

**SUBMISSION on Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023**

I have significant concern as to whether any submissions opposing this Bill will be properly considered. I wrote to my local MP, [REDACTED] about this Bill several weeks ago, indicating my concerns and asking about his stance on it. My correspondence was ignored. Nevertheless, I suppose I will try here.

This Bill is a very significant incursion into free speech.

We have no idea how misinformation or disinformation will be interpreted? What is likely to cause “serious harm” is likewise completely subjective.

It is completely unacceptable to have such interpretations left to unelected bureaucrats (or anyone for that matter – no one person or group of persons should such power over others as this Bill would give).

One category of harm outlined in the Fact Sheet is, “Harm to the health of Australians.” This is outrageous. We have just experienced lockdowns and associated business loss and mental harms, the governments and media emphasis on the need for mass vaccinations with loss of employment for those who exercised their choice not to have them, and the associated harms that flowed to the people who were unlucky enough to experience serious adverse reactions. People who spoke out about any of these issues at the time were demonised and labelled conspiracy theorists and misinformation and disinformation purveyors. What these people were saying (online and elsewhere) have now been shown to have largely been correct. Meanwhile, under this proposed legislation, they could have had fines imposed that would have the capacity to destroy lives (since the potential fines as so ridiculously astronomical).

All of this is unacceptable.

Another category is “Harm to the Australian environment.” This will clearly potentially expose people posting content that expresses scepticism about the Net Zero agenda or anything that is contrary to the supposed scientific “consensus” to be considered to have posted misinformation or disinformation under the pretext of protecting us from climate change. Science is a discussion. It evolves. It changes. Scientists are supposed to challenge current understandings with new theories which are then looked at and tested – and sometimes prove to be completely correct. There is no “consensus” in science. It is an oxymoron. What is happening to the environment and how to best address it is a discussion – not true information and misinformation or disinformation. Even assuming that there is a climate “emergency” as the narrative tries to tell us, how can speech (in any form) “harm” the environment? It is outrageous to attempt to control free speech about a matter that affects all humanity in such a manner.

It is completely unacceptable.

Yet another category of harm includes “Hatred against a group in Australian society on the basis of ethnicity, nationality, race, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion or physical or mental disability.” Yet again this is completely subjective. Certainly, there may conceivably be expressions of hatred which would contravene existing laws (so there is no need for another law). But the word “hatred” can be interpreted very widely, and completely inappropriately. People pushing the “trans” agenda, and others, routinely accuse others who they perceive to be questioning of any of their various narratives, of hate speech, when it is no such thing.

This is unacceptable.

Australia is fast sinking towards totalitarianism and ever tightening government control over the lives of its citizens. I never thought I would see this in Australia, but it seems to be approaching.

Australia has been, and should return to and/or remain, a healthy, functioning democracy.

Democracy fundamentally requires freedom of speech, which enables ideas from across the ideological and political spectrum to be discussed and debated. This permits good arguments, guided by the light of truth, to win out.

Words like harm, misinformation, and disinformation have already been weaponised in Australia to shut down critics of the broader ideological agenda at work here and other western nations. All that happened during COVID is a prime example of all this.

We must not allow any possibility that Australia will be able to advance further into the abyss by permitting Bills such as this to be passed.

This Bill does not advance the safety and wellbeing of Australians as referred to, in any way, shape or form – quite the opposite - it has the potential to put the safety and wellbeing of Australians at risk.

10 July 2023