

Submission

I have deep concerns about this proposed new legislation. My concern lies around the erosion of freedom of speech and information.

The proposed legislation begins with a statement that misinformation and disinformation is harmful. I am firmly of the belief that information in and of itself is not harmful but is to be judged by the individual as to its veracity or otherwise. This cannot be done in a milieu where only a government approved and sanctioned version of information is allowed; it will certainly silence many viewpoints that differ from the ideologies currently being championed by the government in close cohesion with the media. Subjecting media platforms and the expressions of individuals to penalties is a truly objectionable idea. There will literally no longer be any freedom of speech, ideas, communication or ideology. This is already underway but so far has just resulted in people of unpopular opinions being 'cancelled' – a hard enough penalty to bear for those differing from a mainstream view. This will now go a step further and weaponize the law to silence dissenting voices.

Just like information in itself not being harmful; speech in itself cannot be harmful. Stating in writing a belief about a behaviour, for example, is not 'hate' but an opinion; one with which others are welcome to differ. I feel there are huge and inherent dangers in the course of action being proposed by this new legislation. There will be enormous consequences for some parts of the community and there will be only one dogma by which there is permission to live. There will be tremendous social fallout and huge danger to many citizens the bill ostensibly seeks to protect. Unpopular ideas could be legally censored. Please give some credit to the ability of people to discern and decide for themselves what is true and what is not and PLEASE reconsider this dangerous piece of legislation.