

From reading through the proposed amendments there are a few conditions that raise alarm bells for me, a person living in a Democratic Australia.

The first and main point is the ability to question your government. If the government are exempt from the disinformation legislation it sets up a very dangerous situation where the government may not be able to be questioned if the subject for that questioning falls into what is classified as disinformation.

A fundamental condition in a Democracy is the ability to question and challenge the government of the day and indeed any politician on their policies.

A free and open platform is vital to facilitate this process where differing views can be put forward right or wrong with arguments to support those views.

One thing this does is it allows you to get a feeling of how and why people feel the way they do and to understand generally how the range of people or population stand on an issue. It is a feedback loop which is vital whether those views are erroneous or not.

I have had my own views challenged and changed through this process by someone challenging my view and backing that view with information that I was then able to compare to what I previously thought. It was a long process of reading through both sides of the argument and being honest with myself. We all need to have access to that process. If one side of the argument is considered disinformation then that opportunity no longer exists. There also usually exists truths in both arguments that can lead to a greater understanding and possibly leading to an alternative conclusion.

Second thing is platform providers cannot be put into a position of second guessing themselves for fear of allowing disinformation.

How can they judge what that is? It is purely subjective and would lead to over

censorship.

A healthy democracy NEEDS free speech.

Hate speech is very subjective and amounts to saying something someone else disagrees with. We need to be able to cope with differing views without being mortally wounded, this is a resilience that is learnt over time and contributes to a healthy debate and also forces you to double check your own information.

A direct threat of violence is not what I am talking about here.

If the population are not able to question their own government then they no longer live in a Democracy.

Free Speech in a Democracy is the first thing a Government representing that Democracy should protect, not the first thing it tries to control.

A Federal Democratic Government only represents the people of it's Country, not anything outside of it's Country. Keeping that population sovereign, united, prosperous, healthy, economically viable and resilient while representing them is their main job, anything outside of this needs to be put to the population it governs to freely and openly discuss and to make a decision on without coercion or hate speech from those putting the proposal forward. I can handle it directed at me because I can see it for what it is and that needs to be able to be questioned by me which your amendments would prevent me from doing. In this case the government should present their unbiased argument, this is where hate speech should be eliminated, not in a healthy debate.

Most content providers have on their shows people called Mods who monitor chat on their shows and remove people who are disrespectful or hostile towards that show or audience. That is controlled at a local level and is all that is needed. This is of a voluntary nature to that show, it is very effective.

To a platform where the scope is so broad this is not possible without infringing on free speech. A direct threat to a person or body or posting inappropriate content for an open audience should be controlled but should be treated in the same way it is controlled in real life if someone is offensive in public. This does not mean controlling the views or expression of those views by those same people if they can do it in an appropriate way.

In summary, controlling people expressing views on a digital platform is not appropriate as long as those views are presented in a way that is not threatening. A healthy debate can be ugly at times and be erroneous but that is not a reason to eradicate that argument because as I said, there will likely be truth within that argument that needs to be heard and expressed, controlling or eliminating that option because someone decided that it is false creates a pressure cooker situation for a start that could lead to more extreme consequences.

There are many possible scenarios for stiflingly free speech, something that does not belong in a Democracy.

Thankyou for the opportunity to put forward my views.