

Submission on the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combating Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023

*To the Department of Infrastructure,
Transport, Regional Development Communications and the Arts:*

I object to the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combating Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023.

The proposed bill undermines freedom of speech by attempting to 'balance' that fundamental right with the notion of combating so-called 'misinformation'. Fundamental rights cannot be balanced against anything, rather they are undermined.

Determining what qualifies as so-called 'misinformation' is subjective and entrusting a government agency to decide truthfulness raises grave concerns. We do not know the details of what guidelines will be used to determine what constitutes disinformation of misinformation and who will be the arbitrator of what this means. It is possible if not even likely, personal opinions will creep into determining the definitions thereof.

So-called 'misinformation', unless it incites violence, does not cause direct harm, and defining harm based on subjective criteria is problematic.

Open and honest discussion is the best medium for regulating truth as well as so called dis- and misinformation. This will be impossible with restrictions in what we are allowed to talk about. It can even have a detrimental effect on science as discussions is essential to the furthering of evolution.

The bill grants excessive control to authorities and will lead to censorship.

Alternative approaches should be explored that do not infringe upon freedom of speech.

