

Hi there

## The Meta Metamorphosis



As ['The Facebook Papers'](#) continue to ripple through the world's media, the troubled social media giant is trying on a new identity. On Thursday, CEO Mark Zuckerberg announced the parent company would now go by 'Meta' - from the 'Metaverse', the next digital revolution Zuckerberg has been heralding all year. Meanwhile Whistleblower Frances Haugen's leak of internal documents keeps revealing more dirty secrets: Facebook executives let misinformation spread widely to keep people logging in. They ignored

evidence that Facebook was fuelling political violence in fragile democracies and harming teens while they tried to hold onto young audiences.

Just as Haugen hoped, her leak has boosted efforts by the US Congress to regulate the industry. This week representatives hauled officials from Tik Tok, Snapchat and YouTube into combative hearings focused on whether they'd done enough to keep children safe online.

'Being different from Facebook is not a defence', Senator Richard Blumenthal told the officials. 'That bar is in the gutter.'

The tech industry has fought regulation in Australia and Europe but they fear it most in the United States where almost all are headquartered and where they make most of their revenue. Never has US regulation looked more likely. Among the proposals is an update to a [law known as Section 230](#) that protects online platforms from liability for anything users publish. That alone would incentivise platforms to police the bullying and disinformation that drive engagement and help level the playing field with news media.

Almost lost among the furore was the unsealing of the civil case filed last year by a dozen US states under US competition law, which argues that Google's dominance in the digital advertising space comes not from out-innovating competitors, as Google claims, but from underhanded tactics.

'Google sought to kill competition and has done so through an array of exclusionary tactics, including an unlawful agreement with Facebook, its largest potential competitive threat, to manipulate advertising auctions', said the suit. 'The Supreme Court has warned that there are such things as antitrust evils. This litigation will establish that Google is guilty of such antitrust evils, and it seeks to ensure that Google won't be evil anymore.'

Australia is pursuing the same issues. Last [month](#) the ACCC found Google has a monopoly on online advertising in its ad tech inquiry report.

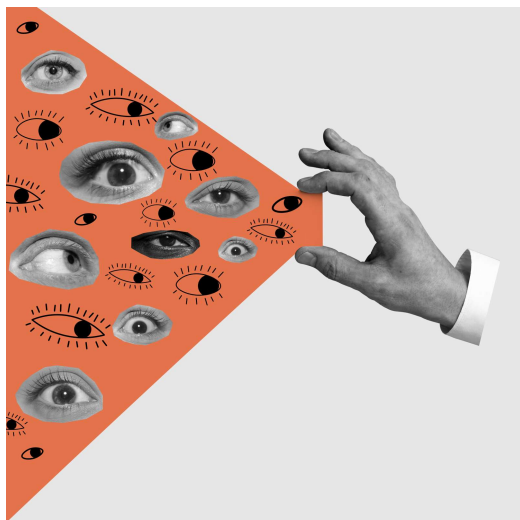
All this came as the platforms revealed startling increases in revenue with Google parent, Alphabet, clocking an all-time record revenue of \$US65.1 billion. Facebook reported revenue growth of 35% to \$29 billion.

In this week's newsletter ... Monica looks at The Conversation's challenge to Facebook over the digital platform's surprising decision to shut the media outlet out of negotiations for a deal for its content. Sacha gives an update on the federal government's latest step on the road to privacy reform with the release by the Attorney-General's Department's [Discussion Paper](#) into its Privacy Act Review.



**Prue Clarke**  
CMT Regional Researcher

## Freezing out misinformation...and The Conversation



In March next year, the News Media Bargaining Code comes up for review. It's fairly safe to say that many news outlets will probably give it the thumbs up. Many have done alternative deals with Google and Facebook for undisclosed amounts to make their content available to the platforms. And in related news, this morning [the ACCC announced](#) that Commercial Radio Australia can collectively negotiate with Facebook and Google over payment for their news content

Whilst the amount of money the outlets have so far received remains in confidence,

they've been on hiring sprees – great for journalism, of course. Not so good on the transparency front nor for the Code itself, which as Derek has pointed out, might actually [never kick in](#). The government's intention might always have been to force the platforms to strike deals on the sidelines of the Code, in which case it's a win for the favoured media outlets, the platforms and the government.

But what of the media frozen out?

Both *The Conversation* and the national broadcaster SBS have been denied the capacity to do deals with Facebook, despite having successfully negotiated with Google. This week, *Conversation* editor Misha Ketchell decided to [slap down](#) the platform for refusing to provide a reason to negotiate with his and other quality media outlets that are eligible under the actual Code.

