

I am vehemently opposed to the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023.

This legislation proposes that the Australian people hand over their liberty and freedoms to Public Servants who will act as a type of Ministry for Truth. Our Freedom of Speech and our Freedom of Expression will then be subject to their censorship. Roald Dahl's early writings have already been subject to such censorship because the content was deemed by Puffin Books as, "derogatory". Can anyone be truly unbiased in determining the morality of social media and content? "If we start down the path of trying to correct for perceived slights instead of allowing readers to receive and react to books as written, we risk distorting the work of great authors and clouding the essential lens that literature offers on society," tweeted Suzanne Nossel, the Chief Executive of PEN America.

The minute we have a powerful group shutting down everybody else, then we no longer live in a democracy. It is the end of liberty.

It is notable that in Provision 4.1 & 4.4D of the 'Adequacy of digital platforms disinformation and news quality measures', there are exclusions for Professional News Content and Political Content.

"The ACMA considers the exclusion of entertainment and educational content produced in good faith, government-approved content, and authorised political content is appropriate given the need to balance interventions with freedom of expression. Provision 4.4.D of the code excludes news"- that is Professional News Content (Adequacy of digital platforms disinformation and news quality measures, p55).

These findings create a suspicion of the Australian people (i.e. they are inclined to provide and absorb disinformation and misinformation), while Professional News Content and Political Content are above reproach. On the contrary, Paul H. Weaver, a former political scientist at Harvard University and Corporate Communications Executive at Ford Motor Company, explains that the media and government are quite adept in producing misinformation and disinformation themselves.

"The news media and the government are entwined in a vicious circle of mutual manipulation, mythmaking, and self-interest. Journalists need crises to dramatize news, and government officials need to appear to be responding to crises. Too often, the crises are not really crises but joint fabrications. The two institutions have become so ensnared in a symbiotic web of lies that the news media are unable to tell the public what is true and the government is unable to govern effectively (*News and the Culture of Lying: How Journalism Really Works*).

This bill is a serious over-reach of government and a breach of Australian people's right to Freedom of Speech and our Freedom of Expression. It must be scrapped as it sets a dangerous precedent for authoritarian censorship, blatant government hypocrisy, and the undermining of democracy.