Buying and selling extremism
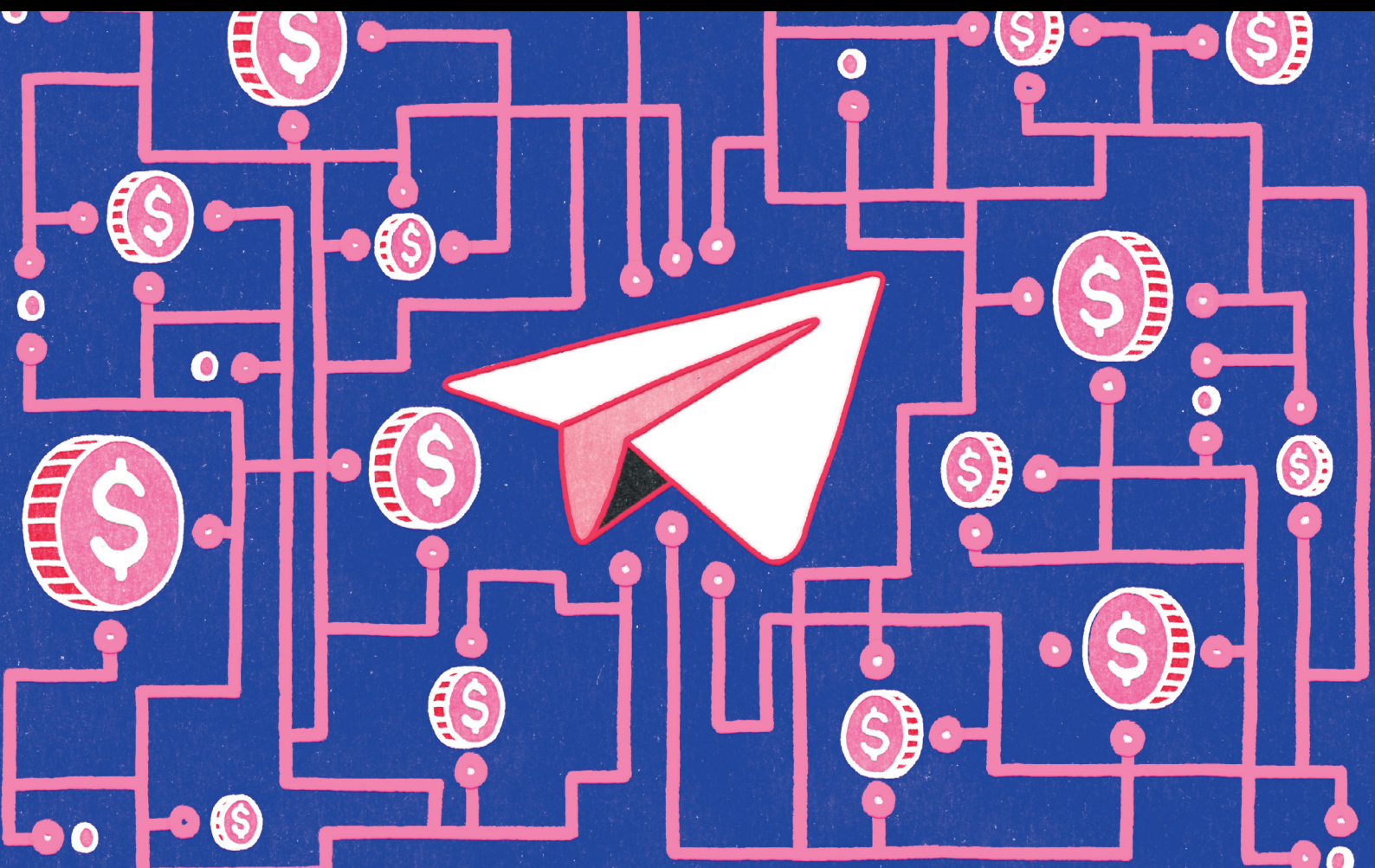
New funding opportunities in the right-wing extremist online ecosystem

Ariel Bogle

About the author

Ariel Bogle is an Analyst with ASPI's International Cyber Policy Centre.

Acknowledgements

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Contents

What's the problem?

As mainstream social media companies have increased their scrutiny and moderation of right-wing extremist (RWE) content and groups,[1] there's been a move to alternative online content platforms.[2] There's also growing concern about right-wing extremism in Australia,[3] and about how this shift has diversified the mechanisms used to fundraise by RWE entities.[4] This phenomenon isn't well understood in Australia, despite the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) advising in March 2021 that 'ideological extremism'[5] now makes up around 40% of its priority counterterrorism caseload.[6]

Research by ASPI's International Cyber Policy Centre (ICPC) has found that nine Australian Telegram channels[7] that share RWE content used at least 22 different funding platforms, including online monetisation tools and cryptocurrencies, to solicit, process and earn funds between 1 January 2021 and 15 July 2021. Due to the opaque nature of many online financial platforms, it's difficult to obtain a complete picture of online fundraising, so this sample is necessarily limited. However, in this report we aim to provide a preliminary map of the online financial platforms and services that may both support and incentivise an RWE content ecosystem in Australia.

Most funding platforms found in our sample have policies that explicitly prohibit the use of their services for hate speech, but we found that those policies were often unclear and not uniformly enforced. Of course, there's debate about how to balance civil liberties with the risks posed by online communities that promote RWE ideology (and much of that activity isn't illegal), but a better understanding of online funding mechanisms is necessary, given the growing concern about the role online propaganda may play in inspiring acts of violence[8] as well as the risk that, like other social divisions, such channels and movements could be exploited by adversaries.[9]

The fundraising facilitated by these platforms not only has the potential to grow the resources of groups and individuals linked to right-wing extremism, but it's also likely to be a means of building the RWE community both within Australia and with overseas groups and a vector for spreading RWE propaganda through the engagement inherent in fundraising efforts. The funding platforms mirror those used by RWE figures overseas, and funding requests were boosted by foreign actors, continuing Australian RWEs' history of 'meaningful international exchange' with overseas counterparts.[10]

What's the solution?

The ways online funding mechanisms can be exploited by individuals and groups promoting RWE ideology in Australia are an emerging problem. Any response must include strong policies and programs to address the drivers of right-wing extremism. However, another strategy that Australian law enforcement, intelligence agencies, policymakers and civil society should explore involves undermining the financial incentives that can help sustain and grow RWE movements.

This response should include examining whether emerging online funding platforms have obligations under Australian laws aimed at countering terrorism financing, as well as enhancing the transparency of platform policies and enforcement actions related to fundraising activity by individuals and groups promoting RWE and other extremist content. The authorities could also explore whether the financial activities of RWE individuals in Australia may in some cases fall under legal prohibitions against the commercial exploitation of a person's notoriety from criminal offending.

In addition, the Australian Government should create systems to better monitor hate crimes and incidents that can be used to assess linkages of crimes to extremist ideologies and groups, and to track trends to inform the formulation of policy responses related to RWE fundraising. Likewise, more research should be supported to examine the relationships between online content creation and fundraising by RWE influencers, radicalisation, mobilisation to violence, and the potential financial and social influence appeal of online funding and content-production mechanisms when disengaging people from RWE groups and movements.

Defining right-wing extremism

ASIO has said that 'right-wing extremism is the support for violence to achieve political outcomes relating to ideologies, including but not limited to, white supremacism and Neo-Nazism'.[11] That definition points to the central role of violence in defining RWE for law enforcement, but also highlights the role of supporting rather than perpetrating violence. For ASIO, it's 'an individual or group's support for violence' that triggers the agency's interest.[12]

However, international attention is being paid to RWE content and activities that might not fit neatly within existing counterterrorism or violent extremism[13] frameworks.[14] That work also recognises a 'post-organisational' understanding[15] of RWE that isn't limited to membership of defined or static groups.[16] This has brought a focus on how threats such as 'lone wolf' attacks can emerge from the broad environment of right-wing or other extremism, especially via online ecosystems that can operate as a culture of inspiration for violence.

In this report, we use the term 'right-wing extremism' in the following way, as described by Macquarie University's Department of Security Studies and Criminology in its report on online right-wing extremism in NSW, to denote:

> communities and individuals committed to an extreme social, political, or ideological position that is pro-white identity (the 'in-group'), and actively suspicious of non-white others (the 'out-group'). It is characterised by individuals, groups, and ideologies that reject the principles of democracy for all and demand a commitment to dehumanising and/or hostile actions against out-groups. RWE can be used as an umbrella phrase which incorporates a collection of terms that have been adopted internationally to describe this diverse social movement, including the 'far-right', 'alt-right', 'extreme-right' etc. RWE communities actively misappropriate the language of conservative, right wing political philosophy to reject democratic norms and values.[17]

This working definition is useful because of the difficulty in scrutinising right-wing extremism in Australia.[18] Hate crime is rarely prosecuted here, and individuals who have committed crimes motivated by right-wing extremism may have been charged with other offences.[19] Nor do we have any central open registry of 'crimes motivated by offenders' bias against race, gender, gender identity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, and ethnicity' similar to the US Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program that would allow us to better understand the issue and identify potential risks and escalations.[20] So far, only one RWE group, the Sonnenkrieg Division, has been designated as a terrorist organisation by the Australian Government.[21] And Australia lacks research entities that make hate group designations, such as the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) in the US. Our understanding is also complicated by volatile allegiances among people who hold and act on such beliefs and by their geographical dispersal.[22]

This vacuum in Australia could make right-wing extremism an attractive avenue for foreign adversaries seeking to exploit and exacerbate existing social cleavages, because any governmental response will be sluggish and probably politically fraught, further exacerbating the problem.[23] Clearly, there's also an important debate about how to approach these issues while ensuring that the expression of diverse beliefs and views, including views that other members of Australian society may find distasteful, remains possible.

Given these challenges, we also note other work tracking US RWE fundraising that has relied in part on the SPLC's hate group designations and draw on those designations in our sample where they occur—recognising that they may be imperfect when removed from the US context.[24] However, content from US hate groups was shared among the report's sample, and some channels declared direct affiliations.

