

14 February 2025

Director, Digital Competition Unit
Market Conduct and Digital Division
Treasury
Langton Cres
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Via email: digitalcompetition@treasury.gov.au

To whom it may concern,

Clubs Australia appreciates the opportunity to comment on the New Digital Competition Regime.

Clubs Australia represents over 5,000 licensed clubs that employ more than 140,000 people. Clubs are not-for-profit, member-owned organisations whose central activity is to provide sporting and recreation infrastructure to their members and the wider community.

Clubs Australia recognises the role digital platforms play in shaping the broader digital landscape. Clubs use digital platforms to support operations, including member and visitor sign-in, social media services and operating and booking systems and for transactions ranging from membership fees to event bookings and in-house purchases. Our submission focuses on the impact of these platforms on clubs, particularly in terms of fairness, competition, and consumer protections.

1. Ensuring Fair Competition for Clubs

Clubs, particularly those operating in regional areas, rely on digital platforms to engage with their members, promote community activities, and offer services. However, clubs have faced increasing challenges in maintaining a level playing field, with some digital platforms potentially favouring larger, international entities over clubs.

For example, digital advertising and social media platforms often impose fees that may be disproportionately burdensome for clubs, limiting their ability to communicate effectively with their audiences. The digital competition regime must ensure that clubs, particularly small ones, are not at a disadvantage compared to other businesses when it comes to digital platform access, data usage, and advertising costs.

2. Data Privacy and Consumer Protection

Clubs Australia acknowledges the significant concern around data privacy in the digital economy, particularly with the use of digital platforms. Ensuring that personal data is protected while also allowing clubs to use data responsibly to enhance member experiences is crucial.



We support the Australian Government's focus on protecting consumer data and recommend the development of clear guidelines to support clubs in continuing to use digital platforms in line with legislative obligations. However, it is important that clubs do not face significant administrative burden or face excessive compliance requirements.

3. Transparency in Algorithms and Content Moderation

There is increased scrutiny on the role of digital platforms and how they shape public discourse and the dissemination of information. Clubs Australia encourages the Government to consider the impact of platform algorithms on smaller, community-focused organisations. The lack of transparency in how platforms prioritise and present content often means that clubs' efforts to promote their activities or public interest messages have the potential to be suppressed or overlooked, reducing their reach and effectiveness.

We recommend that digital platforms be required to disclose how algorithms work and how content moderation policies are applied to ensure that clubs are not disadvantaged.

4. Supporting Innovation and Access to Digital Tools

Clubs Australia supports any measures that will help our members innovate and leverage new technologies to enhance their services. Digital tools provide valuable opportunities for clubs to increase their member engagement, improve efficiency, and offer new services. We encourage the Government to continue fostering an environment that enables clubs to use digital platforms without facing unnecessary regulatory barriers or costs.

Conclusion

Clubs Australia supports the Government's new digital competition regime that is competitive, cost-effective and fit-for-purpose. Clubs should be treated fairly and we urge the Government to balance regulation with practical measures that promote competition, protect consumer data, and allow for continued innovation, particularly for smaller clubs with limited resources.

Should you require any further information from Clubs Australia regarding this submission, please do not hesitate to reach out at [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Alison Tehan
Deputy Director
Clubs Australia