

ACCC September 2022 Digital Platform Services Inquiry

Report on Regulatory Reform – Key Findings



Digital platforms offer valuable services for consumers and businesses

Consumers rely on these services to connect with others, to find and buy products, to seek and sort vast quantities of information and to access entertainment. Many Australian businesses, particularly small businesses, depend on these services to reach consumers in an effective and low-cost way.



The ACCC has concerns about significant consumer and competition harms

The ACCC has identified a range of consumer and competition issues with digital platforms. These include scams, harmful apps and fake reviews, inadequate dispute resolution, increased market concentration and instances of anti-competitive conduct. Current competition and consumer laws are not well-suited to addressing these issues.



Stronger consumer protections are needed for all digital platforms

Stronger safeguards are needed for consumers and small businesses to promote trust and confidence and minimise harm. The ACCC recommends:

- targeted measures to protect consumer and business users of digital platforms against scams, harmful apps and fake reviews
- minimum standards for digital platform dispute resolution processes and the ability for users to escalate complaints to an independent ombuds.

The ACCC continues to support an economy-wide ban on unfair practices to address certain business practices that occur online and offline, including those that involve digital platforms.

These consumer protections should be given effect in legislation and apply to all digital platforms that supply search, social media, online private messaging, app stores, online retail marketplaces and digital advertising.



We need targeted competition measures for certain digital platforms

The ACCC recommends legally binding codes of conduct, applied service-by-service, which require certain Designated Digital Platforms to address issues including anti-competitive self-preferencing, tying and exclusive pre-installation agreements.

New obligations in these codes could also aim to improve consumer switching, information transparency and interoperability between different services, and to better protect business users of digital platform services.



Reforms are happening globally

Similar reforms are already happening overseas. These include the European Union's Digital Services Act and Digital Markets Act, the United Kingdom's proposed pro-competition regime for digital markets, and Japan's Act on Improving Transparency and Fairness of Digital Platforms.