The SPLC defines a hate group as:

> an organization or collection of individuals that—based on its official statements or principles, the statements of its leaders, or its activities—has beliefs or practices that attack or malign an entire class of people, typically for their immutable characteristics.[25]

Those characteristics include race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation or gender identity. However, the SPLC doesn't consider the committing of violence to be a prerequisite for being listed as a hate group 'because a group's ideology can inspire hate violence even when the group itself does not engage in violent activity'.[26] Of course, the SPLC is a private organisation, so its designation of hate groups carries no legal consequence (i.e. prosecution).

There's evidence that some RWE figures and groups have intentionally toned down their more extreme rhetoric in order to reach a broader audience while avoiding the scrutiny of law enforcement.[27] As the Macquarie University's Department of Security Studies Studies and Criminology report found:

> few, if any, groups explicitly and publicly advocate the use of violence against those considered part of the out-group such as Muslims, Jews or immigrants, but rather adopt a longer term opportunistic strategy.[28]

Likewise, the report of the New Zealand royal commission into the 2019 Christchurch terrorist attack discussed how many individuals and groups that use 'dehumanising and divisive rhetoric' against others 'are careful to avoid direct engagement with, or endorsement of, violence'.[29] Nevertheless, it suggested that such rhetoric can serve to normalise Islamophobia or anti-immigrant sentiment in a way that may encourage or legitimise the use of violence.[30] ASIO Director-General Mike Burgess has also voiced concern about the internet's role in this milieu, stating that 'extremists are security conscious and adapt their security posture to avoid attention. In their online forums and chat rooms, they show that they're savvy when it comes to operating at the limits of what is legal... The online environment is a force multiplier for extremism; fertile ground for sharing ideology and spreading propaganda'.[31]

Research methodology

For this analysis, we drew on a dataset of nine Australian Telegram channels that shared RWE content between 1 January 2021 and 15 July 2021. Due to the rapid evolution of online ecosystems, the use of encrypted platforms and the difficulties of tracking financial transactions, especially in cryptocurrencies, this snapshot is necessarily limited. The sample size is small; however, we seek to provide a preliminary survey of the online financial platforms promoted by RWE Telegram channels in Australia before a more comprehensive analysis of the ecosystem.[32]

The nine channels were chosen by a version of 'snowball sampling' (a technique, often used for studying specific groups that are hard to reach, in which research participants are asked to help researchers identify further subjects) adapted for a digital messaging platform built around forwarded messages and link sharing. The first Telegram channel was chosen because it shared RWE content such as posts that glorified Hitler as a martyr and called for a White Australia, and is connected to an individual who has a documented history of connection with Australian RWE groups. The next eight channels were chosen by following forwarded links from other channels (a function of the Telegram platform) to provide a sample (Figure 1).

Figure 1: How the nine Telegram channels were connected by forwarded links between 1 January and 15 July 2021.
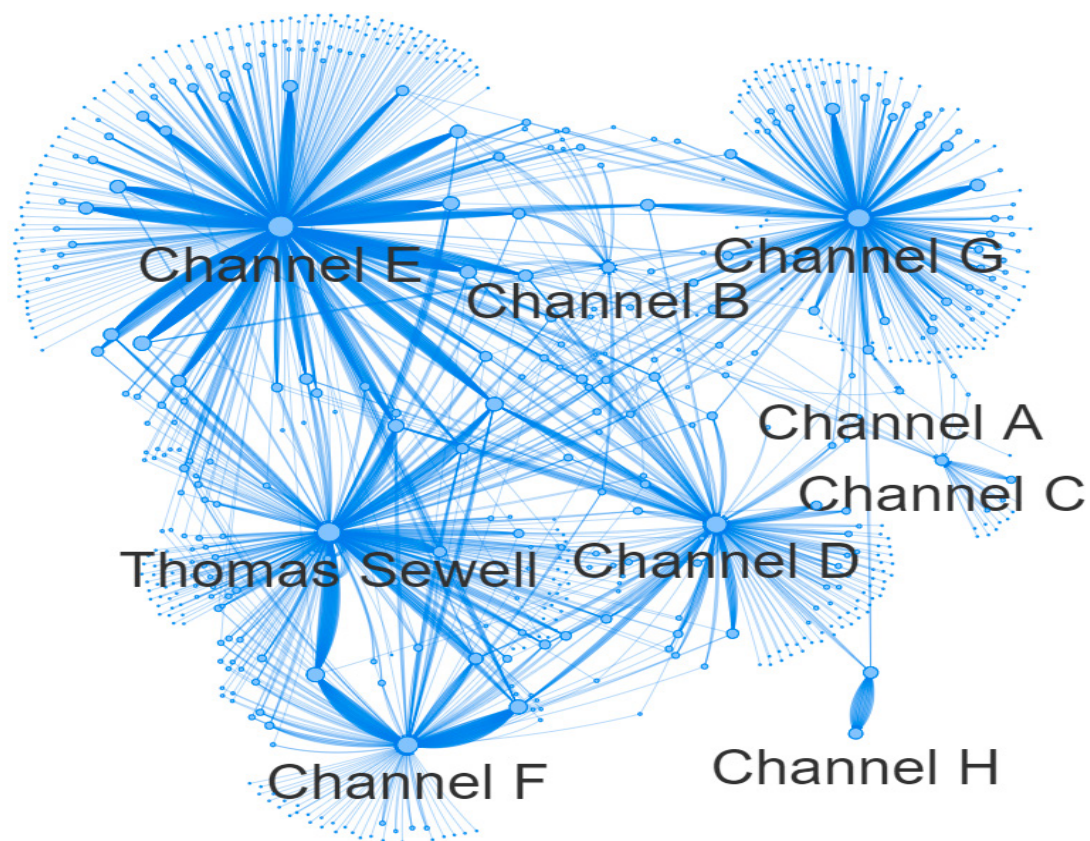
Nine Telegram channels were chosen to form the sample based on the following characteristics:

- An initial assessment of content (posts, images, videos, website links) shared in the channel revealed its ideological alignment with RWE, as defined above.

or

- The channel shared content from or was affiliated with groups designated by the SPLC as hate groups, such as the Proud Boys, and the channel:
  - was linked to Australia
  - promoted at least one platform that offers online fundraising
  - had at least 100 subscribers as a baseline of audience reach.

This report seeks only to provide a preliminary mapping of where the Australian RWE ecosystem fundraises online. It doesn't claim to be representative of the complete RWE ecosystem in Australia or assess the overall presence of certain ideologies. Nor do we attempt to analyse the scale or legality of RWE fundraising activity in Australia, how much is raised overall or how funds are ultimately used. In recognition of work identifying the dangers of amplifying RWE and providing 'breadcrumbs' for the public into these ecosystems, only figures who are already well known to the public due to criminal charges and convictions highlighted in Australian media are named here.[33] As shown in Figure 1, they include Thomas Sewell, whose affiliations with RWE groups have been covered extensively by Australian media and who is facing armed robbery, assault and violent disorder charges as recently as June 2021.[34]

This report examines the use of online funding platforms used by RWE Telegram channels in our sample but doesn't analyse their broader uses and audiences. In general, those platforms weren't intentionally built for RWE content; however, we note where platforms have purposefully taken a more *laissez-faire* approach to content moderation in stated opposition to more mainstream platforms.

Data collection and analysis included:

- exporting the nine Telegram channels associated with our sample
- examining channel files for terms including 'donate', 'fund' and 'view' to identify fundraising attempts and related platforms
- mapping the funding ecosystem that stemmed from Telegram onto external platforms (Websites, YouTube, BitChute, DLive, Entropy, Odysee, Trovo, SubscribeStar, Patreon, cryptocurrency wallets, Buy Me a Coffee, Ko-fi, GoFundMe and PayPal, Represent)
- examining websites related to channels in the sample using tools such as BuiltWith to identify advertising and ecommerce services such as Google AdSense, PayPal, Square and Amazon Associates Program
- exporting and analysing Telegram JSON files using R packages tidyverse, lubridate and jsonlite to analyse how links were forwarded between channels.

Mapping the Australian RWE funding landscape

Introduction

We found at least 22 platforms, payment services, online tools and cryptocurrencies being used to solicit, process and earn funds linked to a sample of Telegram channels that shared RWE content in Australia between 1 January and 15 July 2021. Where we've been able to identify earnings in our sample, they appear to have been limited. This work establishes only that RWE-related fundraising activity is occurring and that the channels for it have been taken up in the Australian environment.

The sampled platforms include multiple emerging live-streaming websites such as DLive and Entropy, which are central to efforts aimed at building an audience for RWE content as well as the RWE community. Some of the platforms provide a means of soliciting donations or micropayments in cash or cryptocurrency. Fundraising was sometimes promoted via the sale of merchandise as well as on platforms such as Patreon, Buy Me a Coffee, PayPal and SubscribeStar. Others advertised various cryptocurrency wallets.

The range of platforms being used mirrors a recent review of the UK RWE online ecosystem published by *Bellingcat*.[35] Likewise, Institute for Strategic Dialogue analysis in 2020 examined '73 US-based groups involved in promoting hatred against individuals on the basis of their gender, sexuality, race, religion or nationality' and found similar online funding mechanisms.[36]

While global fundraising for RWE causes isn't a new phenomenon, it's arguably becoming a more complex one.[37] Australia has domestic laws and is party to international taskforces concerning terrorism financing.[38] However, there's a 'significant gap' in knowledge internationally regarding the financial operations of groups that support acts of terrorism inspired by RWE ideology, or that support the broader ecosystem that creates content that could incite violence.[39] The UN Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate has written that 'money is often raised to fund a milieu - which may be accessed by those aspiring to carry out more violent acts - via event fees, merchandizing and donations.'[40]

The relationship between RWE material online, funding and acts of terrorism has been particularly scrutinised following the Christchurch terror attack. While in New Zealand, the Christchurch terrorist reportedly made at least '14 donations to RWE, anti-immigration groups and individuals',[41] but his own attack was apparently self-funded.[42] However, the Christchurch report said that it was 'plausible to conclude' that his exposure to RWE content online may have contributed to his actions on 15 March 2019.[43] His donations formed a part of his engagement with that content. In an interview, professor of computer science at Elon University Megan Squire, who tracks RWE fundraising, described the use of online funding platforms that combine 'tips' and RWE live streams as the 'monetisation of propaganda itself'.[44]

While RWE groups such as the US-based neo-Confederate group 'League of the South' historically solicited 'dues' or membership fees from members and sold merchandise,[45] among other activities, requests for funds among the sample we examined were sometimes framed around individuals as RWE content creators rather than the activities of RWE groups specifically. This may mirror a social media 'influencer' model of patronage in which figures are rewarded for both the entertainment value

and perceived credibility of the material they create online. Like wellness 'influencers', who use online platforms such as YouTube or Instagram to embody their health approach and build audiences 'off the appeal of intimacy, authenticity and integrity',[46] RWE content creators may be supported for ostensibly 'living' the ideology they propagate.

