To whom it may concern,

I wish to state my opposition, in full, to the upcoming Misinformation and Disinformation bill. I will outline my reasons why;

Social media is rife with misinformation and disinformation; but the only way to combat it is to publicly refute it, not censorship.

Thinkers have struggled with the implications of free speech for centuries, and concluded that limiting speech is far more dangerous to society than the regrettable consequences of false claims.

That's why free speech is enshrined in the First Amendment of the Bill of Rights in the US Constitution: "Congress shall make no law ... abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press".

And why it is enshrined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which Australia helped to draft in 1948: "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."

Social media is a double-edged sword: it can be a channel for the worst misinformation and disinformation, but so can governments, as we have witnessed; alternatively, it can also be the medium that exposes government and corporate lies that the corporate mainstream media won't, which restores power to the people.

If these powers were in place in 2002, when the US, UK and Australian governments lied about Iraq having weapons of mass destruction, they could have been used to suppress public opposition to invasion and war.

Regulating truth on social media will not protect democracy, it will suppress it.

Regards,

Greg Astridge