

## Centre for Media Transition



Hi there

In the wake of recent announcements by Pfizer and BioNTech, it's never been timelier to understand the competing vaccine narratives currently circulating on social media.

First Draft's newly released 'Under the surface' report finds that the leading topic of discussion is mistrust in the political and financial motives driving the vaccine. Our 'quantitative-minded' senior data journalists in the US are grateful to FASS's Catriona Bonfiglioli and Francesco Bailo who double-checked our qualitative design elements. Jack Berkefeld from the Sydney First Draft bureau also assisted our global team and tells us more about



the experience below. As the topic of the coronavirus vaccine is an urgent one – and will likely remain so for many months and even years to come - I urge you to at least read the report's [executive summary](#). The analysis not only helps researchers, but everyday people to pre-empt and guard against those attempting to pollute the information environment with harmful and misleading conversations surrounding the topic.

The topic of conversations and constructive discussions meanwhile was raised as a new form of media literacy this week. The CMT's Chrisanthi Giotis participated in a panel of civil society leaders on Tuesday as part of a constructive week-long conference on social cohesion. The work of the conference began over a year ago with nationwide community consultations involving hundreds of people.

And finally, Derek has compiled a list by way of reminder, with important deadlines looming for current policy reviews.



**Anne Kruger**  
First Draft APAC Director

## Fraught online narratives and vaccines



First Draft has recently published a [report](#) mapping out the dominant narratives on social media about vaccines across three languages as part of a [suite of resources](#) to assist experts to respond to the issue of vaccine hesitancy. I was tasked with analysing how vaccines were communicated online in Spanish to complement analysis conducted by my colleagues in English and French. For each of these languages, we analysed the top 100 performing posts on Facebook pages and groups as well as on Instagram and

Twitter. Our data journalists gathered posts which referenced vaccines between June and September, which they then categorised under six topics to identify dominant narratives.

Two topics which were dominant across all languages were posts referencing the political and economic motives behind vaccines, and those that referenced the wider umbrella of safety, efficacy and necessity (or lack thereof) of vaccines. An example of a cross-language narrative held the idea that a 'healthy immune system is more powerful than a vaccine'. We also found language-specific themes. For example, the idea that 'the blood of Christ is the only vaccine against Covid-19' was exclusive to Spanish. Posts which referenced how vaccines could impact civil liberties did not feature in Spanish at all but were most dominant in English.

A crucial challenge in this type of research I have found in both languages is determining the meaning and sincerity of posts which rely on humour and are steeped in sarcasm.



**Jack Berkefeld**  
First Draft research reporter

## The media, the audience and a pathway to social cohesion



Can the media take on a greater share of responsibility in advancing and safeguarding social cohesion in the content they produce? How can news reporting overcome the tendency to overemphasise the fragmented elements of society or paint a segment of society in an overly critical light?

These were the two key questions put to me as I joined a fantastic panel of civil society leaders on Tuesday as part of a [week-long conference](#) on social cohesion hosted by the Australian Baha'i Community. The conference was the culmination of a year and a half of work, which included more than 50 nationwide consultations bringing together over 500 people to come up with ten key ['pathways'](#) for social cohesion.

From this widespread community consultation on social cohesion and inclusion 'Rethink the role of the media' emerged as one of those key pathways.

Discussion acknowledged that society is strengthened when we access the diverse lived experiences of all of us, and of course, that access often happens through the media. The responsibility of the audience also came through; what you click and share will tell editors what they should commission more of. And a new form of media literacy was raised – knowing how to conduct constructive discussions online is important – also important is knowing which conversations are best done face to face. If Mark Deuze is correct and we all now live a 'Media Life' then we all have responsibilities.



**Chrisanthi Giotis**  
CMT Postdoctoral Fellow



# Policy Horizon

This week we note three upcoming deadlines for current policy reviews

## Disinformation

Submissions close on 24 November for DIGI's draft Australian Code on Disinformation. A copy of the draft code is available [here](#). Send submissions by email to [hello@dig.org.au](mailto:hello@dig.org.au)

## Media diversity

Last week the Senate Environment and Communications References Committee announced its inquiry, 'Media Diversity in Australia'. The proposal was moved by Greens Senator Sarah Hanson-Young in response to the petition by former Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd. Terms of reference are available from [the inquiry website](#) where submissions can also be uploaded. Closing date is 11 December, with the report due on 31 March 2021.



## Privacy

The Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department is conducting a review of the Privacy Act 1988. This is one of the responses to the ACCC's Digital Platforms Inquiry. Terms of reference and an issues paper are available [here](#). Submissions are to be emailed to [PrivacyActReview@ag.gov.au](mailto:PrivacyActReview@ag.gov.au), and close on 29 November.



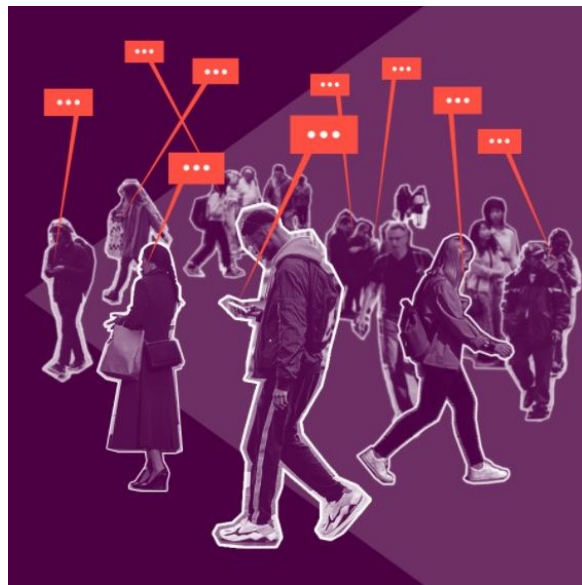
**Derek Wilding**  
CMT Co-Director

# Empowering community to tackle the infodemic

First Draft is delighted to have entered into SXSW's 2021 PanelPicker, where the panel discussions at the festival will be chosen by vote. We'd love your



support in voting for our proposed panel discussion — 'Tackling the infodemic with the power of community.' At First Draft, we're on a mission to disrupt disinformation, and we can't do it alone. So we want to use this panel discussion to dive into our award-winning CrossCheck project, which is being transformed to allow influential journalists and publishers all over the world to collaboratively verify emerging stories and rumors while promoting accurate, trustworthy reporting.



If you'd like to see this panel discussion happen, please vote for us [here](#). Voting will close at 11:59 p.m. PT November 20 (Friday) or 7:59 a.m. GMT November 21 (Saturday).



**Esther Chan**  
First Draft Sydney Bureau Editor

#ICYMI You can read more of our publications and the reports below on our [website](#).



**Have a great weekend!**

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*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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