

Comments and position on draft *Communications Legislation Amendment (Combating Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023* (to be referred to here as the draft ACMA Bill)

Short statement

I do not consent to and strongly oppose any form of censorship. Censorship has no place in a free and democratic society. The cornerstone of a democratic society is freedom of engagement and discussion to facilitate understanding and diplomacy.

Reasons why I do not consent to the ACMA Bill

My concerns with the draft ACMA Bill relate to:

- **Threats to Freedom of Speech:** There is a high risk that our fundamental right to freedom of speech would be infringed upon, despite the assurances of this draft ACMA Bill. By granting a regulatory/advisory body (such as ACMA) the power to determine what is misinformation/disinformation, and to enforce codes of practice/industry standards, it is highly likely that legitimate speech and differing viewpoints will be suppressed.
- **Potential for overreach:** As the definitions of misinformation and disinformation provided in the Bill are subjective and open to interpretation, this creates an 'open-ended' level of discretion that could stifle legitimate public debate and discourse. It also paves the way for certain views/discussions to be censored subject to pressure from special interest groups (such as stakeholders within the WHO)
- **Privacy and data security at risk:** By giving ACMA (or any other regulatory/advisory body) the power to collect our digital data from digital platform providers, in addition to the lack of clarity on what constitutes "serious harm" enables the potential abuse of power.
- **Anti-competitive environment:** Digital innovation, particularly from smaller platforms and startups would be disproportionately affected from the additional compliance requirements and potential regulatory burdens being imposed upon them. These smaller platforms/startups do not have the financial/human resources that larger established platforms do.

Comments on Exposure Draft Bill

The following below is a case study of the control of misinformation/disinformation gone wrong:

- The Government announced a package of measures to communicate the safe and effective message during the Covid-19 pandemic aimed specifically at the Australian media. No other treatments, or positive health messages were broadcast, only a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to sars-cov2.
- Citizens bodily autonomy and informed consent were removed. Australians were informed by the then Prime Minister Scott Morrison that the said vaccines were not mandatory but clearly the states were given the task of making them mandatory (this has undermined trust in Government). This was made more obvious with Greg Hunt (former minister for health and aged care) stating:
 - "The world is engaged in the largest clinical trial, the largest global vaccination trial ever"
media event date:21 February 2021

- The items (see dot points below) at the start of the pandemic could and have been removed off social media platforms at the bequest of Government and are now if not entirely true. Which begs the questions who within ACMA decides what truth is and what is not truth?
- Items that have been removed:
 - The Covid Vaccines are recognised as Gene Technologies
 - “In collaboration with biotech company Beam Therapeutics, Pfizer scientists are developing mRNA technology as a new approach to gene editing, a form of gene therapy.”
 - ref: <https://www.pfizer.com/news/behind-the-science/unlocking-power-our-bodys-protein-factory>
 - The said vaccines are not safe and not effective.
 - [REDACTED]
 - [REDACTED]
 - Senators voted against an investigation into excess deaths (Why?), all data is sourced from the Australian Government. More interestingly is the death rate fell in Australia in 2020 before the said vaccine rollout, then climb alarmingly in 2021 post vaccination.
 - ref: <https://www.excessdeathstats.com/australia/>

Summary of concerns

- Who decides what is and is not mis/dis information?
- The Government itself is exempt (leaves room for overreach and lack of accountability)
- The Australian Government is outsourcing its public health responses to the WHO a non-government organisation heavily sponsored by the [REDACTED].
- [REDACTED] made billions through [REDACTED] during the pandemic (conflict of interest)
- Censorship is a direct attack on freedom and liberty of Australians and only further centralises power to a few within Government. The Government work for and are paid by the people of Australia. The power lies with the Australian People not the Government.