

Exposure draft of the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023

I regard myself to be a reasonable example of an average, ordinary person. I am writing this submission to defend my freedom to choose the content I read, watch, look at (within the scope of the law). My freedom to choose whether to engage or move on. I believe it to be reasonable to assume an “average” person knows not to ‘believe everything you see on the internet” and that we as individuals should have the right to determine what to believe and what not – based on whatever information we, as individuals choose to access.

It is genuinely accepted by law that the understanding of an “ordinary person” is the benchmark for what is “a reasonably expected outcome”. I suggest that “ordinary” people, have reasonable knowledge that in an important matter, they should carry out their own due diligence to make informed decisions. Removing available information (or taking measures that prevent it from ever being available) seems like a massive over reaction that has potential for outcomes not intended.

There was a time in not so far ago history where spouting that the earth is round, would have, by accepted society, been deemed as either mis or dis information, depending on the manner or origin of the shared “knowledge”. We know truth and reality only as the most recent science discoveries or theories, and to consider that any group, government, platform, or authority can censor what content I am exposed to seems a breach of my rights, not rights I can see in black and white written for interpretation, but rights I feel within myself as fundamental.

Seeing even extreme content, teaches us beyond the words or pictures in front of us. to remove this content and think the only thing being lost is the single dimensional content seems short sighted. To remove access to content to protect the democracy process sounds counter effective. Surely access to all prospective and content is a part of democracy.

My experience is that there are systems in place on any internet platform, I will sometimes see content that is blurred with a comment that it has been “fact checked” or that the information “could be deemed distressing or potentially harmful” and I then have the option to view or move on. I have the option. The choice belongs to me. Where I see someone, I know is sharing information I know to be untrue, based on current accepted knowledge, I have the option to engage, and perhaps share with them information from a reputable source, or I can ignore and move on. I have the option to report content, and, on all occasions, there is action to determine the accuracy of the report. There are already options in place, should I disagree with the outcome. There are laws to protect us from financial, physical, or emotional harm. I feel a lot could be done to further enforce these laws and that a lot of good could be done and our most vulnerable could be better protected – while writing this submission I received a phone call stating issues with my visa. I do not have a visa. Two days ago, I received a phone call stating my Amazon account was being cancelled. I do not have an Amazon account. This morning I received a calendar invite of something I had never heard of – this has happened multiple times and if not declined, infiltrates my calendar, for what purpose, I am unsure but I assume it is not for the greater good. Surely when targeting a safer place in the vast space of the world wide web – better could be achieved by targeting these very real and direct threats.