



03 August 2023

SUBMISSION:

Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023

Dear Committee:

Please see my feedback as requested on the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023.

This bill will destructive to Australian democracy and must not pass.

I am grateful to be an Australian citizen, having come from a country where free speech that opposed the government of the day saw people fined, imprisoned and killed, in the name of protecting the peoples from harm.

The “peoples” were the privileged that did not stand in opposition to the government injustice, and the “harm” was the fight for equality from Apartheid.

I have seen how silencing opposing opinions has lead to dictatorial regimes around the world, the irony is that the government proposing this silence states that it is in the interest of the people.

Truth is like water, given time, it will always make its way through to the surface.

My feedback and thoughts on this proposed bill are outlined below this letter.

Please prevent this bill from passing, it will cause more division and harm than it tries to solve.

Thank you for giving us, the citizens, this opportunity to present our thoughts and concerns in a submission. This ability to make a submission is exactly why Australian democracy works, this proposed bill will erode our democracy.

Yours Sincerely



SUBMISSION POINTS AT ISSUE

The proposed bill summary states:

“The Communications Legislation Amendment (Combating Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023 (Cth) is the Albanese Government’s proposed law to combat online ‘misinformation’ and ‘disinformation’ which allegedly ‘pose a threat to the safety and wellbeing of Australians, as well as our democracy, society and economy’. If passed, the Bill will empower the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) to compel online service providers to censor online speech that it considers to be ‘harmful’. ACMA will also have the power to impose significant penalties on online service providers.”

1. **Who decides what is misinformation and disinformation?** In 1933 the information of the day was contained in books. Those books which were considered disagreeable (misinformation) to the government of the day were burned (Pre war Nazi Germany). From the silencing of freedom of speech, it was a short road to all out discrimination, murder and war.
 - When did a government or agency of that government, become the arbiter of what is misinformation and disinformation?
 - What happens when the government mandated “truth” is provably factually false and harmful? Will reparations be made to those who have suffered under this bill?

2. **Who decides what truth is?** I have a well founded concern that the “truth of the day” will be determined by the policy of the government of the day.
 - Fact Checkers are opinionated and biased by the narrative, these fact checkers are also paid by the organisations or bodies that require a particular outcome.
 - “Experts” can be found to support any view and resort to selective use of data to support their findings.
 - For example, it is now widely accepted that much of the approved information about Covid from authority organisations early in the pandemic has now been proved to be incorrect. Actions to flatten the curve; such as masks, social distancing, lockdowns, showed little benefit but at the time these actions were put forward as fact.
 - For example, the official information stated strenuously that the Covid 19 virus originated in a Wuhan wet market, that theory that was proposed as truth (by “expert” scientists) has subsequently been repealed. (Lancet journal report among others on the origin of Covid)

3. How will my freedom of speech be protected from this bill? This bill is a direct assault on our free speech. The Universal declaration of human rights - section 18 and 19 protects free speech, Australia is a signatory of this declaration but this bill stands in direct opposition of The Universal declaration of human rights.

- Democracy is at its heart, debate and disagreement trying to reach common ground in the interest of the people first and foremost. This bill will take Australia further toward an Orwellian dictatorship where any opposing view will be labelled disinformation / misinformation and the proposer of the opposing view will be silenced. Silencing opposition has been the primary vehicle of communist dictatorships. Freedom of thought, opinion and freedom of discussion is fundamental to our Australian heritage
- Is not open discussion and debate the foundation of getting to the truth?
- Freedom of conscience, freedom to speak, freedom make right / wrong decisions is one of the many benefits of living in a FREE democratic society.
- The bill asserts that people are unable to think for themselves and make decisions about what is truth and what is misinformation and disinformation.

3. How will my freedom of Religion be protected from this bill? The bill refers to Misinformation being false, misleading or deceptive and contribute to harm, stipulating causing hatred toward a group.

My faith teaches that it is in love and wanting to do the best for people that we speak out for the oppressed and against injustice. There are groups who already deem our views as “hatred toward a group”.

- If the teachings of my religion stand in opposition to the policy of the government, will my religion then be deemed misinformation / disinformation?
- This is exactly what North Korea and Communist China have done with my faith.
- How long until all faiths are considered mis-information?

4. Why is this bill discriminatory? This bill has exemptions for government, main stream media and organisations not in opposition of the governments position. If implemented all sectors of society should be held to account for spreading Misinformation and Disinformation.

- The “truth” in the main stream media is more representative of which truth camp has deeper pockets and more power.
- What will happen to opposition politicians if they express an opinion or argue a topic that has been declared Misinformation and Disinformation?
- If citizens disagree with government policy, pseudo science or cultural directions, will their opinions, evidence or alternative world view be shut down under this bill.

5. Let the law do its job. Australia has a functioning legal system. If there is deemed to be harm caused by Misinformation and Disinformation, there would be a case to prosecute and defend.

- Misinformation guidance note example - *Incitement to commit hate crimes* must be dealt with by criminal law, not by a subjective interpretation by ACMA
- Misinformation guidance note example - *Undermining the AEC*. There are laws in place to protect our electoral system, if needs be, expand the law if new issues arise.
- Misinformation guidance note example - *dangerous drugs*. The case cited was an untested alternate Covid treatment. Dangerous drugs of all kinds need to be dealt with under health laws, there are new treatments coming to light all the time such as CBD oil, it is being managed by health laws, none of this should be managed by ACMA.

Time will reveal the truth, leave debate alone and let time expose the misinformation. This bill will destroy our democracy, our freedoms and my faith. Thank you for considering my submission.