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Key milestones in Australian regulation of digital platforms 2015–2023: a chronology

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Key points

- This Chronology provides an overview of key milestones in digital platform regulation from the introduction of the [Enhancing Online Safety for Children Act 2015](#) to the end of 2023.
- There are 4 primary concerns driving Australian attempts to regulate digital platforms:
 - protection from online harms
 - responding to issues related to competition and power imbalances
 - concerns for privacy and the responsibilities related to holding user data
 - protection and promotion of Australian content
- Digital platforms covered by the inquiries and reforms here include:
 - search engines (Google)
 - social media platforms (Facebook and X (Twitter))
 - digital content aggregation services (Google and Apple News)
 - digital marketplaces (Amazon, Apple App store and Google Play)
 - streaming video on demand services (Netflix, Disney+ and Amazon Prime)
- This chronology does not cover Artificial Intelligence (AI).

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Introduction

The regulation of digital platforms has increasingly occupied governments around the world in recent years, as they debate governance systems designed to ensure that platforms are trusted and trustworthy sources, organisers, and curators of public information. In this pursuit, legislators grapple with concerns around censorship versus harm minimisation; competition and diversity of social media versus a concentration of ownership and control by tech giants; and a vastly different media landscape to that of the 20th century.

In Australia, various inquiries have noted the enormous impact that digital platforms have had on the media landscape. The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) has noted discrepancies in regulation between traditional and new media, as well as new privacy concerns related to digital platforms, and the shift in revenue from advertising and the challenges this brings to the traditional media ecosystem.¹

Additional concerns have been raised over the power and influence of digital platforms in spreading misinformation, as well as their capacity to enable the disruption of elections and public health campaigns, and provide a vehicle for hate speech and terrorist activity.²

The range of concerns raised by the growth of digital platforms has led to calls for more focused regulation and oversight.³ While self-regulation has so far dominated, there are demands for this to change and a growing desire for accountability, evidenced through, for example, numerous appearances by the Facebook whistleblower Francis Haugen to inquiries held here and internationally, as well as repeated pressure for the heads of Meta, Google and X to answer questions before governing bodies.⁴ This has led some to argue that we are entering into a period of ‘regulated internet’, defined by:

... increasingly involved national governments, in the liberal democracies as well as authoritarian and one-party states, legislating in ways intended to rein in digital platform power through a series of ad hoc measures applied around areas that include economic competition, content regulation, access to user data, online harms, and privacy and security concerns.⁵

Complicating the issue, however, is that definitions of digital platforms remain unsettled, with definitions ranging from neutral platforms simply hosting content (rather than creating it), to publishers of content (or a hybrid of the two). This hinders attempts to implement top-down regulation in an industry which is constantly changing and evolving.⁶

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- 1 Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC), [Digital Platforms Inquiry: Final Report](#), (Canberra: ACCC, 2019).
 - 2 Senate Select Committee on Foreign Interference through Social Media, [Final Report](#), (Canberra: Senate Select Committee on Foreign Interference through Social Media, 2023).
 - 3 ACCC, [Digital Platforms Inquiry: Final Report](#). See especially recommendations 4, 7, 12, 13 and 15.
 - 4 See for example Jennifer Dudley-Nicholson, ‘[Calls for Overhaul to Online Safety: Giants Put on Notice](#)’, *The Guardian*, 16 March 2022.
 - 5 Terry Flew and Chunmeizi Su, [Mapping International Enquiries into the Power of Digital Platforms](#), working paper, 2022/2, (Glasgow: University of Glasgow School of Law, 7 February 2022), 10.
 - 6 See, for example, Tarleton Gillespie, [Custodians of the Internet: Platforms, Content Moderation, and the Hidden Decisions That Shape Social Media](#), (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018).

For the purposes of this Chronology, ‘digital platforms’ are identified according to the ACCC’s approach, which sets out 3 categories:

- search engines
- social media platforms and
- digital content aggregation services, such as Google and Apple News.⁷

Also considered here are digital marketplaces, such as Amazon and the Google Play and Apple app stores, which have been the subject of additional ACCC inquiries, as well as streaming video on demand services (SVOD), such as Netflix, Disney+, Stan and Amazon Prime.⁸

