

# This bill must be SCRAPPED.

Submission by Helen Nandlal Bsc.Hons

Why?

1. More openness, not less, is needed in our society. Governments above all other organisations must disseminate the information they generate freely and openly without redaction. Misinformation spreads when information is withheld (including by governments). Rather than shut down debate, encourage debate.

2. If you are serious about combatting misinformation, put money into teaching people how to find reliable information (such as in PubMed), how to find the source of information, how to tell if the source is suspect or not (even if it is presented within a journal article, such as recognising conflict of interest), and how to examine the information. It is clear from the COVID narrative that sustained, intensive, long-term messaging by government can change people's behaviour (to get them to even do things contrary to human decency), so use this for good and educate people about how to tell fact from fiction.

3. The government should not be exempt! The government has exempt themselves from prosecution in this bill, and well they would, as history shows us that the government has spread misinformation (and engaged in disinformation?) many times, and only corrected themselves following intense protest by those who would (if this bill were in operation) be prosecuted and silenced. Government's "facts" have been shown time and time again to be wrong and in many cases damaging. Change begins when a few people question and disseminate what would be called in this bill "misinformation". Here are only a few examples:

- Aboriginal people were not permitted to vote by the government, and they (as fellow Australians) should be able to vote.
- Cigarettes were originally touted as healthy by the government, and they are not.
- Levels of lead in paint were originally allowed by the government to be >50%. Lead is a potent neurotoxin.
- COVID vaccine was advertised by the government and mainstream media relentlessly as able to prevent transmission of the virus and preventing people from getting sick. Both these assertions have proven to be incorrect.

Overturing all these untruths and many, many others took organisation and protest by groups within our society. The government didn't make the changes without many people protesting – these days it would be largely via social media as mainstream media refuses to report the truth – and if this bill were to pass all dissenters and platform providers would be committing illegal acts.

4. Who decides what is misinformation? This is not mentioned. All that is stated is that misinformation is content that contains 'false, misleading or deceptive' information. What are the guidelines for truth? All my examples in 3 above were eventually accepted as right and true. At what point does an assertion become truth, and how is the evidence going to be allowed to accumulate when debate and dissemination of evidence will be stifled through this bill?

This bill is an evil overreach of power. It seems designed specifically to silence debate and prevent education of Australians. It contravenes the human right to freedom of expression and needs to be torn up and replaced with a bill that enshrines all Australians' right to free access to information, whether the government of the day agrees with the information or not.