

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR TRANSPARENCY OF ONLINE POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENTS

In exercise of the powers conferred by Section 48 of the Protection from Online Falsehoods and Manipulation Act 2019 (“the Act”), the POFMA Office in the Infocommunications Media Development Authority (“POFMA Office”), which has been appointed as the Competent Authority pursuant to Section 6(1) of the Act, hereby issues the Code of Practice for Transparency of Online Political Advertisements.

CITATION AND COMMENCEMENT

2 This Code of Practice for Transparency of Online Political Advertisements may be cited as the Political Advertisements Code and shall come into operation on 2 October 2019.

INTERPRETATION

3 For the purpose of this Political Advertisements Code, the following definitions shall apply:

- a. “political advertisement” means an advertisement or paid content that can reasonably be regarded as being directed towards a political end; and
- b. “towards a political end” means:
 - i. to promote the interests of a political party or other group of persons organised in Singapore for political objects;
 - ii. to influence, or to seek to influence, the outcome of an election to the office of President, a general election of Members of Parliament, a by-election of a Member of Parliament, or a referendum;
 - iii. to influence, or to seek to influence, public opinion on a matter which in Singapore is a matter of public interest or public controversy, with key examples being those relating to race or religion; or
 - iv. to bring about, or to seek to bring about, changes of the law in the whole or a part of Singapore, or to otherwise influence, or to seek to influence, the legislative process or outcome in Singapore.

APPLICATION AND PURPOSE

4 This Political Advertisements Code sets out the obligations that prescribed digital advertising intermediaries and internet intermediaries have to comply with to enhance transparency of online political advertisements. This Political Advertisements Code shall be read together with the Annex to the Political Advertisements Code.

DUE DILIGENCE MEASURES

5 Prescribed digital advertising intermediaries and internet intermediaries must put in place reasonable due diligence measures to enhance disclosure of information concerning any online political advertisement that is communicated in Singapore.

6 The due diligence measures stated in paragraph 5 above shall apply in respect of all online political advertisements targeted at end-users in Singapore, and must include the following:

For political advertisements pertaining to elections in Singapore,

- a. Verifying the eligibility of advertisers, including obtaining proof to indicate that they have complied with the legal requirements under the Parliamentary Elections Act and Presidential Elections Act.

For all political advertisements (including those pertaining to elections in Singapore),

- b. Ensuring that online political advertisements are accompanied with disclosure notices.
 - i. Disclosure notices must display the name(s) of the person(s) or organisation(s) that requested to place or paid for the advertisement.
 - ii. Disclosure notices shall be easily accessible.
- c. Maintaining and making available for viewing by the POFMA Office a record of all such online political advertisements, regardless of whether the advertisement has been removed by the person or organisation who requested or paid to place the advertisement. The contents of the record must include:
 - i. Digital copy of the advertisement;
 - ii. Name(s) of the person(s) or organisation(s) that requested to place or paid for the advertisement;
 - iii. The amount or range of amount that was paid for the advertisement;
 - iv. Description of the advertisement's intended target audience, or actual viewers reached (e.g. demographics of target audience or viewers);
 - v. The number or range of the number of views that the advertisement had received; and
 - vi. The date when the advertisement was first and last (if applicable) displayed.

The record must be in an accessible, machine-readable, format with search interface (e.g. stable API) requirements and be retained by prescribed digital advertising intermediaries and internet intermediaries for no less than four years after the date on which the advertisement was first displayed.

- d. Having in place reporting mechanisms for end-users to report online political advertisements that are undisclosed or miscategorised and acting on said reports as soon as practicable.
- e. Having in place Government reporting channels and acting on said reports immediately.
- f. Developing techniques to identify and flag out online political advertisements targeted at end-users in Singapore that are undisclosed, miscategorised or placed by unverified persons or organisations.
- g. For online political advertisements targeted at end-users in Singapore, having in place reporting mechanisms for end-users to escalate instances of suspected abuse of advertising tools by malicious actors.
- h. Promptly informing public authorities of suspected abuse of advertising tools by malicious actors.

ANNUAL REPORTS

7 Prescribed digital advertising intermediaries and internet intermediaries shall provide the POFMA Office with an annual report on the implementation of the above measures.

ANNEX TO CODE OF PRACTICE FOR TRANSPARENCY OF ONLINE POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENTS

In exercise of the powers conferred by Section 48 of the Protection from Online Falsehoods and Manipulation Act (“the Act”), the POFMA Office in the Information Media Development Authority (“POFMA Office”), which has been appointed as the Competent Authority pursuant to Section 6(1) of the Act, hereby issues this Annex to the Code of Practice for Transparency of Online Political Advertisements (“Political Advertisements Code”).

CITATION AND COMMENCEMENT

2 This Annex may be cited as the Annex to the Political Advertisements Code and shall come into operation on 2 October 2019.

INTERPRETATION

3 For the purposes of this Annex, the definitions in the Political Advertisements Code shall apply.

APPLICATION AND PURPOSE

4 This Annex sets out the obligations that prescribed digital advertising intermediaries and internet intermediaries are required to comply with to enhance transparency of online political advertisements. This Annex shall be read together with the Political Advertisements Code.

VERIFICATION OF ELIGIBILITY TO PLACE ELECTION ADVERTISEMENTS

5 In accordance with paragraph 6(a) of the Political Advertisements Code, prescribed digital advertising intermediaries and internet intermediaries are to undertake the following steps during election periods:

- i. Verify the advertiser’s identity and location; and
- ii. Remove advertisements in violation of the Parliamentary Elections Act or Presidential Elections Act when informed by the POFMA Office.