

Subject: Submission – Concerns regarding the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Act 2023

I write as a concerned citizen of Australia, deeply troubled by the proposed Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Act 2023. While I acknowledge the government's intent to combat misinformation and disinformation, I believe that the provisions of this legislation pose a significant threat to freedom of speech, open discussion, and the principles of science and democracy that our society holds dear.

Freedom of speech is a fundamental pillar of any democratic society. It allows for the free exchange of ideas, the pursuit of truth, and the challenging of prevailing norms. By imposing exorbitant fines and penalties on individuals and corporations for non-compliance with the registered code, this legislation risks chilling free expression and stifling open dialogue. It is crucial to remember that open discussion and rigorous debate are the most effective means of tackling bad ideas and combating misinformation, not through limiting or censoring discussion.

Throughout history, great philosophers, thinkers, and scientists have emphasized the importance of unrestricted intellectual inquiry and the pursuit of truth. The philosopher John Stuart Mill, in his work "On Liberty," argued that suppressing dissenting opinions denies us the opportunity to critically examine and refine our own beliefs. He posited that society benefits from the clash of ideas, as the truth emerges through open and robust debate.

Moreover, renowned scientists such as Galileo Galilei and Charles Darwin faced opposition and suppression from prevailing dogmas and authorities. Their groundbreaking contributions to scientific understanding would have been stifled if they were subjected to censorship or punitive measures for expressing unconventional ideas. The progress of scientific knowledge is rooted in the freedom to question and challenge prevailing assumptions, leading to new discoveries and advancements.

By enacting the proposed legislation, we risk discouraging individuals and organizations from engaging in open discourse on critical issues, including science and democracy. It undermines the principles of intellectual honesty, critical thinking, and the pursuit of truth, all of which are essential for societal progress.

Instead of punitive measures, I urge the government to invest in education, media literacy programs, and public awareness campaigns that empower citizens to discern reliable information from misinformation. Promoting digital literacy and critical thinking skills will enable individuals to navigate the vast ocean of information effectively, distinguishing fact from fiction.

Furthermore, the proposed legislation must incorporate clear and objective criteria for identifying misinformation and disinformation. The process should involve diverse stakeholders, including subject matter experts, independent fact-checkers, and civil society organizations. Transparency and accountability are crucial to avoid potential biases and to ensure the fair and equitable implementation of any regulatory framework.

In conclusion, I implore you to reconsider the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Act 2023. While combating misinformation is a noble goal, it

must be achieved without compromising the principles of freedom of speech, open discussion, and the advancement of scientific knowledge. Let us draw inspiration from the great philosophers, thinkers, and scientists of the past who advocated for intellectual freedom and the pursuit of truth.

I appreciate your attention to this matter and trust that you will carefully consider the concerns expressed in this submission. Thank you for your commitment to fostering a society that values open dialogue, critical thinking, and the principles of democracy.

Yours sincerely,

Antonio D'Amico