Of course, the online funding ecosystem could also lead people to make RWE content simply to court money and attention rather than due to ideological commitment. However distinguishing between social harms caused by those who are dedicated to right-wing extremism and those who are simply exploiting a fundraising or profile-raising opportunity is not simple if both make RWE content. This 'influencer' model also demonstrates a potential impact of more leaderless or decentralised strategies on fundraising approaches,[47] and a 'borderless' internet means that new funding strategies are quickly shared and emulated. As Dr Cynthia Miller-Idriss suggested in *Hate in the Homeland: The New Global Far Right*:

> The modern far right is working to build muscular warriors equipped with the physical capacity to fight, along with "alt-right" thinkers with the intellectual capacity to lead and the commercial ecosystems that help market, brand, and financially support these actions. Underpinning all of these activities, though, is the modern far right's rapid adoption—and creation—of a broad new tech and media ecosystem for communication, dissemination, and mobilization.[48]

Where they can be identified, the funds raised by our Australian sample via live streams and crowdfunding appear limited in comparison to the significant amounts raised by high-profile individuals in the US who share RWE content. They shouldn't be dismissed, however, as fundraising can spike alongside high-profile events, as we discuss below.[49] Likewise, donating can have an impact on an individual's ties and symbolic commitment to an organisation or cause. Activists who seek to build movements online sometimes discuss the 'commitment curve', in which new members begin by viewing and liking content but can shift to being supposedly more committed to the cause once they begin to donate.[50]

In addition, fundraising links were forwarded and promoted in more popular RWE British, Canadian and American Telegram public channels, helping to solidify ties between RWE influencers and groups in multiple countries. Similarly, some Australian figures in the sample channels were hosted on overseas podcasts and livestream shows, which offered another opportunity to raise a group's or individual's profile and promote fundraising efforts, while others created dedicated content for foreign media channels with links to right-wing extremism.

Funding platforms used by our sample

Table 1: The online platforms, payment processors and cryptocurrencies used by channels in our sample that offer the opportunity to raise funds.

|		
Live streaming and video hosting	• DLive • Entropy • Odysee • BitChute • Trovo • YouTube	Video platforms that allow various forms of monetisation, including tips paid to content makers during a live stream, or donations facilitated on the content maker's video page or channel.
Subscription platforms	• SubscribeStar • Patreon	Platforms that allow users to make ongoing contributions to a content maker, or pay for access to exclusive content.
Cryptocurrency wallets	• Bitcoin (BTC) • Monero • Litecoin (LTC) • Ripple (XRP) • Ethereum (ETH)	Cryptocurrencies with variable functionality, some of which may attempt to obscure the destination of funds. The publication of wallet addresses in public channels allows anyone to donate.
Micropayments and donations	• Buy Me a Coffee • Ko-fi	Online platforms that allow users to make ongoing or one-off contributions to a content maker or individual.
Crowdfunding	• GoFundMe	Websites that allow users to request donations for a specific cause or activity.
Payment gateway	• PayPal	An online payment system that allows users to accept tips and donations, as well as a payment gateway on websites.
Ecommerce website	• Represent	An ecommerce website that allows users to set up an online store, largely through uploading designs that are then added to T-shirts and other merchandise.
Ecommerce platform	• WooCommerce	An open-source ecommerce platform built on WordPress that allows users to offer goods or services for sale on their websites.
Ecommerce service	• Square	A web solution that helps users set up online retail stores as well as payment processing.
Donation widget	• Donorbox	Software that allows users to create donation forms that are embedded on their websites.
Online advertising	• Google AdSense • Amazon Associates Program	Online advertising programs that allow website owners to potentially earn revenue by showing ads alongside online content. Amazon Associates Program allows web-page owners to recommend Amazon products and earn revenue if a purchase occurs, among other customer actions.

Platform analysis

Telegram

The chat app Telegram plays an important role in the online funding ecosystem among our sample, while not itself being a mechanism for raising money. The platform did briefly attempt to set up a cryptocurrency before shutting it down after pushback from the US Securities and Exchange Commission, indicating a potential crossover between fundraising and content creation on the app if such a scheme were to ever go ahead.[51]

In our sample, Telegram was used by individuals who shared RWE content appeared to act as a central guide and point of communication with followers—potentially because channels in the sample feel their channels are less likely to be removed than on platforms such as YouTube or Facebook, as well as the perception of security offered by encryption and its 'self-destruct' function.[52] Fundraising links were often shared across the channel's online presence, creating a network that provided a plethora of funding options (Figure 2). For example, one channel in our sample used the video description section on its YouTube videos to provide a link to its Telegram channel, as well as offering a range of funding mechanisms, including PayPal.

Figure 2: Links to fundraising platforms stemming from one Telegram channel in our sample (some social platforms are omitted).
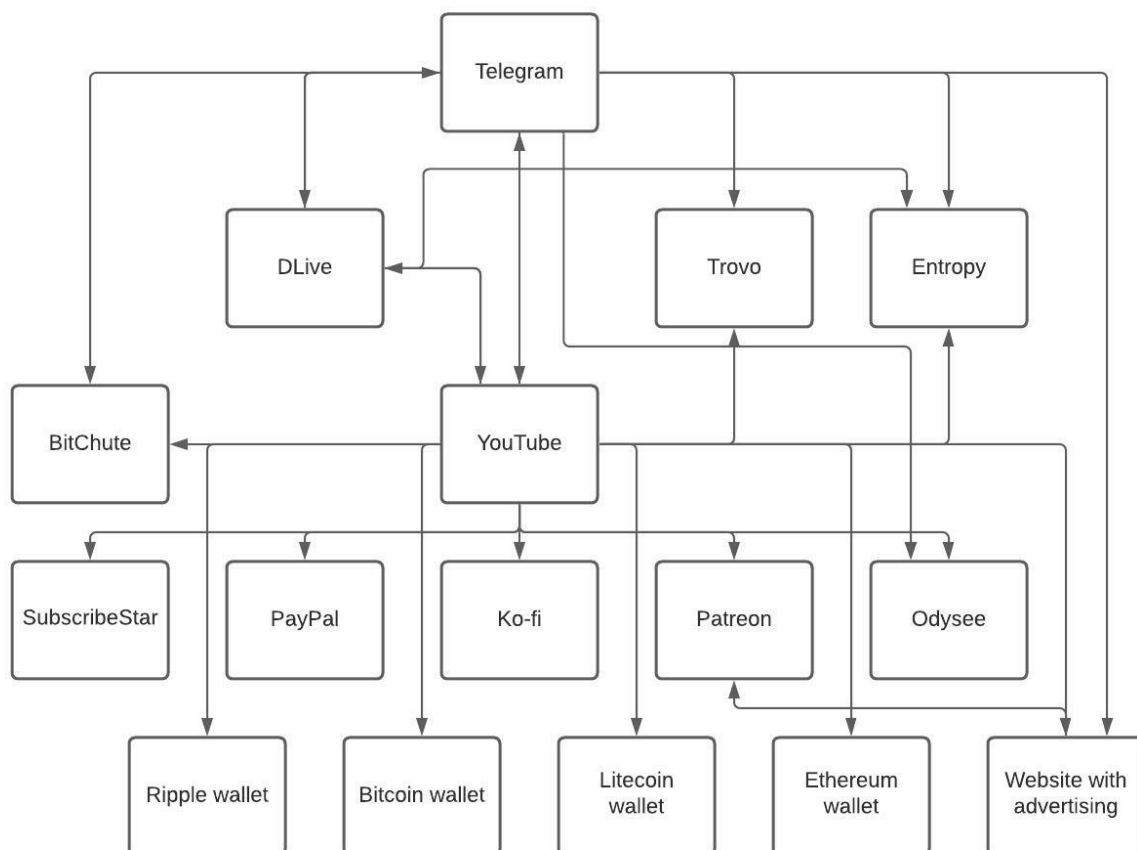
Within the broader ecosystem, there are also Telegram channels dedicated to acting as 'guides' to RWE audio and video content, and particularly live streams on sites such as YouTube and DLive,[53] including those in Australia that discuss extremist content (Figure 3). Those channels post times and links to such content with the goal of helping followers find and engage with it. This ostensibly helps channels find more viewers and potentially financial supporters for their content. This ecosystem is particularly facilitated by Telegram's forwarding function, which allows links from one public channel to be forwarded into another, creating a road map for users to expand the range of channels they follow. In this way, like a channel using hyperlinks to connect a YouTube profile to a website or Facebook page, it builds 'large propaganda networks with multiple entry points'.[54]

