

This bill crosses a significant line when it comes to freedom of speech and does not 'balance' it. It is a form of coercion and manipulation of individuals by those in power.

Our culture has historically accepted the existence of differing opinions and ideas, and this is a fundamental aspect of democratic society. This bill launches an assault on the Australian right to democracy. It implicitly states that any view which contradicts the narrative or opinion of the government is incorrect and should be policed. Dangerous policing of free speech is already taking place within Australian society, and this bill will only corral public discourse further.

This bill none-too-implicitly identifies the government as sole arbiter of truth, which is completely unacceptable. Having a government body determine what is termed 'misinformation' and 'disinformation' is not only unwarranted but completely dangerous. Have we not learned lessons from communism or other regimes that utilise such tactics involving the manipulation of public opinion through forcibly silencing those who do not agree?

The new powers given to the ACMA could also entail invasive monitoring and record-keeping of individuals who peaceably and respectfully dissent on certain topics, without their consent. This could be used as a data-gathering strategy to try to predict a person's behaviour and hence 'mark' a person's digital record in a way that is harmful, even if they are merely respectfully disagreeing with majority or mainstream opinion.

I firmly reject this bill and consider it a dangerous step toward the silencing of Australian free speech and the coercion of the Australian public.