

Ricky McDonald

[REDACTED]

Ph: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

In February 1616 a man named Galileo Galilei was accused of spreading harmful misinformation about the Heliocentric model, which was declared by the experts of the Roman Inquisition to be "foolish and absurd in philosophy, and formally heretical since it explicitly contradicts in many places the sense of Holy Scripture." Galileo was told by a Cardinal following the instructions of Pope Paul V "to abandon completely ... the opinion that the sun stands still at the centre of the world and the Earth moves, and henceforth not to hold, teach, or defend it in any way whatever, either orally or in writing."

Sixteen years later, Galileo once again strayed too far from what the Pope considered to be truth by publishing a book called 'Dialogue concerning the two chief world systems.' This book portrayed the Heliocentric model too favourably, so once again Galileo faced the inquisition. The Inquisition found Galileo 'vehemently suspect of heresy' and he was required to 'abjure, curse and detest' his opinions about Heliocentrism. Galileo was also subjected to house arrest, his book was banned and he was not allowed to publish any other books.

Centuries of observations have not been so kind to the opinions of the experts of the Inquisition and the Pope. Today you would be very hard pressed to find anybody who would try to claim that the Sun orbited the Earth and that those experts were right. It was only through free and open investigation and discussion that the facts were checked so different conclusions could be reached. Without the free exchange of ideas and thought, no real progress can ever be made. There are many more examples in history where 'experts' have for one reason or another ordained that something was true, only for history to contradict them. Why would it be any different today?

"So misinformation, i think is... um has been a really tricky one because there are things that are kind of obviously false but they may be factual um, but may not be harmful um, so, look alright, are you gonna censor someone for just being wrong? If there is no kind of harm implication of what they're doing ...there's a bunch of real kind of issues and challenges there. But then, there are other places where it is um, If you just take some of the stuff around COVID earlier on in the pandemic where um there were real health implications, but there hadn't been time to fully vet a bunch of the scientific assumptions and, you know, unfortunately, I think a lot of the kind of establishment on that um, you know kind of waffled on a bunch of facts and asked for a bunch of things to be censored that, in retrospect, ended up being, you know, more debatable or true and that stuff is really tough for it really undermines trust and that um..." - Mark Zuckerberg, founder of Facebook and CEO of Meta Platforms in a recent interview.

As Zuckerberg says, the medical establishment believed a lot of things about Covid that later were proven to be untrue. If the government approved medical experts got

it wrong, then how can it be justifiable for the government to amend the communication legislation to pressure platforms to censor "misinformation?" The very people who will be relied upon to set the standards for misinformation were wrong about things, while "misinformation" turned out to be completely correct. For example, the mortality rate of Covid was reported to be over 3%. Today we know it is a fraction of a percent. Today we know that the demographic most affected by Covid is the elderly and those with preexisting health conditions, while for most of the early stages of the pandemic the messaging from the "experts" was that everyone was at risk. Most of the world spent years wearing masks after being told they would stop the spread of Covid, which they might have done if Covid had been primarily spread by droplets rather than aerosols. No surgical mask can hope to block an aerosol from passing through either way, so they were ineffective. Even the origin of Covid has been the subject of misinformation from "experts." How many people can seriously argue for a natural origin after we learnt that the closest relative of the Covid virus was found years ago in a bat cave thousands of kilometres away from Wuhan, or that the Wuhan Institute of Virology was studying bat Coronaviruses and possibly conducting Gain of Function research. (The CCP can not possibly be trusted to be truthful on that point!) Even the treatment of severe Covid has changed a lot, you don't hear anything about Ventilators for treating Covid anymore. In fact, there are cases where people suffered more from being intubated than from Covid.

Experts have been wrong in the medical field many more times too, with disastrous results. Thalidomide is a notorious example of "experts" in the medical field getting things wrong. Thousands of children were killed or maimed by this drug. Thalidomide was removed from the European market in 1961 and many regulations were changed to prevent anything like that from happening again. Since Thalidomide is an old story and the regulations concerning pharmaceutical safety have been strengthened surely the "experts" in the medical regulations industry will have kept us safe? The Vioxx story paints a different picture. Vioxx was approved by the American FDA in 1999 and was withdrawn in 2004 after causing many thousands of fatal heart attacks. Safety studies were manipulated by not including some of the people who had suffered adverse events and conflicts of interest worth tens of thousands of dollars were involved. How about Zantac, a drug that has been available for around 40 years until an independent lab did a basic contamination test and found NDMA, a carcinogen. Levels of this carcinogen increase over time under normal storage conditions. It seems the "experts" in the various drug safety agencies around the world neglected to run these tests at any point over the decades. How many other "safe and effective" drugs are on the market today that could have easily been studied or tested to find how unsafe they are, or worse, have had fraudulent studies showing safety where none existed?