Figure 3: The top 20 channel links forwarded into a Telegram channel that appears to act as a guide for largely RWE and conspiracist videos and live streams on DLive, YouTube and other platforms between 1 December 2020 and 15 July 2021.
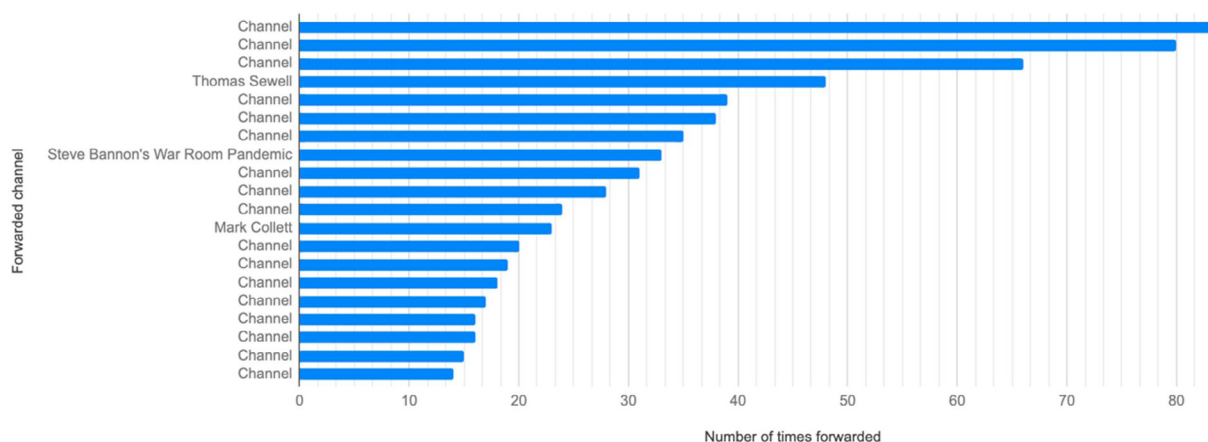
DLive

DLive.tv is a live stream video platform with an inbuilt 'rewards' system and is largely used for gaming content. Viewers can donate 'lemons' to content creators (a reward point system that creators can cash out, while DLive takes 20% on all transactions on the platform) and take part in live chat rooms.[55] DLive was embraced by a number of extremist figures in the US in 2020, including American RWE figure Nick Fuentes, who earned around US$61,655 on the platform in April–October 2020, according to estimates by Dr Megan Squire.[56] The SPLC also found that some extremists used the site to 'supplement' offline fundraising efforts.[57]

The platform came to global attention after several figures streamed on DLive during the 6 January 2021 breach of the US Capitol building.[58] While DLive accounts linked to the Australian Telegram channels in our sample don't appear to be raising similar levels of revenue to US figures, they're making use of the platform and could expand both usage and income generation. Some have a regular weekly streaming schedule, while others use the website more sporadically.

While the platform appealed to RWE figures due to its lax moderation compared to more mainstream live-streaming sites, DLive has since cracked down on some white supremacist channels following the Capitol Hill storming. In a statement following the riot, DLive said it had 'suspended 3 accounts, forced offline 5 channels, banned 2 accounts from live streaming and permanently removed over 100 past broadcasts' … 'for content that violated its Terms of Service and Community Guidelines on or about January 6th.' [59] Also in January 2021, DLive announced restrictions on what kind of content could raise money on the platform—including streams under its 'X-tag' section for mature audience content.[60]

However, Australian RWE channels in our sample are still collecting donations on the site and regularly live streaming. For example, one live stream in our sample following the DLive announcement was tagged as being about the video game Fortnite but instead discussed race using terms such as 'pure blood' and 'mongrels'.

Entropy

Entropy is a video platform that allows users to port their streams from other platforms, including YouTube, Twitch and DLive, in what it calls a 'censorship free environment'.[61] That means that, even if their channel is stripped of the ability to run advertising or accept tips on those platforms, they can keep collecting donations on Entropy. On Entropy, viewers can make 'paid chats', in which they post a comment or question by donating in multiple currencies, including US and Australian dollars. The site takes 15% from paid interactions.[62]

YouTube also performs a similar function, allowing users to pay for 'Super Chats' that make their chat messages stand out during a live-stream chat session. However, YouTube has cracked down on some RWE figures monetising their channels after outlets such as *BuzzFeed News* reported on their use of the platform for fundraising.[63] One channel in our sample specifically cited YouTube's demonetisation of his account as a reason why financial support was required. In a statement provided to ASPI on 16 June 2021, Google said: 'Channels that repeatedly brush up against our hate speech policies will be suspended from the YouTube Partner program, meaning they can't run ads on their channel or use other monetization features like Super Chat.'[64]

As an example of how Entropy is used, one Telegram channel in our sample regularly posts links to live stream content on sites such as YouTube and DLive while encouraging users to ask questions via Entropy. Earlier this year, this channel featured Thomas Sewell, who is associated with Australia's National Socialist Network and the European Australia Movement,[65] and who is facing a number of charges, as described earlier in this report.[66] During the stream, which also took place on YouTube, the channel claimed that viewers paid between US$3 and US$50 on Entropy to ensure their questions were posed to Sewell.

Odysee

The video platform Odysee was launched at the end of 2020 by chief executive Jeremy Kauffman, who said he wanted to recapture what he saw as the early internet where 'anyone could speak and anyone could have a voice'.[67] It hosts a variety of content, but it does in some cases appear to operate as a backup archive for videos that appear on other sites from which clips expressing extremist rhetoric are more likely to be removed.[68]

Odysee claims to be built on blockchain technology,[69] which potentially makes it more difficult to remove videos. It also offers different ways to monetise content, including earnings per view, tips from viewers and site promotions.[70] The company is also introducing live streaming.[71] At least four channels in our sample used Odysee, including channels that hosted anti-Semitic videos but it's unclear if or how much they had earned. Their pages displayed a button that allows viewers to 'support this content' either by paying a tip or paying to 'boost' the channel (Figure 4).[72] Those contributions are in LBRY credits, which is a cryptocurrency currently being scrutinised by the US Securities and Exchange Commission.[73]

Figure 4: A channel seeking LBRY credits.
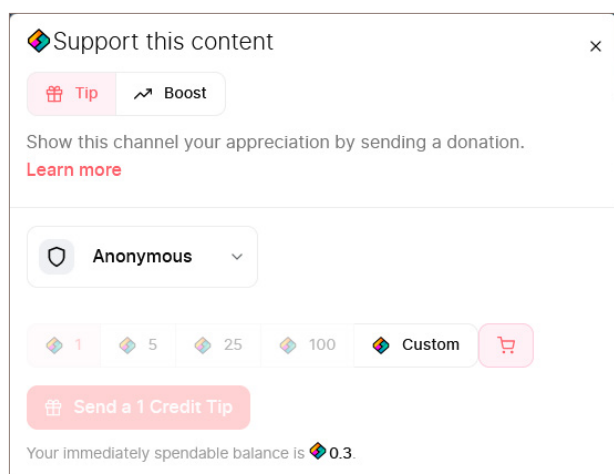
BitChute

BitChute is a British video hosting website that hosts a range of content.[74] It has been widely used by extremists and figures from conspiracist communities, including QAnon and anti-vaccination activists, largely as a means of backing up videos removed from other sites.[75] Some channels in our sample used it to share anti-Semitic material, among other content. BitChute provides integration with a number of third-party payment providers, including SubscribeStar, CoinPayments, Patreon and PayPal (Figure 5).[76] In our sample, two of the five channels with BitChute pages had 'monetised' it as of 15 July 2021: one with PayPal, and the other with PayPal and Patreon.

Figure 5: BitChute account seeking payments via PayPal.
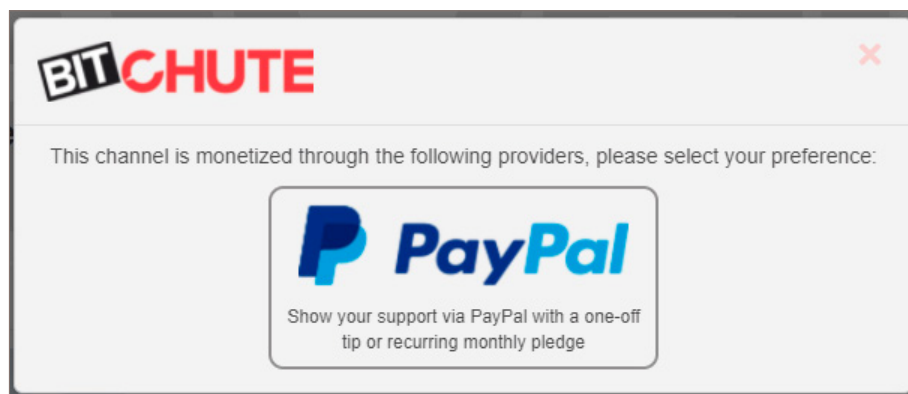
Trovo

Three channels in our sample promoted live streams on the site, but it's unclear whether they were able to earn any income from the platform. A video streaming service, Trovo is owned by TLIVE LLC, which is an affiliate of the Chinese technology giant Tencent. Trovo offers various opportunities to earn revenue,[77] but it's unclear whether the channels are monetised on the platform.
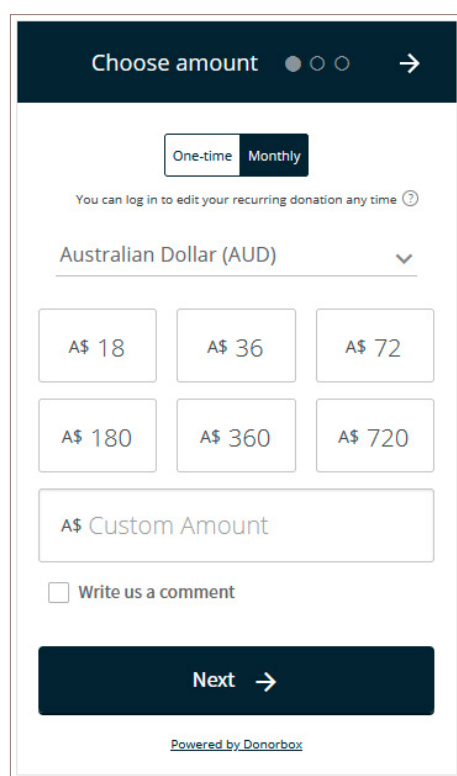
PayPal, Patreon and SubscribeStar

A number of channels in our sample offered direct ways to donate: four used PayPal.Me pages that allow people to send money, and two offered Patreon subscriptions. Patreon is a membership platform that allows content creators to offer different subscription levels with varying levels of content

and access. One Patreon account belonging to an Australian RWE content creator in the sample offered six support levels, ranging from under $2 per month up to almost $300 per month for exclusive content and 'follow backs' on social media. Two channels also used SubscribeStar, which similarly allows users to sign up for various levels of membership offering content and access, for which the site takes a 5% service fee.[78]

Donorbox

One channel also used Donorbox on its related website. Donorbox allows a user to include a donation embed or widget on their website that prompts visitors to make one-time or monthly donations (Figure 6).

