

Submission – Re: Draft of the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation Bill 2023).

After reading the above Draft I have grave fears that this Bill will be extremely detrimental ‘to the safety and wellbeing of Australians and to our Democracy and Economy.’ I therefore set out my objections.

1. I strongly believe that all Australians have a right to express their views and opinions on matters concerning the governance of our country especially when it comes to **Freedom of Speech**. I believe that ‘freedom of expression’ will be seriously jeopardised.
2. Extending new powers to the Independent Regulator, ACMA, is definitely not necessary and a body appointed by Government is hardly going to be wholly independent. The proposed bill gives ACMA the power to decide what is misinformation / disinformation plus the power to create and enforce an industry standard structure, a higher form of regulation, should a voluntary code of practice formed by a Digital Platform be deemed ineffective. (I’m not sure how ACMA would be able to regulate platforms outside this country) There is also provision that ACMA may even make provisions for Digital Platforms to keep records and report to them.
3. The Government is exempt from the legislation – so if people don’t agree with the narrative the Government puts forward, (which happened over the last three years), they have no right to question eg. advice / mandates? Democracies are much more robust when ‘the people’ have the right to exercise individual freedoms.
4. These amendments will affect at least three existing Acts – The Broadcasting Services Act 1992, The Australian Communications and Media Authority Act 2005 and Online Safety Act 2021, which already have adequate provision.

I take this opportunity to make this submission and implore the Government to refrain from passing **legislation and regulations** that are suppressing freedom and causing great division in our country. There are so many more looming and the loss of trust and confidence in our system will only increase and risk civil unrest. People have had enough of control, loss of freedom and outright censorship.

[REDACTED]

Trevor & Helen Richards

[REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]