

Google bombards Australian search users as PR campaign intensifies

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US tech giant Google stepped up its public relations campaign against Australian regulation Friday, presenting all search users Down Under with a "proposal" to water down planned rules.

Australians searching for any term were presented with a pop-up setting out the company's opposition to proposed legislation that would force them to pay news companies for content.

Google and Facebook have vehemently opposed the proposed rules, which are designed to rebalance the relationship between long-struggling news companies and tech giants that dominate the online advertising market.

Under the [new laws](#), the firms would be required to compensate Australian media outlets—ranging from Rupert Murdoch's giant News Corp to public broadcaster ABC—for publishing snippets of their content in [search results](#) or news feed.

The rules are being closely watched around the world, as governments consider how to better

regulate online media companies that have become some of the biggest and most influential entities on Earth.

Google has deployed hardball tactics to try and gut the legislation, threatening to pull its search service from Australia altogether and carrying out an "experiment" that blocked Australian news sites from some users.

But Friday's action marked a new stage in the campaign, one focused on winning over [internet users](#) to Google's cause.

In a linked video, Mel Silva, managing director for Google Australia, warns the new rules would "break the way that search engines work" and threaten a "free and [open web](#)".

That view has been backed by World Wide Web inventor Tim Berners-Lee, who recently argued the new Australian law—due to come into force this year—is "unworkable" and would undermine a "fundamental principle" of the internet.

But Google's critics said Friday's pinned message only underscored the company's willingness to use its market dominance for its own advantage.

"Google AU: We're not a monopoly/don't participate in anti-competitive behaviour... Also Google AU: we will use our 95% search market share to undermine regulation we don't like," tweeted Jordan Guiao of the Australia Institute, a left-leaning think tank.

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