Focusing on these categories of platforms, this Chronology provides an overview of key milestones in digital platform regulation, dating from the introduction of the [Enhancing Online Safety for Children Act 2015](#) to the end of 2023. Australian attempts to regulate digital platforms since 2015 have reflected 4 dominant concerns. First is protecting Australians from online harms, such as disinformation and cyber-bullying, through the introduction of a less fragmented regulatory framework and the creation and extension of the eSafety Commissioner’s remit. Second, as the many ACCC inquiries suggest, there are substantial concerns surrounding competition, particularly power imbalances between companies such as Google and Meta when negotiating with comparatively small news outlets or companies. Third has to do with privacy and the responsibilities companies and platforms have for their users’ data, made particularly evident following the release of millions of customers’ personal and medical data through the Optus and Medibank data hacks. The final consideration is the protection and growth of Australian content, with changes introduced for commercial broadcasters and further policy announcements on the issue of SVOD’s spending on local content initially expected in mid-2024, but now delayed.⁹

This Chronology does not cover ChatGPT or generative AI, with regulation of these still in its infancy and falling outside the definition of ‘digital platform’ used here.

7 ACCC, [Digital Platforms Inquiry: Final Report](#), 41.

8 See, for example, ACCC, ‘[Digital platform services inquiry 2020—25](#)’. There are services which fall outside this definition, including online gambling services.

9 Tony Burke (Minister for the Arts), ‘[Transcript of interview with Sabra Lane: ABC AM](#)’, media release, 30 January 2023; Rochelle Siemienowicz, ‘[Australian government misses deadline for local content streaming quotas](#)’, *Screenhub, news*, 4 July 2024.

Milestones

Milestones	Details	Source document
2015		
24 March 2015	<p>Commencement of <i>Enhancing Online Safety for Children Act 2015</i></p> <p>The Act fulfils an election commitment made by the Coalition in 2013 and establishes the Children’s eSafety Commissioner and a 2-tier system regulating the removal of prohibited material online.</p>	<p>Enhancing Online Safety for Children Act 2015.</p>
2017		
23 June 2017	<p>Commencement of <i>Enhancing Online Safety for Children Amendment Act 2017</i></p> <p>The amendments extend the remit of the eSafety Commissioner to all Australians.</p>	<p>Enhancing Online Safety for Children Amendment Act 2017.</p>
4 December 2017	<p>The ACCC begins its inquiry into digital platforms</p> <p>See 26 July 2019 for outcomes of the inquiry.</p>	<p>ACCC, ‘Digital platforms inquiry 2017–2019’.</p>
2018		
3 October 2018	<p>Release of the review of the <i>Enhancing Online Safety Act 2015</i> and the Online Content Scheme</p> <p>The Briggs Review finds excessive fragmentation in Australia’s online safety system, recommending new legislation be introduced.</p>	<p>Lynelle Briggs, Report of the Statutory Review of the <i>Enhancing Online Safety Act 2015</i> and the Review of Schedules 5 and 7 to the <i>Broadcasting Services Act 1992 (Online Content Scheme)</i>, (Canberra: Department of Communications and the Arts, 2018).</p>

Milestones	Details	Source document
10 December 2018	<p>Release of the ACCC’s preliminary report into digital platforms</p> <p>The inquiry notes the substantial market power held by Google and Facebook and makes recommendations aimed at, among other things, enhancing merger law and processes and strengthening consumer choice through changes to the pre-installation and default use of certain search engines and browsers.</p>	ACCC, Digital Platforms Inquiry: Preliminary report , (Canberra: ACCC, 2018).
2019		
February 2019	<p>The Council of Attorneys-General releases a discussion paper on proposed amendments to the Model Defamation Provisions 2005</p> <p>The Model Defamation Provisions (MDP) were endorsed by the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General in 2005 to address significant differences in approach to defamation law.</p> <p>See also 27 July 2020 and 31 March 2021.</p>	NSW Government, Communities and Justice, ‘Review of Model Defamation Provisions’ . Council of Attorneys-General, Review of Model Defamation Provisions: Discussion Paper , (Sydney: New South Wales Government, 2019).
6 April 2019	<p>Commencement of the <i>Criminal Code Amendment (Sharing of Abhorrent Violent Material) Act 2019</i></p> <p>The Act is a response to the live streaming of the Christchurch (NZ) terrorist attack on 15 March 2019. It amends the <i>Criminal Code</i> to make it a criminal offence for an internet service provider, content service provider or hosting service provider to fail to refer material accessible through their services to the Australian Federal Police if they believe it to be Abhorrent Violent Material.</p>	Criminal Code Amendment (Sharing of Abhorrent Violent Material) Act 2019 . Criminal Code Act 1995 , sections 474.33 and 474.34.
26 July 2019	<p>Release of the <i>Final Report of the ACCC’s digital platforms inquiry</i></p> <p>The ACCC recommends a ‘platform-neutral’ approach to regulation and makes</p>	ACCC, Digital Platforms Inquiry: Final Report , (Canberra: ACCC, 2019).

