

Subject: Public Consultation Submission - Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023

10th July, 2023

To Whom It May Concern,

I write to you today as a concerned citizen regarding the proposed Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023. I am submitting this letter as my official objection to this legislation, voicing my concerns rooted in the principles of individual freedom of expression, democracy, and the preservation of a free society.

Australia's strength lies in its commitment to democratic principles and the belief in the inherent wisdom of its citizens. Freedom of expression forms a cornerstone of these principles, fostering diversity of thought, encouraging open discourse, and enabling the free exchange of ideas. This freedom, I believe, is under threat with the introduction of the proposed bill.

While I fully acknowledge and appreciate the intention of combating online misinformation and disinformation, I fear that the proposed powers granted to the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) may inadvertently infringe upon the right to free speech. This could lead to an environment where individuals may feel hesitant to express their views for fear of them being labelled as 'misinformation' or 'disinformation'. Such an outcome would, I feel, be detrimental to the free and open nature of our society and our democratic way of life.

By empowering a regulatory body to monitor, and potentially influence, the dissemination of information online, we risk setting a precedent where the government becomes the arbiter of truth. The population of a democratic society like Australia is perfectly capable of discerning the validity of information, and this proposed legislation might unintentionally diminish that individual discernment, creating overreliance on regulated truth.

The proposed legislation seems to assume a deficit in the ability of Australians to differentiate between credible information and disinformation. However, I assert that individuals should retain the right to engage, critique, and ultimately determine the value of information in the digital landscape, as this is a crucial aspect of personal freedom and democratic participation.

I would encourage the consideration of alternative means to tackle the issue of online misinformation and disinformation that do not impede upon individual freedoms, and rather focus on educating citizens in media literacy. Encouraging a more informed and media-savvy populace would, in my opinion, better serve the intended aim of this legislation.

In conclusion, I urge you to consider these concerns and the potential implications for our democratic society, and reconsider the provisions of the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023. In the fight against misinformation and disinformation, let us not lose sight of the fundamental values that make our society free and democratic.

Thank you for considering my views on this matter.

Yours sincerely,

W Crook