

Submission on proposed legislation.

Communications Legislation Amendment (Combating Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023

My attention has been drawn to the above bill which is set to be introduced to Parliament in the near future. I am pleased to provide what is my first submission into my thoughts and concerns as to the proposed bill.

'mis' and 'dis' – information are terms that have been used in a prolific manner in the United States of America since 2015-16, being imported into the Australian media and political scene in typical 'copycat' fashion. These terms have caused deep division in the US and are well on the way to creating the same here in this country.

Public trust in Government, media and Government agencies I feel is at an all-time low after the events of the previous few years. We have seen the authorities act in a highly authoritarian manner under the auspice of keeping the community safe from harm, using dubious information and recommendations from external organisations and other countries.

It seemed that open debate was something that those espousing the authoritarian actions and associated enforcement had little interest in engaging in. Instead resorting to attack and belittlement in an attempt to silence opposing points of view. This was obvious at any time by simply engaging and observing any mainstream news outlet at the time.

We note that many of the authoritarian style actions and enforcements of the time were based on information and recommendations from various sources that are found to be inaccurate today. This example has and is repeated in various forms over time, where our elected representatives make representations to the public which are clearly skewed to their own agendas and ends.

The proposed legislation in this case causes me to be extremely concerned as to the way it will almost certainly be used, with that being the shutting down of opinion and public debate on any number of issues going forward. Governments and social media companies of any ilk can and will use the legislation for self-promotion and the censorship of any dissenting voices. Essentially anything that is not strictly the official Government approved line will be censored by the social media companies, under fear of reprisal.

Worthy of note is that those to whom this proposed legislation does not apply, have the most to gain from its implementation, through the propagation of 'official' narratives.

I believe all information should be available so that Australians can make their own assessment as to the merit of any issue. They do not require a 'cleaned' version that puts forward the proletariat's preferred narrative over anyone else in the population.

Censorship of this type has absolutely no place in a democratic system such as ours, and would almost certainly be more comfortable in a system of government such as that in China, Russia, North Korea and their Communist peers. It is offensive to assume that this population cannot be trusted to make decisions relating to internet content for themselves.

Given the above, I would like to submit passionate opposition to the proposed Communications Legislation Amendment, trusting that our elected representatives can see this proposal for what it is, consigning it to the ever-increasing pile of bad ideas rejected by Parliament and the people.

S Graham