Milestones	Details	Source document
	<p>23 recommendations focused on issues including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • competition and the dominance of a few platforms • the creation of a specialist digital platforms branch within the ACCC • the harmonisation of Australia’s media regulatory framework • funding for journalism and media literacy • reform of privacy laws. 	
<p>12 December 2019</p>	<p>Release of the Government’s response to the ACCC’s <i>Final Report</i> into digital platforms</p> <p>Following 12 weeks of public consultation the Government releases its roadmap to reform, which commits to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • creating a unit within the ACCC to monitor and respond to the state of competition and consumer protection in digital platform markets • addressing bargaining imbalances between media businesses and platforms • beginning reform towards a platform-neutral regulatory framework • ensuring effective privacy settings to protect consumers. 	<p>Australian Government, Regulating in the Digital Age: Government Response and Implementation Roadmap for the Digital Platforms Inquiry, (Canberra: Australian Government, 2019).</p>
<p>2020</p>		
<p>10 February 2020</p>	<p>The ACCC begins a five-year inquiry into markets for the supply of digital platform services</p> <p>The ACCC is to inquire into:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • market competition between digital platform services • practices which may harm consumers • market trends 	<p>ACCC, ‘Digital platform services inquiry 2020–25’.</p>

Milestones	Details	Source document
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> developments outside of Australia that may affect the market. <p>See interim reports released on 23 October 2020, 28 April 2021, 28 October 2021, 31 March 2022 and 11 November 2022.</p>	
10 February 2020	<p>The ACCC begins an inquiry into digital advertising services</p> <p>The Government directs the ACCC to inquire into markets for the supply of digital advertising technology services and digital advertising agency services.</p>	ACCC, ' Digital advertising services inquiry 2020–21 '.
27 July 2020	<p>Stage 1 Review of the Model Defamation Provisions concludes</p> <p>In 2018, the Council of Attorneys-General established the Defamation Working Party to review defamation law and determine whether the MDPs remain valid.</p> <p>The first stage review of the MDP results in the Model Defamation Amendment Provisions.</p> <p>See also February 2019 and 31 March 2021.</p>	NSW Government, Communities and Justice, ' Review of Model Defamation Provisions '. Model Defamation Amendment Provisions 2020 .
23 October 2020	<p>Release of the ACCC's September 2020 interim report into the digital platform services inquiry</p> <p>This stage of the inquiry examines online private messaging services in Australia and updates previous ACCC analysis in relation to consumer and competition issues across platforms.</p>	ACCC, ' Digital Platform Services Inquiry: Interim Report ', (Canberra: ACCC, 2020).
30 October 2020	<p>Terms of Reference are released for the review of the <i>Privacy Act 1988</i></p> <p>This review is a response to the ACCC's Final Report of its Digital Platforms inquiry. This review is expected to be completed during the 46th Parliament but a report will not be released until February 2023.</p>	Attorney-General's Department, ' Review of the Privacy Act 1988 '.

Milestones	Details	Source document
	See also 16 February 2023 and 28 September 2023.	
11 November 2020	<p>Referral of an inquiry into media diversity in Australia</p> <p>The Senate refers an inquiry into media diversity, independence and reliability to the Senate Environment and Communications References Committee. This followed unsuccessful calls for a Royal Commission into media diversity through an online petition, which received over 500,000 signatures.</p> <p>See 9 December 2021 for the report of the inquiry.</p>	Senate Environment and Communications References Committee, ' Media diversity in Australia '.
2021		
1 January 2021	<p>Commencement of the Broadcasting Services (Australian Content and Children’s Television) Standards 2020</p> <p>The Government announces changes to the sub-quota requirements for broadcast television. The original sub-quotas required commercial broadcasters to not only broadcast a minimum of 55% of Australian content on their primary channels, but to also spread this content across different genres. Under the changes, Australian content requirements may instead, for example, be met through investment solely in dramas.</p>	<p>Broadcasting Services (Australian Content and Children’s Television) Standards 2020.</p> <p>Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications, 'Fact Sheet: Budget package for television and film production sector' (Canberra; Australian Government, 2021).</p>
17 February 2021	<p>Facebook withdraws news media content from Australian pages</p> <p>In response to the proposed News Media Bargaining Code, Facebook withdraws news media content from Australian pages.</p> <p>See also 3 March 2021</p>	<p>William Easton (Managing Director, Facebook Australia & New Zealand), 'Changes to Sharing and Viewing News on Facebook in Australia', Meta, 17 February 2021, updated 22 February 2021</p> <p>Treasury Laws Amendment (News Media and Digital</p>

