

Australia leader expects 'sensible outcome' to news pay plan

September 7 2020, by Rod McGuirk



Australia's Prime Minister Scott Morrison speaks during a press conference at Parliament House in Canberra, Monday, Sept. 7, 2020. Morrison has said he expected a "sensible outcome" to his government's plans to make digital platforms pay for journalism after Facebook threatened to block Australian publishers and individuals from sharing news stories. (Mick Tsikas/AAP Image via AP)

Australia's prime minister said Monday that he expected a "sensible outcome" to his government's plans to make digital platforms pay for journalism after Facebook threatened to block Australian publishers and individuals from sharing news stories.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison said he had discussed his proposed laws with "very senior-level executives" including Google's chief executive, Sundar Pichai, last week.

Facebook's managing director for Australia and New Zealand, Will Easton, warned last week that laws that would make the social network and Google compensate Australian media organizations could result in Facebook blocking Australian news content rather than pay for it.

The warning was seen by some as an attempt to dissuade other countries from similarly legislating to make the digital giants pay for the [news content](#) that they siphon from commercial media.

"I think people from these companies understand that when I say something, I mean it and that I intend to follow through with it," Morrison told reporters.

"Therefore I would encourage them, very strongly, to work constructively and cooperatively with the process that is underway," he said.

"I'm quite certain we'll come to a sensible outcome on this and it won't need coercion wherever it comes from. It's not something I respond very well to," he added.

Australia is drafting the final version of the legislation after a consultation period ended in late August.

If the U.S.-based platforms could not agree with Australian media businesses on pricing after three months, arbitrators would be appointed to make binding decisions.

Breaches of the law could attract penalties of up to 10% of a platform's annual turnover.

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