difficult to identify comparable historical scenarios in which foreign-owned oligopoly suppliers of distribution pathways have held such power to deny Australians access to a key public good – trusted news and information.

²⁶ *When journalism is turned off: Preliminary findings on the effects of Meta's news ban in Canada* (pre-print, April 2024), available at: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/6450265301129e5dbabfe8a2/t/6622c8a408f39611294ebdb2/1713555621401/Whenjournalism+is+turned+off_Preliminary+Report.pdf

²⁷ Same as immediately above

²⁸ SBS's submission available at https://drupal.prod.sbs.com.au/sites/sbs.com.au/aboutus/files/sbs_response_to_review_of_news_media_bargaining_code_1.pdf

²⁹ Per a statement by Meta's Communications Director Andy Stone, available on X (formerly Twitter) here: <https://x.com/andymstone/status/1686415795184717825>

³⁰ <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/meta-will-play-hardball-so-will-the-government-facebook-threatens-canadian-option-20240502-p5fob1.html>



Interventions and regulatory settings that should be considered by Government

Policy-makers must urgently consider the available public policy interventions which could be utilised to prevent this significant social harm from arising. There are a range of factors that require attention.

Noting the real possibility of Meta removing Australians' access to news content on its platforms, the Government should consider a "must-carry" regime, to require social media platforms operating in Australia to carry news and information from trusted and established sources. This could be considered as an alternative approach to designation under the NMBC. While this would not solve the issue of fair remuneration for news content on those platforms which the NMBC sought to address, it would be a better outcome than Australians being unable to access news at all on these platforms.

Similarly, action must be taken to address the harmful impacts of digital platforms' algorithms. SBS would welcome consideration of measures to ensure that professional news content is not overwhelmed or 'out-ranked' through algorithms by non-professional content that is not subject to editorial standards or controls. Similarly, measures should be considered to assist consumers find trusted or reliable news from established providers in an environment where they are faced with AI-generated content. This may include protections such as a "trusted news provider" mark or prioritisation mechanism.

SBS would also welcome additional or enhanced measures to protect public figures and media providers from online abuse. During the period leading up to the Referendum, NITV staff received an unprecedented level of racially motivated abuse through social media. Similarly, a number of high-profile SBS and NITV personalities have received hateful or abusive commentary and contacts, also via social media, with serious implications for mental health. (There have been examples of media personnel receiving increased abuse that continued even when they were not online.)³¹ As a result, the NITV team made the difficult decision to no longer utilise X (Twitter), in order to protect staff wellbeing. This impacted the public's ability to access NITV content on X, and the counterbalancing role that NITV's content plays in relation to mis- and dis-information on that platform.

IV. SBS IS IDEALLY PLACED TO COLLABORATE ACROSS GOVERNMENT TO ADDRESS THE INFORMATION NEEDS OF ALL AUSTRALIANS

As the world's most linguistically diverse broadcaster, SBS has deep connection with, unique insights and significant reach into more than 60 of Australia's multilingual, multicultural, and First Nations communities it serves.

Media literacy is key in identifying 'fake news', and mis- and disinformation. SBS can partner with agencies to ensure relevant awareness-raising or educational materials and messages are appropriately delivered to all Australians. These opportunities may be through:

- Sharing of SBS research or insights about preferred media distribution platforms and areas of interest for multilingual and First Nations communities, to support effective service delivery;
- SBS Audio multi-platform services, which have long-established and unparalleled connections with Australia's diverse communities;
- SBS Learn³² SBS's dedicated educational platform for school-age children, developed in line with the Australian curriculum;
- SBS Media³³, which offers end-to-end cross-platform communications campaigns, including in-language (see SBS CulturalConnect³⁴); or

³¹ See *Racism in the media: "Don't read the comments" isn't enough anymore!* at <https://indigenoux.com.au/racism-in-the-media/>

³² <https://www.sbs.com.au/learn>

³³ <https://www.sbsmedia.com.au/>

³⁴ <https://www.sbsmedia.com.au/make-deeper-connections/>



- via tools such as the SBS Inclusion program or Cultural Atlas, which may assist agencies' or stakeholders in further understanding Australia's diverse communities.

All of SBS's services are backed up by robust research conducted by SBS's Audience Data and Insights team.

V. CONCLUSION

SBS appreciates the opportunity to respond to the Committee's inquiry into the influence and impacts of social media on Australian society.

As Australia's most trusted source of news and information, SBS can attest to the importance of accuracy, transparency, accountability and impartiality in the collection and publication of news content, to develop a relationship of trust with audiences over time.

It is timely therefore for policy-makers to reaffirm Australia's objectives in relation to trust in news, civic participation, and constructive political and social discourse. SBS looks forward to working constructively with the Committee and Government to develop and implement the regulatory frameworks required to facilitate appropriate positive public policy outcomes.



APPENDIX – SBS'S RESPONSE TO THE INQUIRY'S TERMS OF REFERENCE

(a) the use of age verification to protect Australian children from social media;
N/a. SBS does not provide social media services. Extensive protections for child audiences exist in relation to broadcast content, and SBS On Demand accounts are limited to people aged 15+.
(b) the decision of Meta to abandon deals under the News Media Bargaining Code;
Please refer to the Part III this submission, where matters relevant to Meta are discussed in detail.
(c) the important role of Australian journalism, news and public interest media in countering mis and disinformation on digital platforms;
Please refer to the body of this submission, where SBS's critically important role – in providing journalism, news, and services in the public interest that counter mis- and disinformation including on digital platforms – is discussed in detail.
(d) the algorithms, recommender systems and corporate decision making of digital platforms in influencing what Australians see, and the impacts of this on mental health;
SBS would welcome consideration of measures to address the impact of digital platforms' algorithms in influencing what Australians see, or are served with on digital platforms. This consideration should take in ways to ensure that professional news content (including SBS's) is not overwhelmed or 'out-ranked' through algorithms by non-professional and/or misleading content, including the fast-emerging threat posed by AI-generated content (which purports to be news or current affairs coverage). Many digital platforms' algorithms appear to be designed to promote the most engaging content, which is often the most sensational or divisive content, or content borne out of misinformation and disinformation.
(e) other issues in relation to harmful or illegal content disseminated over social media, including scams, age-restricted content, child sexual abuse and violent extremist material;
In relation to harmful mis- and disinformation on social media, please refer to the body of this submission, which discusses in detail the urgent need for appropriate regulatory settings, and SBS's important role in counter-balancing this issue. In relation to scams, please refer to SBS's submission in response to the Treasury's Scam Taskforce's <i>Scams – Mandatory Industry Codes</i> consultation paper, here . ³⁵ In relation to harmful or illegal content, age-restricted content, child sexual abuse and violent extremist material, please refer to SBS's submission in response to the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts' <i>Statutory Review of the Online Safety Act 2021</i> Issues Paper, here . ³⁶
(f) any related matters.
Other related matters are discussed in the body of this submission.

³⁵ https://www.sbs.com.au/aboutus/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/SBS-submission_Scams-%E2%80%93-mandatory-industry-codes_March-2024.pdf

³⁶ https://www.sbs.com.au/aboutus/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/SBS-submission_Statutory-Review-of-the-Online-Safety-Act-2021_21-June-2024.pdf