

Reference: [Exposure Draft Communications Legislation Amendment \(Combating Misinformation and Disinformation\) Bill 2023](#)

Thank you for the opportunity to provide my concerns regarding the referenced Draft Communications Legislation Amendment (Combating Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023

I disagree with the *Exposure Draft Communications Legislation Amendment (Combating Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023* and request it be withdrawn. I have a number of concerns with this Bill, the primary is that this Bill fails to define who determines the misinformation/disinformation or what is considered misinformation/disinformation.

The use of Digital Platform Services is the most prolific method of public communication and debate today. There is only one truth and the Government is not the sole holder of that truth. Had the Government never made a mistake, lied or mislead the people then this Bill MAY have merit. In its current form this Bill hinders freedom of expression and hence hinders the development of new concepts and ideas. The impact of this Bill will be felt in areas such as science, politics, education, health and business simply because people will no longer feel safe to disagree with someone's interpretation of truth while using digital services.

This country has a democratically elected Government and while it is the Government's responsibility to provide what it believes to be the truth it must be up to the people to decide for themselves what is disinformation and misinformation. This Bill provides the ability for the ACMA to suppress the people's ability to disagree with the Government. A government that suppresses the right to speak out in a public forum is a government without accountability. While accountability ensures a healthy, functioning society that is free to debate and develop acceptable truths a lack of accountability in Government leads to a Socialist and/or Communist government and ultimately the suppression of truth.

On numerous occasions history has shown us that the 'truths' held by the Government of the time were dangerous, inhumane, and ultimately shown to be wrong. One example amongst many is the policies, the 'truths', held by the Government prior to the 1960s which dehumanised Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The very people who spoke against these supposed truths and ultimately brought about changes, under this Bill, would be branded as propagators of misinformation and disinformation. How can our country progress with suppression orders like those considered in this Bill?

So, who can be trusted to determine what is misinformation and disinformation? Just one example where leading academics, a trusted group of society, simply got it wrong is that of Hungarian physician Ignaz Semmelweis. In the 19<sup>th</sup> centenary Semmelweis had the 'audacity' to suggest that a doctor should wash his hands before aiding a mother in child birth. Today we stand on this side of history with no way of knowing how many lives Semmelweis saved. He was ridiculed by his colleagues for his work linking handwashing to better medical care and they had him committed to an asylum because these academics refused to accept the truth. Had Semmelweis lived in the digital age he would have used a digital platform to spread his message of 'disinformation' and under this Bill would have received 12 months in jail or a fine of up to \$550,000.

How can Australia continue to progress if organisations and individuals fear speaking out, making controversial statements or disagree with the Government? How will we develop as a society if we can't publicly, using digital media, disagree with the Government's version of the 'truth'? Is it not every person's right to have, and share, their opinion in any way and using whatever media they want? A person who society has deemed a liar is not necessarily also deemed a criminal, if that were the case, unfortunately, many of our politicians would be jailed and fined.

I appeal for the sake of Australia and the freedom of her people that this Bill be withdrawn in its current form.