

National [Media bargaining code](#)

'Deeply unethical': Royal Children's Hospital, Neighbourhood Watch Victoria hit by Facebook ban

By [Liam Mannix](#)

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Organisations including Melbourne's Royal Children's Hospital, Neighbourhood Watch Victoria and Eating Disorders Victoria have seen their Facebook posts removed as the tech giant's news ban causes chaos across the state.

Facebook's unexpected decision to [ban publishers and users from sharing or viewing any news articles on its platform](#), in response to the Morrison government's proposed media bargaining laws, has hit a range of non-news sites as collateral damage.

Facebook has announced it will restrict people and publishers in Australia sharing or viewing Australian and international news content.

Meanwhile, the Australian Liberty Alliance, which appears to be affiliated with Rebel News Australia and posts content critical of Victoria's lockdown, appears unaffected – despite describing itself as a 'news and media website'.

The group's Facebook page and recent posts – including one on Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews' press conference on Wednesday – are still visible, and it made several posts on Thursday morning, including several Rebel News stories.

Bambi Gordon, CEO of Neighbourhood Watch Victoria, woke on Thursday morning to discover all her organisation's posts vanished.

"It went down pretty much first thing. No warning from Facebook. We certainly did not believe, as we are not a media organisation, it would have anything to do with us," she said.



Bambi Gordon, CEO of Neighbourhood Watch Victoria, woke up to discover all her organisation's posts vanished.

"We have lost the main Facebook page for Neighbourhood Watch Victoria.

"We have noticed a lot of our smaller groups, associated with a suburb or town, are still there. But we're not sure they are going to remain. And we cannot get any information from Facebook so we can start to plan for what the new social media landscape is going to look like.



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FB statement now: Government Pages should not be impacted... As the law does not provide clear guidance on the definition of news content, we have taken a broad definition in order to respect the law as drafted. However, we will reverse any Pages that

are inadvertently impacted

10:46 AM · Feb 18, 2021



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“We have got approximately 130,000 followers across all our Facebook pages. We use it to connect neighbours, connect communities, make sure people can talk to each other. That’s not going to be easily or quickly replaced.

“It definitely is a safety and crime prevention issue.”

Belinda Caldwell, CEO of Eating Disorders Victoria, said she had “no idea why we were caught up in the whole thing. Some algorithm is glitching, I guess.”

“This is a key means of communication for our community. We had lots of stuff on it. We post links to resources, let people know what’s happening. Facebook is absolutely one of our key social media platforms.”

[Melbourne’s Royal Children’s Hospital](#) and St Vincent’s Hospital have been stripped of their content.

Facebook pages for the [Burnet Institute](#) and the [Medical Journal of Australia](#), as well as literary journals *Overland* and [Meanjin](#), all appear to be affected.

In an emailed statement, Burnet Director and CEO Professor Brendan Crabb said: “Any sudden change to quality health information flow at any time, but most especially in the midst of a health crisis, is deeply unethical and damaging.

“It should be met with the sustained contempt it deserves.”

The AFL’s Facebook page appears unaffected, but the AFL Women’s page has had its posts removed.

Victorian Health Minister Martin Foley [called on the federal government to urgently intervene](#) in Facebook’s news sharing ban and appealed to the social media giant to reinstate the flow of health-based news reports as soon as possible.



Melbourne's Royal Children's Hospital Facebook page has been stripped of content. GETTY IMAGES

“This is not a time for credible, reliable information to be taken away from the community,” he said.

“We're going to need those systems of engagements on all platforms particularly as we move into vaccinations.

“Anything that removes credible and reliable information sources in the midst of a global pandemic is beyond regrettable and needs to be fixed.

“This matter needs to be taken up by the federal government ... and needs to be resolved as soon as possible.”



Liam Mannix



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