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Tuesday, 4 July 2023

Subject: Strong Opposition to the Misinformation and Disinformation Bill

Dear Minister for Communication,

I am writing to you as a deeply concerned Australian citizen about the **'Combating Misinformation and Disinformation Bill'** currently under discussion. As a strong proponent of democratic values, free speech, and civic responsibility, I believe there are significant aspects of this bill that require careful consideration.

Firstly, while the intent of the bill to address the widespread issue of misinformation and disinformation is commendable and to some extent necessary. I am primarily concerned about the potential infringement upon the absolute right to freedom of speech in our country, as well as our human rights protected under Section 16 of the Human Rights Act 2004. This crucial legislation affirms that everyone has the right to hold opinions without interference, and everyone has the right to freedom of expression. The loose definitions of "misinformation" and "disinformation" could lend themselves to subjective interpretations and may be used as a tool to suppress legitimate, albeit dissenting voices, under the guise of preventing untruths, in direct contradiction with these established rights.

I implore you to think about the potential for selective enforcement and political bias that may be unintentionally encouraged by this bill. There is inherent danger in assigning any entity with the power to arbitrate what is true and what is not, particularly within the complex realm of politics, where truth is often multifaceted. This could lead to an inadvertent inhibitory effect on free speech, where individuals might fear expressing their views because of the risk of being penalised.

Furthermore, the privacy implications of such a bill are deeply concerning. To effectively identify misinformation and disinformation, a substantial level of scrutiny and surveillance of digital communications will be necessary, which might be seen as an overreach of power and a violation of privacy rights.

While we must undoubtedly fight against the spread of false information that has the potential to harm our society and undermine confidence in our institutions, it is imperative that we do so in a way that does not impinge on the basic freedoms on which our society is based.

I am hopeful that when you are considering your stance on the **'Combating Misinformation and Disinformation Bill'**, you will keep these concerns at the forefront of your mind. Any legislation on this topic must be thoroughly considered to ensure it mitigates the spread of misinformation without compromising our deeply held democratic principles.

I trust in your commitment to uphold the freedoms that make Australia a democratic nation, including the absolute right to free speech and the right to dissent. I hope that you will take into account the significance of this matter and work towards an effective solution that combats misinformation while safeguarding the freedoms that define our society.

Thank you for your dedicated service to our state and country, and for your consideration of this vital issue. I look forward to your thoughtful response.

Yours sincerely,

Benjamin William

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