

Facebook threatens to remove news from its platform in Australia

(<https://www.cnet.com/news/facebook-threatens-to-remove-news-from-its-platform-in-australia/>)

Australian Competition and Consumer Commission(ACCC) has released a draft news media bargaining code that addresses “bargaining power imbalances Australian news media businesses and digital platforms, specifically Google and Facebook”

(<https://www.accc.gov.au/focus-areas/digital-platforms/draft-news-media-bargaining-code>).

According to ACCC, this would ensure fair payment of journalists’ and media publications’ work. Facebook is counteracting the approval of the draft code by threatening to stop allowing users to share news on Facebook and Instagram.

ACCC believes that the imbalance in bargaining power made the media companies “accept less favourable terms” in order to be visible on powerful social media such as Facebook and Instagram. The draft code sets “minimum standards” to be able to ensure an equal playing field for local, independent, as well as top news media companies by tracking algorithmic changes in ranking or presentation of the news, “providing information about how and when Google and Facebook make available user data collected through users’ interactions with news content” and so on. Also, since Facebook already pays for news content to some media, there can be a skewed representation of the news.

However, Facebook states that most of the revenue does not come from the relationship with media companies and that the news is only a fraction of what the users see on their feed. Facebook also claims that this draft code will hurt the “vibrancy of Australian media” in the long run. Google also has fought back by saying that it would hurt “hurt how Australians use Google Search and YouTube”

(<https://www.cnet.com/news/google-clashes-with-australian-regulator-over-law-that-would-force-it-to-pay-for-news/>).

Although this code is only subject to Australia, I believe countries all over the world are concerned about how misinformation is being passed around as facts on social media,

especially Facebook. People rarely fact check each “article” they come across on Facebook, Instagram, or Youtube, and if they agree with the title, they pass the information to other people or post it on their feed. I understand the government’s point of view where they feel that some kind of law is necessary to limit the spread of “fake news.” However, as a result, it can censor what is being put out there by media companies, and offering a narrow view of the world.

If this kind of law came into effect in the US, I believe that the users would have a very limited news experience on social media. For example, any algorithm change may need to be approved so that the government can assess if the new algorithm gives fair representation of all the news. Also, smaller media companies will try to bargain higher payment which can limit the speed of how fast the news comes out.