

To whom it may concern,

Re: Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation)
Bill 2023

I'm not convinced this is a good idea, a bureaucratic government department that has not been elected, or an elected government with bias in control of what is the published truth, as they see it, without an option of rebuttal in regards to citizens rights with freedom of speech and expression is a dangerous path to take.

This is straight out of the fictional book 1984, the ministry of truth. This is not the answer, it removes the option of debate, raising counter arguments to peoples beliefs, positions and ideas. I believe in the ability to have open communication regardless of where truth lies, where each person has the opportunity to debate and decide in their own right what the truth is. If we take that away, we will only be following the defined truth as determined by the government bureaucrats which can apply any bias as required for the narrative being sold. If this amendment passes each citizens human rights to express themselves will be diminished based on someone else's perspective or position being true or false.

Free flowing freedom of speech and expression has led western countries to the where they are today, it has strengthened them in many ways also being example beacons of freedom in the world. It angers me that something like this would even be contemplated and raised, I can see this being abused extensively, no different to a state with a dictatorship. The past three years where there were many things raised on social media and deemed misinformation, people of reputation and experts in their fields were shutdown by social media, main stream media, commentators and governments for voicing theirs views. These peoples speech later being found and proved correct after their reputations were ruined. Who is going to take responsibility and be accountable for these situations after the fact, conveniently from what appears in the draft the responsibility of those in control are deemed to be exempt.

Who is the arbiter of truth?, who decides whats true?, what is the recourse for individuals and groups accused of falsehoods? Is the evidence of what is deemed true going to be vetted by third parties outside the government? In regards to science where new observable evidence in contrary to current knowledge and understanding, will these findings be deemed misinformation?

Some of the definitions are ambiguous and open to interpretation, they could easily be linked to other legal controls currently within the law to enforce an outcome. I would like to see a re-thinking of this amendment, I get that misinformation can have adverse affects in society, but in silencing what could be credible information it may lead to more destructive outcomes.

Regards,

Rowan Howard

2/7/2023