Milestones	Details	Source document
22 February 2021	<p>News media is restored to Australian Facebook pages</p> <p>An agreement is reached between Facebook and the Australian Government (however, in February 2024, Meta announces it will not renew its agreements)</p> <p>See also 3 March 2021</p>	<p>Platforms Mandatory Bargaining Code) Act 2021.</p> <p>Easton, ‘Changes to Sharing and Viewing News’.</p>
22 February 2021	<p>Release of the voluntary <i>Australian Code of Practice on Disinformation and Misinformation</i></p> <p>The Digital Industry Group Inc. (DIGI) launches the <i>Australian Code of Practice on Disinformation and Misinformation</i> in response to the Morrison Government’s request (made in its response to the ACCC’s Digital Platforms inquiry) that the digital industry implement a voluntary code of practice.</p> <p>The Code has since been updated; first in October 2021 and then in December 2022. One notable change is that the definition of ‘harm’ (as posed by the propagation or dissemination of disinformation and misinformation) has been revised from that which poses an ‘imminent and serious threat’ to that which poses a ‘credible and serious threat’ to democratic processes or public goods.</p>	<p>Digital Industry Group Inc. (DIGI), Australian Code of Practice on Disinformation and Misinformation, 22 February 2021, updated 11 October 2021.</p> <p>Australian Government, Regulating in the Digital Age: Government Response and Implementation Roadmap for the Digital Platforms Inquiry, (Canberra: Australian Government, 2019), p. 7.</p>
3 March 2021	<p>The News Media Bargaining Code is legislated</p> <p>The News Media Bargaining Code allows eligible news media companies to negotiate with digital platforms over the fair use and distribution of their content. Should the Minister designate a platform as one which falls under the Code, it must negotiate in good faith and participate, if necessary, in arbitration.</p>	<p>Treasury Laws Amendment (News Media and Digital Platforms Mandatory Bargaining Code) Act 2021.</p>

Milestones	Details	Source document
25 March 2021	<p>The Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services begins its inquiry into mobile payment and digital wallet financial services</p> <p>The Committee is tasked with inquiring into issues concerning bargaining power imbalances between financial service providers, merchants and vendors, and consumers, as well as competition and consumer protection. Additionally, the Committee considers international examples and the adequacy of Australian regulation and legislation in this area.</p>	<p>Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services (PJCCFS), ‘Mobile payment and digital wallet financial services’.</p>
31 March 2021	<p>Attorneys-General agree to implement the Model Defamation Amendment Provisions 2020</p> <p>Agreement is also given for a Stage 2 Review of the Provisions. Stage 2 looks at the liability of internet intermediaries for third-party content.</p>	<p>NSW Government, Communities and Justice, ‘Review of Model Defamation Provisions’.</p>
28 April 2021	<p>Release of the ACCC’s March 2021 interim report for its digital platform services inquiry</p> <p>This stage of the inquiry examines the distribution of mobile apps to smartphone users, specifically, the Apple App Store and Google Play Store.</p>	<p>ACCC, Digital Platform Services Inquiry: Interim Report No. 2: App Marketplaces, (Canberra: ACCC, March 2021).</p>
23 June 2021	<p>The Online Safety Bill 2021 passes Parliament</p> <p>The <i>Online Safety Act (OSA)</i> fulfils a commitment made by the Coalition following the Briggs Review (see 3 October 2018), during the 2019 Federal Election campaign, to introduce an Online Safety Act, the functions of which would include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • basic online safety expectations (BOSE) for relevant digital services, with the eSafety Commissioner empowered to monitor compliance 	<p>Parliament of Australia, Online Safety Bill 2021 homepage. Explanatory Memorandum, Online Safety Bill 2021.</p>

Milestones	Details	Source document
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an online content scheme for removing specific material • bringing providers of app distribution services and internet search engine services clearly into the remit of the new online content scheme • a complaints-based removal notice scheme for cyber-abuse perpetrated against an Australian adult • reducing the timeframe for responding to a removal notice from the eSafety Commissioner from 48 to 24 hours • empowering the eSafety Commissioner to require internet service providers to disable access to abhorrent violent content, for time-limited periods in crisis situations. 	
<p>8 September 2021</p>	<p>The Voller High Court decision is handed down</p> <p>In December 2020, a case had been brought to the High Court appealing a decision against 3 media companies which had published stories concerning a former Don Dale Youth Detention Centre inmate, Dylan Voller. These stories were shared on the companies’ Facebook pages, and the companies had subsequently been found liable for defamation based not on the media articles, but rather the reader comments published in response to those articles.</p> <p>On appeal, the High Court of Australia upholds the decision of the Supreme Court of New South Wales (Court of Appeal), establishing the responsibilities of publishers for third party comments posted on digital platform services.</p>	<p><i>Fairfax Media Publications v. Voller; Nationwide News v. Voller; Australian News Channel v. Voller</i> [2021] HCA 27.</p>
<p>28 October 2021</p>	<p>Release of the ACCC’s September 2021 interim report from its digital platform services inquiry</p>	<p>ACCC, Digital Platform Services Inquiry: Interim Report No. 3: Search Defaults and Choice</p>

