

Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023.

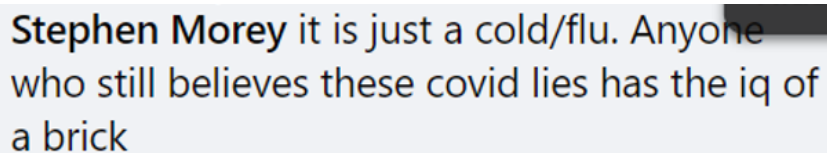
Submission prepared by Dr. Stephen Morey

<https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/have-your-say/new-acma-powers-combat-misinformation-and-disinformation>

I strongly support the proposal for laws to provide the independent regulator, the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA), with new powers to combat online misinformation and disinformation.

Online misinformation and disinformation were well exemplified in the recent COVID-19 pandemic and included:

- deliberate lies implying that the pandemic was 'planned' or 'fake', often accompanied by personal abuse and insult, of which this is an example directed at me:



Stephen Morey it is just a cold/flu. Anyone who still believes these covid lies has the iq of a brick

(Note firstly that I was hospitalised as a result of serious bout of COVID-19; secondly, I have recorded the 'name' of the Facebook user who wrote this, though that is probably a fake name.)

- deliberate lies about the effectiveness and safety of vaccines, vaccines that have saved countless lives around the world
- online abuse of politicians and government officials who were making decisions about community safety, decisions based on science and carefully considered advice,
- deliberate abuse and distortions of fact intended to tarnish people's reputations. This includes slanderous accusations, which includes people making baseless accusations of pedophilia, inspired by the 'QAnon' conspiracy (I can provide examples of such accusations if you wish)

I support these new powers that will enable the ACMA to monitor efforts and require digital platforms to do more to prevent harmful online misinformation and disinformation.

I support the proposed powers to:

- enable the ACMA to gather information from digital platform providers, or require them to keep certain records about matters regarding misinformation and disinformation

- enable the ACMA to request industry develop a code of practice covering measures to combat misinformation and disinformation on digital platforms, which the ACMA could register and enforce
- allow the ACMA to create and enforce an industry standard (a stronger form of regulation), should a code of practice be deemed ineffective in combatting misinformation and disinformation on digital platforms.

There has been a campaign against these proposed laws by those who currently profit from disinformation and misinformation. I urge that those submissions spreading misinformation should not be taken account of in reviewing this legislation.

An increasing number of people use social media for information and news. This is a good thing, because it allows for diverse opinions to be heard. However, deliberate lies, such as we saw during the pandemic and continue to see, should not be permitted to spread.

Stephen Morey