

The Escalating Misuse of 'Misinformation' and 'Disinformation' Labels

I trust this letter finds you well. I am writing to express my deep concerns about the growing misuse of 'misinformation' and 'disinformation' labels by governmental bodies. This issue has been observed globally, and unfortunately, Australia is not immune to this trend, which threatens to stifle legitimate debate, silence opposition, and manipulate public sentiment.

The essence of democracy lies in the principle of open, transparent debate where all perspectives, irrespective of their popularity, should be heard and scrutinised. However, the misuse of 'misinformation' and 'disinformation' labels can potentially mark any dissenting voice as harmful, thereby posing a serious threat to democratic discourse. In my reading this is exactly what this draft bill is seeking to do.

While it's imperative to counter the spread of false information, it is equally important to guard against the weaponisation of these labels in a way that undermines democratic debate. To emphasise my concerns, I want to highlight some examples from the Australian context:

1.COVID-19 Pandemic: The introduction of the 'Disinformation and Misinformation' bill during the COVID-19 pandemic had, at times, resulted in the dismissal of genuine concerns and questions about the speed of vaccine development and potential side effects, under the label of 'misinformation'. There is a legitimate question about vaccine whether healthy young adults should have been forced to take these vaccines when it is not clear that the benefits did actually outweigh the potential side effects like Myocarditis and Blood clots. Even today the actuaries are highlighting an increase of between 10-15% in excess deaths in the last 12 months, to what their modeling expected. This should be raising alarm bells within the medical and political community, as currently there appears no accepted explanation of these. But I fear many professionals are afraid to voice their concerns here for fear of being labeled as mis or dis information.

2.Climate Change Debate: In recent years, we have seen instances where voices expressing concerns over the government's climate policies have been labelled as propagating 'misinformation', thus undercutting a fair and open debate on one of the most pressing issues of our times.

3.Media Law Reform: With the proposed Media Bargaining law, there were instances where independent voices raising concerns about the impact on smaller media outlets were dismissed as 'misinformation', curbing a broader debate about the law's implications.

These instances are just a few examples, but they reveal how labels of 'misinformation' and 'disinformation' can be misused as tools for political censorship, leading to the suppression of dissent and the skewing of public sentiment.

To counteract such misuse, it's crucial to establish stringent checks and balances. Fact-checking organisations need to operate independently, transparently, and accountably. But often they are funded by political lobby groups, there needs to be more accountability and transparency here on the funding and control of Fact Checking Organisations.

As a country we should foster a culture of media literacy, enabling citizens to independently verify information and not rely solely on authorities for the determination of truth.

A strong democracy is built on well-informed citizens. By giving people information, we help them make good decisions and speak up about what matters. This means we can't just label things we disagree with as "misinformation". Instead, we need to focus on teaching everyone how to check facts and think critically. When everyone has a voice and the right information, our democracy works best.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best Regards,

Rene Le Cornu