

Submission regarding draft legislation granting new powers to ACMA to combat misinformation and disinformation

I have very, very strong misgivings regarding this proposed legislation.

I note that the process for arriving at this point was started by the Morrison led Coalition government.

The basic premise of this legislation is flawed.

The notion that any Government, or Government agency should be placed in a position whereby they are effectively to be placed above criticism of their actions and processes goes right to the heart of the basis of our liberal democratic society.

There has been a move toward this censorious mode of behaviour by Western Governments in recent years, witness the declaration by the then New Zealand Prime Minister that her government would be 'the sole source of truth' in that country during the covid vaccine rollout. A comment that sent chills up the spine of any person who values our liberal democratic society and it's assumption of free speech and individual responsibility.

It seems from my reading of the proposal that the governments of Australia will be the sole arbiters of what constitutes the truth, but that they will subcontract out the censorship to private companies.

Our society is based on the freedom of ideas and expression of those ideas, and if governments are unable to persuade the people that what they propose is indeed in the best interest of all people, then the system is working.

Any attempt to alter this system is at best Authoritarian, and a huge overstep of the role of government. We are not a society that is dictated to by our governments, that happens in North Korea, Iran, China, and has no place in Australia.

We have witnessed many ,many instance of "fact checkers" removing items from social media over the past several years, and it has been revealed that the Australian government had a major role in that censoring of debate. This was wrong at best.

It does seem that the government wishes to control the narrative, and only those media that push put their line are to be allowed, this is not the behaviour of a free society, and reminds one of the Nazis in Germany nearly a century ago.

In summary, this proposal has no merit in Australian society, it should be forgotten about immediately, and replaced with legislation that supports the democratic process by allowing the people right of expression.