Figure 6: A Donorbox donation widget.

GoFundMe

Another channel attempted to use crowdfunding website GoFundMe to raise money for a project, but didn't appear to have attracted any donors via the website as of 15 July 2021. The channel also claimed that donations to the program were 'tax deductible', but we couldn't locate the company on the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission register or on state-based community organisation registers.

This is an important mechanism to monitor, however, as RWE groups overseas have obtained charity status. The Institute for Strategic Dialogue's 2020 report, *Bankrolling bigotry: an overview of the online funding strategies of American hate groups*, found that 32 (44%) of the 73 hate groups examined had some form of charity tax status in the US.[79] 'This potentially helps legitimise hate groups and provides them with avenues through which to raise money', the report said.

Buy Me a Coffee and Ko-fi

Channels in our sample used microdonation sites such as Buy Me a Coffee and Ko-fi—platforms that allow content creators to solicit donations and subscriptions by buying 'coffees'. On Buy Me a Coffee they start at around US$3.39 (A$4.60). One channel, for example, shared several Buy Me a Coffee pages in 2021, ostensibly for Thomas Sewell's legal fees (see Figure 7 below) for the charges described earlier in this report. It's unclear, however, whether Sewell was able to withdraw those funds, as his pages have been repeatedly removed by the website. However, a post in the channel said 'it doesn't do anything to the money when it gets taken down'. A Buy Me a Coffee spokesperson declined to say why the pages were removed.[80]

Figure 7: Buy Me a Coffee posts raising funds for Thomas Sewell's legal fees.
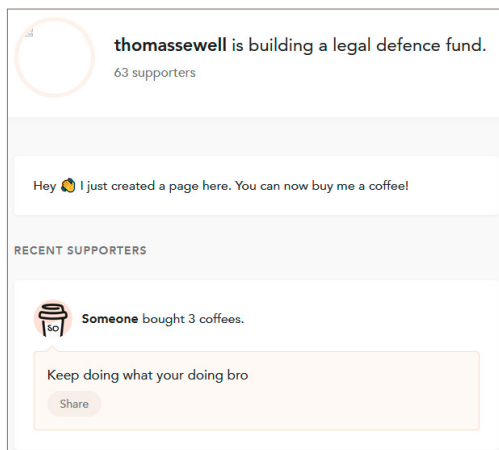
Merchandise

Two channels in our sample offered merchandise associated with their branding and ideology, including clothing and books via linked websites, which were examined using the online tool BuiltWith. One used the ecommerce widget WooCommerce on its website, as well as payment facilitator PayPal. The other used the online marketplace Represent, which allows people to customise clothing and offer it for sale on dedicated branded pages, as well as via the website builder and payment processor Square.[81] The volume of sales is unclear, but counterterrorism financing expert Jessica Davis has written that 'propaganda sales are unlikely to generate significant profit for terrorists and extremists, but generate a small source of funds, create loose networks of likeminded individuals and serve to keep propaganda available to potential new recruits.'[82]

Online advertising

Of the five channels in our sample that directed viewers to associated websites, three of those websites appeared to use Google AdSense (an online advertising program that could allow them to earn revenue when ads are seen or clicked), based on analysis using the BuiltWith website analytics tool. One also used Amazon Advertising and appeared to be part of an Amazon Associates Program, which allows web-page owners to recommend and link to Amazon products and earn money if a sale occurs, among other functions.[83] Links from the website to a number of products on Amazon's webstore included Store ID tags.

Cryptocurrencies

We observed wallet addresses for cryptocurrencies including bitcoin, monero, ethereum, ripple and litecoin promoted in Telegram channels and on associated accounts as a means of soliciting funds. John Bambeneck, a computer security researcher who has tracked donations to RWE figures in Europe and the US, said in an interview that such figures still mostly use bitcoin 'because that's the easiest for people to get their minds around for low dollar donors'. Nevertheless, while money may be accepted in bitcoin, it can be converted to another cryptocurrency and moved to another wallet in an attempt to 'create a break in traceability'.[84]

The use of cryptocurrencies can also be seen as part of a distrust of traditional financial institutions by RWE actors, and, in some cases, the developers of these 'coins' have explicitly cultivated that perception.[85] Monero, in particular, has been embraced by overseas RWE channels due to its emphasis on privacy and lack of traceability. Notorious white supremacist website the *Daily Stormer* has announced that it accepts only monero donations after having been pushed off other funding platforms.[86] While it can't promise complete anonymity, monero claims to 'hide the sender, amount, and receiver in the transaction', making it difficult for third parties to track.[87] It does it by mixing the wallet address with others when the coin is transferred.[88]

In contrast, researchers were previously able to track bitcoin sent to a range of RWE figures in the US.[89] In one case, according to a 14 January 2021 *Chainalysis* report, American RWE figure Nick Fuentes was gifted bitcoin worth around US$250,000 from a donor in December 2020.[90] 'Previously, the most he had ever received in a single month was $2,707 worth of Bitcoin,' according to the report.

A monero wallet address was also shared on a Telegram channel associated with Thomas Sewell, describing the funds raised as being used for Sewell's legal fees. Likewise, a channel linked to Sewell's former associate Blair Cottrell similarly advertised a number of cryptocurrency addresses, described as a means of supporting his content. Cottrell was convicted of 'inciting hatred, contempt and ridicule of Muslims' in 2017.[91]

Despite the increasing difficulty of tracking some types of cryptocurrency transactions, Bambeneck emphasised that there are still relatively few platforms on which money can be turned into cryptocurrency and donated, and vice versa, and that this provides a potential point of scrutiny by authorities where appropriate. 'They can be sitting on a bunch of monero, but eventually they're going to want to cash it out, so they're going to want to use regulated exchanges,' he said.[92]

Table 2 shows the highest balances over the 12 months to 15 July 2021 in some of the cryptocurrency wallet addresses shared in our sample.

Figure 8 is a post on Telegram highlighting Thomas Sewell's donation request in monero.

Table 3 summarises the use of funding platforms by the channels in our sample.

Table 2: Highest balance over the 12 months to 15 July 2021 in some of the cryptocurrency wallet addresses shared in our sample, as per walletexplorer.com and etherscan.io. (Conversion as of 12 August 2021).

Cryptocurrency	Highest balance over past 12 months
Bitcoin	0.11813704 (A$7,280.84)
Bitcoin	0.01294395 (A$797.74)
Litecoin	0
Ethereum	0.120330393 (A$514.83)
Ethereum	0.009916 (A$42.43)

Note: We can't confirm who controls the wallet, whether funds in the wallet were raised by donation solely or in part, or whether funds were cashed out or transferred to another wallet. Monero and ripple aren't included.

Figure 8: A post on Telegram highlighting Thomas Sewell's request seeking donations in monero.
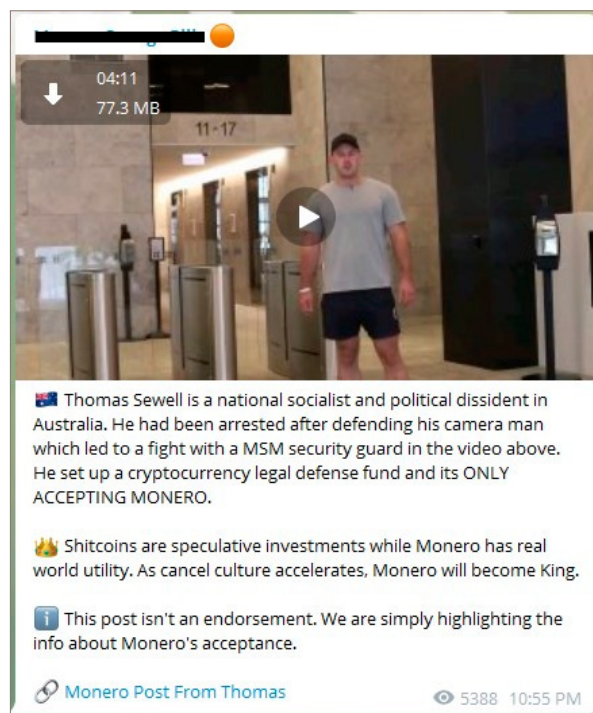
Table 3: Summary of funding platforms in our sample of nine Telegram channels.

Platform	Presence in sample
Bitcoin (BTC)	Two channels
Monero	Two channels
Litecoin (LTC)	One channel
Ripple (XRP)	Two channels
Ethereum (ETH)	Two channels
DLive	Five channels
Entropy	Three channels
Odysee	Four channels
BitChute	Five channels
Trovo	Three channels

GoFundMe	One channel
PayPal	Four channels
Patreon	Two channels
SubscribeStar	Two channels
Buy Me a Coffee	One channel
Ko-fi	Two channels
Represent	One channel
WooCommerce	One channel
Square	One channel
Donorbox	One channel
Google AdSense	Three channels
Amazon Advertising	One channel

Platform policies and demonetisation

All but two of the platforms and services we examined had terms of service for users that explicitly prohibited hate speech or threatening behaviour in some way (Table 4). In general, however, online content and payment platforms grant themselves considerable flexibility when it comes to interpreting and enforcing their own rules and typically operate with limited independent oversight and disclosure.[93] Efforts to remove individuals and groups that share RWE content from funding platforms have often been prompted by public pressure on private companies to enforce their existing terms of service. For example, following the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville in 2017, which left one woman dead, PayPal was pushed to remove accounts used by figures involved in the event.[94] Activist groups have also pressured payment providers such as Mastercard and Visa to remove what they called 'white supremacist groups' from their platforms.[95] Bringing significant challenges for freedom of expression as well as social risks, the enforcement of terms of service by funding platforms has been described as 'reactive and arbitrary'.[96]

Table 4: The policies on hate speech of platforms used by a sample of 9 RWE channels in Australia as of 15 July 2021.

