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Subject: Submission in response to the Combating Misinformation and Disinformation Bill proposed by the Albanese government.

I am presenting this submission voicing my concern regarding the proposed Combating Misinformation and Disinformation Bill from both a conceptual viewpoint as well as from personal experience.

Freedom of speech is a cornerstone value of Australian society which has given us much of what we enjoy in this country today. Our fundamental respect for the individual and their right to free speech has fostered the free exchange of ideas, innovation, social equity, the fair rule of law and many other benefits which make this a prosperous, free and safe country.

The proposed legislation offers to diminish this freedom of speech and expression by labelling some speech as misinformation, disinformation or hate speech.

My question is who decides what is misinformation, disinformation and hate speech? Does the Australian Communications and Media Authority really have the capacity to objectively determine what is truth and censor speech accordingly? Does the government of the day? Certain public servants? Social media employees?

I have personal experience in regard to free speech suppression on a social media platform. I am a fifth-generation Australian farmer who had my Twitter account suspended for reasons I do not understand. I am not an aggressive person and I am not disrespectful towards others, but I was annoyed when Coles Supermarkets advertised \$1/litre milk several years ago because of the impact this would have on Australian Dairy farmer's business viability. While I cannot remember my exact comment and I can't revisit it because my account is suspended, it was something to the effect that "social responsibility is dead in Australian supermarkets".

Twitter suspended my account shortly after this, so I have to assume it was for my social justice stance. Other than this all my other comments on the platform were benign.

Who decided what was appropriate in this case? Who made the rules? Will the Australian Communications and Media Authority possess the capacity to dissect complex issues and project truth upon them? If it was a mistake – my voice was still effectively shut down.

To introduce the Combating Misinformation and Disinformation Bill proposed by the Albanese government injects a dangerous subjective element into deciding which speech is allowed and which speech should be suppressed. This is a naïve bill which has the potential to constrict and stifle an open, innovative and prosperous society. It is not a model that the rest of the democratic world should follow.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Greenshields