

Is Australia heading down the slippery slope towards totalitarianism?

I have some serious concerns on the proposed Communications Legislation Amendment (Combating Misinformation and Disinformation Bill) which the Federal government is seeking to bring in.

One of the reasons why Australia is such a great place to live, is because of our good weather (lots of sunshine) and also because of our freedom of speech. In many countries around the world, people are afraid to speak up because of oppressive governments who squash those who differ in their opinions. And yet, that seems to be exactly what is happening here. The Combating Misinformation and Disinformation Bill comes under the guise of safeguarding the people of Australia in combatting misinformation and disinformation on digital platforms.

And yet, who is to say what is misinformation and disinformation? As we saw with COVID, the government made various statements which 2 years later have been shown to be false, ie the vaccines are safe, (whereas in actual fact many people have had serious adverse reactions to them) and the vaccines will stop the transmission of COVID, (whereas in actual fact vaccinated people still got COVID).

Another example of some misinformation is that in June 2021, the Reserve Bank made an (apparent) promise not to raise interest rates within its control until 2024. However since April 2022, we have had 11 interest rate rises.

In science, many times what one person thought was the truth, has later been found out not to be the case, ie the idea that the sun revolves around the Earth, whereas it was later shown that the Earth revolves around the sun. Initially light was believed to come in wavelengths, and then it was shown that it can also be a stream of particles of light. Science is all about asking questions and finding out new discoveries which sometimes contradicts what we previously thought to be true.

For a society to be democratic, it needs to have the pooling of ideas and to have healthy discussions about what is the best way forward. That cannot happen if ideas are being squashed under the term 'misinformation and disinformation'. If Australians cannot speak against the government narrative, how is that any different from totalitarianism?

As Chris Mitchell has said in the Australian, on 2 July 2023, "While no serious journalist supports publication of disinformation and misinformation, many are concerned both terms are being used as political weapons. (<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/author/chris-mitchell>)

It is ironic that the government is exempt from this bill and yet, throughout history, the government has been shown to be one of the biggest disseminators of misinformation and disinformation.

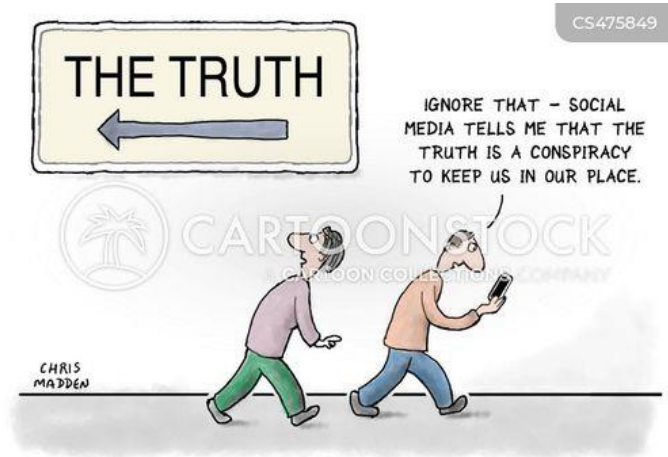
This legislation sounds like one step away from the 'Ministry of Truth' in George Orwell's 1984.

"The Ministry of Truth, like the other three ministries, has an ironic name. It purports to be focused on the pursuit of truth when in fact, the ministry is concerned with erasing the truth of the past and present and replacing it with whatever the Party deems "correct." Those in charge of the ministry decide what "truth" is." (<https://bookanalysis.com/1984/ministry-of-truth/>)

Surely the government doesn't have a monopoly on truth!

My suggestion is that the government should not be excluded from the ramifications of any Bill, but it too be held accountable to the same degree for its misinformation and disinformation and that the group overseeing this be a completely separate group and having no ties to the government.

But better yet, I would like to suggest that we not become a nanny state and instead we allow freedom of speech on digital platforms and let people debate and work out for themselves what is truth and what is not.



https://www.cartoonstock.com/directory/p/post_truth.asp