Ketchell says he doesn't want to abandon *The Conversation's* Facebook audience. But he doesn't want to 'give Facebook an undeserved veneer of respectability' either. Nor will Ketchell be applying for any of Facebook's new, special [funding grant](#) of \$15m over three years, which will be administered by the Walkley Foundation to boost public interest journalism and help out small, regional and digital newsrooms to innovate and become sustainable. Ketchell calls the fund 'an attempt to placate media' that Facebook is refusing to negotiate with under the actual Code.

Given the claims by whistle-blower Frances Haugen that Facebook could algorithmically stop the spread of dangerous misinformation but isn't because that would impact profit, it would seem a no-brainer to embrace [The Conversation](#), which taps into a global academic base to publish knowledge-based journalism.



**Monica Attard**  
CMT Co-Director

## Getting serious about Privacy



It turns out that the data economy is driven by (drumroll, please) data. And it turns out our privacy protections are (another drumroll, please) dangerously inadequate.

On Monday, the Attorney-General's Department took the latest step on the road to reform by releasing a [Discussion Paper](#) into its Privacy Act Review. The A-G's Department is now seeking feedback in response, including about the scope of the Act, the protections in the Australian Privacy Principles and how the Act is

regulated and enforced. It will accept submissions until January 10, 2022.

The A-G's Department also released an [Exposure Draft of the Online Privacy Bill](#), a proposed law aiming to address the privacy challenges posed by social media and other platforms. The Bill aims to implement a binding online privacy code for social media, and the A-G also released an [Online Privacy Bill Explanatory Paper](#). Submissions in response to the Exposure Draft are due by December 6, 2021.

Expect a flurry of submissions, and a wide range of views, just as there were in response to last year's [Privacy Act Review Issues Paper](#). That's because there's a lot at stake. [Cambridge Analytica](#), anyone? As we noted in [the CMT's submission](#) to the Issues Paper, 'Breaches of an individual's privacy have the potential to harm not just the individual whose privacy is at issue, but also other people and, more broadly, society and democracy ... Privacy is networked, collective and relational, which is particularly evident with social media.'



**Sacha Molitorisz**  
UTS Lecturer in Law/FASS

## Upcoming Events

The Centre for Media Transition warmly invites you to our virtual events program. We have three events to finish off the year and hope to see you online for one, some or all of them.

**Black Lives Matter and Journalism: A Conversation between Journalists in Australia and the US.** A conversation between non-white journalists.



In 2020, as protests following the murder of George Floyd roiled institutions across the USA, newsrooms found themselves in the unfamiliar position of being scrutinised for their own failings on race. Journalists of colour said newsrooms were undermining trust in their communities and further entrenching division and inequality.

In Australia, Indigenous journalists and activists worked hard to use the movement's momentum to shed light on ongoing police abuse and deaths in custody in their communities. From newsrooms there were stories of discrimination and calls for change. But when Media Diversity Australia released its landmark report showing an overwhelming majority of newsroom leaders, presenters and reporters had an Anglo-Celtic background, sections of the media tried to discredit the findings.

So, one year later, is real change happening?

In this conversation, we'll assess the results of Black Lives Matter and have an opportunity to share and learn from each group's experiences.

Tuesday 30 November 2021

11:30 am - 1:00 pm AEDT

[Register here](#)

## Book launch: 46 Boxes of stuff

'This community media archive began with '46 boxes of stuff.'

Liz Giuffre and Dom Romeo rolled up their sleeves and dived into 2SER's archives, compiling and cataloguing an incomplete history of community broadcasting in Australia.

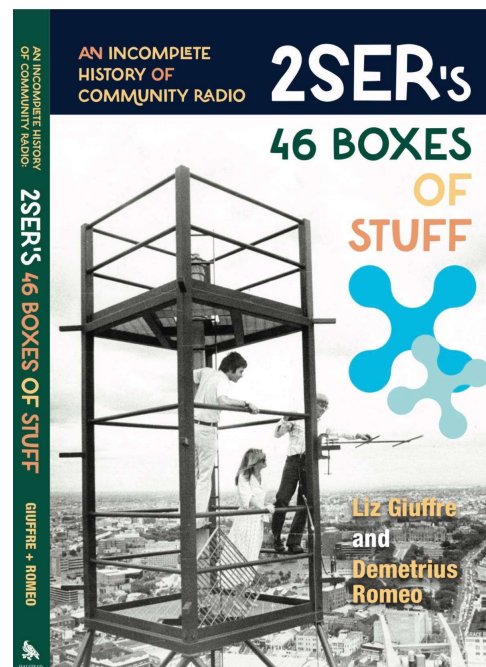
Community media has played an important role in ensuring access, driving social change, and bringing people together IRL.

