



Media Release
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Google’s cynical ploy to mislead and frighten Australians shows why the Code is necessary

Free TV Australia today said that the deliberately misleading “Open Letter to Australians” published today by Google highlights exactly why the mandatory Code is urgently needed.

Free TV Chief Executive Officer, Bridget Fair, said: “Google has shown once again how important free, strong independent news media industry is in Australia so that they can hold Google to account for pushing such deliberately inaccurate information to its users.

“These are the statements and actions of a monopolist flexing its considerable muscle to try and divert attention from the real issue—paying a fair price for the news content that creates value for the platforms.

“Google’s letter is straight out of the monopoly 101 playbook trying to mislead and frighten Australians to protect their position as the gateway to the internet. We’ve seen this kind of tactic before from big businesses trying to stop regulators from evening up the playing field so that they can hold on to excessive profits. Hopefully they will not succeed.

“The ACCC Code is about ensuring a free and vibrant Australian news media sector into the future. This breathtakingly misleading letter is not about consumer safety, it’s about Google maintaining money, control and market power.

“The facts are that nothing in the draft Code would require the platforms to provide any personal information about any Australian to any media company.

“To suggest otherwise is fake news.

“The draft Code recognises that the data of Australians is valuable and requires that the platforms be transparent about the value they currently extract from accessing Australian news content.

“It also requires that Google and Facebook tell registered media companies what types of data they collect from Australians who access news content but which they keep for themselves and do not pass on to the media companies. Any data that Google agrees to provide would have to be under existing Australian privacy laws.

“While it’s high time that the platforms woke up to the fact that Australians take privacy seriously, it’s cynical in the extreme to use this newfound concern to mislead Australians,” Ms Fair said.



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ABOUT FREE TV AUSTRALIA

Free TV Australia is the peak industry body representing Australia's commercial free-to-air television licensees through advocacy, innovation and strategic advice. The members of Free TV Australia are Seven West Media, Nine Entertainment Co, Network 10, Southern Cross Austereo, Prime Media Group, WIN Network and Imparja Television.