

EXCLUSIVE

Leading internet expert Robert Epstein believes Google meddles in Australian politics

By ADAM CREIGHTON

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22 Comments

Leading American behavioural psychologist Dr Robert Epstein says he has “no doubt” Google is manipulating Australia’s elections by subtly biasing search engine results to encourage support for the tech giant’s favoured – usually left-wing – political parties.

The Harvard educated Dr Epstein, speaking to Liberal Senator Alex Antic on his podcast ‘Based’, urged all nations to set up “monitoring systems” so governments could track how tech giants were seeking to surreptitiously influence public opinion.

“Australia has no monitoring system, the European Union has no monitoring system; if anyone at Google in Australia has any political interests in Australia ... I have no doubt, absolutely no doubt, that they are manipulating your elections,” he told Senator Antic in comments to be uploaded Tuesday.

In 2018 the Wall Street Journal published leaked emails among Google staff, revealing them discussing how to discreetly turn voters against then president Donald Trump’s 2017 travel ban on nationals from certain Muslim countries from coming to the US.

“Unless you have a monitoring system in place, you don’t actually know what’s happening, you don’t know how they might be indoctrinating your children, you don’t know how they might be undermining your democracy,” Dr Epstein added.

[The big US tech giants have been embroiled](#) in years long controversies over their alleged political bias in favour of left-wing parties and ideas, which intensified during

the Covid-19 pandemic and the 2020 US election, prompting governments around the world to consider extra regulation to make their internal algorithms clearer.

“Right at this minute, Google is sending register to vote reminders to members of one party, the Democrats, at two and a half times the rate they’re sending those register to vote reminders to Republicans,” Dr Epstein told Senator Antic.

“We know from very rigorous research that the ‘go vote’ reminder alone in the United States on election day can easily send 450,000 more votes that day to one candidate than to the other,” he added, suggesting “that’s going to happen in Australia too”.

Dr Epstein’s comments came amid a furore in the US over allegations Google and Facebook had deliberately made it harder for users to find out about the attempted assassination attempt of Donald Trump on 13th July, and were also promoting Democratic Party presidential nominee Kamala Harris.

Facebook last week apologised for labelling the iconic images of Mr Trump with his fist raised “altered” and the day itself as “fictional”, blaming the censorship on an internal programming error which had since been fixed.

Google, which earlier this year had to apologise for the extreme left-wing bias of its freshly released AI platform Gemini, similarly came under attack for failing to produce search results on the assassination attempt on Mr Trump, and directing users who searched for “Trump Rally” to pictures of and stories about Kamala Harris.

South Australian Senator Antic told The Australian: “Very few people truly understand the enormous effect that the tech sector has on our daily lives and that needs to change”.

Mr Trump branded their efforts “another attempt at rigging the election”, telling his followers to “go after” Google and Meta in subsequent social media posts.

Dr Epstein, a veteran critic of the political power of social media, in a famous 2015 study explained how easily a dominant search engine could shift political preferences

of decided and undecided voters by subtly prioritising certain groups, individuals and institutions in search results.

“Without any intervention by anyone working at Google, it means that Google’s algorithm has been determining the outcome of close elections around the world,” he told Science magazine at the time.

Google Australia has been contacted for comment.

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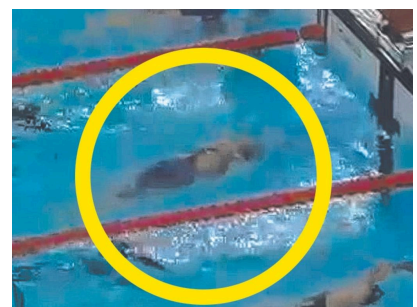
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