

*'Think of the press as a great keyboard on which the government can play.'*

Joseph Goebbels (Nazi Reich Minister of Propaganda 1933 – 1945).

**90 years ago, there was no internet, and no social media platforms. But this statement by Goebbels is as true today as it was back then.**

**Although it is not in the Australian Constitution, freedom of speech is implicit in all democracies. Without that ability to speak freely, we would be living in a dictatorship.**

**The definition of 'press' now must include these social media platforms, and the manipulation and control of content by governments and special interest groups is as insidious as ever. You just have to look to some past events to see this in action. The Covid pandemic; climate change; LGBTIQ+ issues; the Voice to Parliament etc.**

**At the direction of those who control some of these platforms, people who put counter-arguments and points of view to a particular contentious topic are cancelled, banned, and shouted down as xenophobes, homophobes, climate deniers, racists, or outright liars.**

**And yet in hindsight, these nay-sayers have been proven right in many instances.**

**This Exposure Draft (Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023) is proposing to enforce actions be taken by social media platforms to counter 'misinformation and disinformation'.**

**But who will decide what is 'misinformation and disinformation'?**

**The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) will be deciding what people can say and see. And if the social media platform fails to comply with the AMCA regulations, they will subject to monetary penalties.**

**So what will these social media platform do? They will ensure that any content on their platform is 'approved' by those who have the power (ACMA and the Federal Government), and silence those who oppose the views and aspirations of that government.**

**And what content will be excluded from this proposed legislation?**

Under 'DEFINITIONS', Excluded Content includes that coming from (in part):

- Professional news content – so they can parrot the line of the government of the day.
- An accredited educational institution – so they can spread their radical ideological notions on anything from white privilege, distorted history, 'inclusion', gender fluidity, their rage at western civilization, etc.
- Content by a foreign government or a body recognised by a foreign government as an accreditor of educational institutions. Considering the influence that China has in our higher educational institutions, this is alarming!
- Content that is authorised by the Commonwealth, all the States, a Territory, or a local government. This is giving licence to these bodies to say anything they like – even outright lie – on a social media platform, and then have ACMA regulations have any counter-comments or arguments blocked. We see this often (the lies) coming from politicians (mostly from the progressives and Left).

Again from the 'DEFINITIONS' section, Harm means any of the following:

- Hatred against a group in Australian society on the basis of ethnicity, nationality, race, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion or physical or mental disability.

Speaking out against any of the above does not necessarily come from 'hate'. And yet I'm sure the victim mentality will kick in, and those whose feelings are hurt will make a lot of noise, and the 'perpetrator' will be subject to banning.

- Disruption of public order or society in Australia.

I bet my last dollar that anyone who, on a social media platform, organises a disruptive rally in support of – let's say 'Climate Change' – will not be seen as disruptive. On the other hand if anyone does the same thing but is against the 'Climate Change' scaremongering narrative, they will be banned!

- Harm to the integrity of Australian democratic processes or of Commonwealth, State, Territory or local government institutions.

**Will posts made by those on the radical / extreme left be banned if they espouse intimidation of, and actions be taken against politicians who oppose their views? I think not!**

- **Harm to the health of Australians.**

**Think about the Covid19 pandemic, and the radical statements and actions made by both elected and unelected officials, who supported and implemented forced closures of businesses, travel bans, face masks, stay at home restrictions, and forced vaccinations on sections of the community. In hindsight, all this did more harm than good.**

**And yet, under this proposed legislation, politically endorsed social media notices would be exempt, even if it causes REAL harm to Australians.**

- **Harm to the Australian environment.**

**I almost had to laugh at this. Federal, State, Territory, and local governments are all in on the 'Climate Change' con-job. Their push for nett zero emissions and the implementation of policies that close down coal fired power stations, but fast-track renewables is doing more harm than good to the Australian environment. And the termination of sustainable logging in Victoria has been on the orders of the far left Victorian Government. Government at all levels are doing more to harm the environment than anything or anyone else. And yet if a politically-endorsed post appeared on social media in support of these radical ideas, it wouldn't be blocked, BECAUSE IT WAS POLITICALLY ENDORSED!**

- **Economic or financial harm to Australians, the Australian economy or a sector of the Australian economy.**