Milestones	Details	Source document
	This stage of the inquiry examines the provision of web browsers and search services, including the effectiveness of choice screens and their roll-out in Europe.	Screens , (Canberra: ACCC, September 2021).
28 October 2021	<p>Release of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services’ report, <i>Mobile Payment and Digital Wallet Financial Services</i></p> <p>The report notes the importance of regulation and regulators, as well as legislation, in protecting consumers and ensuring competition. On the issue of Apple Pay – identified as the most contentious area – the inquiry does not call for immediate regulatory intervention, but welcomes ACCC inquiries into the issue.</p>	Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services, Mobile Payment and Digital Wallet Financial Services , (Canberra: Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services, October 2021).
1 December 2021	<p>A cyber-bullying inquiry is announced</p> <p>The inquiry is referred to the Select Committee on Social Media and Online Safety.</p>	Scott Morrison (Prime Minister), Paul Fletcher (Minister for Communications, Urban Infrastructure, Cities and the Arts of Australia) and David Coleman (Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention), ‘ Parliamentary Committee to put Big Tech Under the Microscope ’, media release, 1 December 2021. House of Representatives Select Committee on Social Media and Online Safety, Inquiry into Social Media and Online Safety .
1 December 2021	<p>Release of an exposure draft of the Social Media (Anti-Trolling) Bill 2021</p> <p>Although introduced as ‘anti-trolling’ regulation, the Bill is predominantly</p>	Attorney-General’s Department, Social Media (Anti-Trolling) Bill , Exposure Draft.

Milestones	Details	Source document
	<p>concerned with defamation and addressing the repercussions of the <i>Voller</i> case.</p> <p>See also 10 February 2022</p>	
9 December 2021	<p>The Senate Environment and Communications References Committee tables its report, <i>Media Diversity in Australia</i></p> <p>The report calls for a judicial inquiry, with the powers of a royal commission, to be established to inquire into media diversity, ownership and regulation.</p> <p>See also 11 November 2020.</p>	<p>Senate Environment and Communications References Committee, Media Diversity in Australia, (Canberra: Senate, 2021).</p>
15 December 2021	<p>Creation of an Online Safety Youth Advisory Council</p> <p>The Council will comprise of up to 20 young Australians aged 13–24 years. Efforts by the Council include an open letter to ‘Big Tech’ in February 2023, calling for platforms to better protect young people from harassment and abuse inflicted through online services.</p>	<p>Scott Morrison (Prime Minister), Paul Fletcher (Minister for Communications, Urban Infrastructure, Cities and the Arts) and Luke Howarth (Assistant Minister for Youth and Employment Services), ‘A Voice for Young People on Online Safety’, media release, 15 December 2021.</p>
2022		
23 January 2022	<p>Commencement of the <i>Online Safety Act 2021</i></p> <p>See 23 July 2021 for detail.</p>	<p>Online Safety Act 2021.</p>
10 February 2022	<p>The Social Media (Anti-Trolling) Bill 2022 is introduced to the House of Representatives</p> <p>The Government does not pursue the Bill’s passage in the final sitting weeks before the prorogation of Parliament in April 2022, and the Bill lapses.</p>	<p>Social Media (Anti-Trolling) Bill 2022.</p> <p>Paul Fletcher, Second Reading Speech: Social Media (Anti-Trolling) Bill 2022, House of Representatives, <i>Debates</i>, 10 February 2022, 310.</p>

Milestones	Details	Source document
11 March 2022	<p>The Digital Platform Regulators Forum (DP-Reg) is announced</p> <p>DP-REG is comprised of the eSafety Commissioner, the ACMA, the ACCC and the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC). The Forum is designed to address the fragmented approach to online regulation, by bringing together key organisations to share information and ideas, but is not a decision-making body.</p>	<p>eSafety Commissioner, ‘Digital Regulators Unite to Help Reign in Market Power of Big Tech’, media release, 11 March 2022.</p> <p>ACMA, ‘Digital Platform Regulators Forum (DP-REG) Terms of Reference’.</p>
15 March 2022	<p>The report of the Inquiry into Social Media and Online Safety is tabled</p> <p>The Committee makes 26 recommendations which predominantly call for the strengthening and extension of existing bodies and their functions, as well as identifying the need for greater transparency and reporting from social media companies.</p>	<p>Select Committee on Social Media and Online Safety, Final Report, (Canberra: Select Committee on Social Media and Online Safety, 2022).</p>
21 March 2022	<p>The ACMA report on the industry code on disinformation and misinformation is released by the Government</p> <p>The ACMA makes 5 recommendations (to which the Government agrees) including the continuation of the ACMA’s role as overseer of industry compliance with the Code, greater investigative powers and enforcement capabilities, and the establishment of a Misinformation and Disinformation Action Group.</p> <p>The Government announces that it will legislate new powers for the ACMA along the lines of the recommendations in the second half of the year, however legislation addressing disinformation and misinformation is not passed during the term of the Coalition Government.</p>	<p>ACMA, A Report to Government on the Adequacy of Digital Platforms’ Disinformation and News Quality Measures, (Canberra: ACMA, 2021).</p> <p>ACMA, ‘Release of ACMA’s Disinformation Report’, media release, 21 March 2022.</p> <p>Paul Fletcher (Minister for Communication, Urban Infrastructure, Cities and the Arts of Australia), ‘New Disinformation Laws’, media release, 21 March 2022.</p>
31 March 2022	<p>Release of the ACCC’s March 2022 interim report for its digital platform services inquiry</p>	<p>ACCC, Digital Platform Services Inquiry: Interim Report No. 4: General</p>

Milestones	Details	Source document
	This stage of the inquiry examines consumer issues related to online retail marketplaces.	Online Retail Marketplaces , (Canberra: ACCC, 2022).
22 September 2022	Optus customers’ personal information is compromised following a data hack For response to the hack see 6 October 2022.	Australian Securities and Investment Commission, ‘ Guidance for consumers impacted by the Optus data breach ’, 4 October 2022.
26 September 2022	An inquiry into the influence of international digital platforms is referred by the Senate to the Economics References Committee The Committee is tasked with looking at the impact of ‘Big Tech’ on markets, user behaviour, and transparency of data collection and use. It is also asked to consider the adequacy of recent domestic and international attempts to regulate international digital platforms.	Senate Economics References Committee, Inquiry into the Influence of International Digital Platforms .
6 October 2022	Response to the Optus data breach Following the leak of passport, licence and other personal data onto the Dark Web, the Albanese Government announces amendments to the Telecommunications Regulations 2021 to enhance consumer protections through greater coordination and collaboration with financial institutions and governments.	Jim Chalmers (Treasurer) and Michelle Rowland (Minister for Communications), ‘ Changes to Protect Consumers following Optus Data Breach ’, media release, 6 October 2022.
11 October 2022	The OAIC launches an investigation into the handling of Optus customers’ data See 22 September 2022.	OAIC, ‘ OAIC Opens Investigation into Optus Over Data Breach ’, media release, 11 October 2022.
12 October 2022	Medibank reports to shareholders that a cyber-attack has occurred Confirmation that customers’ personal and medical information has been compromised is later confirmed on 26 October.	Emily Ritchie, ‘ Medibank Cyber Incident ’, <i>Medibank Newsroom</i> , 13 October 2022. Asha Barbaschow, ‘ Medibank Confirms Stolen Credentials were used to

Milestones	Details	Source document
		Access its Network ’, <i>Gizmodo</i> , 24 February 2023.
11 November 2022	<p>Release of the ACCC’s September 2022 interim report from its digital platform services inquiry</p> <p>This stage of the inquiry examines issues raised by previous inquiries and recommends a range of new measures related to competition and consumer protection. Among other things, the ACCC notes that, while Digital Platform Services provide certain benefits to consumers, the growth and expansion of these services has been accompanied by risks and harms that existing competition and consumer protection laws are not well placed to address. It also notes there is ineffective monitoring and enforcement in this sector.</p>	ACCC, Digital Platform Services Inquiry: Interim Report No. 5: Regulatory Reform , (Canberra: ACCC, 2022).
28 November 2022	<p>The Privacy Legislation Amendment (Enforcement and Other Measures) Bill 2022 passes Parliament</p> <p>At the time the Bill passed the House on 9 November, Attorney-General Dreyfus committed to the review of privacy laws being completed by the end of 2022, as well as an ‘overhaul’ of the <i>Privacy Act</i> in 2023.</p>	Mark Dreyfus (Attorney-General), ‘ Privacy Penalty Bill Passes House ’, media release, 9 November 2022.
1 December 2022	<p>Release of Treasury’s review into the first year of the News Media and Digital Platforms Mandatory Bargaining Code</p> <p>The review finds that the Code has been successful.</p>	Treasury, News Media and Digital Platforms Mandatory Bargaining Code: The Code’s First Year of Operation , (Canberra: Treasury, November 2022).
1 December 2022	<p>The OAIC launches an investigation into the handling of Medibank customers’ data</p> <p>See 12 October 2022.</p>	OAIC, ‘ OAIC Opens Investigation into Medibank Over Data Breach ’, media release, 1 December 2022.

