Date: 1/July/2023

Submission: Communications Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023

Introduction: My Name is Rachel Byrne and I live in ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮. I am a mother and a wife. We are working people and have done so all our lives, we are taxpayers, and we believe in freedom and democracy. My family and I believe in free speech, the underpinning of any true democracy. We are fiercely passionate in the belief that People deserve the right to free speech as a basic human right and this must be protected at all costs.

"Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers." Article 19 – Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

I am opposed to this legislation for the following reasons:

- If the ACMA registers a misinformation code, digital platform providers in the relevant section of the digital platform industry must comply with the code or in exceptional circumstances, ACMA may determine a standard that digital platforms are required to comply with.

  This is an absolute overreach of powers. It is not for any one body or Government to determine for everyone what is the truth and what is a lie. These so-called proposed Government protections are dangerous, mass censorship is abominable and makes me and my family feel extremely unsafe. We take as our right as people to share information and receive information as a given human right and an expectation in a free society. In modern society digital platforms are a method of communication, of ideas, expressions and news. This overreach the government proposes essentially grants extraordinary powers to silence dissenters against the Government or any approved Government narrative. The proposal is to silence any opinions other than that of the ruling powers by "preventing or responding to misinformation or disinformation". I am appalled that representatives of the Australian Government would suggest such legislation, to me it is very reminiscent of the censorship that people in communist countries and countries run by dictatorships are forced to endure. Who decides the truth? The ruling class?

  "Whoever would overthrow the liberty of a nation must begin by subduing the freeness of speech". Benjamin Franklin

- The ACMA would be giving themselves sweeping powers to change standards, impose standards and punish digital outlets for non-compliance. Given the shocking powers and overreach the government both State and Federal gave themselves over covid, I am extremely concerned and dismayed the political class want to give themselves more power as to what the Citizens can read, publish or have access to.
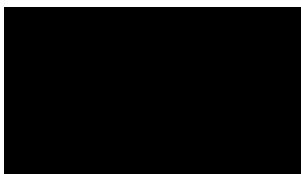
They will achieve this be threating to punish the platforms that modern society uses to communicate with each other. It is extremely controlling, limiting and immoral to do this. By controlling outlets and platforms published content you are threatening that if they allow people to speak and it goes against the approved narrative they will be financially and legally punished. As a result, you will silence people. I believe that if the Australian people truly understood the powers and the dangers of this proposed legislation they would never agree. Essentially this legislation will gag the Australian people and the platforms that allow carriage of ideas and voices. This is an extremely dystopian measure and not representative of the Australia that I know.

In summary, I am against every section of this proposed legislation, I find it be antithesis of freedom and democracy. The Australian people should not be silenced, nor should their vehicle of communication of ideas and speech be curtailed by a government that is obsessed with power and control. The Government and politicians work for the people, you are mandated to serve NOT to rule.

"Give me the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience, above all liberties."

John Milton

Yours Sincerely

Rachel Byrne