

I wish to give my feedback on the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combating Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023, which I do not endorse for a number of reasons. To me, this bill is designed to make social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter suppress any discussions that does not fit the government's narrative.

It is true that there was a lot of disinformation during the pandemic, particularly 5G cell towers causing COVID-19. A tiny percentage of people who actually believed this conspiracy theory went out and burn down as many towers as they could find. However, the most astonishing piece came from US, UK, and Australian governments who claim that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction. As a result of this, all three countries invaded Iraq, killed millions of people, and triggered a chain of events not just in the Middle East, but also beyond, events that had far-reaching consequences to this day.

When the previous Coalition government passed the Assistance and Access Bill in 2018, there was a clause which states that governments would be protected from the legislation; we are seeing a repeat of it here. This sends a message that politicians are above the law, and if this bill is passed, it would allow the government itself to spread disinformation such as the aforementioned incident in Iraq. Individuals will then be unable to debunk it.

In 1948, Australia was one of the countries that helped draft the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 19 states:

*“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 media regardless of frontiers.”*

So what our government is doing is tearing this apart.

As an individual worried about the state of our democracy, I urge you to vote against this dangerous and unnecessary bill. It is up to social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to determine what is misinformation or disinformation and remove it, not the government.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.