

Rowan Karrer

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to express my sincerest concern over the proposed amendments and augmentation of powers provided to the government body ACMA in relation to the dissemination of misinformation and disinformation.

In my opinion, the proposed capacity to issue fines of up to millions of dollars constitutes a dramatic overreach of government authority. These powers could effectively stifle the capacity of dissenting journalists or media bodies to question the overarching institutions of power who are responsible for defining the terms critical to the manifestation of this policy, such as:

- What constitutes misinformation? According to whom?
- What constitutes disinformation? According to whom?
- Professional news sources are said to be exempt from these powers, professional according to whom?

Further to this, the proposed fine structure stands to exact far more severe punishment on smaller, independent, and low-funded media sources. For such institutions or individuals, a fine of up to \$2.75 million is likely to be far more devastating, than a fine of up to 2% of gross turnover for a large international corporation, even if the 2% amounts to a larger sum.

Due to the sheer size of social media platforms, and the quantity of information they are processing, the promulgation of such a policy will no doubt force “social-media, news-aggregators and podcasts” to enforce arbitrary standards based on current standing information through machine-learning and other autonomous technologies. These technologies are not always capable of the necessary nuance and philosophical insight that may be necessary to discern contrarian but true ideas, well-intentioned but misguided ideas, and outright malicious ideas.

I understand that the dissemination of poor or even malignant information is potentially dangerous in certain circumstances – even life threatening. However, the proposed powers have the capacity of silencing any and all dissenting voices on the arbitrary grounds of ‘misinformation’, and this is a far greater threat to the safety of Australians.

The information and assumptions within in this letter are derived from information obtained from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation:

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-06-25/fines-to-punish-online-misinformation-under-new-draft-bill/102521500>

And the government infrastructure website:

<https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/have-your-say/new-acma-powers-combat-misinformation-and-disinformation>

Thank you kindly for your time and consideration. I am grateful that I still have the opportunity to speak freely in this country on important matters, a freedom that is being proposed to be weakened.

Regards,

Rowan Karrer