

**To: [information.integrity@infrastructure.gov.au](mailto:information.integrity@infrastructure.gov.au)**  
**Subject: Re the Draft Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023**

This is my confidential submission to your request for views on the above-named Draft Bill.

The right to think and believe and speak - according to one's individual conscience - has long been held as an inalienable human right, while both civil and religious liberty have characterised western civilisation from its birth.

Indeed, the mark of a truly democratic society is freedom - freedom of thought, speech, belief, expression and religion - with such thoroughly defined and fundamental human rights undergirded by legal provisions designed to protect citizens from violation of them.

Such freedoms have thus ever-allowed for a broad and variable range of ideas and persuasions to be represented, expressed and debated in free societies for generations — on all levels of media platforms and education, in workplaces, and in every area of public life.

The fact that humans can think, believe, move, and speak freely, that group petitions may be heard, that public events, parades and peaceful protests can take place, as a means of active participation, without censorship, legal, government, or other interference, is testament to our Protestant heritage, and enshrined in the constitutions of free western nations, giving people - with all manner of viewpoints - the opportunity to share their ideas and beliefs within the community, to raise awareness on all kinds of socio- and/or religio-political, environmental, and/or other issues they may deem valid, relevant, and/or important, for the betterment - as they see it - of the world.

In our recent history, communication via audible two-way conversations on telephones and printed publications has been substantially augmented by visual and audiovisual communication of information and ideas - via texts, emails, social media, TV and the internet.

So far there have been some limited but worthwhile protective manoeuvres devised to limit exposure to harmful material (eg. ratings and preambles re sensitive content on films to signal the need for viewer caution); and means of restricting access to suspicious/dangerous websites (eg. parental controls on children's internet and gaming devices), in response to public pressure.

However, whilst advances in these technologies have led to an explosion of information and viewpoints available on screened devices, the task of evaluating the worth and veracity of presented material has always, and must still, belong to the individual receiver.

That being said, what we have witnessed, very specifically, in more recent times has been an over-reach of government - particularly in the public health arena. And unfortunately, much of the mainstream information deemed by government bodies and authorities to be ethically and scientifically veracious - at that time - has, in the aftermath, proven to be ill-informed, scientifically unsound and recklessly presumptuous.

And all-too tragically, in the wake of that debacle, there have been countless injuries and lives lost on account of physical consequences attributable to the Covid 19 vaccines, and psychological and economic damage caused by the brutal imposition and conduct of government mandates and lockdowns.

Such retrospective misinformation then can only give rise to concern about the aims and objectives of a body such as

ACMA, which seems to assume the right to determine what is true or false, what is in conformity with acceptable ideologies, and subsequently authorised to (in effect) censor whatever information or viewpoints may be contrary or challenging to the perceived truths, scientific notions and endorsed socio-political narratives — presumably in the interests of protecting our minds from deceit and 'harm', whilst conveniently silencing and disempowering opposition to limit the possibility of dissension and violence.

Thus our freedoms and human rights to know and decide have been effectively trampled underfoot, and we are under a totalitarian regime - afraid to think, afraid to speak, and afraid to share opinions and express different points of view to one another or...worse still, are unable to do so.

Such a potential reality presents a very frightening scenario reminiscent of the nefarious religio-political power that reigned throughout the Middle Ages, along with all the totalitarian regimes that have repressed, oppressed, silenced and slaughtered its dissenters throughout human history.

So with that lesson book before us, why is our Australian Government now threatening the very fundamental freedoms our forbears fought and died for — whose sacrifice handed to us the freedoms and lifestyles we have so long enjoyed — and considering such a fatal move?

Such a situation would constitute a massive confinement to our individual and communal liberty, and thus substantially diminish what it means to be human — that is, one possessing the freedom and intelligence to evaluate a full range of options and thus able to adopt various positions of thought, belief, and functionality in response to information and experiences of encountered realities.

So, I humbly ask, what right has government or any other group of appointed persons, to decide what information we should be

able VS unable to access and consider in formulating our knowledge and understanding of the world, and thus our thoughts, beliefs and opinions in relation to society, faith and politics; and what facts, ideas and sentiments we should be permitted to share?

And what gives certain bodies of individuals the right or authority within the provisions of government, according to our Australian Constitution, the power now to violate certain principles within it by acting to control the thinking and behaviour of Australians, by commanding conformity to a 'politically-correct narrative' in speech and conduct?

And more importantly, by what set of standards and moral authority is that narrative imposed?

I realise this is a very cleverly constructed paradigm - making media outlets and platforms financially liable for allowing transmission of content viewed as unacceptable, but that is simply a blame-shifting exercise.

In essence this ACMA body is assuming the power to ultimately determine — in our stead — what is right and true, by using threats of fines as a means of censorship.

Whilst I totally understand, and would be the first to agree that many items with dubious and dodgy content are posted online, Australians must still retain the right to be free to access and consider the full range of information communicated, and thus make our own, personal assessments of such content.

Hence I both humbly request and strongly urge that you please withdraw this proposed Bill.

Yours sincerely,

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature and name of the sender.

Email:

