

Stop and Consider campaign

2019 federal election



For the 2019 federal election, the Australian Electoral Commission ran a public information campaign branded with the tagline 'Stop and Consider'.

The campaign was the first of its kind run by the AEC and encouraged voters to check the source of electoral communication they saw, heard or read to avoid being misled by disinformation.



Electoral communication - the AEC's role

There are no provisions in the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* relating to truth in electoral communication and, as such, the AEC has no legislative power in this regard.

Australian electoral legislation defines "electoral matter" and requires any material that falls under the definition to be appropriately authorised. The intent of the legislation is to provide clarity regarding the source of electoral communication. The scope of the AEC's role with regard to electoral communication is therefore firmly centred on the requirement for an appropriate authorisation.

Electoral disinformation - concerns

While conscious of the limit to laws regarding truth in electoral communication, the AEC - as the independent body entrusted with conducting federal elections - has a significant interest in the effect of electoral disinformation on the continued trust in the integrity of federal election processes and results.

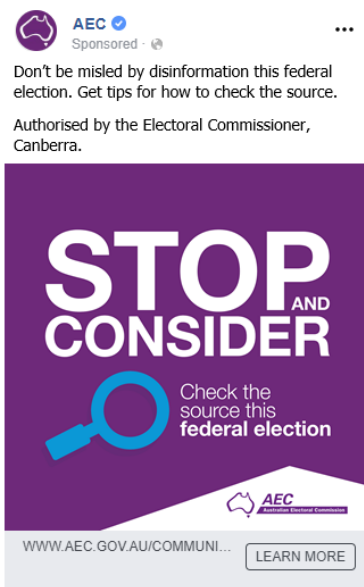
Electoral disinformation has always existed. However, the growth of digital platforms - particularly social media - and the changing way in which people use these channels means disinformation is now often disseminated easily, to a huge number of people and in an extremely short period.

Evolving campaigning tactics in democracies around the world has seen social media become a much more prominent part of the electoral integrity conversation. In recent Australian federal elections, there has also been an increased awareness among Australians of the potential for electoral interference with coverage of election campaigning tactics increasing.

The Stop and Consider campaign was implemented in response to this growing global concern about threats to electoral integrity.

The campaign

The AEC-branded advertising campaign ran during the 2019 federal election period (from 15 April to 18 May 2019) on the social media channels of Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.



... Social media advertising was supported by online search advertising, dedicated content on the AEC website, proactive mainstream and ethnic media activities, and stakeholder engagement to promote information (fact sheets and media releases) available in 29 languages.

Following the drafting and qualitative testing of a number of different concepts and taglines, the AEC settled on “Stop and Consider: check the source this election” as the single static creative (see left).

The creative reflected a focus on brand recognition, trust and simplicity of messaging. The campaign webpage had the same branding applied as what appeared in the promoted social media post.

A small series of carefully selected media opportunities served as an effective means to set the groundwork for media engagement on the topic of electoral disinformation and gauge the tone of opinion.

Results

The campaign was geared towards increasing visibility of its key messages among the voting community, and this was successfully achieved through the delivery of more than 56 million social media impressions and more than 100,000 clicks to AEC website material.

Outreach activities also yielded spread of key messages through positive media coverage and more than 1,700 downloads of translated fact sheets.



Image: Screen shot of a Nine News segment on the campaign

Further to this, independent market reach undertaken showed that the Stop and Consider campaign was generally well received; with two in five (40%) of those recognising the campaign claiming they would take action on account of seeing it.