**We are all feeling the effects of radical policies implemented by Governments, most notably energy prices. This goes hand-in-hand with the previous dot point. Remember PM Albo's infamous statement 'we will bring down your power bills by \$270 before the last election? Yeah, right! Outright lie! And yet if he put that in a social media post, he wouldn't be banned or blocked. BECAUSE IT WAS POLITICALLY ENDORSED!**

**Section 7 (Misinformation and disinformation).**

Unelected bureaucrats in ACMA get to decide what is 'misinformation and disinformation'. Who made them the font of all knowledge? Again, consider the Covid19 pandemic. What was considered 'fake or false information' back then has now proven to be true. And what political affiliations or biases might they have? What oversight is there to ensure that their decisions are even-handed? The Minister? And who has oversight of them?

Section 19 (ACMA may obtain information and documents from other persons).

The onus must be on ACMA to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that an opinion is misinformation or disinformation, and NOT for the person accused of that opinion to prove that it ISN'T misinformation or disinformation.

Section 21 (Self-Incrimination).

Every person has the right to remain silent if there is the possibility that information provided to ACMA will subject them to penalties. This section is comparable to hearings held by the Australian Crime Commission! Witnesses at the ACC are compelled to answer questions, and the answers provided cannot be used against them, but can form the basis of further investigations. ACMA IS NOT THE ACC! And I see there no reference for the 'accused' to have legal representation present.

Section 25 (Publication on Website).

Again, the unelected bureaucrats in ACMA get to decide what is misinformation or disinformation! THAT IS DANGEROUS!

Section 35 (Limitation – Electoral and Referendum matters).

By excluding these matters, the draft law is allowing politicians and other partisan bodies or individuals to lie through their teeth with impunity. IT SHOULD BE ONE IN, ALL IN; or ONE OUT, ALL OUT! THERE SHOULD BE NO EXCLUSIONS! We have already seen this on many occasions where they state blatant lies and expect the public to believe them. This whole draft law is proposed by those who are more intent in holding on to power, and seeking more and more control over our daily lives, how we think, what we think, and what we say or do.

Section 37 (Registration of Codes).

Again, ACMA will decide on what is a 'reasonable' burden on freedom of political communication. Despite sub-sections stating there will be opportunities for public and body or association submissions, there is nothing in this bill that requires any submissions to have any influence on ACMA's decisions.

**Section 40 (Variation of Misinformation codes).**

Again, ACMA will decide on what is a 'reasonable' burden on freedom of political communication.

**Section 45 (General Requirement – Consideration of Freedom of Political Communication).**

Again, ACMA will decide on what is a 'reasonable' burden on freedom of political communication.

**Section 47 (ACMA may determine standards—no industry body or association formed).**

ACMA determines a 'Misinformation Standard'. If there is a political or ideological bias associated with deciding these standards, then this cancels out any opportunity for debate on social media platforms.

**Section 60 (Implied freedom of political communication).**

Subsection 1 states in part: *'The provisions ..... have no effect to the extent (if any) that their operation would infringe any constitutional doctrine of implied freedom of political communication.'*

With governments having so much influence and control over 'issues', then everything becomes political. And anyone who makes a post that challenges the government position can then claim that it is a 'political communication'.  
**SO WHY BOTHER WITH ALL THIS???**

**Section 63 (Schedule not to affect performance of State or Territory functions).**

*'A power conferred by this Schedule must not be exercised in such a way as to prevent the exercise of the powers, or the performance of the functions, of government of a State, the Northern Territory or the Australian Capital Territory.'*

This means that a far-left government like in the ACT or Victoria can post anything they like on a social media platform with no ramifications!

## **Final Word.**

Instead of this proposed legislation, it would be much better to legislate that all social media platforms **MUST** allow all content to be viewed. No 'fact checkers' and no blocking of content unless it contravenes current criminal laws.

This would allow those who have differing ideas and ideologies to have their say, and to be confronted with counter arguments (and facts) if the topic/s are debatable.

Having unelected persons within a body (ACMA) decide what is 'misinformation and disinformation' is dangerous, considering the probability of political bias.

The list of exemptions excludes those who have the most influence – politicians, bureaucrats and educational institutions – whose main drivers are power and control. **THEY** are the most likely to be the initiation point for misinformation and disinformation, and give them the power to control the narrative.

In case you have forgotten my first paragraph, here it is again:

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**I DO NOT SUPPORT THIS PROPOSED LEGISLATION.**