

To whom it may concern,

I'd like to state that the introduction of the "Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023" will not help in fighting misinformation and disinformation as its title says. It will introduce measures that will influence speech away from libertarian to more totalitarian rhetoric. This statement here can be a little extreme, but it is also necessary to explain how far it can go when influencing public opinion on the things that matter in our society. For all we know it may be used to control opinion in the future, which is not what we want. Ultimately, I believe that the best society is one that is open to dialogue, being able to poke at the arguments of others, and resolve the issue at hand with the best solution. I understand that the ACMA is trying to assist us with this piece of legislation, but I believe this will not help and a different direction must be taken.

Who should be the arbiter of disinformation, misinformation, hate speech, etc.? In other words, who should have the authority to decide whether information is correct? Could it be that one person's information is another person's misinformation? I believe these questions all relate to the pressing issue that the ACMA will indirectly influence journalism and free speech. By indirectly I mean that with the power to ask for previous articles, posts, etc. from digital platform providers, the providers will fear the power that the ACMA has over them. They will have to review and change the posts in their platform to tow the government's current line which may or may not be beneficial for society. From this you can already feel a sense of control. Control that governments will use to get their way and not the public. It won't happen immediately, it will be attained over a long time, leading to what I referenced in the introduction.

This will cost a lot of money and time, for which in a quickly changing and developing world online, can be expensive and take long hours of analysis. It can be daunting to scour the internet, interview experts, review articles, etc. to essentially fact check the information provided. How on earth will a government be able to do all this within a reasonable budget and time frame? The ACMA will need to interview experts on the topic, scour the internet for sources to help confirm or disprove the information, undertake a review by upper management and ultimately publish the information online showing exactly what the issue is and the solution. By the time the piece of information has been deemed misinformation, another piece of information comes out later with better evidence proving that the information was actually true. The ACMA is not well-equipped for such an endeavour. The investigations may turn into wild goose chases over facts that may already be true, wasting money and time indefinitely. I do not think that the ACMA is able to adequately undertake such a responsibility in our ever-changing society.

This feedback explains my concerns regarding this bill and would strongly like it to be scrapped and never considered again. Governments are there to serve the interests of the people, not the government's vested interests in what the information provided must be. It's difficult to determine the right information from the wrong, indicating that there should be no authority on what information is right or wrong. It takes time and money to investigate, review, debate and come to conclusions for the information we are given. I believe that people with good morals should be able to determine which information is right or wrong and be able to talk to others so that the information is scrutinised. I believe that everyone has the right to free speech, whether they are wrong or right and whether I agree with

them or not. The government should only push the public's arguments forward for debate and then decide.

I thank you for allowing the public to speak out on this piece of legislation.