

## Title: Censorship, Soft and Hard: The Multifaceted Approach to Controlling Narratives

**Abstract:** This treatise explores the diverse manifestations of censorship employed by governments and political entities worldwide. It examines both overt and covert forms, highlighting the impact on public perception and democracy, and includes prominent examples such as authoritarian censorship regimes and the 'Mediscare' campaign in Australia.

**Introduction:** Censorship is a powerful tool used by regimes and political entities globally to control information flow and shape public sentiment. This manipulation ranges from outright suppression of dissent to the more subtle influence of soft censorship, both forms influencing societal viewpoints and outcomes. There is a fear that the powers of ACMA will not be transparent and biased with influence, soft and hard, from Government.

**I. Overt Censorship:** Overt or hard censorship, prevalent in authoritarian regimes, involves explicit control over information dissemination. Examples from the Soviet Union, Nazi Germany, North Korea, China, and Saudi Arabia reveal how these regimes leveraged censorship to suppress dissent and manipulate public perception to maintain power and control.

**II. Soft Censorship:** On the other end of the spectrum is soft censorship, a subtler form that uses media, political narratives, and influential figures to mould public opinion and drive political outcomes. Soft censorship manifests as biased reporting, selective news coverage, favouritism in public advertising, or unfair allocation of resources that influences media narratives.

**III. The Power of Political Narratives:** The strategic framing and repetition of specific narratives, often devoid of factual bases, can profoundly shape public perception and determine political outcomes. A prime example is the 'Mediscare' campaign by the Australian Labour Party during the 2016 Federal Election, where the party capitalised on the public's concern for the healthcare system, despite lacking evidence supporting their claim of Medicare privatisation.

**IV. The Role of Media:** Media entities play a significant role in both perpetuating and counteracting these forms of censorship. Their coverage can either contribute to the spread of specific narratives or challenge them by providing alternative viewpoints and fact-checking claims.

**Discussion:** Whether through explicit suppression of information or through strategic manipulation of narratives, censorship in its various forms influences public sentiment and shapes the political landscape. Recognizing both overt and covert tactics of censorship is essential in understanding their potential to manipulate democratic discourse and infringe on the freedom of speech.

**Conclusion:** The study of censorship in its various forms underscores the importance of maintaining a diverse, independent media landscape, and the necessity for an informed and critical populace. As we continue to engage with the evolving nature of information dissemination and media consumption, understanding the multifaceted influence of censorship becomes increasingly crucial for preserving a healthy democracy. If Australia is to grapple with the ever-expanding overreach of government censors then the argument for a Bill of Rights is evermore well made.