

## SUBMISSION

Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023.

Freedom of speech is crucial to any free and democratic society. The proposed Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023, is an attack on freedom of speech. It must not be allowed to proceed.

There is no Government, Politician or government official, who is qualified to rule on which opinions and arguments should be censored and which should be promoted. In any free society, people have differing points of view, which change over time. Ideas must be allowed to be shared, regardless of how abhorrent they seem to some parts of the community.

History shows us that censorship has preceded every transition towards totalitarian / authoritarian government. History has also clearly identified that while some individuals might be trusted, Government and Bureaucracy as a whole can never be trusted as the arbiter of truth. Such organisations are always subject to influence from ideology, politics, money and self preservation.

It wasn't that long ago that homosexuality was illegal and homosexual acts were considered abhorrent and immoral by most of society. Under the proposed legislation, the Government of that day would have censored all speech regarding homosexuality and lgbtqia+ activities (the Government of those years, did in fact censor a good deal of communication on these topics). Yet, in today's society the current Government celebrates all things lgbtqia+ and actively promotes all associated topics. Who decides?

There are lies (misinformation and disinformation) spread every day through legacy and new media channels. Most Media is privately owned and funded. People understand that Media promotes ideas and shares news that supports the owners political and financial interests. The ABC is run by individuals who influence the news and information shared through its channels. Politicians are famous for lying. Who do we trust to decide what is truth and what is disinformation?

Recent history has shown that the Australian Federal and State Governments are already adept at censoring information they don't want shared. The covid era provides many examples of material that was considered disinformation and actively censored, which was eventually proven to be accurate or at least a worthy argument to be considered.

- The covid Lab leak theory was actively censored, but is now largely considered to be correct.
- Arguments that the covid vaccines were less effective than claimed were censored, but it is now clear that vaccine effectiveness is limited.
- Claims that covid vaccinated people could still catch and spread covid were called misinformation by the Australian Government and Health authorities, yet it quickly became evident that those claims were true.
- Blood clotting issues with some covid vaccines were initially denied by Government, until eventually they were grudgingly acknowledged.

Trust in Government, Politicians, and Mainstream Media is at an all time low. And for good reason.

The people of Australia do not trust the government or any bureaucrat to make decisions about what information we can and cannot consume. Free speech is too important. I strongly stand against the proposed Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023.