

Submission: Communications Legislation Amendment (Combating Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023

To Whom It May Concern,

I write regarding the proposed 'Communications Legislation Amendment (Combating Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023.

The Australian Government should not legislate itself, nor any regulatory body, the arbiter of truth. It runs contrary to the goal of protecting 'the safety and wellbeing of Australians, as well as our democracy, society and economy'.

The Bills impulse to control is glaring and cannot be concealed by the nebulous proposed reasons used to initiate it.

Assuming it to be true that 'misinformation and disinformation pose a threat to the safety and wellbeing of Australians' – a trend to censorship would be more-so.

There are broadly two strategies for combating what the Bill describes as 'misinformation and disinformation':

- 1) Censoring voices that do not agree with your own; and
- 2) Improving the delivery, clarity and veracity of your own messaging.

The Government is well-resourced and has a generous platform from which to explain and project official views; and to single out and counter potentially harmful ones.

A competent administration will find the second strategy more than equal to the task – the safety and wellbeing of Australians being its objective.

Furthermore, the enrolment of private corporations, under the threat of financial penalty, to implement the restrictive measures will inevitably lead to far more egregious censorship as they seek to avoid such penalties at all costs.

The enlistment of private corporations also renders avenues of recourse and accountability for decisions made less accessible as the government and its agencies hide behind a third parties financial imperative.

The road to the curtailing of public discourse is not one this nation ought to be set on.

The Communications Legislation Amendment (Combating Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023 cannot work, given its stated aims and should be dispensed with. More appropriate and effective options already exist.

Yours Sincerely,

Dr Christian Sims
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