

Submission: Communication Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023.

To whom it may concern.

I am no one special. Just an everyday Australian. An Australian that values freedom and democracy. However, over the last years and in particular the recent past I am seeing that freedom and democracy eroded if not destroyed on all fronts. Not least of which is free speech. The right to speak one's mind, rightly or wrongly, without fear. That is no longer the case and this current bill before parliament is case in point.

While agree that social media companies have a lot to answer for on some fronts, they have however become an important way for people to communicate. However, one has to feel that communication among the masses is something that current governments do not want.

Have we as a society become so delicate that we have lost the ability to look at an article or opinion and just say to ourselves that's, wrong or right or just plain "nuts"?

How is it that the government has decided that it and only it should be the only body that can have an opinion or disseminate information?

I for one and I know I am not alone, resent the implication that I no longer have the ability to assess something and do my own due diligence as to its validity. To decide whether or not that what I am seeing or reading stands up to that due diligence. To believe it or cast it aside. In fact, I do this quite often, as do many others. Believe it not the vast majority of us who are indeed sentient adults have this ability.

I see the biggest problem is among the vulnerable, easily manipulated and naïve and poorly educated young. Those are the ones who seem to have fallen victim to the current easily "triggered," safe space "seeking ideology that, by left wing government manipulation has pervaded modern society.

This bill on all fronts looks more like something you would see from the likes of the old Polit Bureau, the Stazi or in fact the old KGB !! It smacks of big government seeking to invade and control every part of a citizen's life. If you have not read 1984, perhaps you should, but then again in the current environment, it seems to be being used more as a "how to" instruction manual!

This bill cannot be allowed to pass. Free speech and "I may not agree with what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it" is uppermost in our democracy. We are still, hanging by a thread, but still a democracy none the less.

I admit that I signed off Face Book some years ago. My husband is still on there, so I see it. I lasted about a week on Twitter before leaving that, what is aptly called the "toilet door of the internet" "Elon Musk notwithstanding. I have never been on Instagram or Tik Tok or Redit etc. I have even gone off Pinterest and Spotify. I just cannot be bothered with it all anymore. That is my right. My right to decide what I am and am not a part of. There are many more like me. Some only stay on these places so they know what they are avoiding. ! So how is it that the government has decided to take that individual right to decide away from us?

If you do not like what someone has to say, you as an individual have a choice to make. Switch them off, get angry, laugh at them, or, look into what they are saying and then decide if it is even worth your consideration. THAT IS NOT WHAT GOVERNMENT IS FOR.

One example is "the voice". How can what is being said be characterised as either misinformation or disinformation, when the public is not being given any information. Not meaningful constructive information at any rate. Which has left the public to wonder why, what is it they do not want us to know. So social media become the masses only way to discuss what may be going on. From what I understand, the government is being branded as liars and con men. Another part of the bill talks about harm to the environment? Now if I am a "climate change denier" I am to be silenced no matter what evidence I may have to prove my argument. This bill seems to have it mind to control my opinions on well, everything. If I do not agree with the government and its party line, I am to be cancelled. That will be the effect of this bill.

My personal convictions, religious beliefs, political leanings, education etc, will become the sole province of the government. I repeat this is not democracy. This is at the very least socialism bordering on communism. I reserve the right to make up my own mind, in my own time, about how I feel about what is happening around me. That will not change. Despite the fear of big brother looking over my shoulder. The fear of fines I cannot pay. The thought police turning up at my door to take for reduction. Far fetched. No. We saw it happening during COVID. Softening us up for the next phase. This Bill proves that.

I am no radical, no revolutionary. To even consider writing this and I am not writer, shows how concerned I am about the future of this country. Of the country, our grandchildren will inherit.

This bill must be withdrawn. The government, any government, has no right to decide what any individual may or may not think or have an opinion on. In its essence, it is that simple.

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