

I would like to express my total opposition to the Albanese government's Communications Legislation Amendment (Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023.

As I see it this bill is another step towards totalitarianism in our country; a country which has recently been subject to control and manipulation by various state premiers and prime ministers throughout the COVID pandemic and beyond. All Australians should be extremely concerned that our government is now endeavoring to further remove the rights and freedoms of its citizens in another attempt to stifle freedom of speech rather than allow the people of Australia to decide for themselves what to believe or disregard.

The bill it says will give the government power to regulate "truth" online by being able to force social media platforms to censor "misinformation" and "disinformation" that is "harmful". This terminology is extremely general and vague, the interpretation of which is dangerously broad and determined by likely biased and ill-equipped people. I believe that interference at this level with the freedom of speech we now value is unacceptable.

During the COVID years, social media companies entered into informal arrangements with government agencies to aggressively police content on their platforms. This bill has the very real potential to make those informal arrangements both formal and permanent.

I am totally in favour of identifying and removing illicit content such as acts of terrorism, child sexual abuse and extremist violence, but the question is who decides what constitutes 'disinformation' and on what basis do they make their decision?

Is a currently democratic country such as Australia at the risk of becoming a communist run country by policing its population and yet at the same time allowing its government to be completely immune from its own dangerous misinformation which is held up with much bias by our controlled media. The fact that this proposed bill explicitly exempts any government communication, from any level of government, being considered misinformation or disinformation, is indicative of the bias and control our government plans to force on the people of Australia. This is wrong on all counts and assumes that government powers are inherently honest and at all times working towards the good of their people. It is clear this is an incorrect assumption with proven evidence of our leaders' lies, convenient memory losses and refusal to enter into debate on any important issue they do not wish to discuss as it may incriminate them.

Neither would the proposed bill simply apply to the protection of public health, as we have already witnessed the mass-censorship of information contrary to the COVID-19 narrative, including that of highly qualified doctors and scientists. Many concerned people who chose to post helpful information during COVID to encourage them to maintain their health and build their immunity in order to protect themselves and their loved ones from COVID found their posts pulled down. I ask how could these posts be deemed dangerous? The information they provided was both honest and scientifically supported, but we now know that it did not fit the government or pharmaceutical industry's agenda to force the community to undergo experimental vaccinations, in many cases against their will.

There is no argument that social media contains misinformation and disinformation; but this would be better publicly refuted than censored. Consensus on the topic of freedom of speech states that censorship of speech is far more dangerous to a healthy democratic society than the unfortunate consequences of false claims.

Free speech is enshrined in the First Amendment of the Bill of Rights in the US Constitution and also in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which Australia helped to draft in 1948: "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.”

Please seriously consider my views and those of the many other Australians who will oppose this draconian and communistic bill.

Kind regards

Lyn Manson