Platform	Policy on hate speech and extremist groups
DLive	DLive prohibits activities and material (including live streams, videos and comments) that: 'Constitute or encourage hate speech that directly attacks a person or group on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, medical or mental condition, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender, or gender identity'.
Entropy	No policy on website.
Odysee	No specific policy on hate speech, but prohibits using the service to 'Stalk, intimidate, threaten, or otherwise harass or cause discomfort to other users' or 'for any illegal or unauthorized purpose or [to] engage in, encourage, or promote any illegal activity'.
Trovo	Prohibits conduct that would 'promote or advocate for terrorism or violent extremism' or 'is threatening, abusive, libelous, slanderous, fraudulent, defamatory, deceptive, or otherwise offensive or objectionable'.
Buy Me a Coffee	Prohibits content that's 'threatening, abusive, harassing, defamatory, libelous, tortious, obscene, profane, or invasive of another person's privacy'.

Ko-fi	Prohibits 'hate speech, intimidation or abuse of any kind targeting any individual, group or institution'.
PayPal	Prohibits use of the service for activities that involve 'the promotion of hate, violence, racial or other forms of discriminatory intolerance or the financial exploitation of a crime'.
BitChute	Prohibits activities that contain incitement to hatred 'as defined in section 368E subsection (1) of the UK Communications Act 2003. This applies to any material likely to incite hatred against a group of persons or a member of a group of persons based on any of the grounds referred to in Article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union' and 'any act of violence or intimidation carried out with the intention of furthering a religious, political or any other ideological objective'. BitChute maintains and publishes a prohibited entities list that contains entities that BitChute has independently identified and explicitly prohibited on the platform under this guideline.
GoFundMe	Users agree not to use the service for 'User Content or reflecting behavior that we deem, in our sole discretion, to be an abuse of power or in support of hate, violence, harassment, bullying, discrimination, terrorism, or intolerance of any kind relating to race, ethnicity, national origin, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, serious disabilities or diseases'.
SubscribeStar	Prohibits use that would 'harass, abuse, insult, harm, defame, slander, disparage, intimidate, or discriminate based on gender, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, race, age, national origin, or disability'.
Patreon	Prohibits 'projects funding hate speech, such as calling for violence, exclusion, or segregation. This includes serious attacks on people based on their race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sex, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability or serious medical conditions.'
Represent	Prohibits material that is 'hateful, or racially, ethnically or otherwise objectionable' or is 'advocating persecution based on gender, age, race, religion, disability or national origin, containing explicit sexual content or is otherwise inappropriate for Represent production'.
WooCommerce	No policy. A spokesperson told ASPI 'WooCommerce, just like WordPress, is a free and open-source software (as opposed to a platform/SAAS) distributed under GPL V2 license which means that anyone is free to use and modify it without any restrictions or supervision from our side. There isn't a way for us to force any sort of policies on WooCommerce users, or monitor any sort of compliance.'[97]
Square	Prohibits the upload or provision of content that 'is false, misleading, unlawful, obscene, indecent, lewd, pornographic, defamatory, libelous, threatening, harassing, hateful, abusive, or inflammatory'.
Donorbox	Prohibits 'engaging in, encouraging, promoting, or celebrating unlawful violence toward any group based on race, religion, disability, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, or any other immutable characteristic'.
Google AdSense	Prohibits content that 'incites hatred against, promotes discrimination of, or disparages an individual or group on the basis of their race or ethnic origin, religion, disability, age, nationality, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or other characteristic that is associated with systemic discrimination or marginalization'.
Amazon Associates Program	Unsuitable sites include those that 'promote or contain materials or activity that is hateful, harassing, harmful, invasive of another's privacy, abusive, or discriminatory (including on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, nationality, disability, sexual orientation, or age)'.

Indeed, the approach of payment platforms to RWE content wasn't consistent among our sample.[98] Buy Me a Coffee fundraisers posted to a Telegram channel associated with Thomas Sewell appeared to be repeatedly suspended, but the company declined to say why.[99] However, some of the sites used by our sample that allow donations or tips, such as the live-streaming platform DLive, have announced crackdowns on 'violent extremists'.[100] Nevertheless, we found Australian RWE DLive channels circumventing the platform's policies, potentially due to their lack of international prominence, limited monitoring or a lack of focus from those platforms on Australia.

The definitional difficulties surrounding the sharing of RWE content, as explored above, may also play a role. The platforms rarely define, at least in publicly available documentation, what they mean by terms such as 'hate speech' or how a determination is made. One exception was Patreon, which provided a list of questions it may consider when reviewing an account for a potential hate-speech violation, such as 'Does the creator glorify a group that is known to support ideologies that would be classified as hate speech under this policy?'[101]

The history of public pressure leading to RWE deplatforming from funding platforms has arguably fuelled what Cynthia Miller-Idriss has called an 'entrepreneurial spirit within the far-right'.[102] RWE groups and figures in the US and Europe have moved to fundraising platforms with fewer restrictions or those purpose-built for them. The now inactive crowdfunding site Hatreon is one example of this attempt to supplant more mainstream funding sources.[103] However the demise of Hatreon (Visa reportedly suspended its processing support for the site) shows how funding platforms remain vulnerable to the decisions of major payment processors.[104]

Cryptocurrencies offer an increasingly popular alternative that's seen as less vulnerable to deplatforming, as indicated by their use among our sample.[105] Nevertheless, pressure points may emerge where cryptocurrencies are converted into or out of fiat currencies. Coinbase, a popular cryptocurrency exchange, reportedly shut down accounts attempting to make bitcoin transfers to RWE website the *Daily Stormer* in 2017.[106] The company's user agreement prohibits uses that 'encourage hate, racial intolerance, or violent acts against others'.[107] Reasearch fellow with the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, Dr Eviane Leidig has also proposed that cryptocurrency exchanges like Coinbase and Bittrex become members of the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism, which is a collection of technology companies that works to counter terrorist and violent extremist activity online.[108]

International case study

RWE figures in the US have raised significant amounts using crowdfunding tied to high-profile events such as the Million MAGA Marches in late 2020 and the 6 January 2021 Capitol riots. While the US political and media ecosystems are unique, they nevertheless provide an example of the scale of fundraising possible using online platforms. We don't attempt to assess the legality of that activity in this report.

Various militia groups, as well as the Proud Boys (labelled a hate group by the SPLC[109] and designated as a terrorist entity in Canada),[110] appear to have raised thousands of dollars on the Christian crowdfunding platform GiveSendGo in December 2020 and January 2021, as revealed by a website data breach. Shared with ASPI ICPC by transparency group Distributed Denial of Secrets,[111]

the GiveSendGo dataset shows that the site was used to raise at least $172,000 in support of activities with claimed links to Proud Boy chapters in the two-month period, with the stated goal of covering expenses such as costs of travel and materials. As noted by *The Guardian*, 'Two separate fundraisers asked patrons to fund protective gear and communications equipment for regional Proud Boys chapters, raising $4,876 and $12,900 respectively'.[112] Analysis by the *Washington Post* found that at least $247,000 was raised on the site for 24 people looking to cover 'travel, medical or legal expenses connected to "Stop the Steal" events'.[113]

GiveSendGo was also used to raise at least $164,399 as part of 'legal defense' funds as of February 2021, including funds ostensibly for high-profile figures in the Proud Boys, including Enrique Tarrio (at least $113,000, according to the DDoSecrets data and a cached GiveSendGo page)[114] and Nick Ochs (two funds appear in his name, amounting to at least $22,899, according to the DDoSecrets data and cached GiveSendGo pages),[115] as well as members of militia groups (Figure 9). These are likely to be a conservative estimates, given that we included only individuals and funds in our dataset with alleged links to events leading up to and including the 6 January riot and to the Proud Boys or the militia group Oath Keepers, as verified by cached records of the GiveSendGo website, media reports and other sources. In addition, some fundraisers captured in the DDoSecrets dataset are still accepting funds.

Figure 9: Funds raised on GiveSendGo as of February 2021 that are claimed to be linked to the Proud Boys and Oath Keepers, drawn from Distributed Denial of Secrets data.
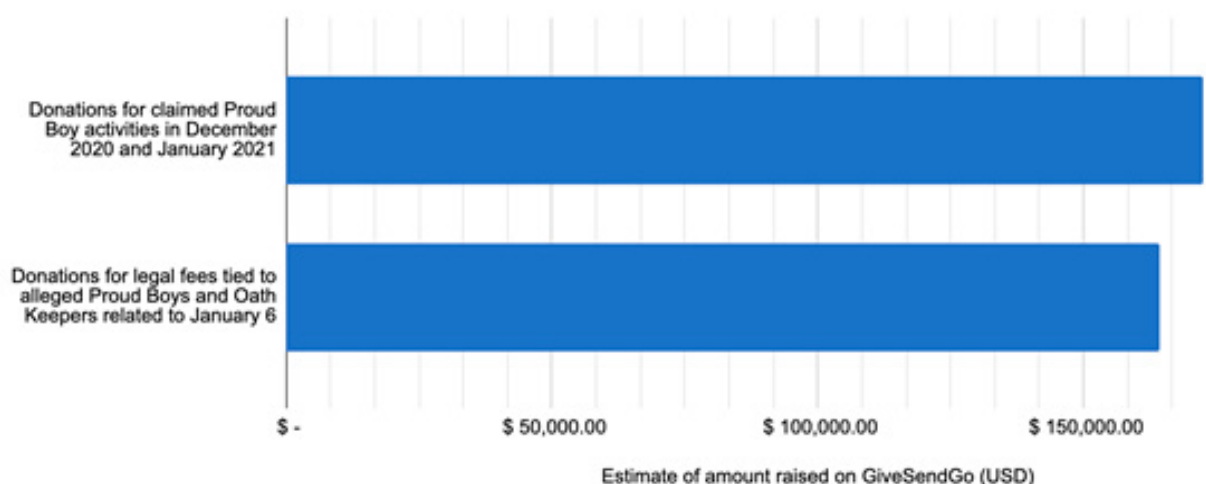

