

Centre for Media Transition



Hi there

In 2020, truth keeps taking hit after hit. Earlier this week, President Trump [prematurely and falsely declared victory](#) in the US election. At that point, the result was far from clear. It was like calling the winner of the Melbourne Cup with 200 metres left to run.

In today's newsletter, Anne Kruger reports on using the latest psychology-based research to combat misinformation amid elections in the US and Myanmar, Derek Wilding raises the thorny issue of TV viewers left guessing about hidden commercial arrangements in news broadcasts, Jacqui Park reports from the recent (virtual) World Congress of the International Press Institute and I give an update on privacy law reform.

In a year when rugby league's opening State of Origin game was played the day after [the Melbourne Cup](#), everything feels unfamiliar and uncertain. We're all out of our comfort zones. Still, the truth remains the truth. The best way forward is to work to reveal it, and to call out those undermining it.



Sacha Molitorisz
CMT Postdoctoral Fellow

Using psychology to debunk disinfo

With all eyes (including mine) on the US elections, First Draft is also taking stock of voting in the Asia Pacific. This

Sunday, Myanmar goes to the polls for its general election. On Monday, our new bureau editor [Esther Chan](#) and I hosted a half day online seminar covering four 'buckets' of election-related mis- and disinformation. We outlined the tools and techniques being used by agents of disinformation in Myanmar, as well as tips on how to write debunks, craft responsible headlines and present debunks of mis- and disinformation for maximum effect using the latest psychology-based findings.

For example, a debunk on Twitter should never repeat the myth; however, if people are searching for information on something they've already heard, we need to write a headline matching what people are likely to type into their search browser. Participants joined the seminar from Australia, Hong Kong, India and Myanmar, with great feedback about these new insights into the psychology of debunks. People also noted the risky conditions facing journalists on the ground in Myanmar.

Meanwhile, there was no rest for the APAC bureau as we joined 'round the clock' monitoring during this fortnight of the US elections. Our Chinese-language monitoring has been included in reports by [Foreign Policy](#), [NBC](#), [SCMP](#) and the [ABC in Australia](#). We are also working on investigative pieces with the *Washington Post* and the *NYT* in Hong Kong. What's more, our work, and First Draft founder Claire Wardle, have featured prominently in reporting of [Trump's early 'win' speech](#), and reports of [a manipulated video of Joe Biden](#). For anyone interested in misinformation and how to counter it, these are busy times.



Anne Kruger
First Draft APAC Director



TV viewers in the dark about commercial arrangements

A couple of weeks ago there was a small but interesting development on disclosure of commercial arrangements in TV and radio programs. On 20 October, the [ACMA](#) published the [report of its investigation](#) into



a segment on the Seven Network's *The Morning Show* that had been broadcast live from a BIG W store back in May. The program did not make any explicit disclosure that it was being paid to broadcast the segment, then argued that there was no need because 'the arrangement was transparent to viewers by the content and context of the segment'. ACMA rejected this argument on the basis that the applicable code of practice required express disclosure of the arrangement, finding the licensee had

breached the code. ACMA said, 'Viewers should not be left in the position of having to make guesses about the presence or absence of a Commercial Arrangement of this kind.'

The finding is interesting for two reasons. First, as the ABC's *Media Watch* has noted on several occasions, commercial TV viewers have indeed been left guessing when commercial exposure has apparently taken the form of an enticement to future arrangements, rather than in return for payment. Second, the decision again exposes a weakness in the code of practice. Section 4.1.3 of the Commercial Television Code allows for disclosure to be made in various ways, including as part of the segment, or in the closing credits, or on the program's website, or 'in any other way that adequately brings the arrangement to the attention of viewers'. Earlier this year, we noted in [our research report for ACMA](#) that there is a lack of research on how consumers actually use disclosure statements and how effective they are.

At the CMT, we have reservations over the value of a disclosure statement made on a program website, rather than as part of the program itself. In the case of *The Morning Show*, Seven said it would ordinarily make a disclosure in the closing credits, but human error on this occasion resulted in the omission. Research shows consumers care deeply about news content that's influenced by commercial considerations in ways that are not transparent. Clearly, this issue needs attention.



Derek Wilding
CMT Co-Director

The wide, wired world of global journalism

How do we re-imagine journalism at a global scale? That's the question the International Press Institute global network of journalists, editors and publishers addressed at their 2020 World Congress, which ran virtually from mid-September to mid-October. There were some big take-aways from the Congress, including myths about [young readers](#), how to counter [misinformation](#), principles of [cross-border reporting](#) and, of course, [diversity](#). All the discussions are [here](#).



I was lucky enough to curate the conference, which left me pondering the role of events as a tool for journalism. It inspired this piece in *The Story*, my newsletter on media innovation that appears on *Medium*. The piece is titled, '[Suddenly, news media events work at scale ... and other lockdown upsides](#)'. Subscribe to *The Story* [here](#).



Jacqui Park
CMT Senior Fellow

Legislating fairness in the data economy

Perhaps unsurprisingly, here at the Centre for Media Transition we try to understand media transition. It turns out there's quite a lot of it about.

Just for starters, the impacts of the [ACCC's Digital Platforms Inquiry](#) will be ongoing. That includes development of the news media bargaining code, which is proving controversial. After [Google](#) [dubbed](#) the draft code 'unreasonable' and 'unclear', this week News Corp told the government to [hurry up and legislate](#).



Meanwhile, privacy law reform is back on the agenda, also thanks largely to the [ACCC's Final Report](#). Last Friday, the Federal Attorney-General's Department released an [issues paper](#) seeking feedback on its review of the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth). This is an area of focus for us. We will soon release our report into privacy, smartphones and consent. As [I've argued elsewhere](#), privacy is a [defining issue of our time](#), and Australia's privacy laws require major globally-minded reforms.

Issues covered by the A-G's review include: whether the *Privacy Act* effectively protects personal information; whether a statutory tort for serious invasions of privacy should be introduced; and whether there should be an independent certification scheme monitoring compliance with Australian privacy laws. The deadline for submissions to the A-G's department is 29 November 2020.



Sacha Molitorisz
CMT Postdoctoral Fellow

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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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