

I love the heart behind this Bill. I love that our government wants to protect Australians from potential threats to our safety and wellbeing, as well as our democracy, society and economy. Thank you!

I appreciate that the Bill provides no authority to remove individual posts and that its focus is on encouraging digital providers to be responsible in their policies and procedures, so as to avoid the dissemination of misinformation and disinformation.

However, as a lover of democracy and free speech, I have concerns that this Bill may constitute government overreach and lead to unnecessary harm done to honest Australians. Specifically,

- I can find no definition in the Bill of the terms 'false, misleading or deceptive'. I mention this specifically because I am curious as to **who or what is the arbiter** of whether something is 'false, misleading or deceptive'. As a student and teacher of history, I am aware of many instances when "the establishment" considered a new idea to be false (e.g. heliocentric view of the universe, doctors washing hands to prevent spread of infection) and were later proved that they were the ones who were wrong. This Bill provides me with no confidence that controversial (but true) new ideas and theories will not be labelled as false, misleading or deceptive.
- Connected to the above, I am concerned that this Bill grants the government the right to determine what is and isn't true and, in so doing, effectively allows the government the ability to control what information its citizens receive. This strikes me as too similar to some totalitarian states that exist in our world right now. This presents the frightening prospect of an erosion of our country's democracy.
- The Bill clearly seeks not to stifle freedom of political communication, for which I am grateful. However, no mention is given to freedom of religious communication nor other matters on which the Australian public may hold a variety of opinions, such as health care.
- If the government is prepared to give news outlets exemption, granting them editorial freedom, why are other organisations not permitted the same freedoms? This appears to be a double standard – presumably unintentional – which is of concern for a nation founded on democratic principles of equality.
- Whilst no authority is given within this Bill to enforce removal of individual posts, this Bill feels a little too much like the thin edge of the wedge. I am concerned this Bill would place us on a slippery slope leading to the erosion of free speech in our country.

On the positive side, I would be strongly in favour of any legislation which is able to detect and even enforce removal of any misinformation or disinformation produced by bots or AI, once a satisfactory definition of 'false, misleading or deceptive' has been arrived at.