'Breadcrumbs' and ties to the international RWE ecosystem

The online funding mechanisms described in this report also serve as an additional point of connection between the Australian RWE milieu and those who share their views internationally. Funding techniques and strategies developed in one country or ecosystem are copied and refined, and vice versa. As Tom Keatinge, Florence Keen and Kayla Izenman wrote in 2019:

> While there is no international struggle under which these actors currently unite (in contrast to the threat posed by Islamist actors), RWE terrorist and extremist groups are increasingly connected, sharing and emulating best practices, which may include financial methodologies and the transferring of funds.[116]

Public channels on Telegram, in particular, allow messages to easily be forwarded into other groups—a mechanism that helps build the RWE community domestically and internationally. For example, we observed pleas for support for Thomas Sewell's legal fund, which the associated Telegram channel said could be provided in the cryptocurrency monero or via Buy Me a Coffee, forwarded into North American RWE Telegram channels—some with more than 50,000 members (Figure 10). Video clips of his alleged confrontation with a security guard, which resulted in an assault charge, were also highly shared across a variety of local and foreign Telegram channels alongside the financial support request.[117]

Figure 10: Calls for funding created in March 2021 in a Telegram channel associated with Tom Sewell and forwarded into a sample of Australian and overseas RWE and conspiracy theory channels (channel subscriber numbers recorded in July 2021).
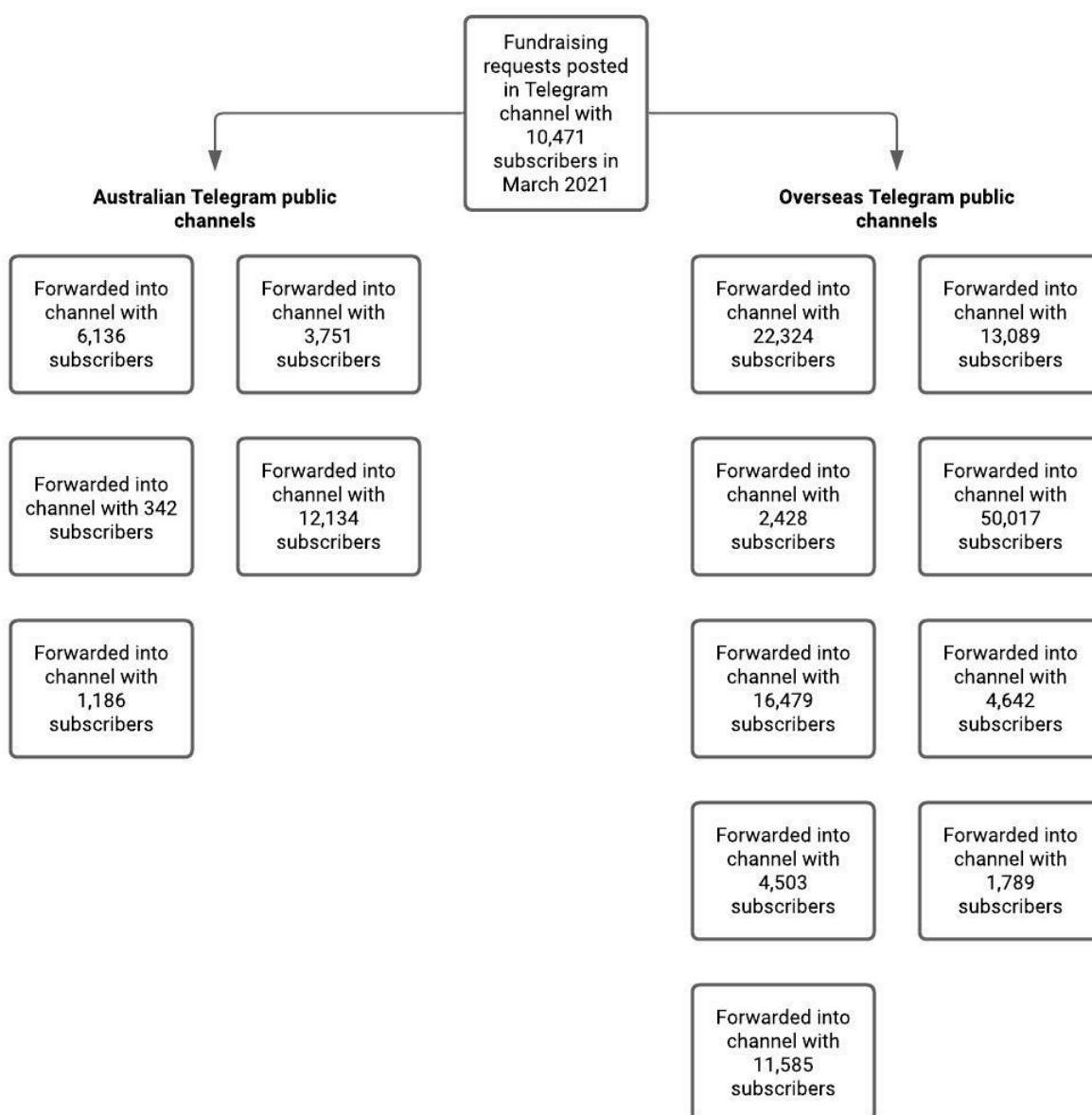
We also observed channels in our sample and associated individuals solidifying connections to the international RWE ecosystem by appearing on British, South African and American podcasts and live-stream shows, which were sometimes used to promote fundraising efforts and posted back on their associated Telegram channels (Figure 11). In some cases, such exchanges appear to be formalised: individuals associated with at least two channels in the sample have regular shows and contribute to overseas media channels that sometimes share RWE content, although it isn't clear what or whether they earn from those relationships financially.

Figure 11: The top 20 Telegram channels forwarded into a Telegram channel that shares content from a North American RWE figure between 1 January and 15 July 2021; a channel associated with Australian Thomas Sewell is among the top 10.
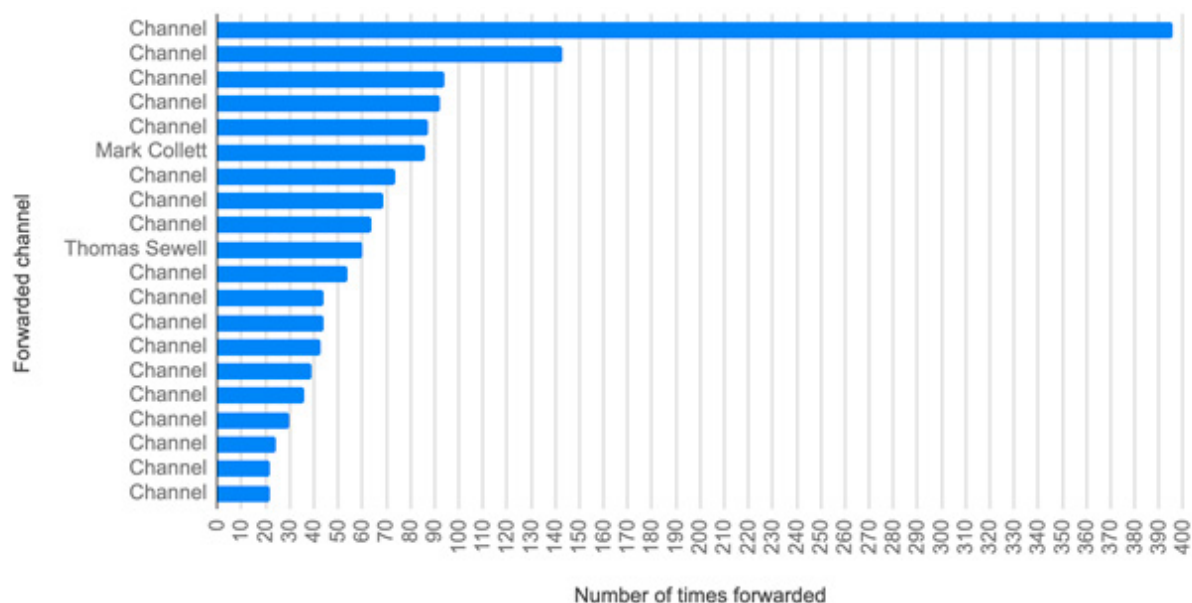
Recommendations

The ways online funding mechanisms can be exploited by individuals and groups sharing RWE material in Australia are an emerging problem. Strong policies and programs to address the drivers of right-wing extremism are important for undermining both the popularity of online extremist content and for disengaging people from RWE movements. However, another strategy that Australian law enforcement, intelligence agencies, policymakers and civil society should explore involves addressing and undermining the financial incentives that can help sustain and grow such movements. This report makes recommendations for government, companies and civil society. These recommendations are grouped into six categories:

1. Reporting obligations for online platforms that allow fundraising

Some financial platforms have obligations under Australia's Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing Act 2006 (AML/CTF Act) if they reach the benchmark of providing a 'designated service' with a 'geographical link' to Australia, among other requirements.[118] While that may be unlikely or complex for some foreign entities that do not have a permanent establishment in Australia, for example, the AML/CTF Act requires a variety of customer identification and verification processes, as well as the reporting of suspicious transactions and record keeping.

Government and regulators should:

- consider whether some of the emerging financial platforms discussed in this report have obligations under the AML/CTF Act
- consider new processes to ensure that emerging online financial platforms are recording and reporting suspicious transactions, among other obligations, even if the service is not located in Australia.

2. Hate crime monitoring

As this report notes, Australia lacks a central registry of hate crimes and related incidents similar to the US Federal Bureau of Investigation's Hate Crime Statistics program. Some organisations, such as Islamophobia Register Australia, track incidents. However, data is collected using different criteria, verification and methodologies and isn't centralised, frustrating an overarching understanding of such crimes.[119] As Professor Greg Barton has written, 'we are flying blind'.[120] Such a registry would provide considerable benefit in understanding the prevalence of RWE-motivated incidents and crime in Australia and provide a better framework to understand related financial activity.

- The government should work with civil society and other groups to create a unified national hate crime and incidents statistics database.

