

To whom it may concern,

Establishing laws against "misinformation" and/or "disinformation" is incredibly dangerous to the free discourse of ideas and is a direct threat to the (established by High Court ruling) existing constitutionally protected right to political free speech.

Enacting laws based on the concepts of "misinformation" and/or "disinformation" requires that both concepts be defined. These need to either be defined in the law itself or defined through legal precedent (through rulings made by the judiciary). In both cases, the terms "misinformation" and "disinformation" will be subject to the meanings given them by people with different motivations and different personal or group objectives. This means that the meaning will change over time and will mean that the application of any related law(s) will be a moving target - this will make it very challenging for the law to apply consistently and will make it even more challenging for Australian residents to know whether they are about to violate the corresponding law(s).

Further, as governments and members of the judiciary will change (over time), the subjective interpretation of "misinformation" and "disinformation" will likely also change - meaning what is deemed to be "misinformation" or "disinformation" today will not be tomorrow; and vice-versa, what is deemed not to be "misinformation" or "disinformation" today will be tomorrow. This is where the government should be VERY CAREFUL with implementing such laws. For example, what an ALP government-appointed commissioner considers to be correct information (today) might be redefined by a Liberal government-appointed commissioner tomorrow - thus, those represented by the ALP may find themselves the focus of such laws, in a way they deem unfair, in the same way, others may find themselves the focus of the laws shortly after their adoption.

Whilst there is a growing community sentiment to regulate speech (of which any legal framework that facilitates action against "misinformation" or "disinformation" seeks to achieve), a simple set of questions demonstrates the danger of such speech regulation:

- "Without free speech, how would you know who to disagree with?" :: Without the ability for individuals to state misinformation or disinformation, causing

those individuals to hide from general public visibility (effectively creating an information black market), how would anyone know who to disagree with?

- "Would you just disagree with whomever the government (or the empowered Commissioner) tells you to disagree with?" :: Would you just blindly accept that the government (or the empowered Commissioner) is entirely correct, without any possibility of being incorrect, and blindly disagree with anyone they tell you to disagree with?

- "What happens if the government (or the empowered Commissioner) decides you are who should be disagreed with?" : Because what is deemed to be "misinformation" or "disinformation" is subject to change it is entirely plausible that one day anyone (including you) could be deemed to be sharing "misinformation" or "disinformation", resulting in the government (or empowered Commissioner) labelling them (you) as the one in the wrong and that the eyes of the law should be focused on them (on you).

The term "political correctness" has origins in historical regimes that have enacted substantial crimes against humanity.

From the Washington Post, "All journalists must have a permit to function and such permits are granted only to pure 'Aryans' whose opinions are politically correct. Even after that, they must watch their step." - quoting the New York Times, describing a clampdown in Nazi Germany -

https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/how-politically-correct-went-from-compliment-to-insult/2016/01/13/b1cf5918-b61a-11e5-a76a-0b5145e8679a_story.html

Quoting from Encyclopedia Britannica, "The term first appeared in Marxist-Leninist vocabulary following the Russian Revolution of 1917. At that time it was used to describe adherence to the policies and principles of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (that is, the party line)."

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/political-correctness>

Indeed, in Eastern-bloc states it was common for parents to describe to children the difference between being "politically correct", the notion that some things were described as fact because they were acceptable to the regime, vs. "kitchen table talk", the notion that something was factually correct but not for saying away from the kitchen table in case an authority heard you

saying something that was not approved - something that was "misinformation" or "disinformation."

Amnesty International describes the concept of "Kitchen Talk" (referring to "Kitchen Table Talks") here:

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/blogs/global-voices/russia-you-can-freely-express-your-own-opinion-your-own-kitchen>

This legislation seeks to establish, in Australia, approved information (that could otherwise be described as "politically correct information") and non-approved information (a.k.a. "misinformation" and/or "disinformation" - that could otherwise be described as "kitchen table talk"). This puts the Australian government on equal footing with several of history's most despotic regimes. It lays a similar foundation to those used by those regimes to enact far more heinous actions.

This legislation should be vehemently opposed as an attack on the very heart of Australia's liberal democratic principles - any MP who supports these changes should be rightly, loudly criticised as pursuing controls of the Australian population that can not achieve anything other than the suppression of the free exchange of ideas and the freedom of political expression.

Regards

