

Centre for Media Transition



Hi there

Meta movements



It's been a big week in the world of social media. Twitter is still convulsing over mass sackings, resignations and technical fiddling after Elon Musk's acquisition of the platform some 3 weeks ago. And META, the owner of Facebook and Instagram, has moved on boss Mark Zuckerberg's belief that there's no money to be made in news. There've been hundreds of job losses.

One META redundancy that's made heads turn is that of International News Partnerships which oversees the platforms

relationship with news organisations. In the US where deals between Meta and news organisations are of a different nature to those here in Australia, the cull is sending a strong message that META isn't as interested in news as it once was and indeed, the company has said explicitly its shifting resources to what it considers 'high growth areas', and news isn't amongst them. Having removed news items from its Australian feed during negotiations for the introduction here of the News Media Bargaining Code (NMBC) in 2021, META has been sending signs it might do the same in Canada, where similar legislation looks close to being enacted.

META's shift in priorities is bad news for the Australia news businesses that signed three-year deals with the platform after the NMBC came into effect. Many have been on hiring

sprees, and it's fair to say there'd be a lot of nervous editors and journalists waiting to see whether their 3-year contracts with the social media giant will be renewed. Sounding confident, News Corp's Executive Chairman Michael Miller [says](#) META had given no indication it wouldn't renegotiate. And the retention of META's Asia Pacific Director of News Partnerships, Andrew Hunter is a good sign, though that too could be to wind down expectations.

Keep reading because we've been up to a lot in the past few weeks. Derek is back from the International Institute of Communication's conference in Ottawa and writes about discussions there of the efficacy of an independent fund to support public interest journalism as an alternative to the NMBC here and the new legislation Canada is looking to pass. Stevie Zhang has been at a UNESCO conference in Bangkok where media literacy was front and centre and writes about some of the initiatives discussed there. And Michael has been pouring over the new Communications Minister's recent speech on what the government has in mind for the media space.

Finally, the CMT held a two-day Tech Camp on our Sydney campus, bringing together journalists from all over the Pacific to talk disinformation and what to do about it. It was a huge success thanks to our Events and Communication Officers, Alexia Giacomazzi and Rosa Alice. Take a look [here](#) at the video we pulled together.



Monica Attard
CMT Co-Director

Support for journalism fund as an alternative to news code



A few weeks ago, a Canadian parliamentary committee held hearings about [Bill C-18](#), its version of Australia's News Media Bargaining Code. At the time, Sacha noticed an [interesting Twitter thread from Jason Kint](#) who posted video excerpts of Meta's appearance, including some tough questions over Meta's possible withdrawal from news in Canada if the bill goes ahead in its current form (see this very recent [commentary from Columbia Journalism Review](#)). The following week, I

chaired a session at the [IIC annual conference in Ottawa](#), with representatives from Google, Facebook, the CRTC (Canadian regulatory), AGCOM (the Italian regulator) and a Canadian digital news company, Overstory Media Group.

What surprised me about that session is that an independent fund to support public interest journalism now seems to be favoured by some platforms and news producers. This would be an alternative to the news code developed under competition law in Australia (and proposed in Canada) and to the copyright-based approach used in Europe. Searching for more detail, I found Google has made a [written submission](#) to the Canadian parliamentary inquiry, backed up by [oral testimony](#) to the committee on October 18 from Colin McKay, its Head of Public Policy and Government Relations in Canada. As an alternative to a mandatory bargaining and arbitration scheme, Google has advanced the idea of ‘platforms contributing to an independent fund in accordance with a predictable and transparent formula’. It outlines ‘a single pool of funds, gathered from services that earn revenue from news, with clearly established and objective eligibility, contribution and distribution criteria ...’

Anyone who has followed our commentary on the News Media Bargaining Code will know that while we’ve expressed qualified support, [we’ve also said](#) from the outset that a more durable approach would be to require digital platforms, as service providers operating within the contemporary communications environment, to contribute financial support to a scheme that would distribute these funds according to established criteria.

We won’t hold our breath on this approach taking hold in Canada – by all accounts, Bill C-18 code is likely to pass the Canadian parliament, with amendments – but we’re glad to see the approach being considered as a public policy option. And we’re particularly interested in the view of smaller news providers that this would be more manageable than negotiations with digital platforms.



Derek Wilding
CMT Co-Director

Bridging digital divides

Earlier in November, I attended UNESCO’s Regional Meeting on “Bridging digital divides and empowering youth and educators with digital competencies in the Asia-Pacific”, jointly organised by UNESCO’s Communication and Information Unit and Education Unit in Bangkok. Participants from Australia, Hong Kong, Vietnam, Philippines, Bhutan, Nepal and Thailand, and from a variety of professional backgrounds including journalists, educators,



entrepreneurs, government representatives and even venture capitalists, discussed how to better digital citizenship and media literacy education in the region.