Milestones	Details	Source document
13 December 2022	Commencement of the <i>Privacy Legislation Amendment (Enforcement and Other Measures) Act 2022</i>	Privacy Legislation Amendment (Enforcement and Other Measures) Act 2022 .
20 December 2022	Release of a Treasury consultation paper in response to the Digital Platform Services inquiry Following the release of the ACCC's 5th interim report, Treasury releases a consultation paper on the need for, and design of, a new competition and consumer protection regulatory framework for digital platforms.	Treasury, Digital Platforms: Government Consultation on ACCC's Regulatory Reform Recommendations , (Canberra: Treasury, 2022).
2023		
16 February 2023	Release of the Privacy Act Review Report The report suggests changes to the regulatory framework, and clarifications around the nature of protected data and the application of the Act. Also addressed are the protections afforded by the Act, for example around notifiable data breaches, and the enforceability and oversight of the Act. See also 30 October 2020 and 28 September 2023.	Attorney-General's Department, Privacy Act Review Report 2022 , (Canberra: Australian Government, 2023).
28 April 2023	Release of the ACCC's March 2023 interim report from its digital platform services inquiry This stage of the inquiry examines competition and consumer issues related to social media platforms and their provision of social media services, looking both at scams and misleading or deceptive conduct.	ACCC, Digital Platform Services Inquiry: Interim Report 6: Report on Social Media Services , (Canberra: ACCC, 2023).

Milestones	Details	Source document
16 June 2023	<p>Five industry codes are registered by the eSafety Commissioner, to take effect on 16 December 2023</p> <p>Division 7 of the OSA requires ‘sections of the online industry’ to develop industry codes to protect users online. These codes must be registered by the eSafety Commissioner, who may, if a code is unacceptable, determine an industry standard applicable to that section.</p>	<p>eSafety Commissioner, ‘Industry codes and standards’ and ‘Register of industry codes and industry standards for online safety’.</p>
25 June 2023	<p>Consultation opens on an exposure draft of the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023</p> <p>The Bill would grant the ACMA new powers to register industry codes and create industry standards regarding misinformation. This measure is intended to strengthen and support the existing voluntary framework, established by DIGI.</p> <p>Consultation closed in August 2023.</p>	<p>Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts, ‘New ACMA powers to combat misinformation and disinformation’.</p>
31 August 2023	<p>The Government releases the eSafety Commissioner’s age verification roadmap which had been delivered to them in March 2023</p> <p>The development of the roadmap was in response to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs’ 2020 report, Protecting the age of innocence, which considered the need for age verification for access to online pornography and the methods through which such a system could be implemented. The roadmap describes ways in which the issues related to online pornography can be addressed through education with an emphasis on existing regulatory mechanisms, such as the OSA</p>	<p>Michelle Rowland (Minister for Communications), ‘Albanese Government Publishes eSafety’s Roadmap for Age Verification’, media release, 31 August 2023.</p> <p>eSafety Commissioner, Roadmap for Age Verification and Complementary Measures to Prevent and Mitigate Harms to Children From Online Pornography, (Canberra: eSafety Commissioner, 2023).</p>

