

Submission regarding the new ACMA powers (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation Bill 2023) - by Angela Carter

I am writing to express my deep concerns regarding this bill. I believe this bill is antidemocratic and anti-free speech.

- (1) Who is going to be the arbiter of whether something is mis- or dis-information?
 - Government officials?
 - Unelected bureaucrats?
 - Big tech?

Recent history has shown that all three groups showed poor form in this regard. For example - the idea that the covid 19 virus could have originated from a lab leak was widely censored by all of the above groups. And yet, now it is widely accepted that lab leak was the likely origin.

- (2) The antidote to alleged mis- or dis- information is more information in the form of open debate - not closing down different opinions by censorship. In censoring ideas that don't fit the prevailing narrative, we are in danger of creating a society with lack of diversity of opinion, and this makes it more difficult to pursue the truth. I believe that this is not just unhealthy for society, but is downright dangerous.
- (3) It seems that the government would like to stifle debate that it doesn't approve of, but it doesn't want to be seen to be doing the censoring. Instead it threatens Big Tech with huge fines if they are found to have allowed mis- or dis- information. This obviously creates a massive incentive for Big Tech to censor anything that even remotely goes against the prevailing narrative. And Big Tech are already censoring opinions they don't like. So now, Big Tech would be able to hide behind the law and say that the censorship was not their fault. How convenient - Government and Big Tech each blaming the other for the resulting censorship.

In summary, I believe that this Bill would result in the equivalent of the Orwellian "Ministry of Truth" in the novel "1984". The resultant censorship would erode free speech and contribute to the development of totalitarian elements within our system of government.