INTERNATIONAL DIGITAL POLICY OBSERVATORY (IDPO)

REPORT December 2024

THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY — UNSW SYDNEY — UTS — aiia australian information industry association

IDPO Report 2024

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Executive Summary

The International Digital Policy Observatory (IDPO) is a publicly accessible database that tracks developments in digital, internet, and emerging technology regulation across multiple countries. The IDPO is led by Professor Terry Flew with a team of interdisciplinary researchers from the University of Sydney, UNSW, and UTS, and is funded by a 2023 Australian Research Council Linkage Infrastructure, Equipment and Facilities (LIEF) grant. The IDPO has received over 5,000 visits to the website since its launch in April and has published four e-newsletters.

The IDPO has also been involved in numerous policy submissions, including submissions to the Joint Select Committee on Social Media and Australian Society, the ACCC Digital Platform Services Inquiry, and the Safe and Responsible AI in Australia inquiry.

Since its launch in April 2024, the IDPO has quickly established itself as a valuable resource for policymakers, industry stakeholders, and civil society advocacy groups who are seeking to better understand and respond to international trends in the tech policy arena.

Introduction

The IDPO is a publicly accessible, real-time database with enhanced analytical tools that tracks developments in digital, internet, and emerging technology regulation across multiple countries. The purpose of this infrastructure is to shape innovative policy search and analysis techniques concerning multifaceted regulation, policies, and governance across our digital society and economy.

Through the development of such an enabling infrastructure, policy makers, industry stakeholders, and civil society advocacy groups will be able to draw upon a 'common pool' resource to better understand and respond to international trends in the tech policy arena. This International Digital Policy Observatory (IDPO) seeks to place Australia at the forefront of policy and regulatory debates globally.

This project is funded by a 2023 Australian Research Council Linkage Infrastructure, Equipment and Facilities (LIEF) grant which provides funding for research infrastructure, equipment, and facilities.

The IDPO is led by Professor Terry Flew with a team of interdisciplinary researchers from University of Sydney, UNSW, and UTS. A key project partner is the Australian Information Industry Association. This multi-university consortia and industry partnership has built the IDPO to place Australia at the forefront of regulatory best practice in the digital economy.

Project Partners

Australian Research Council

The University of Sydney

University of NSW (UNSW)

University of Technology Sydney (UTS)

Australian Information Industry Association (AIIA)

Highlights

- IDPO Website
    - The team focused on the preliminary project development, website design, implementation, and testing from January through to April.
    - The IDPO was officially launched by The Hon Justice Melissa Perry at the law firm Gilbert + Tobin on 24 April 2024
    - Further website useability testing was undertaken from October and November
    - Enhancements are scheduled to be implemented December 2024 - January 2025
    - Datasets for Misinformation and AI Regulation were launched.
    - Cybersecurity and Online Content Regulation datasets are currently in progress for release in 2025
    - Four e-newsletters were published and distributed to industry and partner subscribers
    - Since launch in April the IDPO has received over 5000 visits to the website
- A new IDPO logo was designed and implemented in October 2024
- An A4 IDPO Introduction flyer was produced and distributed to over 250 Federal and NSW Members of Australian Parliament
- Wendy Lam was engaged through UTS to undertake data collection updates for misinformation and disinformation policy in the European Union (and EU countries) and the United Kingdom
- Chris Zhao was engaged as an intern for 140 hours. Key outcomes of this internship resulted in user testing of the existing website along with proposed useability enhancements.

Publications

Flew, T. and Swist, T. (2024). *Social Media Regulation Futures: Learning from International Policy Mixes*, TechREG Chronicle 2, February, pp.1-8.

