

I strongly object to the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023.

What the drafters of this bill fail to recognise is that human rights are non-negotiable. They do not belong to any government, nor are they granted by government. To quote Benjamin Franklin once more, "Freedom is not a gift bestowed upon us by other men, but a right that belongs to us by the laws of God and nature."

The impulse to decide which speech constitutes 'misinformation' and must be censored is, at heart, totalitarian. By giving government agencies increased power over the words that Australian citizens are allowed to utter, the Albanese Government tempts tyranny.

George Orwell warned, "If liberty means anything at all, it means the right to tell people what they do not want to hear." A freedom that only allows sanctioned, inoffensive speech but silences provocative ideas or ideas that challenge the consensus viewpoint is not a freedom worth having. In fact, it is not freedom at all.

The single most concerning aspect of the bill's exposure draft and a huge red flag is that "content that is authorised by the Commonwealth or a State" along with "professional news content" would be granted immunity from the proposed ACMA powers. Such a proposal invites comparisons to George Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four and to political regimes that allow only government operatives and State-sanctioned news outlets to guide the public discourse.

Just a few years ago, anyone suggesting the Australian government would do such a thing would have been dismissed as a conspiracy theorist. Now we are just months away from that bone-chilling scenario potentially passing into law.

On behalf of all freedom-loving Australians, I condemn this draft bill and plead in the strongest possible terms that the citizens of Australia be allowed to continue holding their government to account.