

FEEDBACK ON COMMUNICATIONS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2023

I am thankful for the Government and its role within society. Government is there to maintain order in society, uphold justice and work for the good of the people under its jurisdiction.

However, in proposing a bill such as the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023, the Government is stepping beyond its primary responsibilities and the limitations which are rightly set on its power. Redefining and expanding its role to include the ability to limit the free exchange of information not only compromises freedom of speech, conscience and communication (which have greatly contributed to the flourishing of our Western civilisation), it violates the UN's own Declaration of Human Rights ([link in comments](#)) and swings the doors wide open to tyranny, corruption and the misuse of power.

Most of us today have not personally experienced how these subtle changes can progress and can be disinterested and unconcerned as a result. On the

surface the goals of the bill sound commendable, and we all crave safety and protection. However, we are only safe and protected if the governing body controlling and defining information happens to understand and undertake all things perfectly - which we all know they never do. There is no government, group or individual who gets it all right. Take for example the healthcare industry. In not too distant decades past, the government, backed by well meaning professionals, produced the healthy eating pyramid. Whilst some aspects of their understanding was probably right, new research has shown that there is much that was incorrect and incomplete in the understanding presented and advice given. Many health problems have followed. Free exchange of information, to improve, refine and validate current information, enables progress and holds governing bodies accountable. This freedom is a pillar of democracy and a great protection to the everyday person. Giving a body the right to define what is 'truth' and what is 'mis' or 'dis' information and removing or suppressing the necessary process and accountability of open debate where ideas can be challenged, is unwise at best and dangerous at worst, especially as leaders become corrupt and misuse their power.

Systems of control have never led to human flourishing. Rather, they lead to oppression, division, societal unrest, wars and genocide. We have enough record of history to see how these things play out to give us pause. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (link in comments) was drafted in 1948, directly after the atrocities that took place in the second World War. It would be good not to stumble blindly into a repeat. The answer to the negative impacts of incorrect information is not to police what may and may not be discussed, believed and circulated but to continue to allow open debate which will test, debunk and better incomplete or incorrect ideas. A push to remove this freedom, even in a small or subtle way at this point, reveals values which undermine democratic freedoms, human rights, equality, accountability and the right of Australians to have their say. I therefore do not support the bill.

<https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>