Flew, T. (2024). Epistemic Rights and Digital Communications Policies: Collective Rights and Digital Citizenship. In Minna Aslama Horowitz, Hannu Nieminen, Katja Lehtisaari, Alessandro D'Arma (Eds.), *Epistemic Rights in the Era of Digital Disruption*, (pp. 81-96). Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Flew, T. (2024). **The Return of the Regulatory State: Nation-States as Policy Actors in Digital Platform Governance**. In Claudia Padovani, Veronique Wavre, Arne Hintz, Gerard Goggin, Petros Iosifidis (Eds.), *Global Communication Governance at the Crossroads*, (pp. 161-178). Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Flew, T. (April 23, 2024). **Mediated trust, the internet and artificial intelligence: Ideas, interests, institutions and futures**. *Policy and Internet*, 16(2), 443-457.

Flew, T., Fitzgerald, S., McTernan, C., Nicholls, R. (September 6, 2024). **Communications, media and internet concentration in Australia, 2019-2022**, (pp. 1 - 49). Sydney, Australia: Global Media and Internet Concentration Project.

Policy Submissions

Submission to the Joint Select Committee on Social Media and Australian Society (2024) Flew, T., Humphry, J., Gray, J., Hutchinson, J., Page Jeffery, C., Johnson, M., McKee, A., Nicholls, R.

ACCC Digital Platform Services Inquiry Response to Final Report: Issues Paper (2024) Professor Terry Flew, Dr Joanne Gray, Dr Rob Nicholls.

Safe and Responsible AI in Australia: Submission Paper (2023) Terry Flew, Chris Chesher, Jonathon Hutchinson, Milica Stilinovic, Francesco Bailo, Joanne Gray, Catharine Lumby, Agata Stepnik, Gerard Goggin, Justine Humphry.

Engagement

- Meeting with NSW Government Deputy Secretary and Government Chief Information and Digital Officer. (Prof Terry Flew, Dr Rob Nicholls, Dr Joanne Gray, data scientist Justin Miller, and Ellissa Nolan, Exec Officer Centre for AI, Trust and Governance), 5 December 2024
- Good Internet Policy Conference – IDPO presentation by Dr Rob Nicholls and Justin Miller, 4 October 2024
- Presentation of IDPO website to the law firm Webb Henderson by Dr Rob Nicholls and data scientist Justin Miller on 21 October 2024
- Meeting with Dr Trish Lavery, Project Director, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, 15 August 2024.

- Meeting with ANU National Security College, 5 September 2024.

International Visitors

- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade - Indonesian delegation. IDPO introduction by Dr Timothy Koskie, 21 October 2024
- Delegation from Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Institute for Journalism and Communication, 5 July 2024.

Interviews and Media

Nicholls, R., McTernan, C., Fitzgerald, S., Flew, T. (September 17, 2024). *Google is worth more in Australia than major news outlets. Here's how it could better fund journalism*. The Conversation.

Nicholls, R., Flew, T. (May 16, 2024). *Investigating social media harm is a good idea, but parliament is about to see how complicated it is to* fix. The Conversation.

Flew, T. (April 30, 2024). *Where to next in Australia's battle with Elon Musk and X? 360*.

Nicholls, R. (May 1, 2024). *Facebook won't keep paying Australian media outlets for their content. Are we about to get another news ban?* The Conversation.

Nicholls, R., McTernan, C., Fitzgerald, S., Flew, T. (September 17, 2024). *Google is worth more in Australia than major news outlets. Here's how it could better fund journalism.* The Conversation.

Nicholls, R. (September 12, 2024). *How well is the federal government regulating social media in Australia?* The Conversation.

Nicholls, R., Flew, T. (May 16, 2024). *Investigating social media harm is a good idea, but parliament is about to see how complicated it is to fix.* The Conversation.

Koskie, T. (October 30, 2024) *How AI could influence US voters* 360info.

Flew, T. (April 22, 2024). *Fake news and misinformation: Sydney universities launch new database* The University of Sydney.

Flew, T. **A news levy on big tech could save Australian journalism.** 360info, (October 10, 2024).

Next Steps

- Secure new sources of funding (ARC and non-ARC) in 2025
- Presentation to the NSW Government Shaping Futures team in February 2025
- Secure additional internal funding through other sources – Social Impact
- Launch three new datasets on IDPO Website (Online Content Regulation, Digital Identity, and Cybersecurity)
- Website useability enhancements launch February 2025.

IDPO

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