I presented our approach to researching and monitoring mis- and disinformation, focusing on pre-emptive and community-based interventions, in a panel session on youth engagement in media literacy education. Other panellists were young people involved in various media literacy

projects in the region, including Wikimedia Thailand and Philippines information literacy non-profit YABONG.

The meeting highlighted the urgent need to equip teachers and educators in the Southeast Asia region with skills to bridge existing digital skills gaps and train students to become critical media and information consumers. We discussed the primary challenges of achieving digital literacy across the region, focusing on issues around discrimination and misleading content. The key challenges are firstly, the language and geographical barriers that mean resources are not evenly distributed, and secondly, that our ability to fact check or otherwise address the spread of misinformation can be highly dependent on the dominant influence in the specific social context. Lastly, we concluded that there are conflicting tensions between the need for highly targeted, specific skills training that take into account social, political and legal contexts, and the lack of resources in the media and digital literacy education sector.



Stevie Zhang

CMT Researcher, Information Disorder

The policy turn

Since the ALP's return to government in May, its communications policies have been slowly taking shape. Last month's budget saw the expected cash injections for the ABC, community broadcasting and local and regional publishers, as well as funding to investigate strategies to aid the ailing news sector. Before the election, Michelle Rowland



spelled out the need for extensive legislative reform, but details remained sketchy until a series of ministerial speeches over the last few weeks.

Perhaps the biggest move so far is Rowland's [announcement last week](#) that Labor will task ACMA with developing a new model for measuring diversity in Australian news media. This has been a long time coming. ACMA released a [model framework](#) for assessing diversity and localism in December 2020, which recognised that the media ownership and control rules were no

longer fit for purpose in the internet age. CMT undertook an extensive literature review for ACMA and, along with other media researchers, participated in a series of stakeholder consultations that informed ACMA's model framework. There has been a great deal of work on assessing the health and diversity of Australian media over the past several years, including from the [Public Interest Journalism Initiative](#), and the [Media Pluralism Project](#).

The diversity measurement framework was one of several priorities for regulatory reform that Rowland set out in her speech. Aside from expected moves on [prominence](#) and anti-siphoning rules, in the medium term we are likely to see some long-awaited action on classification and industry codes to encourage consistency amongst the different industry sectors. Spectrum-related reforms are likely to wait.

One area in which there has been relatively little news is the regulation of digital platforms, including on the previous government's plans to grant ACMA increased powers relating to DIGI's disinformation and misinformation code. Rowland said the government was 'eager ... to work towards making the online environment a more competitive, fair and trustworthy space for Australian users and businesses,' but whether this leads to the proposed changes remains to be seen. The budget saw new [funding for media literacy programs](#) in schools, and Rowland has noted the importance of [strong public-service media in countering misinformation](#). Importantly, Rowland has also pointed to the need for improved protections for press freedom and defamation reform, with the attorney general pushing those reforms.



Michael Davis
CMT Research Fellow

Fighting information disorder



Earlier this month, the CMT hosted TechCamp Australia, a series of participant-led workshops on mis- and disinformation in the Pacific region. We welcomed journalists from Fiji, Tonga, Cook Islands, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Kiribati, Samoa, Vanuatu, New Zealand and Australia.

Over two days, the candidates and expert trainers addressed local challenges and brainstormed low-barrier solutions that could be easily implemented in newsrooms.

They raised some common issues in the fight against mis- and disinformation, including the growing popularity of social media and fake accounts, deadline pressures in newsrooms, and state control of the media and/or corporate influence.

The candidates came with varying levels of experience in online verification, so the workshops offered them the chance to collaborate, share perspectives and learnings, and develop ongoing professional relationships. It was also a valuable opportunity for the CMT to learn more about the challenges faced across the region, what support was needed for journalists to meet those, and what practices were already in place to combat them.

Ultimately, it was understood that the fight against mis- and disinformation was best undertaken together, and that cross-cultural support was key to developing more imaginative tactics against it.

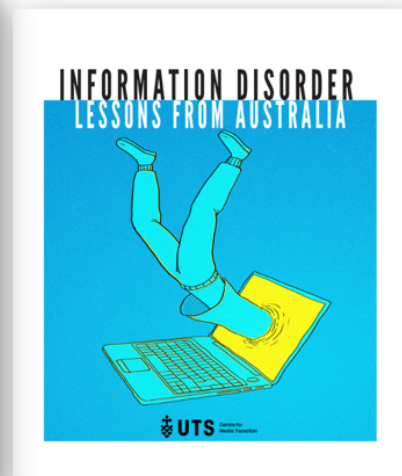
We conducted a few interviews with candidates and trainers during the event that we're excited to share with you [here](#).



Alexia Giacomazzi

Events and Communications Officer

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



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.



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