Register for the book launch to hear from the authors and guests Jess Scully and Robbie Buck.

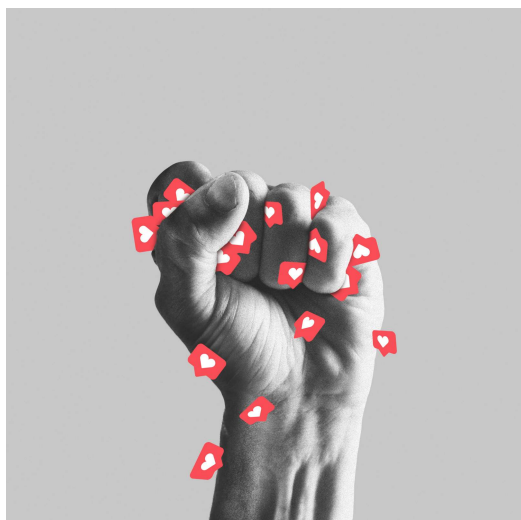
Thursday 2 December 2021

12:00 -1:00pm AEST

[Register here](#)



# The Year in Media Transition



Dr Sacha Molitorisz hosts this end-of-year event to reflect on trends, innovation and disruption in online regulation.

It's been a big year for digital platform regulation. In February, the world took notice as the News Media Bargaining Code was enacted, prompting a flurry of deals between news publishers and digital platforms. In September, against a backdrop of high-profile defamation lawsuits, the High Court ruled that news media companies are liable

for defamatory comments that appear beneath their stories on social media. And in October, Prime Minister Scott Morrison demanded an end to anonymous bullying and proposed that Facebook be deemed a publisher, just as whistleblower Frances Haugen appeared before US Congress to testify against the social network.

In this panel session with media and regulation experts, we ask: are we witnessing a wider move to improve online discourse and protect democracy? Or a worrying regulatory overreach that threatens free speech?

Thursday 9 December 2021

12:00 pm - 1:00 pm AEDT

[Register here](#)

And on 4 November, Monica will be chairing a [session](#) of the Global Investigative Journalism Conference, which is being held online. The session is called 'Networking: Cross Border Projects', where journalists will be invited to talk about collaborations they're planning.

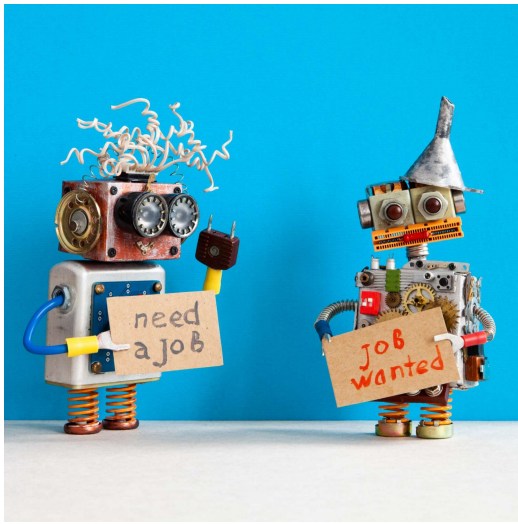


**Alexia Giacomazzi**

Events and Communications Officer

## Come research with us!

The Centre is seeking two new postdoctoral research fellows to be core members of our



interdisciplinary media research centre.

These roles are full-time, three-year fixed term contracts starting in January 2022. One will sit under the Faculty of Law and the other under the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, appropriate to the candidate's background/speciality.

The postdoctoral research fellow roles present an opportunity to conduct research that relates to the Centre's overall strategic intent and to the research programs being

developed and carried out for the period 2021-2023. This will include your own independent research as well as research on projects initiated by the Centre.

Please share this with your networks and with anyone who may be interested. If you would like to discuss these positions further, please contact:

- Professor Derek Wilding for the Law post-doc ([derek.wilding@uts.edu.au](mailto:derek.wilding@uts.edu.au))
- Professor Monica Attard for the FASS post doc ([monica.attard@uts.edu.au](mailto:monica.attard@uts.edu.au))

For more information and to apply:

[IRC208154 - LAW](#)

[IRC208127 - FASS](#)

Please visit our [website](#) for more information about the Centre and our research.



The Centre for Media Transition and UTS acknowledges the Gadigal and Guring-gai people of the Eora Nation upon whose ancestral lands our university now stands. We pay respect to the Elders both past and present, acknowledging them as the traditional custodians of knowledge for these places.

[Privacy Statement](#) | [Disclaimer](#) | [Unsubscribe](#)

UTS CRICOS Provider Code: 00099F

This email was sent by University of Technology Sydney, PO Box 123 Broadway NSW 2007, Australia