

I, Jessica Turner, **strongly object** to the proposed introduction of any legislation designed to 'combat misinformation and disinformation'.

Reasons I am against any form of this legislation include:

- Any legislation limiting free speech in the media would contravene the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, particularly Article 19, which explicitly upholds the fundamental right to freedom of expression. Article 19 states: "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.**"
- The Australian Human Rights Commission has warned against giving any body the power to be "the sole arbiter of truth".
- This bill exempts all government communications from it. This creates separate laws for those working in government offices compared to all other citizens.

Some of the many possible impacts and outcomes of any form of this type of legislation could include:

- **Suppression of Diverse Perspectives:** Limiting free speech in the media would stifle diverse perspectives and hinder the free flow of information and ideas. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes that a democratic society thrives on open discussions, debates, and the exchange of diverse viewpoints. Restricting media freedom undermines the democratic principles of pluralism and free expression.
- **Threat to Independent Journalism:** A free media plays a crucial role in holding governments and institutions accountable. Legislation that restricts free speech in the media may lead to government control or censorship, eroding the independence of journalism. Independent reporting is essential for exposing corruption, human rights violations, and other abuses of power.
- **Infringement on Public's Right to Know:** Limiting free speech in the media denies the public access to information and curtails their right to know. The media serves as a watchdog, informing citizens about critical issues and empowering them to make informed decisions. Article 19 emphasizes the importance of seeking, receiving, and imparting information, and any legislation that obstructs this undermines citizens' ability to participate actively in society.
- **Hindrance to Societal Progress:** A thriving media landscape fosters creativity, innovation, and progress in society. Limiting free speech in the media stifles creative thinking, inhibits the exchange of new ideas, and hinders societal advancement. Article 19 recognizes the essential role of media in promoting intellectual freedom and human development.

- **Potential for Abuse of Power:** Legislation that restricts free speech in the media may be prone to abuse by authorities seeking to control information and suppress dissenting voices. Such legislation can lead to arbitrary application and punishment of journalists and media outlets critical of the government or those in positions of power.
- **International Obligations:** Many countries are signatories to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and are bound by its principles. Restricting media freedom through legislation directly contradicts these international obligations, raising concerns about a country's commitment to upholding human rights and democratic values.