

I am an Australian constituent of [REDACTED].

I am writing this submission to express my extreme concern at the Albanese ALP government putting forward the following legislation:

Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation Bill) 2023

This Bill intends to severely impact freedom of speech and expression in Australia. This legislation seeks to essentially allow ACMA to decide what is true and what is false, and punish those who publish to the contrary.

At present we have an 'opt in' voluntary code of practice which essentially governs the industry at this time.

The guiding principle in the **DIGI Code** is as follows:

Protection of freedom of expression: Digital platforms provide a vital avenue for the open exchange of opinion, speech, information, research and debate and conversation as well as creative and other expression across the Australian community. Signatories should not be compelled by Governments or other parties to remove content solely on the basis of its alleged falsity if the content would not otherwise be unlawful. Given its subject matter, the Code gives special attention to international human rights as articulated within the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, including but not limited to freedom of speech. Signatories are encouraged to, in developing proportionate responses to Disinformation and Misinformation to be cognisant of the need to protect these rights.

Clearly the people who wrote **DIGI Code** offered reverence to Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. I have copied an excerpt of this below:

Article 19

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.

It appears that this legislation, your government proposes to introduce a Bill that completely overlooks Article 19.

The Bill also has some extreme measures on civil and criminal penalties, reminding me of how a **totalitarian government** would operate. To put things bluntly, publish something we do not agree with, and you will be punished. Seems very strange given we reside in a democracy.

I am extremely concerned by this Bill, would appreciate your investigation of this further and follow up with your responses on this matter and how you will protect Australians.

Kind Regards

Mrs Amanda-lea Clohesy

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