

18 July 2023

Submission in relation to new ACMA powers to combat misinformation and disinformation.

Free speech stands as a pillar of democratic societies, allowing individuals to express their thoughts, ideas, and grievances openly. It nurtures an environment of intellectual diversity, fosters progress, and ensures the free exchange of ideas. However, when free speech is suppressed, a dangerous precedent is set, threatening the very foundations of democracy, and impeding societal development. **The proposed new ACMA powers would mean the acceleration of Australia's decent into a Communist ideology where the Government is the only source of truth.**

1. **Stifling Intellectual Progress:** Free speech is instrumental in driving intellectual progress and societal advancement. By allowing individuals to voice their options, challenge conventional wisdom, and engage in robust debates, societies benefit from broader range of perspectives. Suppression of free speech stifles intellectual growth by inhibiting critical thinking and preventing the exploration of new ideas and perspectives. It hinders the emergence of innovative solutions to societal challenges and impedes progress in various fields, including science, technology, and the arts. **Who decides what is misinformation and disinformation? If you delve into the financial incentives provided to fact checking organisations by Government and social media companies it becomes clear that 'truth' can be bought.**
2. **Threat to Democracy:** The suppression of free speech poses a grave threat to democratic principles. In a democracy, the power ultimately rests with the people, who exercise their sovereignty through the expression of their views and opinions. When free speech is suppressed, the voice of the people is muzzled, curtailing their ability to participate in the democratic process and hold those in power accountable. It creates an environment conducive to authoritarianism, as dissenting voices are silenced, and opposition is systematically dismantled. **In the name of disinformation and misinformation.**
3. **Echo Chambers and Polarisation:** Free speech allows for the healthy exchange of diverse perspectives, fostering dialogue and understanding among individuals with different backgrounds and beliefs. Suppression of free speech, however, can lead to the formation of echo chambers, where like-minded individuals reinforce their own views without exposure to alternative ideas. This polarization not only hampers societal cohesion but also prevents the development of informed opinions based on multiple viewpoints. The absence of free speech allows misinformation and extremist ideologies to flourish unchecked, further deepening societal divisions. **As seen when correct lifesaving information regarding safety concerns for COVID vaccines and early treatment options were deemed misinformation when in fact much of the information was correct.**
4. **Hindrance to Social Progress:** Throughout history, free speech has been crucial in challenging societal norms, advocating for social justice, and driving positive change. Movements for civil rights, women's suffrage, and LGBTQ+ rights owe their successes, in part, to the freedom to express dissenting opinions and advocate for marginalized communities. When free speech is suppressed, these vital avenues for social progress are stifled, leaving injustices unaddressed and undermining the fight for equality and human rights. **Unless they align with the Government of the day's narrative.**

5. Emotional and Psychological Impact: Suppressing free speech can have detrimental effects on individuals' emotional and psychological well-being. The ability to express oneself freely is a fundamental aspect of human dignity and personal autonomy. When this right is infringed upon, individuals may feel silenced, marginalised, and powerless. Such an environment fosters fear, self-censorship, and conformity, inhibiting personal growth, stifling creativity, and undermining mental health. **As evidenced when people who suffered injuries from the COVID vaccine some of them catastrophically and were cancelled from social media for telling their story. Not only were they now sick and unsupported but gaslit by social media companies who were receiving advise from Government on which accounts were deemed to go against community standards with devastating consequences for the mental health of the victims.**

The suppression of free speech poses profound dangers to societies. By inhibiting intellectual progress, threatening democracy, fostering polarization, hindering social progress, and impacting individual well-being, the curtailment of free speech stifles the very essence of a flourishing and vibrant society. Nurturing an environment that values and protects free speech is essential for the continued development, progress, and well-being of individuals and communities alike. Safeguarding free speech ensures that diverse voices are heard, ideas are challenged, and societies can flourish in their pursuits of truth, justice, and innovation. **The proposed increase in ACMA powers is a mechanism of control to suppress free speech and institute a 'Ministry of Truth' which will be used to push Government narrative which has been proven to be true through information received via FOI outlining the Governments attack on freedom of speech during the COVID era. This is a disastrous proposal and should make every Australia shudder at the thought. You cannot 'balance' freedom of speech, it is either 'free' or it isn't. Shame on you for such an appalling attack on our democratic rights.**

Yours sincerely

