Submission from the Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB) Australia

Response to the ACCC Digital Ad Tech Inquiry Issues Paper

April 2020

IAB AUSTRALIA INFORMATION FOR THE ACCC AD TECH INQUIRY ISSUES PAPER

Background

About INTERACTIVE ADVERTISING BUREAU (IAB) AUSTRALIA

The Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB) Australia Limited www.iabaustralia.com.au is the peak trade association for digital advertising in Australia. IAB Australia was established in 2005, incorporated in 2010 and is one of over 47 IAB offices globally. Locally there is a financial member base of approximately 150 organisations that includes media owners, platforms, media agencies, advertising technology companies as well marketers. The board has representation from the following organisations; Google, Guardian News & Media, Facebook, News Corp Australia, Nine, REA Group, Seven West Media, Simpson Solicitors, Verizon Media.

IAB Australia's charter is to grow sustainable and diverse investment in digital advertising in Australia by supporting the industry in the following ways:

- Advocacy
- Research & resources
- Education and community
- Standards & guidelines

The Charter includes a focus on standards that promote trust, steps to reduce friction in the ad supply chain; and ultimately improve ad experiences for consumers, advertisers and publishers.

General

The IAB recognises the challenges that the complexity of the digital advertising supply chain presents as outlined in the **ACCC Advertising Services Inquiry - Ad Tech Issues Paper**. The IAB, locally and globally, has developed a wide range of standards, technical guidelines and best practice advice for publishers, agencies, ad tech companies and marketers to help aid both the understanding of the role of ad tech and ways that the digital value chain can operate more efficiently and in a more transparent manner. Key IAB's priorities, which contribute to this aim, are to educate the market and simplify digital advertising for advertisers.

Following is a list of local and global initiatives, standards and education pieces that can aid transparency for the digital supply chain. In order to ensure that any industry standards can work effectively, wide scale adoption is necessary, and persistent ongoing awareness, support and education of all sides of the advertising ecosystem (media owners, platforms, ad-tech, agencies and advertisers) is essential.

Industry Tools, Standards and Initiatives that Can Aid Transparency

Best Practice & Educational Pieces

Australian Digital Advertising Practices – industry practices for key areas of digital trading as agreed by the IAB, MFA & AANA. Version 1 released in July 2018. Version 2 will be released shortly along with an education program for advertisers, agencies, publishers and ad tech.

The Australian Digital Advertising Practices have been created specifically for advertisers by a cross-industry team of advertisers, media agencies and digital publishers and subject matter experts. Endorsed by the Australian Association of National Advertisers (AANA), Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB Australia) and Media Federation of Australia (MFA), the Practices seek to:

- Educate: providing a common understanding of the digital advertising ecosystem

- Encourage shared responsibility: ensuring advertisers, agencies, publishers and digital platform have shared insights and responsibilities for digital spends and outcomes

- Enable trust and confidence: building confidence and trust in digital advertising

The updated version of the Australian Digital Advertising Practices will cover the following five pillars:

- *Digital Value Chain*
- *Viewability*
- *Ad Fraud and Brand Safety*
- *Data Governance*
- *Consumer Privacy*

Each module includes a checklist of questions and areas to consider so that informed decisions can be made. The modules also include links to specialist resources to provide access to deeper knowledge and further detail.

The Practices do not solve all issues. Rather, they act as a starting point for advertisers, agencies and digital platforms to resolve how they will operate together. They are an important first step in building trust and instilling confidence in the digital advertising value chain.

Header Bidding & Auction Mechanics Handbook (Feb 2019)

A handbook detailing bidding mechanics and a concise set of best practices. This guide provides the market with an in-depth look at header bidding, the resultant impacts and a guide to some of the nuances related to auction mechanics.

https://www.iabaustralia.com.au/research-and-resources/research-resources/item/12-research-and-resource/2667-auction-mechanics-dec-2018

IAB Australia Technology Purchase Guidelines (Mar 2018)

Advertising Technology Purchase Guidelines were developed to help purchasers of advertising technology maximise their investment in five core pieces of technology critical to effective advertising. The Advertising Technology Purchase Guidelines, developed by the IAB Executive Technology Council, examine supply side platforms; data management platforms, demand side platforms, verification tools and ad servers; providing simplified top considerations against each area. It aims to empower purchasers of technology by providing them with the key information about each key area of technology and equipping them with questions designed to hold sellers to a high standard of account.

https://www.iabaustralia.com.au/research-and-resources/research-resources/item/12-research-andresource/2447-advertising-technology-purchase-guidelines-mar-2018

IAB Australia Programmatic Playbook (2017)

An update to the 2015 playbook revisiting and updating on the key operational and technical requirements. Recently we've moved to keeping the 'Header Bidding & Auction Mechanics Handbook' approach as this is now more pertinent, but much of the content remains relevant.

