

## **Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023.**

I reject this Bill in its entirety.

As we already have laws to protect people from harm, we do not need to impede on people communicating in whatever form, on digital platforms. We certainly do not need or want a bureaucratic department determining what is misinformation and disinformation especially as they are open to broad interpretation.

This Bill enables any government at any time to control the flow of information. This could be used to neutralise any oppositional view of the government, subverting democracy.

Freedom of speech, regardless of its content, is important for a free functioning society. It is comforting to see speech and opinion that align with your own, however, speech and opinion that do not align is essential for any society or people to progress. If the speech or opinion is harmful or hateful, this will strengthen your own position. If it is challenging your own, this allows for your own position to be reflected on and often amended to accommodate new information. All information is good, even that which you reject, as it allows for a balanced view.

Freedom of speech and opinion is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights under Article 19 "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers." This was put in place to protect all people from potentially totalitarian regimes.

We have laws in place that protect people from harm. Another layer of legislation will only impede on those who mean no harm.

Paul Schreurs