

Comments on Proposed New ACMA Laws to Combat Misinformation and Disinformation.

I am a private citizen, born and raised in Australia. I have post-tertiary qualifications and consider myself to be well-informed and reasonably intelligent. I have never before been involved in any protest movements and have been prepared to accept a range of what I considered to be poorly-thought-out laws and rules because, on balance, I felt able to “live with” the consequences of said laws and rules. I have never had any interaction with law enforcement agencies and have worked long and hard for many years. I firmly believe in the notion that, provided no harm is done, then the government has no business telling anyone what they may or may not do. I also firmly believe it is my right to say what I think based on consideration of the pro and con arguments and the available empiric data, on any particular topic. This is free speech.

I cannot, however, allow the proposed new Misinformation and Disinformation Laws to pass without comment. This proposal is absolutely appalling. How dare the Government, or its agency (ACMA) determine what information I am to be allowed to see? History has shown, many times over, that today’s truth is tomorrow’s falsehood. I, and the vast majority of Australians, are intelligent enough to make our OWN decisions about the veracity or otherwise of material. And to allow the government of the day to be exempt from the laws is obscene.

There is just too much subjectivity in the interpretation of the proposed laws. What is Harm? What is Misinformation? The potential for the Law to allow a government to disallow any opposing thought is immense.

It is also disingenuous to say that ACMA will not have the power to act on specific pieces on whatever platform they appear, when it is still up to ACMA to determine what is and is not permitted. The various digital platforms will more than likely err on the side of caution, potentially disallowing even more items, because of the fines involved.

In short, the proposed Laws are an appalling assault on free speech in this country and have the potential to muzzle all thought that is different to the perceived wisdom of those who shout most stridently about a particular topic. They should not be altered, modified or changed at all. They should be immediately thrown away, never to be considered again.

I quietly wonder is this submission sufficient to have me on some kind of Blacklist should the proposed legislation be passed.