Technical Standards

Most of the technical standards released by the IAB are developed by IAB Tech Lab, a non-profit consortium that engages a member community globally to develop foundational technology and standards (https://iabtechlab.com/standards/) that enable growth and trust in the digital media ecosystem. Tech Lab works with the industry at large to develop guidelines, write specs, develop technology and provide services in an effort to bring alignment, and standardisation to help the industry grow. Tech Lab's broad portfolio of standards are focused across four key themes:

- Brand safety and ad fraud
- Identity, data, and consumer privacy
- Ad experiences and measurement
- Programmatic effectiveness

OpenRTB standards

The RTB (real-time bidding) protocols related to the automated buying and selling of ads are released, managed and overseen by IAB Tech Lab and are regularly reviewed, improved upon and updated. Currently these OpenRTB standards are on version 2.5, with version 3.0 recently released for adoption. We can expect full adoption of v3.0 sometime in 2020, with subsequent significant improvements in both efficiency and transparency as a result.

Advertisers and agencies can use the combined data generated via these standards to understand what they're buying and empower them to be more confident and comfortable in their purchases. These specifications play complementary roles and extend transparency for buyers throughout the entire supply chain, including SSPs and ad exchanges.

For the future, and through the adoption of the next round of protocols (v3, adoption expected in 2020), the authentication process standard will be completed and is called **ads.cert**. This will be a significant step forwards as it works by using cryptographically signed bid requests to offer authenticated paths back to the inventory source. This will guarantee that the bid requests are certified

and haven't been modified, thereby dramatically reducing the risk of fraudulent ads appearing in programmatic buying.

https://www.iabaustralia.com.au/research-and-resources/research-resources/item/2803-open-rtb-update-iab-tech-lab-sept-2019

A list of links and short descriptions about some other critical technical standards are below:

- **ads.txt and app-ads.txt -** a simple, flexible and secure method that publishers and authorised partners can use to publicly declare the companies they have sanctioned to sell their digital inventory and aid the reduction of fraud. https://www.iabaustralia.com.au/ads-txt-info

- **Open Measurement Software Development Kit (OM SDK) -** offers common code and libraries for facilitating third-party access to measurement data. Sites and apps that integrate the OM SDK can send measurement signals to an API, the Open Measurement Interface Definition (OMID). https://www.iabaustralia.com.au/research-and-resources/research-resources/item/12-research-and-resource/2569-open-measurement-sdk

- **The Guidelines for Identifier for Advertising (IFA) on OTT platforms -** are recommendations on how to maintain a high-quality advertising experience within over-the-top television (OTT) environments. https://iabtechlab.com/standards/guidelines-identifier-advertising-over-the-top-platforms/

- **sellers.json** - provides a mechanism to enable buyers to discover who the entities are that are either direct sellers of, or intermediaries in, the selling of digital advertising. https://iabtechlab.com/sellers-json/

- **GDPR Transparency and Consent Framework** – are technical specifications for the IAB Europe Transparency & Consent Framework. These specifications are maintained by a working group of the IAB Tech Lab, in a collaboration with IAB Europe, which leverages IAB Europe's policy and legal expertise and IAB Tech Lab's technical expertise. A framework has also been developed to provide a CCPA California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA) compliant technical mechanism for using ad-targeting data or first-party publisher data in programmatic advertising. https://iabtechlab.com/standards/gdpr-transparency-and-consent-framework/

- **VAST** - a Video Ad Serving Template for structuring all ad tags that serve video and audio ads to media players. https://www.iabaustralia.com.au/research-and-resources/research-resources/item/2804-vast-4-x-omid-simid-iab-tech-lab-updates-august-2019

The Role & Use of Data

For the local market the IAB Data Council is currently compiling a Data Primer to provide the market with a simple explanation of the types of data used in market, common data usages and suggested best practises. This Primer will be released in late May 2020.

Data Transparency Standards and Data Label

IAB Australia is supporting the global **Data Label** project, the structure of which is based upon global Data Transparency Standards released by IAB Tech Lab and managed via www.datalabel.org. The initiative provides a simple, consistent and easily digested set of standards allowing sellers to clearly specify where the data comes from, how it was collected and organised, its recency, if it was manipulated or modelled and what rules were used in establishing the data within any particular audience segments. The IAB has just released updated information on the local initiative and ways for organisations to get involved.

The benefits of the Data Label are:

- Help educate the industry around what is contained within audience data segments, how they have been constructed and how they are being updated.

- Provide consistency and transparency in terms of the product constituents and naming conventions.

- Enable a minimum level of quality assurance in terms of what is being bought and/or utilised.

  Associated with this standard is the IAB Tech Lab's compliance program - which is available to any organisation that offers data, whether syndicated separately or bundled alongside with media, and is also open to adoption by data marketplaces where data is bought and sold. Those organisations that

complete the compliance program affirm their full commitment to the highest standards of audience data transparency.

Listed above are the most relevant current papers and standards in relation to the ad tech and data transparency topics raised in the issues paper. More local initiatives can be found on the IAB website and global technical initiatives on IAB Tech Lab website.

IAB Australia supports a healthy, transparent and sustainable digital advertising ecosystem and looks forward to helping inform and work with the Digital Platforms Branch in relation to the Digital Advertising Services Inquiry.

Please contact Gai Le Roy, CEO of IAB Australia, on any aspect of this submission.

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