A telling demonstration of the "safe" practices of the pharmaceutical industry can be found by looking up how much money various pharmaceutical companies have paid in fines. ██████████, for example, has paid over 7 billion USD total in various fines. ██████████ is over 4 billion, with one very prominent fine in 2009 of 2.3 billion for fraudulent marketing. ██████████ has paid over a billion, ██████████ over 5 billion and ██████████ over 4 billion. Many other large pharmaceutical companies have paid billions or hundreds of millions in fines. With such a long history of criminal activity, why do drug regulation agencies around the world continue to approve any drug from the large pharmaceutical companies, especially why approve them without

doing proper testing? According to the British Medical Journal (<https://www.bmj.com/content/377/bmj.o1538>) our TGA derives a massive 96% of its budget from the industry it regulates. The European, British and Japanese equivalents are more than 80% industry funded, while the FDA is 65% industry funded. To add to this, how many former agency employees wind up on the board of directors of a large pharmaceutical company after they are done working at their regulatory agency? How can a regulatory agency claim to be independent and impartial in such a situation? How can a member of the public put any trust in the "experts" who are supposed to regulate potentially dangerous drugs to make sure only truly safe and effective drugs are on the market?

The only answer is, they can't. No member of the public who thinks honestly and critically about this situation can avoid coming to the conclusion that the "experts" who create or regulate drugs and other healthcare related products cannot be blindly trusted. So now we get to the 'Communications Legislation Amendment' for 2023. On page 4 of the fact sheet for this bill, it is explained that "The proposed powers will only apply to misinformation and disinformation that is reasonably likely to cause or contribute to serious harm." Who will decide what constitutes serious harm? One example of serious harm is "Harm to the health of Australians." Who exactly will be deciding what will be so harmful to Australians that they cannot be trusted to see it themselves? Will it be some panel of medical "experts?" The same medical experts that said Thalidomide, Vioxx and Zantac were perfectly safe and prescribed them to patients? The medical experts who prescribe products made by pharmaceutical companies that have paid billions in fines and rely on agencies they fund almost entirely to grant approvals to their new drugs? How many class action lawsuits against these pharmaceutical companies start with small Facebook groups of people coming together to share stories of being harmed by a drug and trying to help each other heal and maybe find justice? I think the pharmaceutical companies that made those harmful drugs would love it if all those groups were banned by Facebook on the grounds of spreading medical "misinformation" so they can avoid these new fines. So much for justice. One of the most important functions of a government should be to enable the weaker members of society to petition for redress of grievance, especially against a multi-billion, multi-national company, who can be described as strong? No social media platform will ever want Australians to join and talk about their legitimate issues for fear of some panel of "experts" deciding those issues constitute disinformation and threaten fines. Anybody reading this will just have to hope their family does not face this kind situation in the future, going against a massive pharmaceutical company is daunting enough without having to do it alone and silently.

I believe a similar point can be made about censorship of any description on any subject, even if you agree with the patronising, infantilising and honestly absurd notion that Australians cannot be trusted to decide things for themselves, it is not possible for anybody to trust whichever body or panel is chosen to be impartial and honest. But even if you ignore the endless list of reasons to distrust the "experts" who would make up any panel deciding what constitutes serious harms and working out what to fine social media companies for, you cannot ignore the serious philosophical objection against deciding what is true and imposing that upon anybody, even if it is indirectly via social media companies. Even ignoring special interests and simply being wrong, the biggest mistake will be allowing anybody to

become the arbiter of the truth. After all, aren't we a free country, contrasted against a restrictive totalitarian state like China under the CCP? Sure, nobody has seriously tried to accuse Australia of organ harvesting from an enslaved ethnic group, but maybe if the citizens of China could hear what the free outside world was saying, maybe they would speak up and force their government to put a stop to such evil. If you silence us today, then who will dare to speak out tomorrow if the government or a large company commits evil crimes? Will anybody even know if nobody can ever speak beyond what some bureaucrats called "experts" have decided is permissible?

Truth is too large a concept for any one person or organisation to ever hope to grasp. Regulating it to control the range of peoples thoughts has always been the goal of tyrants. Some were afraid that "their" people would see them as weak enough to be dethroned, some wanted to manipulate an audience to some action. We should not allow anything like that to happen here. That is why this bill needs to be stopped.

Regards,
Ricky McDonald