

**Submission to the proposed
*Communications Legislation Amendment (Combating
Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023***

I write to raise my strong objection to the proposed *Communications Legislation Amendment (Combating Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023* and request that this Bill be opposed.

This Bill directly interferes with our rights to freedom of speech which Australians are privileged to hold. Our freedom of speech creates an exciting and diverse culture of expression and opinions and is pivotal to Australian democracy, our rights, obligations, and way of life.

Of great concern, on a broader level, is that this Bill is inconsistent with Australia's international human rights obligations, particularly those under the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

Article 19 of the Declaration of Human Rights states that:

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 regardless of frontiers.

There are inadequate provisions included in the Bill to acknowledge the competing right to freedom of expression and it does not satisfy the high bar required in international law for the interference with fundamental rights of freedom of expression.

The Bill fails to include mechanisms to protect valid expression of opinion and belief, there is insufficient governance to allow legitimate speech, and the vague and ideological definition of "harm" in the Bill risks it being weaponised to shut down legitimate speech on pressing social issues.

This Bill needs to be opposed in order to preserve our current freedom of expression in Australia and to maintain our diverse culture of expression and opinions.