

My name is [REDACTED] and I wish to give some feedback regarding the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023.

I feel it is important to stop misinformation and disinformation, such as 5G towers causing COVID-19 and the lies about there being weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, and to prevent harmful content such as the live-streaming of the Christchurch massacre. However, I also feel that the scope could be extended to political debate – including the public health response to COVID-19 and foreign interference in elections – where social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter would be forced to suppress any information that does not fit the government's narrative.

Why is it necessary to put in a clause that exempts any form of communication between federal, state, and local governments being considered misinformation or disinformation? Why should politicians be above the law?

Freedom of expression is enshrined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and Australia was one of the countries that helped draft it. It 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 any media and regardless of frontiers."*

I accept that misinformation and disinformation has spread onto social media, but this unnecessary bill is not the answer. The only way we can put an end to it is to have open, public debate.

I do not endorse this bill.