

The quote by **Evelyn Beatrice Hall** "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it" sums up how I feel about the new proposed bill on misinformation and disinformation. As the late president John F Kennedy stated "We are not afraid to entrust the American people with unpleasant facts, foreign ideas, alien philosophies, and competitive values. For a nation that is afraid to let its people judge the truth and falsehood in an open market is a nation afraid of its people".

My family migrated to Australia because of this exact reason - freedom to speak. How can a democratic country continue to claim it is democratic if it censors what its citizens say and who determines what is truth and what is not; what is misinformation and disinformation? You cannot have a democracy without free speech.

The last few years have shown that some of what was determined truth by many scientists, government and the legacy media have indeed been false. Importantly many so-called conspiracy theories by legitimate voices that were censored have been proven correct, such as the dangers of lockdowns and the ineffectiveness of the covid vaccine to stop transmission. Everyone is partial to making mistakes but it is only through debate that the truth is revealed.

As Australian citizens we all have a voice and this law will silence those that have a differing opinion to the mainstream. As written by Andrew Lowenthal "Free speech is democratic and messy, and people can abuse it. But the alternative - whereby the government decides what is allowable - is far more dangerous. People with very fringe views are generally ignored anyway, and the scale of their misdemeanours are often minor compared to what the government gets wrong".

This bill assumes that people are inherently stupid and cannot discern for themselves what is truth and what is not and it indicates that the government is afraid of views that do not adhere to their own. Government representatives are people from the population which have been chosen to lead the country but they should always be for the people since they are by the people and therefore the views of the people must be allowed to be heard.

It is also important to note that there are already laws in place that target hate speech and illegal activity such as those pertaining to terrorist activity and pedophile rackets.

I think this is a very dangerous step that Australia is taking and I strongly oppose this bill.