3. Prohibitions against the commercial exploitation of a person's notoriety from criminal offending

In Australia, various legal jurisdictions have varying and at times controversial laws aimed at preventing criminals from benefiting from their crimes,[121] including in some cases from 'selling' their story.[122] For example, the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 has provisions that aim to deprive people of 'literary proceeds derived from the commercial exploitation of their notoriety from having committed offences'.[123] Commercial exploitation can be by any means, including visual media.[124]

- Law enforcement should consider whether the online fundraising of RWE figures in Australia who have gained notoriety from criminal activity falls under the Proceeds of Crime Act or similar state provisions.

4. Enhanced transparency reporting

Many of the platforms in our sample have been co-opted by groups and individuals that share RWE content, even if they weren't built for that purpose. In general, however, few offer governments, researchers, civil society or the public significant transparency about who is using their platforms, how much is being raised or whether funds are successfully 'cashed out'—all of which necessarily raise privacy considerations, among other civil liberty concerns. Nor do they typically share detailed reports on how many accounts have been closed or removed from their platforms for sharing hate speech or otherwise breaking platform policies. This is also an issue when it comes to 'false positives', or when users are inappropriately removed—and especially when there are no meaningful avenues for appeal.

It's important to note that 'arbitrary and reactive' action on the use of such platforms to fund RWE individuals and movements allows private companies considerable latitude over serious social issues, and government and civil society groups must play a role in defining platform regulatory responsibilities, thresholds and safeguards.[125] Civil society is already pushing for change in this space.[126] In June 2021, for example, the Electronic Frontier Foundation and 21 other digital rights organisations wrote to PayPal and its subsidiary Venmo calling on the companies to 'ensure due process, transparency, and accountability' for users.[127] To that end, the letter broadly called for the companies to:

- Publish regular transparency reports
- Provide meaningful notice to users
- Offer a timely and meaningful appeal process.

Non-governmental bodies such as the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism are also playing a role in the moderation of extremist content,[128] although not without scrutiny concerning the transparency and accountability of their activities.[129] Founded in 2017 by Facebook, Microsoft, Twitter and YouTube, the forum aims to build tools and processes that counter the use of technology platforms by terrorists and violent extremists. Likewise, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development is developing a Voluntary Transparency Reporting Framework for Terrorist and Violent Extremist Content Online.[130]

Government agencies, companies and civil society should:

- examine multilateral mechanisms to ensure greater platform transparency and accountability on policy and enforcement
- come together with the platforms and services mentioned in this report, where possible, to discuss opportunities for enhanced transparency and accountability regarding the application of those platforms' terms of services and opportunities for greater clarity and information sharing
- examine opportunities to promote a 'safety by design' approach that puts user safety and rights at the centre of the design, development and release of online funding products and services.

5. Further research on the relationships between online content creation and fundraising by RWE influencers, radicalisation and mobilisation to violence

More research is needed to better understand how online funding platforms may incentivise or help sustain the growth of RWE entities in Australia, and the symbiotic relationship between the two.

Government agencies and civil society should fund and support work that examines, among other topics:

- further themes, tools and narratives of RWE fundraising in Australia
- whether law enforcement agencies have sufficient capability and expertise to investigate these online ecosystems, and identify potential training to overcome any gaps
- how the RWE funding ecosystem may overlap with other online movements, such as groups that espouse conspiracy theories concerning Covid-19
- how the broader online ecosystem (for example, video platforms, chat apps, social media services and hosting services) amplifies, distributes or conducts traffic to the funding platforms mentioned in this report.

6. Countering violent extremism

While more work needs to be done to understand the role of online funding mechanisms in the RWE ecosystem, countering violent extremism early-intervention providers in government agencies and NGOs should be aware that those funding mechanisms could be a factor when they're working to disengage people from the RWE community.

- Government agencies and NGOs that provide countering violent extremism services should investigate whether income from online platforms could be influential or appealing for radicalised or at-risk individuals, and build the ability to identify that potential influence.

Notes

1   As an example, in June 2020, Facebook designated 'boogaloo' a 'violent US-based anti-government network as a dangerous organization' and banned it from the platform under its under Dangerous Individuals and Organizations policy, online.

2   Gerrit De Vynck, Ellen Nakashima, 'RWE groups move online conversations from social media to chat apps—and out of view of law enforcement', *Washington Post*, 18 January 2021, online.

3   The 2021 Lowy Institute Poll found that 42% of those surveyed saw 'right-wing extremism as a critical threat to the vital interests of Australia in the next ten years', online.

4   Will Carless, 'Crowdfunding hate: how white supremacists and other extremists raise money from legions of online followers', *USA Today,* 4 February 2021, online.

5   In March 2021, ASIO Director-General Mike Burgess announced the organisation's new preference to categorise violent extremism as 'religiously motivated' or 'ideologically motivated', rather than as 'Islamic' or 'RWE', for example—a change that was challenged by some terrorism experts and political figures. 'Ideological extremism' includes right-wing extremism. Burgess told *The Guardian* that he would still say 'extreme rightwing terror … when it matters and when that is sensibly there'. Daniel Hurst, 'Australia's spy chief vows to call out rightwing terrorism when there's a specific threat', *The Guardian*, 20 March 2021, online.

6   Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO), *Director-General's annual threat assessment*, Australian Government, 17 March 2021, online.

7   Telegram is a messaging application. For more discussion of Telegram, please see the section titled 'Telegram' under the 'Platform analysis' section on page 10.

8   *Report: Royal Commission of Inquiry into the terrorist attack on Christchurch masjidain on 15 March 2019*, Part 4, Chapter 7, paragraph 17, New Zealand Royal Commission, 21 December 2020, online.

9   'Posing as patriots: *Graphika* exposes an active campaign by suspected Russian actors to covertly target RWE US audiences on alternative platforms', *Graphika*, 7 June 2021, online.

10 Kristy Campion, 'A "lunatic fringe"? The persistence of right wing extremism in Australia', *Perspectives on Terrorism*, April 2019, online.

11 ASIO, 'ASIO submission to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security Inquiry into extremist movements and radicalism in Australia', Australian Government, 16 February 2021, online.

12 ASIO, 'Violent extremism terminology', Australian Government, 2021, online.

13 Extremism creates an 'us versus them' vision of the world, often based on immutable qualities such as race or sexuality. Anders Ravik Jupskås and Iris Beau Segers have drawn attention to how this creates 'enemies' who supposedly threaten the survival of the nation, culture or race. Of course, holding extremist beliefs alone doesn't necessarily lead to violence, and neither is it typically illegal to hold such views. Anders Ravik Jupskås, Iris Beau Segers, *What is right-wing extremism?*, C-REX—Center for Research on Extremism, 31 August 2020, online.

14 Some argue for a category called 'dangerous speech', which is 'any form of expression (e.g. speech, text, or images) that can increase the risk that its audience will condone or commit violence against members of another group'. This refers to speech that uses dehumanisation among other factors to increase the 'risk' of violence, not directly causing it by explicit instruction. 'Dangerous Speech: A Practical Guide', *Dangerous Speech Project*, online.

15 Milo Comerford, 'Confronting the Challenge of 'Post-Organisational' Extremism', *ORF,* 19 August 2020, online.

16 Bruce Hoffman, Colin Clarke, 'The growing irrelevance of organizational structure for US domestic terrorism', *The Cipher Brief*, 2 July 2020, online.

17 Department of Security Studies and Criminology (DSSC), *Mapping networks and narratives of online right wing extremists in New South Wales*, Macquarie University, technical report for Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Program, NSW Department of Communities and Justice, 2020, doi:10.5281/zen-odo.4071472, online.

18 Australian scholars have developed a typology of RWE extremism in Australia that points to a set of core beliefs revolving around Australia being under threat, the inadequacy of democracy to address those threats, and the proposition that innate equality between different genders, races, religions and sexual orientations is a fallacy. Those core beliefs are often understood and promoted through the three organising lenses of anti-Islamism, aggressive nationalism or white supremacy. Other narratives are strategically adopted to mobilise and recruit. They include 'hot topics' of the day, such as same-sex marriage, gender

roles or, more recently, Covid-19. It's the very similarity of these characteristics to overseas RWE movements that helps facilitate transnational cultural and financial connections, as this report explores. Please see Mario Peucker, Debra Smith, Muhammad Iqbal, 'Not a monolithic movement: the diverse and shifting messaging of Australia's far-right', in M Peucker, D Smith (eds), *The far-right in contemporary Australia*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.

19   Hagar Cohen, Meryem Aydogan, Scott Mitchell, 'Why are so few hate crimes prosecuted in Australia?', *ABC News*, 5 May 2019, online.

20   Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Hate crime statistics*, US Government, 2021, online.

21   'Australia lists neo-Nazi Sonnenkrieg Division as terrorists', *AP News*, 22 March 2021, online.

22   Andy Fleming, 'A brief guide to the Australian RWE (July 2020 edition)', *slackbastard*, 3 July 2020, online.

23   'Posing as patriots: *Graphika* exposes an active campaign by suspected Russian actors to covertly target RWE US audiences on alternative platforms'.

24   Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD), *Bankrolling bigotry: an overview of the online funding strategies of American hate groups*, ISD, London, 27 October 2020, online.

25   Southern Poverty Law Centre (SPLC), 'Frequently asked questions about hate groups', SPLC, Montgomery, Alabama, 2020, online.

26   SPLC, 'Frequently asked questions about hate groups'.

27   Jacob Davey, Julia Ebner, *The fringe insurgency: connectivity, convergence and mainstreaming of the extreme right*, ISD, London, 2017, 29, online.

28   DSSC, *Mapping networks and narratives of online right wing extremists in New South Wales*.

29   'Harmful behaviours, right-wing extremism and radicalisation', in *Report: Royal Commission of Inquiry into the terrorist attack on Christchurch masjidain on 15 March 2019*, Part 2, Chapter 5, paragraphs 11–14.

30   'Harmful behaviours, right-wing extremism and radicalisation', in *Report: Royal Commission of Inquiry into the terrorist attack on Christchurch masjidain on 15 March 2019*, Part 2, Chapter 5, paragraphs 12-14, 5.

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Acronyms and abbreviations

AML/CTF Act	Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing Act 2006
ASIO	Australian Security Intelligence Organisation
ICPC	International Cyber Policy Centre
NGO	non-government organisation
RWE	right-wing extremist
SPLC	Southern Poverty Law Center (US)