Misinformation and Disinformation Leading up to The Voice Referendum

What is Misinformation, Disinformation or 'Fake News'?

- Misinformation is false or inaccurate information

- Disinformation or 'fake news' is deliberately false information that is spread with the intent to deceive.

It is important for people to get facts on the Voice before the referendum so they can make an informed decision. Misinformation can increase fear and anger surrounding the referendum and increase division and lateral violence in community. Because of this, we must try to be aware of the biases behind our information sources.

More information about misinformation and disinformation can be found on the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) website, including an Electoral Integrity Assurance Taskforce Factsheet and an online Disinformation Register that covers common misinformation.

Legality of 'Telling Lies'

There will continue to be public misinformation and disinformation about the Voice throughout the campaign and leading up to the referendum.

Australia has laws banning businesses from engaging in misleading advertising about their products and services, but there are currently no equivalent federal laws, or NSW State laws, that apply to politics and political advertising.

The one exception is that it is unlawful to mislead voters about how to fill in the referendum ballot form. For example, an advertisement would be breaking the law if it advised people to tick a box on the ballot form (when in fact you need to write "yes" or "no").

Several media outlets including RMIT ABC Fact Check, AAP Fact Check and AFP Fact Check have provided articles on how to fact-check claims, including the Voice.

Referendum Pamphlet

- Every home in Australia will be sent a paper brochure containing two 2,000-word essays about the proposed constitutional changes – one from the 'Yes' Campaign, and one from the 'No' Campaign.

- It will contain essays for and against the constitutional alteration, written by politicians who voted for or against the bill in parliament. The cases are not factchecked. The brochure will include opinions.

- It will also contain factual information about the proposed constitutional change.

- The AEC will translate the pamphlet into more than 35 culturally and linguistically diverse languages, plus 20 Indigenous languages. For some Indigenous languages which are oral-only, the AEC is investigating other ways of publishing the pamphlet material, including audio recordings.

Why Does the Pamphlet Exist?

In the time before digital media, the pamphlet was designed to inform voters about complicated changes to the Constitution.

Ways to Spot Misinformation

Questions to ask yourself when sourcing information about the Voice:

1. Did the post spark anger, disgust or fear?
2. Did it make you feel good?
3. Is it hard to believe?
4. Did it confirm what you already thought?
5. What's the source?
6. Who said it?
7. Have you double-checked the 'facts'?

Keeping Well

There is a lot of attention and media and racist discourse around the referendum. It does not matter where you sit on the side of the debate, looking after yourself is most important.

Concerns have been raised by community, leaders, organisations and mental health services across the country about the effect the negative public debate surrounding the Voice to Parliament is having on us.

There are several different supports available to all mob that you can access at any time:

- 13Yarn: Call 13YARN (13 92 76) for 24/7 Crisis support

- WellMob: WellMob Healing our way

- Yarn Safe: Yarn Safe Mental Health for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders

- iBobbly: iBobbly app for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders

More Information

For more information about The Voice to Parliament, including NSWALC's principles in relation to the Voice, please visit our website.