Milestones	Details	Source document
	<p>and the BOSE. It does not call for legislation mandating the use of age assurance technologies, noting that these are still in their infancy. However, the roadmap does recommend trials of available technologies and the development of industry codes in accordance with the OSA.</p>	
September 2023	<p>X is fined for its failure to appropriately respond to a non-periodic reporting notice</p> <p>Under the OSA, social media services are required to provide non-periodic reporting on their compliance with the BOSE if requested by the Commissioner. A non-periodic reporting notice was given to Twitter (which later became X) in February 2023, requiring it to report on how the platform addresses the issue of online child sexual exploitation and abuse material and activity. Following an inadequate response, an infringement notice of \$610,500 is issued, which X has not paid.</p> <p>See also 21 December 2023.</p>	<p>eSafety Commissioner, ‘eSafety Initiates Civil Penalty Proceedings Against X Corp.’, media release, 21 December 2023.</p>
12 September 2023	<p>A 6th industry code is registered by the eSafety Commissioner, to come into effect on 12 March 2024</p> <p>A 6th code is registered, having been resubmitted by the internet search engine services group following requests that it consider recent advances in generative AI.</p>	<p>eSafety Commissioner, ‘Industry codes and standards’ and ‘Register of industry codes and industry standards for online safety’.</p>
28 September 2023	<p>The Government releases its response to the <i>Privacy Act Review Report</i></p> <p>The Government has agreed to 38 of the review’s 116 proposals. Among the key reforms agreed to is the introduction of a Children’s Online Privacy Code which would apply to online services that are likely to be accessed by children.</p> <p>Consultation on legislation and guidance</p>	<p>Attorney-General’s Department (AGD), Government Response: Privacy Act Review Report, (Canberra: AGD, 2023).</p>

Milestones	Details	Source document
	<p>material foreshadowed by the Government’s response is being undertaken by the Attorney-General’s Department.</p>	
<p>27 November 2023</p>	<p>X is withdrawn as a signatory from the Australian Code of Practice on Disinformation and Misinformation</p> <p>This is the result of a complaint regarding the closure of reporting channels during the Voice to Parliament Referendum campaign. Following consideration of the complaint by the Independent Complaints Sub-Committee and the failure of X to respond to the allegations in any way, it is decided that X will be withdrawn as a signatory to the Code, with no avenue for appeal.</p>	<p>DIGI, ‘Complaint by Reset Australia Against X (F.K.A Twitter) Upheld by Australian Code of Practice On Disinformation and Misinformation Independent Complaints Sub-Committee’, media release, 27 November 2023.</p>
<p>27 November 2023</p>	<p>Release of the ACCC’s September 2023 interim report from its digital platform services inquiry</p> <p>This stage of the inquiry examines further competition and consumer issues related to the growth of digital platform providers. One further interim report (outside the timeline of this chronology) was released on 21 May 2024. The final report is due in March 2025.</p>	<p>ACCC, Digital Platform Services Inquiry: Interim Report 7: Report on Expanding Ecosystems of Digital Platform Service Providers, (Canberra: ACCC, 2023).</p>
<p>29 November 2023</p>	<p>The Communications Legislation Amendment (Prominence and Anti-siphoning) Bill 2023 is introduced to the House of Representatives</p> <p>A prominence framework would require manufacturers of smart televisions, and television accessories primarily used for streaming media, to program devices so that free-to-air service providers’ broadcasts and broadcasting video on demand services are available on devices.</p> <p>Schedule 2 of this Bill amends the <i>BSA</i> to repeal and replace the current anti-</p>	<p>Communications Legislation Amendment (Prominence and Anti-siphoning) Bill 2023.</p>

Milestones	Details	Source document
	<p>siphoning scheme (the scheme), which prevents subscription television services from purchasing the broadcast rights of designated events (such as the Olympics) until a free-to-air broadcaster holds broadcasting rights, or the event is de-listed. The proposed ‘modernised’ scheme would address the increased use of streaming services by extending acquisition restrictions to ‘media content services’.</p> <p>The Bill is ultimately passed by Parliament in July 2024.</p>	
30 November 2023	<p>The inquiry into the influence of international digital platforms reports</p> <p>See 26 September 2022.</p>	<p>Senate Economics References Committee, Influence of International Digital Platforms, (Canberra: Senate, 2023).</p>
21 December 2023	<p>Consultation on 2 industry standards to replace industry codes closes</p> <p>Two industry-drafted codes covering relevant electronic services and designated internet services were previously submitted to the eSafety Commissioner for registration; however, they were rejected on the grounds that they did not contain appropriate safeguards for users in Australia. Consequently, the Commissioner may determine standards for these sections.</p>	<p>eSafety Commissioner, ‘Industry standards – public consultation’.</p>
21 December 2023	<p>eSafety Commissioner commences a civil proceeding in the Federal Court of Australia against X Corp.</p> <p>The proceedings relate to X’s failure to pay a fine issued following its inadequate response to a non-periodic reporting notice.</p> <p>See also September 2023.</p>	<p>eSafety Commissioner, ‘eSafety Initiates Civil Penalty Proceedings Against X Corp.’, media release, 21 December 2023.</p>

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