



Pause. Breathe. Connect.

Dealing with misinformation and disinformation

Misinformation, disinformation and ‘fake news’ can cause anger, fear, mistrust or confusion. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, mis/disinformation can be targeted at us and increase during political or media commentary on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs. It is common on online platforms, such as social media, YouTube, Reddit and via TV, radio and newspapers.

Here are some brief definitions (from the National Library of Australia):

▶ **Misinformation**

False information that is spread, whether or not someone means to mislead.

▶ **Disinformation**

Deliberately misleading or biased information and propaganda.

▶ **Fake news**

False stories that appear to be news, often created to influence political views (including by scare tactics).

Misinformation can increase experiences of racist trauma and stress. It can make it much harder to have positive conversations. For communities or individuals that are the focus of misinformation there can be increased stress responses and long-term impacts, including feeling no good, shame, anger, isolation, and physical reactions, such as shaking, headaches, feeling sick and not being able to sleep.

Long Term Impacts

Misinformation can increase racism, lateral violence, cultural load, and compassion fatigue.

For our mob, it can significantly affect our social and emotional wellbeing. Remember there is something we can do about it. If you are feeling stressed, take time to **Pause. Breathe. Connect.**

Dealing with misinformation and disinformation

Read, listen or watch content from people or sites you trust and know.

Consider the content, where the information comes from, and ask questions.

Check the facts with someone you know and trust, such as your local health service, other community services or Land Council.

Don't share misinformation links, even if you're trying to call it out – that can give them extra life or help them to go viral. Instead, take screenshots and consider reporting them.

It's ok for other people to have their own opinions and ideas – but racism, or racially motivated ideas, fake news or hate is never ok.

Beware of surprising information, emotive language and unverified accounts.

If you don't feel comfortable or safe, walk away or turn off the TV, radio, or your phone or computer.

Pause.

Turn off devices or remove yourself from uncomfortable situations if you can. It is ok to need time out, trust your gut reaction and trust yourself.

Breathe.

Pause and focus on your breath.
Breathe in for 4.
Hold for 4.
Breath out for 4.

Connect.

Yarn with mob. Walk on Country.
Listen to the sound of Country.
Connect with culture through stories, song, dance, or anything that keeps you culturally strong and feeling deadly.

And remember to reach out to support services if you need to: